

Less Is Still Less

The impact COVID-19 has had on the homeless
and how they are able to stay safe and avoid
exposure.



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Common Misconceptions



The Breakdown

WHAT MAY YOU THINK

- Homeless shelters are taking people despite their appearance and circumstances.
- Homeless people are able to follow the proper precautions to stay safe and healthy.
- State officials are making more accommodations for them to ensure the safety and the stop of spreading
- Homeless people are fully aware of Covid-19, it's affects and possible outcomes

THE TRUTH

- Homeless shelters are still turning men and people of color away despite recent events.
- Homeless individuals don't have running water, proper hygiene supplies and a home to isolate themselves.
- State officials report that supplies are scant and they're unable to collect excess supplies for homeless individuals.
- Homeless people don't have the means to stay updated on Covid-19 and the proper ways to stay safe and healthy!

Asking The Tough Questions:

As a group, we decided that we should try to get some first-hand information on how the homeless is affected, by talking to people directly involved. In Leominster, there is a homeless man named Pepper, he's a 6ft 6" black man who is one of the most well known homeless men out here. In Leominster, we have a lot of people who use the system, dress up and take money from pretending (which has been even more prevalent during COVID-19.) Pepper knows me and my family well, we let him stay at our house for a weekend during Christmas break during a storm. I let him know what we were doing for class and he agreed to answer two questions. This is how it went:

Anaiah: "Do you feel safe, with everything that's been going around with COVID-19?"

Pepper: "Honestly? I never feel safe, I've been homeless for over 20 years now, I never had much luck getting into shelters and I don't really like when people help me... But never in my life have I seen people treat me so inhumanly. As a black man, I'm used to the stars, especially once I became homeless.. and I'm so tall everyone sees me as scary... I went to Market Basket and of course I don't have any of those fancy masks and gloves that y'all get to have so when I go with the few dollars I have, everyone looks at me like I got something. I get looks all the time but this is different, I got kicked out because some lady thought that I was gonna give her kid something and complained, so I had to buy what I had in my hands and leave. Luckily I was able to go to Athens and they gave me some water and some extra food since I wasn't able to buy anything at the store."

Anaiah: Does anyone you know or if are you, yourself have been sought out, in order to receive help?

Pepper: "Honestly? No. Most people around here are either too drugged up to get accepted into shelters, they don't wanna deal with liabilities... and anybody who's been sick has been turned away unless they were sure they had something. It's been tough out here. A lot of these shelters that would take someone like me are full, nobody really has toilet paper or supplies for us and we can't go into fast food places anymore and use their bathrooms. I'm lucky enough to have family to help and families like yours who help me when they can."

So, from what I found, there aren't a lot of resources being given to the homeless, at least not in my area. Pepper and many other people aren't able to shower, use the bathroom or find access to free food and water, which they could normally have access too via fast food restaurants. Some restraints still allow people to come in and get free water, and occasionally use the bathroom without a purchase first but, that's rare.



Prevention

- Proper sanitation
 - Access to bathrooms and showers
 - Previously public facilities were used, like in libraries and gyms.
 - Portable sinks for access to wash hands
- Proper food
 - Mobile soup kitchens
 - Facilities that provided free food have been shut down
 - Vans distributing hot meals
- Proper shelter
 - Distribution of personal protective equipment to the homeless and staff at shelters
 - Isolation beds with adequate distancing
 - Housing in vacant hotels and motels
 - Housing is healthcare



Due to Covid-19, there has been a surge in vital materials (food, water, hygienic supplies, etc.) especially for the homeless. Homeless individuals are struggling to stay healthy and safe during this pandemic because people with the means to buy supplies multiple times a month, week or even day are overstocking due to fear. Media has also done very well at making the masses believe that they're helping homeless individuals during this time with organizations like: The Salvation Army, NLIHC (National Low Income Housing Coalition) and SNAP. Also, many would believe that at a time like this, homeless shelters would be more accommodating and more helpful for the homeless people of their communities. It's extremely easy for people to become selfish during a time like this because heavily affecting people, globally, but this is an instance where having less is having much less! We are instructed to wash our hands but, they have no running water. We are also instructed to stay inside but, they have no where to stay!

Sources:

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