Introduction

Childhood poverty relentlessly stalks its victims and affects every aspect of their lives. It intern triggers an overflow of problems for these adolescents such as family stress, hunger, sickness and most of all homelessness. Homeless children are individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate place to sleep eachnight. This definition also includes adolescents who maybe sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason. Children that may live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, shelters, or awaiting foster care placement could also be considered as homeless. An adolescent can be considered homeless when they are sleeping in a residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used, as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. Adolescents who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus stations, or similar settings are considered homeless. Often times these adolescents become homeless due to many different factors; causes fall into three inter-related categories: family problems, economic problems, and the abuse of their civil and economic rights. Conditions for runaways and homeless youth are never ideal; homelessness and street life have extremely detrimental effects on adolescents. Their unstable lifestyles, lack of medical care, and inadequate living conditions increase young people's susceptibility to chronic illnesses and sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Many of the youth drop out of school and often times are enticed by adults and older youth into selling drugs, stealing, and prostitution as a means for survival. Drug and alcohol dependence by for homeless youth is common as they look for a way to numb the pain and deal with the hardships associated with homelessness. In addition they are typically targets of social rejection and discrimination. They have to develop their social identity and sense of belonging to a society that views them either as victims, who deserve pitying, or as criminals whom must be taken off the streets and locked in jail. Psychologically adolescents on the streets are often denied the love, care and support they need to develop their emotional strengths. They may be asked to do things they know are wrong, or have their self-esteem and trust damaged by abuse. As they enter adulthood, these fundamental psychological challenges often lead to antisocial self-harming behaviors.

Tasks

Being homeless effects an adolescents overall health suffering from hunger and malnutrition. There are an estimated 100 million children living on the streets in the world today. Children living on the streets are especially vulnerable to victimization, exploitation, and the abuse of their civil and economic rights. Conditions for runaways and homeless youth are never ideal; homelessness and street life have extremely detrimental effects on adolescents. Their unstable lifestyles, lack of medical care, and inadequate living conditions increase young people's susceptibility to chronic illnesses and sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Many of the youth drop out of school and often times are enticed by adults and older youth into selling drugs, stealing, and prostitution as a means for survival. Drug and alcohol dependence by for homeless youth is common as they look for a way to numb the pain and deal with the hardships associated with homelessness. In addition they are typically targets of social rejection and discrimination. They have to develop their social identity and sense of belonging to a society that views them either as victims, who deserve pitying, or as criminals whom must be taken off the streets and locked in jail. Psychologically adolescents on the streets are often denied the love, care and support they need to develop their emotional strengths. They may be asked to do things they know are wrong, or have their self-esteem and trust damaged by abuse. As they enter adulthood, these fundamental psychological challenges often lead to antisocial self-harming behaviors.

Process

In order for social workers to adequately understand how to assist homeless adolescents; one must understand the core competencies involved in accessing and helping homeless youth and their families. The following core competencies (as defined by the Council on Social Work Education, 2008) can be used to help homeless adolescent clients and relatives involved in their lives. For example, it is important to know the dimensions of diversity and how diversity shapes the human experience and identity. The social worker must gain awareness of self to eliminate personal bias when working with the homeless population (CSWEPAS, 2008). In addition, there are other competencies needed and designed to help social workers provide better services for their clients. First, social workers need to communicate with clients, to seek their input on solutions to their problems; this allows workers to effectively view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants (CSWEPAS, 2008). Next, workers should make it a habit to advocate for clients in both agency settings and bureaucratic policymaking settings, to push for adequate programs for assisting homeless youth. Each person, despite his/her social class, has basic human rights and one must advocate for these rights on behalf of homeless youth. In doing so, social workers demonstrate an understanding of the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination as they apply to homeless youth, their families, and those who are at risk of being homeless (CSWEPAS, 2008). A social worker aimed at helping homeless youth must understand theories about children's behavior, as well as theories about effective practice. Theories about human behavior and interactions such as the ecological perspective, systems theory, and family systems theory help social workers assess the disadvantaged adolescence by inquiring of parents and their relationship with family, friends, school, and outdoor areas. Bolenstein (1996) suggests that social workers use the ecological perspective and systems theory because they note how more than one factor contributes to the teen's situation and behavior, helping them to find solutions and remembering that some of their problems area result
of the inadequacies of society. In addition, family systems theory holds that the family environment affects the individual and how the family functions throughout one’s life (Hutchinson, 2003; Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2005). Every adolescent has different reasons for being homeless, some teenagers ran away from home because of physical or sexually abuse, while others were homeless because of the obstacles that befall their parents. Family systems theory and the ecological perspective effectively assess these diverses issues and cases.

Evaluation

One of the most important needs of any homeless teenager is a shelter. Torrico (2009) suggests that social workers develop a housing plan early for homeless children. Many child welfare agencies know that a child may be endangered of becoming homeless, but offer little help or support except to remove the child from the home. Today, preventative services and programs are lacking or missing in some communities. Therefore, child welfare workers should seek to efficiently meet with family members to review preventative plans or connect families with housing resources (such as low-income housing) as quickly as possible. Torrico (2009) also mentions that workers should provide basic assistance for families, collaborate with community and other service providers (such as pastors, private charities, and landlords), and advocate for funding of important programs. If a social worker communicates with civic leaders, non-profit organizations, shelters, and religious institutions, she/he can find additional housing, food, and/or clothing for deprived homeless adolescents as a way of advocating on behalf of homeless youth to policymaking officials to attain finances that will maintain, improve, and establish shelters, housing, public assistance, and counseling services for such teens and their families.

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Conclusion

The fight against eradicating homelessness among adolescents is far from over however through advocacy and awareness paired with proper funding and community involvement the percentage of homeless youth in the Hampton Roads area could be reduced tremendously because whether it affect families or youth homelessness continues to be a significant problem in our community.

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References

Ashford, J.B.

http://www.setonyouthshelters.org/


