



MYTH: *People who are homeless are violent, dangerous, and law-breakers.*

FACT: *People who are homeless are far more likely to be the victim of a crime than to be a perpetrator.*

A person who is homeless is no more likely to be a criminal than a housed person, with one legal exception: camping ordinances. A person who is homeless is less likely to perpetrate a violent crime than a housed person, and is in fact more likely to be the victim of a violent crime, especially if they are a homeless woman, teen, or child. In Springfield, Helping Hands and the Winter Warming Center regularly help people who have been physically assaulted or the victim of theft at the hands of a housed person.

MYTH: *People who are homeless aren't trying hard enough to get a job or find a place to live.*

FACT: *People who are homeless often are working and/or have significant barriers to find housing.*

35% of clients staying in the Helping Hands shelter have a steady job. The amount of people working increases during the summer because of seasonal outdoor work available. Many people who are homeless, particularly those who are unsheltered, have physical or behavioral health disabilities that prohibit them from working.

Housing availability and affordability are barriers, particularly for people who do not earn a lot of money. If a homeless person is fortunate to have a job, it is hard to maintain employment when you don't have a place to bathe, prepare meals or electricity to set an alarm. Even with a job, there is no state in the U.S. where a minimum wage worker working full time can afford a one-bedroom apartment at the fair market rent.

MYTH: *People who are homeless are addicts and choose to be on the street instead of get a job.*

FACT: *The trauma of homelessness often contributes to addiction; not the other way around.*

Roughly 32% of individuals experiencing homelessness suffer from addiction to drugs and alcohol—a figure approximately 20% higher than reported abuse of alcohol and illicit drugs by the general population. Homelessness, which is usually accompanied by loss of income, isolation, and loss of self-worth, drives people to substance abuse. It is often mistakenly assumed that alcoholics and drug users lack moral principles or willpower and that they could stop using drugs simply by choosing to change their behavior. Recovering from addiction is difficult for housed people; it is even more difficult for people experiencing the additional trauma of homelessness.

MYTH: *Providing services to homeless people only attracts more homeless.*

FACT: *Most people who are homeless stay in the city where they became homeless.*

A recent national study found that 75% of homeless people are still living in the city which they became homeless. While some people experiencing homelessness move to find jobs and housing, many are unable to move because of physical or behavioral health disabilities, because of financial hardships like foreclosure or job loss that may have led to homelessness, or because they simply do not want to leave a community where they have established meaningful roots. People experiencing homelessness who do move to new areas do so because they are searching for work, have family nearby or for other reasons not always related to services.