



THE SITUATION

More Homeless Families in Need of Shelter

Homelessness is a significant problem in Broward County. On any given night, more than 200 families find themselves in need of adequate shelter. According to Homeless Helpline Manager Stanley Stubbs, the problem is only exacerbated by the holiday season. "Over the past few months we've seen a steady increase in the number of families on the homeless wait list. Historically, we do see an increase at this time of year, but this year we have reached an all time high."

Reports indicate that there is a crisis not only in Broward County, but throughout the nation. The National Center on Family Homelessness reports that child homelessness has risen 33% in the past three years. According to the report, 1 in every 45 American children is homeless. [Child homelessness up 33% in 3 years – USATODAY.com](#)

The homeless crisis in Florida was recently cast into the national spotlight during a segment of 60 minutes on CBS. The program detailed the lives of siblings Arielle, 15, and Austin, 13, who live out of a car with their father, Tom Metzger. The show detailed the family's days which consist of bathing in public restrooms and escaping the elements at public libraries.

Unfortunately, stories like these are far too common throughout Florida, and right here in Broward County, there are currently over 210 families on the Homeless Helpline Family waitlist.

"2-1-1 serves as the gateway for families into the homeless system. We work in collaboration with the Hope South Florida Action Program, Broward County Housing Options Program, Salvation Army, Susan B Anthony Center, Women in Distress of Broward County and a myriad of other organizations to place as many families as possible, but there simply aren't enough resources available," Stubbs said.

Community resources are lacking, so the Homeless Helpline has developed a system which identifies and prioritizes families in the most critical living situations. In doing this, 211 seeks to utilize available resources in the best way possible and avoid stories like that of the Metzger family.

"If you look at 211's current Homeless Family waiting list, you'll see that approximately 20% of those families are sleeping in cars or on the street corners. It's not a perfect situation, but it could be much worse," Stubbs said.

Moving into the next year, the Homeless Helpline has put focus on expanding. The call center is visibly understaffed and in a daily struggle to handle an ever increasing call volume. We rely on a committed staff, volunteers, and generous donors to maintain the Homeless Helpline. Whether it is through volunteer work or financial support, we are always looking for assistance from the community. With your support, 211 will continue to fight and ultimately win the battle against homelessness in Broward County.

To learn more about the Homeless Helpline, please call Laurie Sallarulo at 954-390-0493.