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Atlanta

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**New Study Shows Homeless at Higher Risk During February**  
*Winter Weather Takes a Toll on At-Risk Youth*

Fort Lauderdale

St. Louis, Mo.- As the sixth most poverty-stricken city in the United States, the St. Louis metropolitan area faces a huge challenge during the winter months.<sup>1</sup>

Guatemala

Honduras

February can be the worst month of the year for teens challenged with homelessness. The reasons for this are twofold: fewer resources available, and harsher physical conditions.

Houston

Los Angeles

According to a study by the National Coalition for the Homeless, volunteerism peaks during the holiday months of November through January. Many of the winter services that homeless teens rely on during the holidays tend to end after Christmas.<sup>2</sup>

Mexico

Newark

“This is a critical time of year for charities like Covenant House Missouri,” said Sue Wagener, Executive Director. “Just imagine what it would be like to spend your nights on the streets in the cold. We want to remind people that their support is needed more than ever to provide help to youth in crisis.”

New Orleans

New York

By February, the coldest month of the year, resources have dwindled. During this time, St. Louis area homeless teens are at greater risk of cold-related injury such as hypothermia, one of the leading causes of death among people who are homeless.

Nicaragua

Oakland

Orlando

Hypothermia occurs when a person’s body temperature drops to below 95 degrees. Temperature and other weather factors can contribute to hypothermia.<sup>3</sup> Wind and precipitation can bring the body’s temperature down faster. Homeless people often lack a spare set of clothing to change into when their clothing gets wet. In addition, many of these individuals do not own hats, gloves or proper coats needed to stay warm. Lastly, people who are homeless are not always able to get adequate, healthy meals. Poor nutrition inhibits the body’s defenses against the cold.

Philadelphia

St. Louis

Washington, D.C.

Toronto

Vancouver

Because of these factors, homeless individuals are six times more likely to become ill than people with a place to live. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that there are more than 1.6 million homeless and runaway youth, mostly between the ages of 15-17.<sup>4</sup> This means that on nights like those in the St. Louis area recently, hundreds of teens are struggling to survive the cold.

**About Covenant House Missouri:**

Covenant House Missouri was established in 1998. It provides services to homeless, runaway and at-risk youth between the ages of 16-21 with open hearts and open doors.

Without a stable home or support system, young people drop out of school and end up totally unprepared for the workplace. Homelessness can lead to poverty, crime and drug abuse. Covenant House Missouri provides hope to homeless teens.

For more information about our services, or to donate to Covenant House Missouri, visit [www.covenanthousemo.org](http://www.covenanthousemo.org)

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey, August 2007

<sup>2</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless, *Winter Homeless Services: Bringing Our Neighbors in From the Cold*, January 2010

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health, 2010

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, 2002