



Educating Children on Homelessness and Poverty

Talk about it.

Background: There are nearly 1,500 Milwaukee citizens living without a permanent place to call home. By providing basic necessities in On the Go Bags, children will extend dignity and respect to some of our most vulnerable neighbors. We will show others who may feel invisible that “we see you and we care” by creating the bags.

How to discuss homelessness with children:

1. Children have an innate desire to help others. We can foster this interest by having open, honest and intentional conversations about poverty and homelessness.
2. Children are also naturally curious. Answer their questions with honest, simple answers. Many of us have been asked questions by small children about our homeless neighbors (“Why? How come?”). It’s best to respond with an answer that a small child can understand, e.g. “Some people don’t have enough money to pay for a house.”
3. Model compassion, empathy, dignity and respect for the person about whom you are talking.
4. Encourage your child to come up with ideas for helping.
5. Avoid discussing mental illness, disability and drug abuse. It may confuse young children under about age 7.
6. Assure your child that there are options for people who are homeless.
7. Move the discussion to gratitude. Focus on what your family is thankful for.

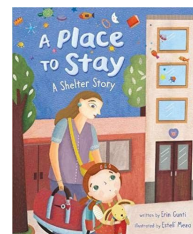
Topics to discuss:

- Why is your home important to you? Think of all the things you like to do at home: cook, eat, sleep, and bathe.
- Why would it be difficult to live in a shelter or be without a home?
- How can you help community members who are homeless?

Read about it.

Thoughtful, well-written books on the topic of homelessness can help children understand and process the complexity of the topic. Some examples include:

- *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting
- *Those Shoes* by Maribeth Boelts
- *The Lady in the Box* by Ann McGovern
- *The Tooth* by Avi Slodovnick
- *A Chair for My Mother* by Vera B. Williams
- *A Place to Stay: A Shelter Story* by Erin Gunti and Estelí Meza



Do something about it.

- Donate dignity condition or new clothing, blankets, toiletries and toys to local agencies.
- Cook a favorite family meal or pack lunches and deliver to a local shelter.
- Host a neighborhood food drive and give to a food pantry.
- Host a bake sale or lemonade stand for a local shelter.
- Serve or eat with community members at a soup kitchen or food pantry.
- Participate in other [volunteer opportunities](#) with Kids Impact Community.