



Homelessness among Elders

When does old age begin?

The relationship between housing stability and health makes a strong case for elder homelessness beginning by age 51. If the social construct that "old age begins at 65" applied, it would seem that only 5% of single homeless adults in our region are elders. But as shown thru accelerated holistic degradation, 51+ is more accurate. This perspective increases the percentage of homeless elders tenfold to 54.3%. This percentage has doubled over the past decade (from 26.5% in 2008 to 54.3% in 2018).

Accelerated Holistic Degradation

The stress of living in poverty, in harsh conditions, and unstable environments is harmful to physical, functional, and social wellbeing at any age - but the detriment to health is particularly severe later in life.

For adults over 50, the cumulative stress of homelessness accelerates negative aspects of biological, psychological, and social aging by 10 to 20 years beyond chronological age, which affects morbidity and mortality; every aspect of a person's life is affected.

Connectedness

Family, friends, and social networks are important protective factors for all of us, offering encouragement, access, care, and individualized information and support.

Among single adults (age 51+) experiencing homelessness in our region:

- 66.7% do not have enough people they feel close to
- 82.2% do not have many people they can trust
- 70.8% do not have plenty of people they can rely on when they have a problem



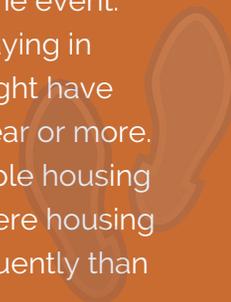
Racial Equity

Homelessness among elders profoundly and disproportionately affects African Americans. 70% of single adults experiencing homelessness and ages 51+ in our region are African American.



Life Course

For many, homelessness is a relatively short, one-time event. About half of adults staying in shelter on any given night have been homeless for 1 year or more. Older adults with a stable housing history experience severe housing cost burden more frequently than the general population.





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Next Steps

Develop toolkit for case managers working in homeless services | Connect Age Wave with Greater Richmond Continuum of Care | Offer specialized training | Convene multi-disciplinary task force

References

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