



For Immediate Release

Missouri Ranks 11th in Numbers of Homeless Children

Sheffield Place Provides Trauma-Informed Services for Children and Families

Kansas City, Mo. (June 23, 2009)—"Seventy-five percent of all homeless children are in 11 states, and Missouri is one of them," says Karen K. Streeter, executive director, Sheffield Place. "Homeless kids are scared, sick and isolated, and all have suffered from traumatic stress. Programs to help them must be trauma-informed, in which organizational staff understand the behavior, attitudes and emotions these children display are survival skills developed in response to sickness, abrupt separation, physical or sexual abuse, and other acute and/or chronic traumatic experiences."

In addition, Homeless Service Coalition's 2008 Point in Time reveals that more than half of the homeless in Kansas City are children. The staggering issue of child homelessness is virtually unknown, as it's commonly perceived that the homeless are predominantly adult men.

Fortunately, local resources are available to help. Sheffield Place, a Kansas City shelter for homeless women and their children, provides a number of programs recognized nationally by the National Center on Family Homelessness that deliver evidence-based interventions for traumatized children - with the goal of not only re-housing these children into safe environments, but treating the acute trauma that most have experienced while homeless.

Sheffield Place was the first homeless shelter in the United States to implement parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT) and trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TFCBT), two of the three top evidence-based interventions for traumatized children. The shelter's supportive services are founded on evidence-based, consumer-focused, trauma-informed principles. Families can stay in the shelter for up to two years, receiving services that include strengths-based case management and independent living skill development; community links to employment and educational services; primary health care services and a vast array of mental health and substance abuse services, support groups and therapy options; transportation; educational groups; and child care for in-house services.

Since implementing the trauma-informed care (TIC) model and trauma-specific services, Sheffield Place clients have had substantial positive outcomes. Stronger parent-child relationships are evident, as are increases in positive behavior in children. Additionally, fewer clients have relapsed or been asked to leave the shelter due to noncompliance. Sheffield Place implemented TIC therapies in 2007 and a full trauma-informed approach throughout the organization in 2008. The number of families served dropped from 45 in 2006 to only 22 in 2008 - testimony to the theory that a direct correlation exists between family stabilization, reduced discharges, and increased length of stay. Since 2006, there has been a 25 percent reduction in the number of discharges related to noncompliance.

"Trauma is very confusing for children. Having a trauma-informed environment supports them by creating a safe place to work on emotional issues and get back on track developmentally," said Margaret Comford, clinical director at Sheffield Place. "The positive, nurturing environment trauma-informed care creates allows adult-child relationships to blossom."

A recent report by the National Center on Family Homelessness recognized Sheffield Place as

one of the Top 7 in the nation for their unique trauma-informed care program. The shelter is currently developing a project to disseminate trauma-informed practices to other programs in the Kansas City area.

About Sheffield Place

Located in Kansas City, Mo., Sheffield Place was founded in 1991 with the mission to empower single mothers with children to break out of the cycle of homelessness and poverty and become self-sufficient. The shelter provides long-term shelter and comprehensive services to fourteen families. Goals include helping families increase their income and educational levels, obtain and retain permanent housing, overcome the impact of trauma, and ultimately achieve greater self-determination, respect and happiness. Sheffield Place brings together the resources of its community combined with the skills and experience of professional staff and volunteers to help resident families become self-sufficient. To learn how you can help, call 816-483-9927 or visit www.sheffieldplace.org.

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SIDEBAR:

Homeless Children: Some Facts*

- More than 1.5 million - one in 50 - are homeless each year in the United States.
- Homeless families comprise roughly 34 percent of the total U.S. homeless population.
- Forty-two percent of homeless children are below age five.
- Twice as many homeless children (one in 7) have moderate to severe health conditions as middle-class children (one in 16).
- By age 12, 83 percent of homeless children have been exposed to at least one serious violent event.
- One in six homeless children has serious emotional disturbances, twice the rate of middle-class children.
- Math and reading proficiency rates for homeless children are 16 percent lower on average than scores for all students.
- Thirty-six percent of homeless children repeat a grade.
- Estimated graduation rates for homeless children are below 25 percent.

**Data from America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness, published by The National Center on Family Homelessness.*

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