

Definitions Of Housing Instability

*Indicators of instability may have multiple meanings depending upon context and there is a need for a “common language.” The following definitions were compiled from a combination of federal guidelines, research papers, and practice in the field.**

Severe Rent Burden

- A 30% threshold is identified by HUD as housing that is affordable.
- Households spending 50% or more of their income on housing-related expenses

Overcrowding

- Having more than one person per room, excluding bathrooms
- No less than 165 square feet per person (HUD)
- More people living within a space than is considered tolerable from a safety & health perspective
- Intergenerational overcrowding: Relatives living together in an extended family household (long-term or short-term)
- Sub families overcrowding: Two separate family units living in the same household (long-term or short-term)
- Paying for a bed(s) in a shared room with unrelated individuals or families

Forced Displacement (residential mobility & eviction)

- Frequent change of residence, either in the same city or town, or between cities, states or communities, due to economic hardship or other stressors associated with housing instability
- Temporary or time-limited housing & no new destination has been identified

Poor Housing Quality (substandard housing)

- Does not meet local building & safety codes & pose health & safety hazards to residents.
- General dilapidation or improper maintenance
- Cooking equipment & food storage not safe or functional
- Infestation of cockroaches/rodents/insects/vermin
- Electrical fixtures not in safe, working condition; exposed electrical wiring
- Plumbing not in safe, working condition; leaking sinks/toilets/bathtubs
- Dampness of habitable rooms & visible mold growth
- Deteriorated, crumbling, or loose plaster; lead-based paint toxins from peeling paint
- Lack of, or improper bathroom facilities, bathtub or shower
- Lack of, or improper kitchen sink; Lack of hot & cold running water to plumbing fixtures
- Lack of adequate heating
- Defective or deteriorated flooring, walls, windows, partitions or ceilings
- Other conditions that detrimentally impact habitability

Homelessness – US Department of Housing & Urban Development*

- Living in a place not meant for human habitation (not habitable)
- Living in a shelter or transitional housing program (including being vouchered in a motel/hotel)
- Living in a motel or hotel with own funds (in some jurisdictions)
- Living temporarily in another family's house or apartment – with proof of pending “eviction”
- Living in car, motor home, trailer, or campsite
- Living in a garage, shed, or other unit illegally converted to housing
- No steady place to sleep at night – couch-surfing (overlaps forced displacement)
- Fleeing domestic violence

Homelessness – US Department of Education (all of the above but including the following)

- Living in motel or hotel with own funds
- Living temporarily in another family's house or apartment (including with relatives)
- Sub family or shared housing situation that is temporary
- Additional sub-definitions for specific populations

**These definitions are not all-inclusive but provide a base for cross-sector communication.*

***The 2017 Homeless Children & Youth Act (S611) may expand this definition within HUD’s definition*

Partnering for Change

8/18/2018