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Recent Research Abstracts

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HOMELESSNESS

McArthur, Morag; Zubrzycki, Joanna; Rochester, Anthony; Thomson, Lorraine. (2006). "Dad, where are we going to live now?: Exploring fathers' experiences of homelessness". *Australian Social Work*, 59 (3), 288-300.

Families comprise approximately one-quarter of the homeless population in Australia. Sole fathers with children in their care are a minority within this group of homeless families. As such, very little is known about their circumstances and experiences of fathering in a homeless environment. The paper presents the results of qualitative research into fathers receiving assistance from the Canberra Fathers and Children Service (CANFaCS). There is a complex interplay of structural conditions, social factors and personal events that can lead fathers with accompanying children into a situation of homelessness. Prominent among these are unemployment, the housing crisis, separation, family violence and abuse, substance abuse, disability, mental illness, problem gambling and financial debt. The paper explores some of the issues faced by men when dealing with homelessness and fatherhood, including their interactions with relevant government agencies. The research has implications for improved practice and service delivery for homeless fathers and their children. (authors affiliated to Australian Catholic University, Canberra)

Rosenthal, Doreen; Mallett, Shelley; Myers, Paul. (2006). Why do homeless young people leave home? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 30(3), 281-285.

Young homeless people aged 12 to 20 years were surveyed to ascertain their reasons for leaving home. Conflict with parents was reported as important by at least two thirds of respondents. Desire for independence or adventure was rated as important by nearly half of young men and women. Other reasons such as issues associated with school, sexuality, sexual abuse and trouble with the law were rated as either somewhat important or not important by most participants. With few exceptions, importance ratings of the 22 reasons were not highly correlated. A focus on familial problems may lead service providers to overlook other important reasons such as a desire for independence and adventure. (authors affiliated to Key Centre for Women's Health in Society, University of Melbourne)

Rosenthal, Doreen; Mallett, Shelley; Gurrin, Lyle; Milburn, Norweeta; Rotheram-Borus, Mary Jane. (2007). Changes over time among homeless young people in drug dependency, mental illness and their co-morbidity. *Psychology, Health and Medicine*, 12 (1), 70-80.

A cross-national survey was conducted among 358 recently homeless young people in Melbourne and Los Angeles. Drug dependence and mental illness were assessed at baseline, 6 and 12 months. At each time point, participants were classified as no condition, drug dependent, having a mental illness or dual condition. Most young people were classified as neither drug dependent nor having mental illness at baseline and remained so for the 12-month period and few remained drug dependent, or had continuing mental illness or both. Half to two-thirds of young people classified as having one or both conditions were subsequently reclassified as 'no condition'. There was no evidence of a consistent pathway from either drug dependence or mental illness to co-morbidity. Most young people reported an absence of mental illness and/or drug dependence at each time point. Improvement from one or both conditions at each transition suggests it may be more effective to provide interventions to address drug dependence and mental health problems to young people early in their experience of homelessness. (authors affiliated to University of Melbourne and University of California at Los Angeles)