



Housing and Service Programs For the Homeless

A City Practice Brief

Fall 2008

Homelessness is a national problem. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, at least 3.5 million people are likely to experience homelessness in any given year. While the most visible sufferers of homelessness are the chronically homeless, they are roughly one-fifth of the total. The persons likely to become homeless are veterans, special needs groups, women with children due to domestic violence, families because of job loss and illness, disconnected youth, and individuals with mental and drug abuse issues.

Local governments know that housing is central to providing permanency for individual and families to establish and maintain a sense of order and well-being into their lives. Many local governments have embraced comprehensive plans that include shelter and services to the homeless. These programs are designed to be preventative as well as to end homelessness. Local governments incorporate a broad range of partnerships from public, private, faith based organizations and agencies in order to bring focused, and results-oriented programs to house and provide services to homeless populations. These approaches deal with the interrelated problems that homeless families face: poverty, lack of affordable housing, lack of skills and education, and health issues, both mental and physical. The programs seek sustainable solutions for individuals and families in crisis.

For more examples, visit the City Practices database, online at www.nlc.org→ABOUT CITIES→CITY PRACTICE RESOURCES.

Spring Terrace

City: **Austin, Texas**

Population: 656,562

For more information, contact: Walter Moreau
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Austin's Spring Terrace supportive housing community combines the goals of green building practices and high-quality affordable housing. Through a partnership with the City of Austin, the non-profit organization Foundation Communities redeveloped a former extended stay hotel into 140 single-room occupancy units at a total development cost of \$5,231,194. The community provides low-rent housing and social service support for low-income single adults and formerly homeless individuals. Foundation Communities' second project of its kind, Spring Terrace had 100 percent occupancy in 2007, and opened a third property in January 2008.

Avondale Gardens

City: **Birmingham, Alabama**

Population: 242,820

For more information, contact: Chris Retan, Executive Director
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Avondale Gardens is a complex of 64 one-, two-, and three-bedroom units built and managed by Aletheia House, a substance abuse treatment program, which became involved in the housing development business when it realized that the homeless graduates of its residential treatment program could not find affordable housing. While units in Avondale Gardens are not limited to residents with special needs, at least 15 percent are set aside for formerly homeless people who are recovering from mental illness or substance abuse. Formerly homeless tenants qualify for rent subsidies through a HUD program. The development was financed with low-income tax credits, loans, grants from the city, and funds from the developer.

Continuum of Care

City: **Burlington, Vermont**

Population: 38,889

For more information, contact: Rita Markley, Executive Director
(802) 864-7402 / markley@cotsonline.org

Continuum of Care offers services for homeless persons through a consortium of nonprofit social service organizations. Components of the comprehensive program include: prevention; outreach, intake, and assessment; emergency shelter and shelter services; supportive services; transitional housing; and permanent and permanent supportive housing. The city's Committee on Temporary Shelter coordinates the Continuum of Care program. Financial support of the program comes from Community Development Block Grants distributed through city, the City Housing Trust Fund, and state and private funds. Local banks support the Continuum through direct financial contributions and financing of permanent and permanent supportive housing projects.

CATCH (Charitable Assistance to Community's Homeless)

City: **Boise, Idaho**

Population: 125,738

For more information, contact: Greg Morris, Program Manager
(208) 493-2503 / gmorris@cityofboise.org

Charitable Assistance to Community's Homeless (CATCH) is a community-wide, collaborative effort initiated and administrated by the City, and supported by local congregations of faith, area businesses, and the United Way. CATCH was developed to address the burgeoning, complex problem of family homelessness by rapidly housing families first, then providing resources, services, and case management. CATCH's total operating budget for 2008 was \$343,902. Since the launch of CATCH, thirty seven homeless families have been rapidly housed and connected with appropriate resources. Out of the twenty-seven families which have exited the program, 82% were able to pay their own rent and be self sufficient.

Urban Peak

City: **Denver, Colorado**

Population: 554,636

For more information, contact: Ann Harris, Development Director
(303) 777-9198 / ann.harris@urbanpeak.org

Urban Peak is a non-profit created in 1988 that serves homeless and runaway youth. City support helped Urban Peak leverage millions of dollars in additional federal and state grants and significantly expand and deepen their services. Urban Peak Denver offers a street outreach program, 40-bed overnight shelter, GED program, job skills and placement, medical clinic, financial assistance for higher education, and basic services such as nutritious meals, clothing and hygiene products. In the 2003 fiscal year, the homeless youth shelter served 762 youth, with 216 attending school, 48 obtaining their GED, and 154 finding employment. In that year, 61 percent of the youth served permanently exited street life.

Maria House

City: **Dubuque, Iowa**

Population: 57,686

For more information, contact: Michelle Brown, Executive Director
(563) 582-7480 / mariahouse@dubuque.net

Dubuque's Maria House is a transitional housing facility for homeless and at-risk women and their children. The program is operated by Opening Doors, a nonprofit partnership of six area Catholic orders, and can accommodate 18 women and children. The house is located near a food pantry, public transportation, and day care. In addition to volunteers, the program has four full-time staff members who provide programming that addresses issues of parenting, relationships, budgeting, and job preparation. The program is for women who are drug and alcohol free and are not fleeing a domestic situation, and must be enrolled in school or working. Women are charged a small program fee, and are required to leave after two years. When a woman moves out, a follow-up staff member continues to meet with the family for up to six months.

