


"Children and Homelessness in Massachusetts"
Prepared for the 4th Massachusetts Family Impact Seminar on "Children in Need"


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HIGHEST NUMBER OF HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DEVELOPED WORLD


1.6 MILLION HOMELESS CHILDREN EACH YEAR

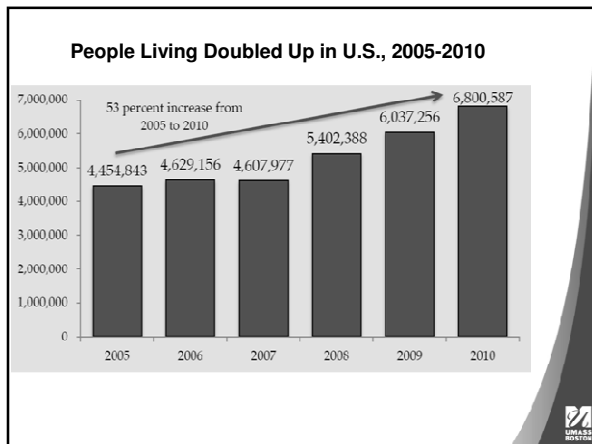


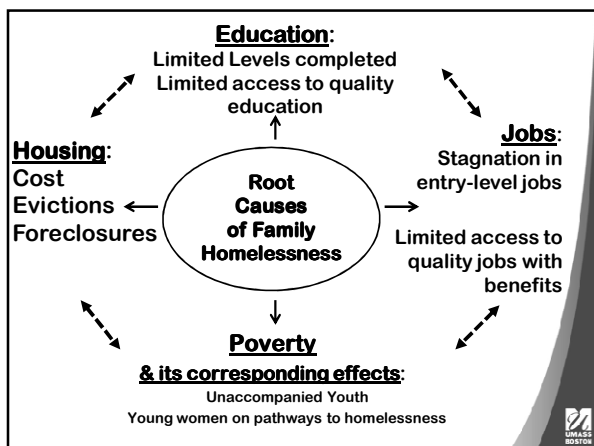
30,000 HOMELESS CHILDREN EACH WEEK

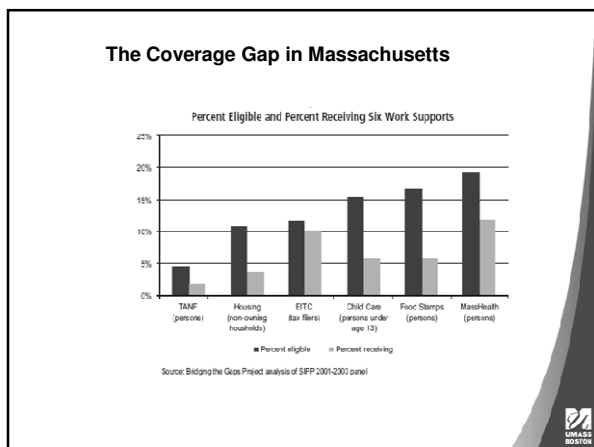
4,400 HOMELESS CHILDREN EACH DAY

ON A SINGLE NIGHT IN 2012 THERE WERE 633,782 HOMELESS PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES, INCLUDING 394,379 WHO WERE HOMELESS AS INDIVIDUALS AND 239,403 WHO WERE HOMELESS IN FAMILIES





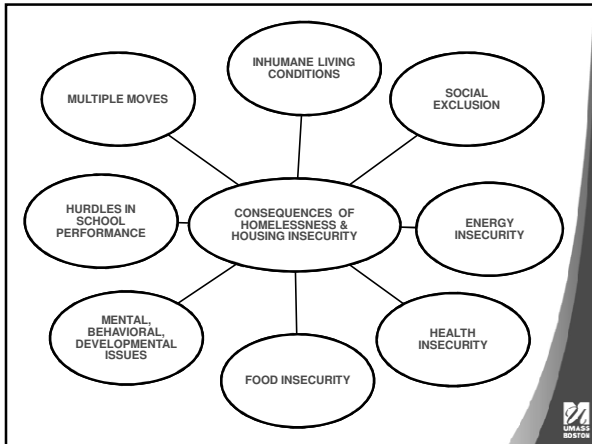




Hidden Consequences of Low-Wage Work and Persistent Poverty

Children and Youth in Low-Wage Families Are More Likely to:

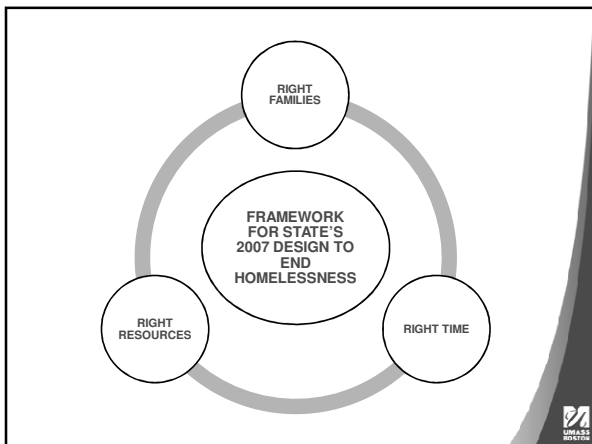
- Drop out of school
- Have a greater likelihood of experiencing health problems, including obesity
- Bear children at a young age
- Grow up very fast, take on adult roles, diverting from schooling, extracurricular activities, and personal development

