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Homelessness and Trauma

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Myth or Fact?

The leading causes of homelessness in America are mental illness and substance use.



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Fact

 Mental Illness and substance use are major factors associated with homelessness. These can be a cause and/or effect.

- My Sister's Place Women's Center
 - Over a 17 month period, 56% of those new clients self-reported living with mental illness
 - 20% self-reported substance use

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Why are people homeless?

- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Unemployment or Underemployed
- Domestic Violence
- Housing Discrimination
- Inadequate access to affordable healthcare, including behavioral health and substance use treatment services

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Myth or Fact?

Most individuals experiencing homelessness live on the streets.



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Fact: Most are sheltered.

According to the 2017 Point In Time (PIT) count:

- 65% of persons counted were sheltered
- 35% were unsheltered

Source: https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

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What feeds into this myth?

- Perceptions of homelessness
 - Example: Unaccompanied youth couch surfing
- Visible vs. invisible
 - Example: Rural homelessness
- PIT numbers are under reported.
 - Snapshot of homelessness on one night

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Who experiences homelessness?

The 2017 PIT Count revealed 553,742 individuals in the US were experiencing homelessness.

	Total People Counted	Single Individuals	Families with Children
2017 PIT Count Results	553,742	369,081	184,661

2,669 were counted in Baltimore City

Source: https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

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Faces of Homelessness?



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Working with the homeless

Scenario

- 16 year old runaway from middle class home
- Pregnant
- Living in substandard conditions with her boyfriend
- Support system: mostly juveniles involved in the criminal justice system
- Poor attendance in school. When attending, sleeps in class and does not complete work.
- When approached about her "poor" choices, she is defensive and verbally aggressive.

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Initial Perceptions versus Reality...

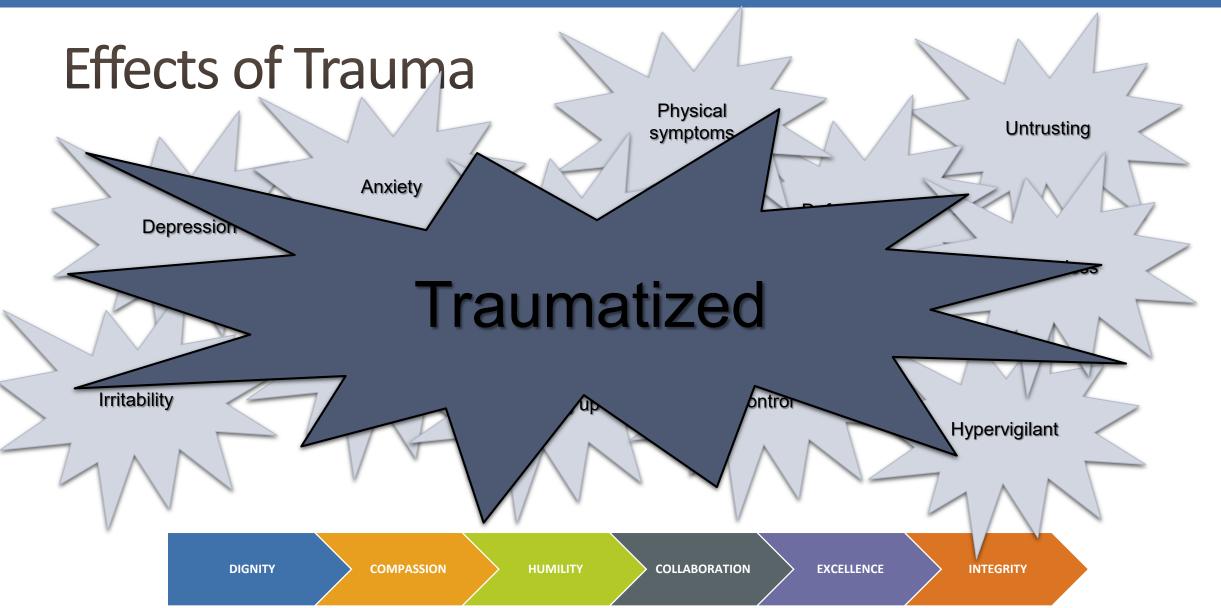
- Ran away from a broken home
- Involved with a boyfriend who was initially helping her flee. Once she left home, her boyfriend began verbally, physically, and sexually abusing her.
- Family questioned why she stayed and did not report the abuse.
- She skipped school to hide the bruises, poor hygiene, depression, and anxiety.
- She was afraid of failure.

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The Journey...



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SAMHSA's Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach



Cultural, Historical, and
 Gender Issues

Removing stereotypes

https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources



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Myth or Fact?

Asking "What happened to you" rather than "What's wrong with you" can be beneficial in reaching someone who seems unreachable.



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What can you do to make a difference?