Beyond Shelter Homeless Families Program

City: **Los Angeles, California**

Population: 3,694,820

For more information, contact: Melissa Paul, Director
(213) 252-0772 / mpaul@beyondshelter.org

Beyond Shelter places homeless families directly into permanent housing with the provision of individualized case management support for one full year, providing the opportunity for a stable transition. The program integrates homeless people into established neighborhoods and the larger society. Some of the interrelated urban problems the Homeless Families Program address are: poverty, lack of access to existing income and credit opportunities, and lack of access to jobs and job training programs.

The Healing Place

City: **Louisville, Kentucky**

Population: 256,231

For more information, contact: Jay Davidson, President & CEO
(502) 585-4848 x201 / jaydavid@thehealingplace.org

The Healing Place (THP) provides recovery and rehabilitation for homeless alcoholic or chemically dependent men and women through a mutual help program that sustains their desire to return to a meaningful and productive life. THP provides a continuum of services including, emergency shelter, free health care, non-medical detoxification, long-term recovery programs, transitional housing, job placement assistance and permanent housing placement for families. THP serves 400 individuals on a daily basis at a cost of about \$25 per person, per day. Over 65 percent of the men and women who complete the recovery program maintain continuous abstinence the first year of sobriety. THP demonstrates the feasibility of a flexible, therapeutic, cost-efficient model for dealing with disadvantaged populations.

Valor House

City: **Missoula, Montana**

Population: 57,053

For more information, contact: Lori Davidson, Executive Director
(406) 523-4632 / l davidson@missoulahousing.org

Missoula operates a housing program for homeless persons with disabilities and homeless veterans. With funding from the Department for Veteran Affairs and a rebate program, the facility offers 17 one-bedroom units as well as social services through collaboration with a local shelter and soup kitchen. The facility provides transition housing and encourages independent living. Various common areas are provided to maintain a sense of community and a computer lab aids in job searching, gaining skills, and communicating with family. After one year in the program, residents may apply for a housing voucher for permanent housing.

Seneca Heights Apartments

City: **Montgomery County, Maryland**

For more information, contact: Stephanie Killian, Multifamily Housing Manager
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Montgomery County converted a local motel into the Seneca Heights Apartments for formerly homeless families and individuals. The county offers the individual apartment units permanently, while families may live in the larger units for up to two years. When they move out, they receive their accumulated rent so they can relocate with some financial stability. The program offers additional resources such as case managers who organize groups around various issues such as health, parenting, and finances. Children may take advantage of the twice weekly tutoring provided by county school teachers. To qualify for the program, residents must pass an application and screening process. The \$8.5 million project funding came from various state and county agencies.

Cylar House

City: **New York, New York**

Population: 8,008,278

For more information, contact: Marie Nahikan, Housing Works
(212) 645-8111 / nahikian@housingworks.org

Cylar House, a 36-unit apartment building in New York's Lower East Side, provides a refuge for the homeless and a first step to self-sufficiency for people living with HIV/AIDS and often substance abuse problems. The property features a community room, roof deck, gymnasium, bamboo garden, catering kitchen, and computer lab. Cylar House also offers narcotics anonymous, job training, gym workouts, budgeting assistance, medical services, and holistic care. The rent is \$700.00 a month for a one bedroom apartment. The total cost of the housing project was \$6,025,000 and has had a consistent 85 percent occupancy rate. More than half of the residents stay in stable housing and many graduate from job training programs and are now successfully employed.

Chez Ami

City: **Portland, Oregon**

Population: 529,121

For more information, contact: Christine Appleberry
(503) 294-1681 / cappleberry@centralcityconcern.org

Chez Ami, a 40 unit apartment building owned by Central City Concern (CCC) in Portland, provides affordable studio apartments and mental health supportive services to very low-income, mentally ill, homeless single adults seeking an alcohol and drug free safe and supportive housing environment. The complex features a community room, kitchen, access to transit, concierge, and shopping. Additionally, the complex provides the following services: case management, interpersonal skill development, income enhancement, mental health, and addiction treatment. The cost of the apartment building was \$2,810,472 and has a 99 percent occupancy rate. The project is a partnership between CCC and Clackamas County Community Health (CCCH), which provides onsite case managers and associate mental health services for residents.

Community Based Homelessness Prevention Program

City: **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Population: 1,517,550

For more information, contact: Dainette Mintz, Director for Special Needs Housing
(215) 686-7106 / dainette.mintz@phila.gov

The Philadelphia Community-Based Homelessness Prevention Program assists low-income households in maintaining their housing or moving to more affordable housing within their neighborhoods. There are six Prevention Centers, each located in neighborhoods with high concentrations of homeless and near homeless persons who are long-time residents of those neighborhoods. By working with existing community services organizations, the Prevention Program links clients with budget counseling, case management, employment assistance, and provides grants of up to \$1,200 for back rent and other housing-related expenses. Some clients are eligible for emergency grants without ongoing case management, only minimal budget counseling. The Program also provides clients links to substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence services.

