

Definitions of Housing Instability

Compiled from a combination of federal guidelines, research papers, and practice in the field.

Severe Rent Burden

- HUD defines affordable as spending 30% of income on housing related expenses
- Households spending 50% or more of their income on housing-related expenses
- Households spending 70% or more of their income on housing related expenses

Overcrowding

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

Residential Displacement / Mobility

- Frequent change of residence due to economic and other stressors leading to housing instability
- Current housing is temporary & no new destination has been identified
- Legal eviction is in process
- Displacement resulting from gentrification

Poor Housing Quality – Chemical/Biological

- Poses health & safety hazards to residents.
- General dilapidation or improper maintenance
- Cooking equipment & food storage not safe or functional
- Infestation of cockroaches, bedbugs, termites, rodents, and other vermin
- Dampness of habitable rooms & visible mold growth
- Deteriorated, crumbling, or loose plaster, including lead-based paint toxins from peeling paint

Poor Housing Quality – Structural

- Does not meet local building & safety codes
- 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

Homelessness – HUD Definition

- Living in a place not meant for human habitation
- Living in a shelter or transitional housing program (including hotel vouchers)
- Living in a motel or hotel with own funds
- Living temporarily in another family's house or apartment – eviction pending
- Living in car, motor home, trailer, or campsite
- Living in a garage, shed, or other space illegally converted to rental unit
- No steady place to sleep at night – couch-surfing
- Fleeing domestic violence

Homelessness – Other Federal Definitions / US Department of Education

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