



The Lord's Place Advocacy & Education Guide for Adults

The Lord's Place is dedicated to breaking the cycle of homelessness. Our goal is to ensure that every family and individual experiencing homelessness in Palm Beach County has a place to call home.



Included in this guide are:

-  Facts about homelessness
-  Common misconceptions
-  Discussion topics
-  Educational activities
-  Ways you can help

This guide will give you the knowledge and tools needed to understand the state of homelessness in our community, as well as the capability to make positive change.

Page 1: Learning the Facts

Read statistics about homelessness and challenge common misconceptions

Page 2: Putting Yourself in Their Shoes

Engage in activities and discussion topics to explore and better understand homelessness

Page 3: Making A Difference

Discover ways to volunteer, fundraise, and advocate for the most vulnerable in your community



45% Of Floridians struggle to meet their basic needs.
Of that 45%, **13%** of Floridians are living in poverty.

14%
of Americans Have been homeless at one point in their life



Homelessness has been on the rise since 2017, growing 6% between then and 2022 nationwide. In Palm Beach County, homelessness has **risen 32%** in the past year.

The #1 cause of homelessness is simply not having a home. Some factors that may contribute to this are:



- Lack of stable housing/ rising rents
- Natural Disaster
- Lack of family support system
- Unemployment/ low wages
- Mental health issues
- Medical debt



Florida has the 3rd highest amount of people experiencing homelessness in America, behind New York as #2 and California as #1.

Nationwide: 580,000

Florida: 30,809

Palm Beach County: 1,855

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

"People choose to be homeless."

People can become homeless due to many reasons, such as eviction, loss of a job, escaping domestic violence, or mental illness.

Homelessness is not a choice, and is not a moral failing or sign of laziness.

"Homeless people should just get a job."

There are many barriers to employment while homeless, such as a lack of street address, no access to showers or clean clothes, difficulty affording transportation, and more. Many people experiencing homelessness are employed, yet don't make enough to cover living expenses and rent.

"They're homeless because they're addicts."

Only a percentage of homeless people have substance abuse issues, just like housed people. Addiction is not the leading cause of homelessness, and even people with drug issues are deserving of compassion, respect, and housing.

Putting Yourself In Their Shoes: Discussion Topics and Educational Activities to Increase Understanding of Homelessness

Getting the Conversation Started

How many missed paychecks until you are homeless?

If you were homeless, do you believe it would impede your ability to maintain employment, including maintaining good hygiene, clean clothes, arriving on time, getting a good night's sleep?

Imagine a friend loses housing. Realistically, would you allow them to stay and live in your home? If so, for how long?

Do you know any places where you could feasibly stay for long periods during the day to escape the elements without being a paying customer? How about at night?

Do you find yourself thinking negatively of people you see who are homeless, without knowing their story or circumstances? Why do you think that is?

Activities

Plan out your route to work as if you could not afford a car, gas, and insurance and had to rely on public transportation. Compare the time difference, as well as comfort and effort levels, of taking the bus instead of driving. How long would it take simply to walk to your nearest bus stop, and think about how that number would change based on excessive heat or rainstorms.

Imagine you are being evicted, with nowhere else to go. You can only take what you can carry with you. Pick a bag and pack it with what you think you'll need to live on the street. Look around at everything you can't take with you, and try to think about what your quality of life would be like with so few possessions. Describe your emotions seeing everything you own on the curb getting picked through by strangers.

Attempt to plan how you could cook a healthy dinner for your family using only free or donated canned food and tools that you could feasibly carry with you while living on the streets.



Making a Difference: What YOU Can Do to Create Positive Change

DONATE

The quickest and easiest way to help people experiencing homelessness is to donate money to an organization that serves this population. Most organizations rely on donations and grant funding to continue their work. Every charitable gift helps people achieve their goals.



Donating items is also a good way to help. New and gently used clothing/shoes, toiletries, sleeping bags, non-perishable food, and other necessary items make life on the streets more bearable for those currently unhoused.



VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are essential and help play an integral part in providing the local homeless population with esteem-building, pro-social, and educational activities that are incredibly helpful on their journey out of homelessness. Volunteer with us today and help change the lives of those in need in our community!

Current volunteer opportunities at The Lord's Place are:

Teaching small group lessons on topics such as healthy cooking, sewing, organization, basic cleaning skills, and maintaining a household. Also, helping those who have been homeless to regain self esteem, heal from trauma, and take back control of their lives.

Help with resume writing, interview skills, teaching classes on basic literacy, reading and writing, basic math, computer competency, mediation, conflict resolution, and anything else which will help those reentering the workforce to gain and maintain employment.

Serving meals to those currently unhoused, and providing companionship, support, and a friendly smile to those who need it.

For more information on ways to get involved please contact Jasper Araujo at JAraujo@TheLordsPlace.org



Making a Difference: What YOU Can Do to Create Positive Change

Advocacy is: the act of supporting a cause to effect the necessary changes you would like to see in your community.

Ways to advocate: sending letters or emails and making phone calls to elected officials in local, state, and federal government, attending rallies, signing petitions, attending and speaking at public meeting events such as city council meetings.

The first step to advocating is to recognize the many barriers that hinder people from breaking free of homelessness, such as an inability to navigate complex systems, qualify for services, or find affordable housing.

You can then **educate policymakers** who may not know the barriers that our homeless community face, and they can then be persuaded to change the policies that are unjust or inequitable.

Advocate! Call Your Legislator!

- State your name, agency, and district.
- Clearly ask for what you want your legislators to do, and include specific bill titles if possible.
- Be clear and succinct, and respectful expressing your concern.
- Provide statistics, data, and personal stories to support your solution.
- Thank your legislator for their time and consideration.

Find out who your state and federal representatives are here:
<https://bit.ly/44vUABg>

Constituents voicing their concerns about homelessness during an organized meeting is a strongly impactful way to show elected officials that there are voters who are passionate about these issues. Here are a few tips when attending public meetings:

- Have prepared statistics, data, questions, and clear messaging.
- Prepare ahead what you will say.
- Gather a group, the more voices the better!
- Show how homelessness affects your community with anecdotal evidence.
- Offer solutions by advocating for specific policies and legislation changes.

