

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

by Helen Cameron, Business Development Analyst
November 08, 2016



A picture is worth a thousand words. This is what a homelessness persons living with mental illness looks like.

These are everyday people living alongside us, but they are invisible to us. Mental illness is defined as "a condition that impacts a person's thinking, feeling or mood and may affect his or her ability to relate to others, even people with the same diagnosis."

Recovery, including meaningful roles in social life, school and work, is possible, especially when you start treatment early and play a strong role in your recovery process.

A mental health condition isn't the result of one event. Research suggests multiple, interlinking causes. Genetics, environment and lifestyle combine to influence whether someone develops a mental health condition. A stressful job or home life makes some people more susceptible, as do traumatic life events like being the victim of a crime. Biochemical processes and circuits as well as basic brain structure may play a role too according to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).

At a national level - of the 943 017 people accessing shelters and transitional housing in 2013, 44 % of those in shelters had a disabling condition and 15% were veterans. According to the [Point in Time count in January 2015](#), there are 580 chronically homeless individuals in Orange County and over 440 veterans are still homeless as of 2015.

Jamboree is Orange County's premier developer of Permanent Supportive Housing units. Statewide, Jamboree has developed housing for over 155 residents with mental illness all of whom are coming from homelessness or at risk of homelessness. All have a serious and persistent mental illness. We offer permanent supportive housing with 24/7 mental health services provided on site by our full service partners in communities in Anaheim, Sacramento, Irvine, Midway City and in houses in Fullerton, Anaheim, Orange, and Irvine. Nationally, the average cost of psychiatric and hospital services prior to housing were over \$30,000. Off the streets and in a permanent supportive housing environment, the cost is less than \$10,000 including housing.

How can we end homelessness?

Solutions to consider:

1. Collaborate with agencies to focus on permanent supportive housing - a national best practice.
2. Acquire additional housing resources with a Housing First Philosophy;

- "Homelessness is a housing crisis and can be addressed through the provision of safe and affordable housing.
- All people experiencing homelessness, regardless of their housing history and duration of homelessness can achieve housing stability in permanent housing.
- Everyone is "housing ready" meaning that sobriety, compliance in treatment, or even a clean criminal history is not necessary to succeed in housing.
- Many people experience improvements in quality of life in the areas of health, mental health, substance use and employment, as a result of achieving housing.
- People experiencing homelessness have the right to self-determination and should be treated with dignity and respect and
- The exact configuration of housing and services depends upon the needs and preferences of the population."

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness Report "Opening Doors"

Act

Join us for the 2017 Point-in-time Count on January 28, 2017 [Sign-up as a volunteer](#) so you can learn more about this and other opportunities to help the homeless.

About

HomeAid has been ending homelessness with [Jamboree Housing](#) since 1991 with the renovation of two homes, adding 10 beds for men and women recovering from mental health challenges.

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