

facilities for them. She said that they need the basic necessities of life, food and shelter, and when the state hospitals do not have facilities for them their basic needs are not met. Sometimes the Penn State Hershey Medical Center's psychiatric department will get walk-in patients who are sent by shelters and sometimes they walk in off the streets. "We do not turn them away. If they need help we provide it for them, and if we see that their condition is severe, we then admit them," she said. Aggarwal also said that some of them they can help, while others they cannot. Usually the patient stays for four to five days. "It depends on the patient, if they need to stay longer they stay," she said.

The social implications that come from the mentally ill homeless having a hard time receiving shelter and getting the proper medical care they need can lead to higher suicidal rates. According to an article published in 2003 by the Soc Psychiatry, Psychiatry Epidemiology, there is a high rate of suicidal behavior among the mentally ill homeless, but it is unknown whether the homeless populations who are not mentally ill also have a high number of suicide rates.

According to the article, suicide attempts were most common in cases of younger mentally ill homeless than compared to the older mentally ill homeless. Alcohol and drug abuse did not seem to increase the thought of suicide among homeless. "However, a significant interaction between age and substance abuse was observed showing that among older clients, those with drug and alcohol abuse were at significantly greater risk of suicidal ideation than those without substance abuse problems," said publishers of the article.

The growing rate of suicide among the homeless is cause for concern. Rates of suicide attempts depend on the person's age, but depression is the main cause of suicide with all ages. In a study of first time homeless men living on the streets, 7 percent reported thoughts of suicide while approximately a third of homeless men living in shelters reported a past suicide attempt. The growing number of homeless people intensifies the need for more people to understand their situation.

A test conducted for this study showed that in the past 30 days, 41 to 44 percent of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts were said to be reported less among mentally ill homeless of 30-39 years old.

The findings of the study show that age, substance abuse, and mental illness all play a factor in suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts among the homeless.

The economic status for mentally ill homeless people is very cost effective. Robert Rosenheck said in the American Journal

"The first published cost-effectiveness study case for homeless people compared a broker case management intervention," said Rosenheck. He said the case management places clients in treatment programs, which exceed 9,000 dollars per client. The cost for

street homeless and sheltered homeless, and whether housing and living on the streets played a role in their criminal activities. The 207 mentally ill homeless participants were interviewed nine times over four years. The study found that mentally ill homeless were more likely to be arrested

to Divonzo, officers are supposed to take homeless to a mental health institution, but reality of the situation is that the police officers may not be able to identify them as mentally ill, and the homeless will most likely be sent to regular prison.

Some prisons do a better job with treating mental illness, said Divonzo. Some will take into account the nature of the prisoners' illness, the nature of the crime, and use the resources that are available to them. On the other hand, some prisons just treat them like any other criminal.

Homeless individuals may adopt some illegal activities such as theft in order to get by. In most cases, Divonzo said when a homeless person commits a nonviolent crime the police often don't give them citations, because they would not have the means to pay the fines. If they receive more than one citation and cannot pay them, they are taken to court. If a judge is available for misdemeanors, the homeless individual will often be tried at Night Court right away.

The study found that homeless individuals are less prone to criminal activities when they are confined in a homeless shelter where they are given the assistance they need. Divonzo said there are rarely cases of homeless with mental illness committing violent crimes. In downtown Harrisburg, homeless are hardly ever jailed. When they are jailed, it is often so that they can cool off. "In other cases some mentally ill homeless have been tasered or shot by the Harrisburg police, because the officer didn't know how to handle the situations," said Divonzo. He also said that it depends on the officers' training in how to deal with these types of situations.

There is little evidence to back up the relationship between homeless and nonviolent crimes compared to violent crimes.

"In fact research suggests that people with mental illness have a modestly higher rate of committing violent crimes than that of the general population," said Mulvey E.P., author of the journal, Hospital and Community Psychiatry. Homeless men were generally no different than that of the general population in committing violent crimes. Arrests among mentally ill homeless men and the general population did not statistically differ or were lower for murder, rape, and aggravated assault, although robbery rates were significantly higher for mentally ill homeless males.

