

AMERICA'S YOUNGEST OUTCASTS



CASE STUDY: Housing

Last year, Sophia lost her job and her roommate moved out. After falling behind in her rent, she and her two children – Star, age 15, and Andy, age 18 months – were evicted from the apartment. Now living in a shelter, she has applied for a housing voucher, but the wait list is very long. Although after many months she has finally secured a job, she worries that it could be years before she can afford stable housing for her whole family.

Sophia often talks about her fears of raising her children alone as a single parent – she has a tenth grade education, earns minimum wage, and worries that they will end up staying in the shelter for a long time. She battles depression, but is determined to keep her job and to keep applying for housing. Her teenage daughter asks everyday when they will find an apartment, and Sophia always answers, “I’m trying, honey.”

CASE STUDY: Doubling Up

Lakisha is a 23-year old single mother of three young children and an infant. Without other options, they sleep each night on her neighbor’s living room floor. The arrangement is difficult, but Lakisha doesn’t have any other options. Her friend’s family stays up late every night, which means that Lakisha’s children do not get enough sleep. Once everyone goes to bed, Lakisha is not allowed to turn on any lights, even if she needs to use the bathroom or comfort one of her children. One night as she was taking her five year old to the bathroom she tripped and fell, hurting her back. Her daughter began to cry. Lakisha, feeling worried, placed her hand on the child’s mouth so that she didn’t wake the family. It made her feel awful. When she awoke the next morning, Lakisha could barely move. She discovered that her back was badly bruised from her fall during the night. She and her children traveled across town to the community health center to have her back checked. When the nurse asked her what happened, Lakisha was embarrassed. She said she fell down the stairs. The nurse informed her that the only way to feel better was to stay off her feet and rest in bed.