Wilson Commencement Park

City: **Rochester, New York**

Population: 219,773

For more information, contact: Tonya Taylor, Director of Development
(585) 263-7930 / ttaylor@wilsoncommencementpark.org

Wilson Commencement Park is a 50 unit townhome community in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Rochester, which provides transitional housing for families recovering from homelessness and domestic violence. The community's goal is to prepare residents to lead a normal everyday life in a two year period. As part of this program, residents are required to develop life goals and plans and to spend 40 hours each week working or learning. The center includes a family learning center, child care center, and security office, in a village-like setting. In addition the park offers case management and services coordinators, employment counseling, educational counseling, transportation assistance, rental assistance, next step housing planning and mentoring programs

Haven for Hope Homeless Campus

City: **San Antonio, Texas**

Population: 1,144,646

For more information, contact: Dennis Campa
(210) 207-7209 / dennis.campa@sanantonio.gov

Haven for Hope Homeless Campus is part of a 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness through a partnership with Haven for Hope, a Texas non-profit corporation, and numerous public and private institutions. Facets of the overall program includes the development of a crisis care, substance abuse, and detoxification center, and the construction of a comprehensive 22-acre homeless campus, which provides one-stop services to treat the root causes of homelessness and address the individuals' housing, workforce, medical, mental health and substance abuse needs. Providing homeless individuals with supportive housing on the campus costs an average of \$30 per night, compared to average jail costs of \$165 per night and average hospital costs of \$1,185 per night.

El Carrillo Housing Project

City: **Santa Barbara, California**

Population: 92,352

For more information, contact: Rob Fredericks, Deputy Executive Director
(805) 897-1051 / rfredericks@hacsb.org

El Carrillo is a permanent supportive housing project that embodies the "housing first" model. The Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara (HACSB) created the 61-studio apartment complex to provide a stable housing option for the community's homeless population, allowing them to skip the many levels of housing in between homelessness and community-based independent housing. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Project provides homes to underprivileged people, as well as services such as case management, mental health treatment, addiction counseling, and job training. El Carrillo was constructed on an underutilized area close to downtown Santa Barbara, and the infill development made it possible to create affordable housing in an area with such high costs for real estate. More information is available online at www.hacsb.org.

Homeless Assistance Rental Program

City: **Salt Lake County, Utah**

For more information, contact: Kerry Steadman
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The Homeless Assistance Rental Program (HARP) provides housing subsidies, case management and treatment services to particularly vulnerable populations, such as ex-offenders, people with mental health or substance abuse problems and young people aging out of foster care. Participants in the program must not earn more than 80 percent of the area median income to receive the subsidy, and must pay between \$50 per month and 30 percent of their salary per month to receive housing. Instead of constructing a new housing development, HARP uses existing units to house participants. To address landlord concerns about damage to their units, the county created a \$10,000 fund to pay for repairs, which had not been tapped as of 2007. HARP was initially funded using \$300,000 in HOME program money from HUD, and \$250,000 from the county council, for a total annual budget of \$550,000.

Pinnellas Hope

City: **St. Petersburg, Florida**

Population: 248,232

For more information, contact: Rhonda Abbott
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With over 1,200 unsheltered homeless individuals and families living in Pinellas County, street homelessness has become an important issue. Pinellas Hope is a pilot project, developed to assist street homeless adults on a voluntary basis. The community-based collaborative effort provides temporary, safe and secure shelter, while offering needed access to services to help them get off the streets and into permanent housing. Utilizing a 10-acre lot, campsites for 225 individual's tent shelters, restroom and shower facilities, a meal center, social service offices and a laundry facility were created to address the most basic of needs. Since the start of the program, over 480 people have been served by Pinellas Hope. More than 200 volunteers, dozens of entities/organizations, and churches have reached out to assist at Pinellas Hope.

South Hampton Roads Regional Taskforce on Ending Homelessness

City: **Virginia Beach, Virginia**

Population: 425,257

For more information, contact: Andrew M. Friedman, Director
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Seven localities in Virginia – the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Suffolk and Franklin, and Isle of Wight County – joined together to address homelessness on a regional basis as in addition to each localities individual efforts. Through its efforts, 120 new units of permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless were built; a database of affordable housing was created; funds from a variety of sources were leveraged by the regional approach; best practice ideas from around the county were presented to the region at two major regional conferences; and the Mayors and Chairs have committed to the development of a formal regional plan to end homelessness. Since the program began in 2005, the homeless population in the region has decreased by more than 20 percent.

This Brief was developed by Bonnie Mann, Project Manager, Affordable Housing Programs, National League of Cities.

City Practices Briefs contain examples from NLC's City Practices database, available at www.nlc.org. Series editors: Bruce Calvin and Larry Foxman. For more information contact the NLC Municipal Reference Service at (202) 626-3130 or email at mrs@nlc.org.