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by [Shannon Firth](#)

Homelessness, generally considered an urban problem, seems to be creeping into smaller cities and towns. New research from the Office of Housing and Urban Development says it's also impacting more families.



Victims of Homelessness

Thursday, the Office of Housing and Urban Development released its annual study on homelessness to Congress. Although the size of the homeless population didn't increase significantly between 2007 and 2008, hovering at about

1.6 million, HUD discovered a worrying [9 percent increase in the number of homeless families](#).

The report also noted that homelessness had spread outside of urban boundaries. "Residents of suburban and rural communities made up about a third of those in need of housing, up from about 24 percent the year before," reported The Associated Press.

Because national surveys are time intensive, HUD has started to implement quarterly regional surveys as part of the Homeless Pulse Project. The first surveys were drawn from both major cities and small towns in 9 regions. Of these, five witnessed a drop in the number of homeless people in shelters, and four saw an increase.

Using the quarterly surveys, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan told the AP, "[W]e will be able to better understand the impact of the current economic crisis on homelessness across the country."

In March, a study from the National Center on Family Homelessness reported that 1.5 million, or [1 in 50, children in America are homeless](#) each year, according to CNN.

The official report, titled "[America's Youngest Outcasts](#)," summarizes the problems homeless children must cope with, from a lack of comfort and privacy, to more serious concerns like poor health care and disrupted schooling.

The study issued a report card and a call to action for each state, grading them on four elements: "child homelessness, child well-being, structural risk factors, and state-by-state policy and planning efforts."

Texas, Georgia, Arkansas, New Mexico and Louisiana received the worst reports, while Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, North Dakota and Hawaii excelled, reported CNN.

According to the report, between 2005 and 2006, three-quarters of the U.S.'s homeless children (those that could be identified as homeless) lived in 11 states.

Even if a child isn't made homeless by the recession he may still feel its impact. Jean Lovelace the principal at Whitney Elementary in Boise, Idaho, cites the example of a student with ADHD whose [family lost their home](#) after his mother was fired from her job.

Lovelace said his bad behavior started just after the foreclosure. Now he is moving to another state where homes are cheaper. As school counselor Ana Leon, explained to the AP, "Mobility is one of the main things that hinders student achievement."

Lovelace noted, "Honestly I think he's going to go to the next school and just be out of control."