

Houses for Change

Teaching Guide, Grades 7-12

Goal

Youth will learn some facts about homeless families and consider some appropriate responses.

Objective

Participants will be assembling and decorating the boxes to look like homes. The boxes will then be used to collect change to be donated to those providing support services to homeless families. While most families experience homelessness for only a short period, it is nevertheless a difficult and traumatic time. It is possible that some of their classmates are homeless and they would not know it. Common stereotypes of the homeless do not fit in an era with rapidly growing family homelessness.

Time Required

Generally allow an hour for the project, the first 15-20 minutes for discussion and viewing the optional video, *Our Families, Our Future*. Use the balance of time for the assembly and decoration of the boxes.

Materials

You will need a box for each child and crayons, markers, stickers, glitter, collage materials, glue sticks, scissors, etc. to decorate the boxes. If you purchased the video, you will need a DVD player set up. Be sure to do a check on the video presentation before starting.

Procedure

Distribute a box to each child and be sure they have crayons, markers, stickers, etc. with which to decorate the box at the appropriate time.

Introduce the project:

“Homelessness is a growing reality in our country. Has anyone met a person or persons experiencing homelessness?”

“When I use the word homeless what images come to your mind?” Share them.

“Many people have stereotypes about who is homeless. 40% of persons experiencing homelessness in the U.S. are families with children!”

“Here are some other facts about homelessness today:

- ***Families with children are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.***
- ***Homelessness has soared in the past few years because of families who could not pay their rent or mortgage.***
- ***One in 11 American workers cannot find a job.***
- ***Families who pay more than 50% of their income on rent have little left over for food, medicine and have difficulty paying for sudden car repairs or medical bills.***
- ***One out of every six families lives with hunger every day.”***

Video (optional)

“Now we will see a video about how some communities in our country are responding to the number of persons experiencing homelessness. As you watch the video, compare the images you see with the images you described earlier of people experiencing homelessness.”

Show the eight-minute video, *Our Families, Our Future*.

When the video is over, discuss what feelings and insights emerged from the video.

Say:

“What are your reactions to the images of homeless persons you saw in the video?”

“Does anyone have experience volunteering at a shelter or soup kitchen that serves homeless families? Might you consider volunteering?”

Introduce the boxes

Demonstrate how to assemble the boxes. Suggest that participants might want to unfold their boxes to make them easier to decorate.

Say:

“We will now decorate these boxes to look like homes and use the boxes for (fill in the amount of time) to collect funds for organizations (like Family Promise) that provide services to families that are looking for places to call home.”

“Put your own creativity to work.”