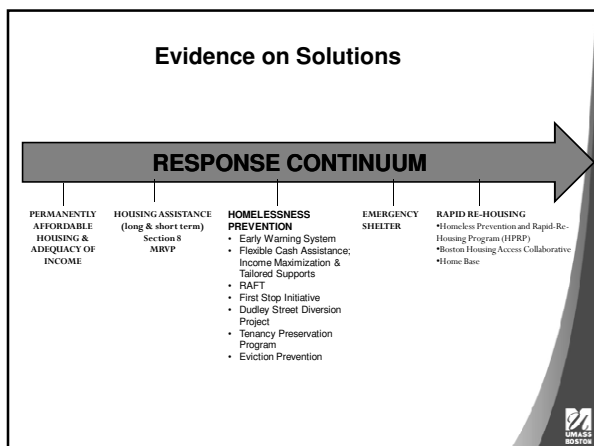


Massachusetts' 2007 Blueprint to End Homelessness

- Shift from crisis response (shelter) to prevention of homelessness
- "Housing First Model"
- Increase investment of public resources in prevention & repurpose shelters (with savings going back into prevention)

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Some Sobering Findings

Evidence from Center evaluations of several homelessness prevention and Rapid-ReHousing interventions in MA

- ▶ **Cash assistance was effective for families; helps families to hold on to housing 12 months after last payment**
- ▶ **Those with higher educational attainment were more likely to afford rents --- with either part or full time employment**

HOWEVER

- ▶ **Few MA families saw income increases 12-18 months after intervention**
- ▶ **Chronic unemployment, low-incomes, high rental markets pose serious treats to well-being & housing stability**

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WHAT THEN TO DO?

- ▶ **CURRENT APPROACH TO SHELTER ACCESS:**
 - ▶ Domestic violence related
 - ▶ Natural disaster related
 - ▶ Subject to eviction --- no fault of family
- ▶ In housing situation not meant for human habitation with risk of significant health and safety (DCF to carry out risk assessment)
 - ▶ 135 families allowed into shelter between Nov. 2012-Feb 2013 after they had stayed in a place not meant for human habitation


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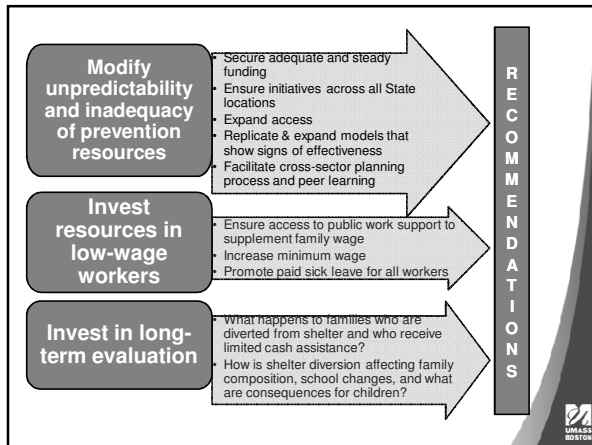
Framework for Assessing Current Eligibility Criteria for Families to Enter Shelter

- 1. DO NO HARM**
- 2. VIABILITY OF IMPLEMENTATION**
- 3. FAITHFULNESS TO STATE'S BLUEPRINT: RIGHT RESOURCES FOR RIGHT FAMILIES AT THE RIGHT TIME**

The new restriction will not stop the flood of families in crisis ----- solutions are: scaling up in prevention, housing affordability and income advancement

Recommendation: End the August 2012 restriction to family shelter that requires verification of being "in a housing situation not meant for human habitation"





Modify unpredictability and inadequacy of prevention resources

- Secure adequate and steady funding
- Ensure initiatives across all State locations
- Expand access
- Replicate & expand models that show signs of effectiveness
- Facilitate cross-sector planning process and peer learning


Invest resources in low-wage workers

- Ensure access to public work support to supplement family wage
- Increase minimum wage
- Promote paid sick leave for all workers

Invest in long-term evaluation

- What happens to families who are diverted from shelter and who receive limited cash assistance?
- How is shelter diversion affecting family composition, school changes, and what are consequences for children?

RECOMMENDATIONS



All Hands on Deck

- ▶ **Multi-pronged, cross-sector, cross-agency approach**
- ▶ **Strong enough emergency safety net**
- ▶ **State policies and regulations enable local and regional networks to innovate, implement, share and learn from their practices**

