

What to Do If You or a Friend Is About to Become Homeless

by Susan M. Brackney

Sometimes things just fall apart. It could be crushing debt, a medical catastrophe, divorce, or lost work. Whatever the reason, maybe you or someone you know is this close to homelessness—or maybe it's already happened.

“People who are experiencing trouble like this sometimes wait until the last minute when things aren't resolvable anymore, but the sooner you act, the greater chance you have to not lose your home,” advises Forrest Gilmore, executive director of Beacon Inc. The nonprofit organization has provided shelter, meals, and other essentials for people in need since 2000. Here is what to do.

• **Saving Your Space**—“If you haven't been evicted, there might be a possibility of preventing that,” Gilmore says. Contact your township trustee, the Shalom Center (812-334-5728), or 211 for help. And if court-based eviction is already proceeding? “Show up to court,” Gilmore continues. “Our local judges are really wanting to support people to stay in their homes and to access resources to prevent them from being evicted.”

Assistance may also be available to keep the utilities on, too. Just don't dally. “If you come after your lights have been shut off, then there's often extra costs for turning them back on, so it becomes even more difficult,” Gilmore notes.



Caption. iStock/

• **Mail and More**—Besides shelter, losing a home means losing your mailing address, kitchen, bathroom, and laundry facilities. The Shalom Center presently serves as an official mailing address for 800-plus people. “You can use our location as an address,” Gilmore says. “Plus the basics—shelter, restrooms, showers, and laundry—are all available at our center.”

• **Food Security**—The Shalom Center also serves breakfast and lunch during weekdays. The Wheeler Mission Center for Men (812-333-1905) serves meals daily, and the Community Kitchen (812-332-0999) offers Monday-through-Saturday dinners via two Bloomington locations. They also serve Ellettsville on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

• **Furry Family**—Unless you can swing storage space, you'll likely have to give up many of your belongings upon losing your home. Sadly, you might also have to re-home or surrender beloved pets. “Our shelter does allow people with dogs or cats, so, that's an option,” Gilmore says. “And the Monroe County Humane Association (812-333-6242) does do some temporary pet fostering for people experiencing homelessness.” You can also call the Bloomington Animal Shelter (812-349-3492) for help.

Visit beaconinc.org for more information. <https://bloomington.in.gov/animal-shelter/surrender> ✨