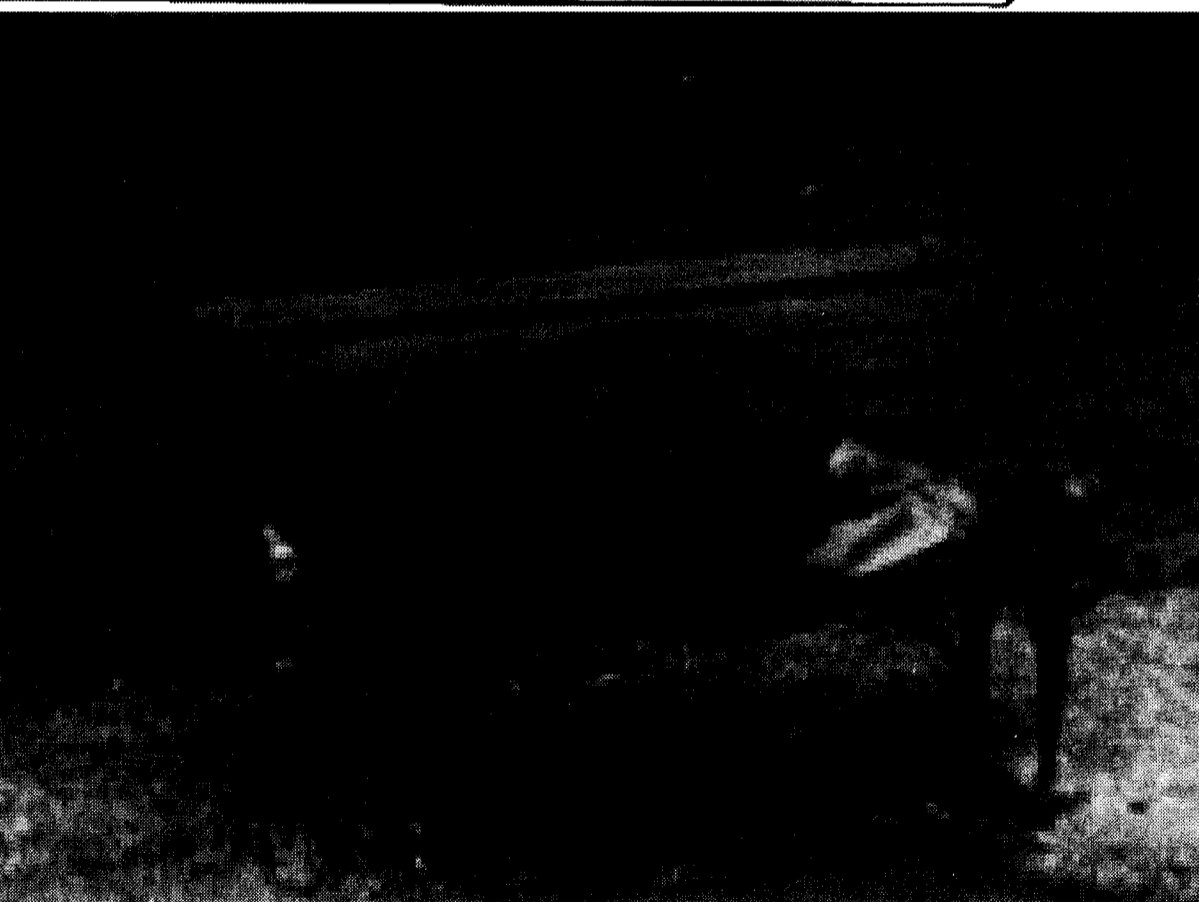
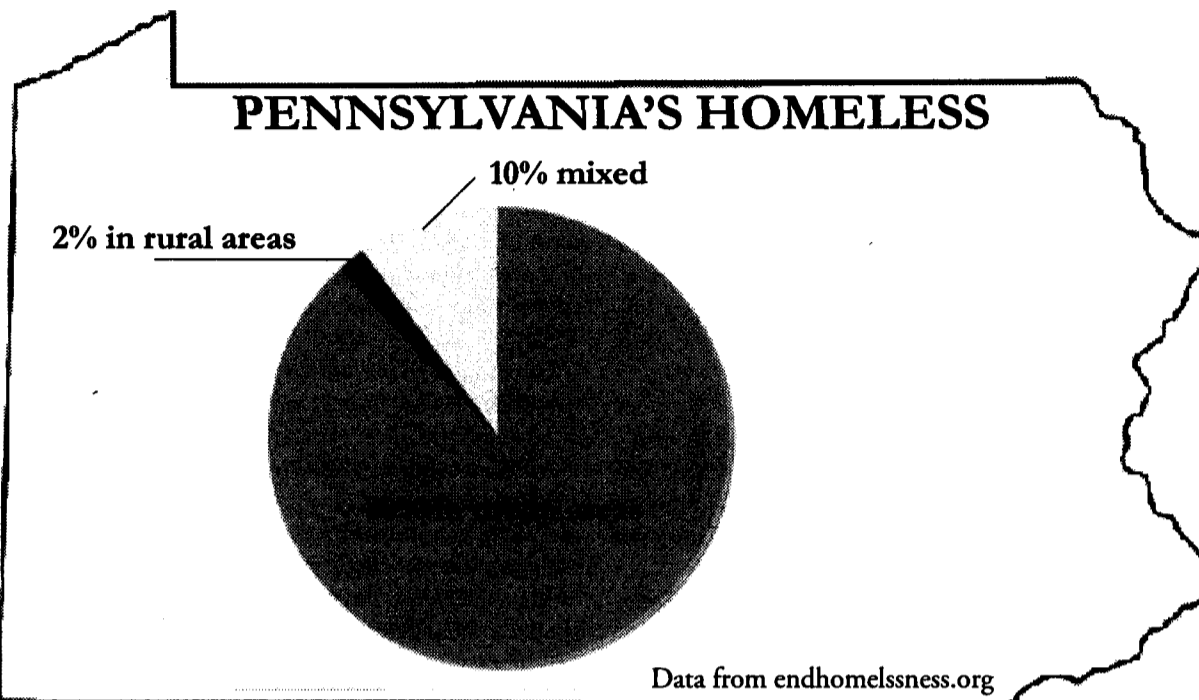


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of Psychiatry that about one-quarter of homeless Americans have serious mental illnesses, and providing housing for them is very cost effective to the economy. Rosenheck grouped the services provided for the mentally ill homeless into three categories: outreach programs, case management and housing payments. His study calculated the cost of medical care for one year for mentally ill homeless veterans at approximately 8,000 dollars.

health treatment rose 3 percent over one year. "The goal of specialized homeless service programs must ultimately be to transition clients into mainstream housing," said Rosenheck. The cost for providing services to the mentally ill homeless is high considering that less than half of them are taking advantage of the housing and medical services.

A study on homeless, mental illness, and criminal activity examined the severity of psychological symptoms between

for minor offenses like camping without a permit or indecent exposure. Other researchers found that they were charged with trespassing, sleeping in abandoned buildings or sleeping on park benches.

PSH Police Services Officer Divonzo said that police will make homeless leave parks so that they do not appear to be a blemish on the state. "It's mainly political," he said. The system is structured to treat the mentally ill homeless differently. According