

Report: Record number of MN Kids without a home for the holidays

Written by Laura Thornquist
Friday, 18 December 2009 13:57

ST. PAUL, Minn. - Most Americans are making plans for the holidays in their warm homes, but thousands of children will spend the holidays simply dreaming about a place to call home. A new report shows the number of Hennepin County homeless families has reached the highest level since 2000, and that number was 75 percent higher in September 2009 than in September 2006. Nearly 2,900 kids have been identified as homeless by Minneapolis and St. Paul schools.

These numbers are just a snapshot of what is happening across the entire state, according to Leigh Rosenberg, research and outreach manager of Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP).

"When people are unemployed and don't have that cushion, they can easily fall into homelessness. In addition, and in both urban and rural areas in Minnesota, there is a real shortage of rental units that are affordable to people."

MHP supports the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act, which would authorize 150,000 new Section 8 vouchers to help families with the rent, Rosenberg says. On a state level, bonding could be used to build more affordable housing for Minnesotans, she points out.

Some people Rosenberg is meeting are homeless and never imagined they would be in that situation, she adds.

"One woman had had a stable job for decades, and then when she was laid off she couldn't find anything. Before long she just didn't have anywhere - she just didn't have reserves and she couldn't afford her housing any more - and that was bad."

The study also showed increasing rental vacancy rates and steady market rents, as renters double up and select lower-priced units.

The study can be found at www.mhponline.org.