

# National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Resolves to Address Homeless Youth and Families

*The NCJFCJ recognizes that juvenile court judges have a leadership role in their communities to care for and protect youth within their jurisdictions.*

RENO, NEVADA, UNITED STATES, August 7, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- (Reno, Nev.) – The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges ([NCJFCJ](#)) recently passed a [resolution](#) at its 80th Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. addressing the needs and issues of homeless youth and families in juvenile and family courts.



The NCJFCJ recognizes that juvenile court judges have a responsibility and leadership role in their communities to care for and protect youth within their jurisdictions. This includes safe and stable housing, connecting youth to services that include case management, alternative housing, substance abuse and mental health services, life skills and counseling and family reunification, where possible and appropriate, to improve their outcomes.



Our resolution demonstrates NCJFCJ's leadership by providing juvenile and family court judges with concrete steps to improve outcomes for youth and families who lack stable housing."

*Judge Anthony (Tony) Capizzi*

There are an estimated 200,000 homeless families with children in 2016 in the U.S., of which 35,000 were unaccompanied youth younger than 24. Some estimates indicate 380,000 youth younger than 18 experienced a period of homelessness of 1 week or more during the year, and

nearly 90,000 students in public schools are homeless. Victims of domestic violence and their children are at risk of becoming homeless due to isolation from support networks and financial resources by their abuser. More than 40,000 victims of domestic violence seek emergency shelter in a given day.

"This is one of those cross-cutting issues that present many challenges," said Melissa Sickmund, Ph.D., director, NCJFCJ's National Center on Juvenile Justice. "Homelessness touches children and families involved with the child welfare system and youth in the juvenile justice system. There is heightened need for LGBTQ youth and youth who are trafficked or who run away. We need to examine our policies and practices and make sure, first, that we do no harm. Then we need to work together with determination to better serve youth experiencing homelessness, families experiencing homelessness, and those with unstable housing that puts them in jeopardy of homelessness."

In a study of homeless youth, 44 percent said they had a stay in jail, prison or a detention center.

Seventy-eight percent said they had at least one interaction with police, and 62 percent said they had been arrested. Approximately 50 percent said they had been in foster care, and experienced homelessness for longer periods of time than youth not in foster care. Homeless youth are also disproportionately African-American, Hispanic, or LGBTQ.

“Far too many of these young people will come into contact with the justice system as a result of their lack of safe and stable housing,” said Naomi Smoot, Esq., executive director, Coalition For Juvenile Justice. “We are thrilled to have the NCJFCJ join us in our efforts to ensure that young people are not criminalized for experiencing homelessness, and similarly that they do not experience homelessness as a result of contact with the justice system.”

“Juvenile court judges have a unique opportunity to help prevent or shorten youth homelessness,” said Casey Trupin, program officer of youth homelessness, Raikes Foundation. “Too many young people exit child welfare and juvenile detention onto the streets. What happens in the legal system often makes the difference between whether their next stop after the courtroom is a home, a shelter or under a bridge. What judges do, inside and outside of their courtroom, can change this – this resolution is the first step to ending the courts-to-streets pipeline.”

The resolution outlines the strategies for judges to better serve youth experiencing homelessness and opposes the criminalization of youth for behaviors that result from their lack of safe and stable housing. It also encourages policies that ensure youth never spend a single extra day in juvenile justice system custody because of lack of housing options.

“The American Bar Association (ABA) applauds the National Council on Juvenile and Family Court Judges for this resolution and its efforts to address the needs of homeless youth and families,” said Linda Klein, ABA president. “The ABA looks forward to collaborating with the NCJFCJ and other partners to improve access to justice by expanding legal assistance to vulnerable populations—and to homeless youth in particular through the recently launched ABA Homeless Youth Legal Network.”

The NCJFCJ calls on judges to provide strong leadership on this issue to convene child welfare and juvenile justice system stakeholders and develop a coordinated response to increase the



effectiveness in identifying youth who lack stable and secure housing at the earliest stage possible.

"Our resolution demonstrates NCJFCJ's leadership by providing juvenile and family court judges with concrete steps they can take in their local communities to improve outcomes for youth and families who lack stable housing when they come to the attention of the justice system," said Judge Anthony (Tony) Capizzi, NCJFCJ president. "The resolution also calls for judges to provide strong leadership on this issue to convene child welfare and juvenile justice system stakeholders to develop strategies to improve responses to youth experiencing or who have experienced homelessness."

For more NCJFCJ resolutions and policy statements, click [here](#).

About the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ):

Founded in 1937, the Reno, Nev.-based National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, is the nation's oldest judicial membership organization and focused on improving the effectiveness of our nation's juvenile and family courts. A leader in continuing education opportunities, research, and policy development in the field of juvenile and family justice, the 2,000-member organization is unique in providing practice-based resources to jurisdictions and communities nationwide.

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