

[Resetting Policies to End Family Homelessness](#)

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Housing is health. Experiencing housing instability, with homelessness on the farthest end of the spectrum, is associated with measurably negative outcomes. This devastating experience confers multigenerational consequences, particularly for families since children are disproportionately represented. Despite methods of calculation that underestimate the total, families currently comprise more than one-third of the overall homeless population in the United States, with numbers on the rise due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Complicating that further, most children in such family units are younger than six years old, a vulnerable time for brain and other development. Assumptions regarding the makeup and causes of homelessness drive policy and, in turn, the allocation of resources for programs and services. Solutions should focus on the scope and outcomes of *all* people experiencing housing instability, including children and families who are often hiding in plain sight. During this session, we will challenge suppositions that contribute to overlooking families and children experiencing housing instability, starting with terms and definitions for this demographic, like “doubling up” and “residential mobility.” We will also explore the risks and needs of children experiencing housing instability in the context of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); discuss why services matter and how to integrate with affordable housing; and contrast the magnitude of the problem in the U.S. compared with other countries grappling with homelessness. We’ll conclude with examples of evidence-based solutions to help break the cycle of housing instability for families and to support opportunities for impacted children to grow and thrive.