

Focus Group #3
Date: 02/06/08
Zoe's House

1. How do you define homelessness?

P1: Nowhere to call home.

P7: Without a residence.

P3: Not having a place you can call your own home.

P2: Belonging nowhere.

P6: Not having a physical residence, not having other resources.

P4: Being displaced, without any resources to obtain.

P5: No place to call home, no stable decisions.

2. How did you become homeless?

P1: Drug use, decided to relocate after treatment.

P3: Still homeless even in Zoe House, drug use, never been on street, homeless because it was my choice.

P2: Poor living skills through addiction.

P6: Same as Participant 2 plus choosing not to live in unsafe place.

P4: Drug abuse been clean, chose to leave home, no deposit money and I receive SSI.

P7: Waiting on SSI approval, been denied 3 times, no income, drug use. Try to sell drugs and became my best customer.

3. How long have you been homeless or were you homeless?

P1: Since December 2007.

P6: July 2007

P2: 2 years

P3: 12 years, doubled up some.

P4: Couple of weeks.

P5: 3 years doubled up.

4. How has homelessness affected the way you think about yourself?

P2: "A devastating blow to my self esteem, to me and my family. Humbling."

P6: "Degradation, dragging 2 year old daughter with me. I just want to throw my hands up. Nowhere to go but up. Will appreciate things more."

P7: Depressing, embarrassing.

P1: Motivating and a little embarrassing.

P2: Motivating, don't have to worry about it happening again. "Poor decision making is the high cost of low living".

P4: Depressing, degrading.

P3: Leads to encouragement, motivation and determination.

P5: Take discipline to make good decisions. I'm 20 and the mother of 3 and I'm focusing on that.

5. Thinking back to when you first became homeless, what would it have taken to prevent it?

P3: Drug addiction and losing control of my life caused it. Better decisions, seeking help for substance abuse.

P6: Poor choices, didn't know how to make healthy choices. Father was a heroin addict who died of AIDS, Mom was an alcoholic. "It was my destiny to be homeless. Parents were addicts; I become an addict which eventually caused my homelessness. The only thing that would have changed any of that was for me to be born to different parents".

P2: Not be so selfish and think about my children. I knew better and still relapsed. I should have continued and resumed my NA meetings. Should have worked my network. I relapsed when I got stressed. "I got too busy trying to make the perfect home and be a perfect mother, neglected myself and relapsed".

P6: I was an honor student. "Somewhere along the way I stopped carrying that person".

P7: More education, life skills, resources, refused disabilities. SSI wait is financially devastating. "You need to have saved up in order to get sick".

P6: Need to pay answering machines instead of people because machines are all that ever answer the phone.

6. What do you need to maintain a home/housing?

P7: Budget your money; know how to spend it, set goals laid out. Stay focused and set a routine.

P4: Make it safe, not afraid in our own home. Cost wise and affordable, not just low income housing. Know the difference between wants and needs.

P3: Job, money, responsible, desire to have your own home. Took 12 years to realize that.

P6: Desire to maintain. My last car I just put gas in it. Know and use your resources. Making job, daycare all come together.

P2: Chance and opportunity. Respect home, value it, work, be a part of a network. Keep mind right.

P6: Be financially educated. Credit counseling, credit score.

P7: Budgeting and life skills.

7. What would you do if you had unlimited resources and could end homelessness?

P6: If I had childcare, little push start, not help for 10 years just a start.

P3: More employment, good start for minorities, felons and uneducated.

P7: Provide and advertise all types of education (life, budgeting, etc.) for free. Teach about Section 8 housing. Hang signs in stores, word of mouth best ads. People don't really trust billboards. They want to hear about stuff from people they know.

P2: Exposure, people aren't aware of programs. Need to know resources.

P6: Education. "Get down into the nooks and crannies, go down to where people are not just physical location but mental location too".

P3: People, some, get comfortable with handouts. A lot of people want to better themselves. Give me another chance after my felony. My future looking more and more grim.

P2: "Network for Dummies-you can ask anything. Dummy Center is place we can make anything happen. If you want to be a doctor you go to the Dummy Center and they tell you exactly what steps you have to take no matter where you are in life. They start from where you are not some dream or ideal situation".

8. What effect has homelessness had on your children?

P5: Changes their behavior, their emotions, want more attention, want you to show them more love. More jealous of each other.

P6: Scared coming out her and uprooting her again. She has abandonment issues, developmentally she's hurting. A good thing is she's such a little soldier, wide eyed to the world and being exposed to different things.

P3: Grown son feels bad trying to help me. Effects him emotionally.

P4: Lost their respect.

9. Many experts think estimates of the numbers who are homeless are not accurate because they do not include people who are doubling up with relatives or friends. Did you ever double up? Do you know others who have?

P6: Yes

P3: Yes, but not when I was living with my mother or son. If someone else can put me out then I am homeless.

P1: Yes

P5: Yes, Lived with a lot of other people.

P2: Went to 5 grade schools and 4 high schools. I've always moved around.

10. What three things should Pitt County do to end homelessness?

P6: Feel in a rut – job, childcare- no job, no money, no childcare. Need an entire network to be self sufficient.

P2: Child care. Could work at daycare or do something to help pay for job training.

P3: Ongoing life changing skills.

P6: Want to be college professor – especially African Americans, felons need more programs to earn BS not just 2 year degrees.

P2: If you help me with school I have to agree to pay it forward.

P4: Childcare at work.

P5: Childcare, parenting skills, (has special needs child) need to know about programs.

(P5 said that she came from Baltimore with 3 children under the age of 3, slept in care for a week.)

P6: Ongoing Child Protective Services case due to my eating disorder. Should have helped me not crucified me. They wouldn't help me before I really got sick or when I was really sick but then wanted to punish me. Agencies make it harder, more complicated.