



Reasoning with Ethics

FEBRUARY 4, 2020

A Project of The School for Ethical Education | www.ethicsed.org

Ethics in action creates character.

Use this blog to:

1. Lead class discussions in social studies, civics, ethics or advisory classes.
2. Teach students skills to analyze cases with core ethical values.
3. Recognize skills in support of SEE's Tri-Factor Model of ethical functioning.

[Visit the online Ethics Blog.](#)



Homelessness in the US

The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty estimates there are over 500,000 homeless in the US with a large percent impacted by substance abuse and/or mental illness.

Beyond the challenges of overcoming rising housing prices, rents and a shortage of low-income housing, the disabling influence of substance abuse and mental illness cripples many efforts to address the needs of many homeless.

Well-intentioned reforms over forty-years ago restricted society's authority to involuntarily place people in treatment programs, whether for substance addiction or mental illness. Subsequently, much of the infrastructure that housed patients in treatment programs were closed and sold or have decayed.

In many cases, particularly in California urban areas, aggressive homeless people can be arrested for some transgression but then are released after 72 hours. One of the meaningful and rarely discussed problems with helping the homeless is that those with substance abuse issues or mental illness are not willing to accept the help that restricts their self-destructive behaviors. In addition, even if the involuntary treatment laws were changed, local and state governments don't have the resources to house and treat those truly in need.

This is a very complicated issue and students are encouraged to use the supplemental links (below) and conduct further research to seek a greater understanding of the problem. Students are asked to identify the core ethical values that would motivate individuals and society to meaningfully address the homeless problem in the US. What political skills will be necessary to change the laws for real and compassionate interventions to take place for the mentally ill?

Supplemental Links

Graphic video from news station in LA that focuses on the homeless and mentally ill (7:40) --

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9U6ZFFk3s>

Youtube Mental Illness and homelessness (1:20)--

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2s99W0ZvkM>

Link to laws regarding involuntary psychiatric holds--

<https://www.bestcounselingdegrees.net/faq/what-are-the-criteria-for-an-involuntary-psychiatric-hold/>

CBS story of CA seeking land for housing homeless (2:00)--

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/california-governor-gavin-newsom-orders-agencies-to-find-land-to-use-for-homeless-shelters/>

CBS Story of increasing homelessness (video requires online subscription)--

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/homeless-population-rises-for-third-year-in-a-row/>

