McKinney-Vento: 25 Years and Counting

PHILADELPHIA PROGRAMS THAT ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE
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Introduction

This report offers a snapshot of how the Philadelphia community has successfully responded to helping their neighbors who became homeless.

On any given night, more than 6,000 Philadelphians will spend the night sleeping in an emergency or transitional housing program, and a few hundred more will sleep outdoors. But partnerships between the public and private sectors are working to end their neighbors’ homelessness. Some of their efforts are showcased here.

Families and individuals experiencing homelessness are supported through emergency, transitional, and permanent housing, employment and job training, computer skills development, GED and workplace literacy, as well as case management and counseling services. Additionally, some programs work to prevent homelessness by providing short-term support and helping people avoid emergency housing.

Most of all, this public-private partnership works with community members and organizations, individual donors, foundations, and government agencies. Highlights include:

- **Housing Opportunities for People In Need I (HOPIN I)** provides rental assistance and supportive services for individuals with substance abuse and with mental health issues. HOPIN I helped H.R. who at the age 19, began experiencing psychiatric symptoms and was forced to drop out of college. She eventually ended up becoming chronically homeless. With the help and encouragement of her Case Manager, at the age of 32, H.R. graduated from Drexel University to begin a productive career.

- Northern Home for Children’s Generations II Program is a supportive housing program that provides supportive services to eight homeless mothers between the ages of 17 and 21 with up to two children in their care. These young mothers are supported through life skills training, academic services, individual therapy, vocational planning, as well as participation in ongoing parenting programs.

- The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center’s Veteran’s Home provides subsidized, supportive housing to honorably-discharged homeless Veterans with special needs with an income below 30% of the median income level for Philadelphia County. The program helped Vets like Joe B. overcome homelessness and depression, enabling him to eventually obtain housing and get a job.
Housing Opportunities for People In Need (HOPIN) I Shelter Plus Care

The Housing Opportunities for People In Need (HOPIN) I Shelter Plus Care program provides 76 units of sponsor-based rental assistance with supportive services to 76 homeless individuals in scattered-site housing. The program serves 51 individuals with substance abuse issues and 25 with mental health issues.

Services for these individuals are provided by Horizon House and Hall Mercer. Case management staff and program participants work together to develop a set of achievable goals, which capitalize on the participant’s strengths and are designed to stabilize the participant and foster independence in residential and community functioning. Case managers make weekly contact with clients, with a minimum of one monthly site visit to a participant’s home. Since the program began operation, approximately 500 persons have been served.

Participant Success Story

H.R. has been a participant/resident in the HOPIN I Program since 2006. She would talk to her Case Manager about her desire to finish her Bachelor’s Degree at Drexel University. She had attended Drexel University for two years after graduating from high school, but at age 19, she began experiencing psychiatric symptoms related to her bipolar disorder and was forced to drop out of college. With the help and encouragement of her Case Manager, at the age of 32, H.R. became a full-time student at Drexel with a major in General Studies and a minor in Business Administration. Her Case Manager provided ongoing emotional support, reviewed her papers and helped her with her writing and study skills.

In May 2010, H.R. walked with her graduating class at Drexel University. Her family was in attendance at the ceremony and they threw a party to celebrate her accomplishment. She received her Bachelor’s Degree in December 2010 after finishing her coursework.
ActionAIDS, Inc.  
1216 Arch St., 6th Floor, Philadelphia, PA  
Executive Director: Kevin Burns, LCSW

**Casa Nueva Vida**

In 2004, ActionAIDS opened Casa Nueva Vida. Casa Nueva Vida upon opening was a transitional housing facility for both individuals and families. After assessing the needs of the target population, today Casa Nueva Vida is a supportive housing program for small families. Casa Nueva Vida consists of twelve fully furnished two-bedroom apartments. The target population includes families who are homeless and living with HIV.

Since 2004, Casa Nueva Vida has served a total of 36 formerly homeless residents, many of whom moved on to independent housing options. In addition to providing housing, the program offers case management, life skills, employment and vocational training, as well as in-home supports. Housing Specialists assist participants by providing the ongoing assistance with referrals, housing counseling, and emergency financial assistance, if available, to meet a broad range of needs including food and shelter, transportation, medical needs, and utilities. Recently, Casa Nueva Vida staff and residents started planning “Community Days” that focus on building pride in the housing program and surrounding community. The first Community Day was the unveiling of the program’s new Community Garden.

Residents and staff came together to plant different vegetables and spices that would be fully accessible to residents. The families that reside at Casa Nueva Vida are now using the garden as a food resource and it has become a great educational tool for the children that live in the program. Casa Nueva Vida continues to be not just a housing program, but a housing community that promotes pride and empowerment of all residents.

**Program Success Story**

After being accepted into Casa Nueva Vida, B.T. was awarded physical custody of his biological child. Having a place to call home allowed B.T. to devote his time to seeking more stability. As a resident working with a Casa Nueva Vida Case Manager, B.T. was able to apply and receive approval for Social Security benefits. Now that B.T. has increased his income and is obtaining and maintaining suitable housing, he can focus on other important areas of life such as, sustaining relationships with family and continuing to maintain a healthy lifestyle. B.T. has maintained supportive housing for the last eight years. Today B.T. is employed and is a major contributor to the community at Casa Nueva Vida.
Bethesda Project
1630 South Street, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: Domenic Rossi

Bethesda Sanctuary

Sanctuary is a transitional, single-room occupancy residence for 16 formerly homeless men in recovery from substance abuse. Bethesda Project provides clients with case management services, three meals a day, and a caring community. Sanctuary uses a comprehensive recovery plan to help men transition into independent housing within two years. Since its inception, Sanctuary has served 208 men.

Participant Success Story

In July 2008, Joshua was laid off from his steady job as a housekeeping supervisor. Unable to find work, his long-time struggle with alcoholism returned, and he lost his apartment. He went to a shelter where he was assigned a bed and required to attend a recovery program. The next January, the shelter’s social worker referred him to Bethesda Project’s Sanctuary program.

While looking for work, Joshua took advantage of every opportunity provided by Bethesda Project, taking classes and getting involved in community activities. Eventually, he found a new supervising job. He moved into one of Bethesda Project’s permanent residences, and a year later, still sober and successful at work, he moved into his own apartment. “Bethesda Project is one of those lifelines that was strategically placed at a critical time,” Joshua said. “I grabbed on to that lifeline.”
COMHAR, Inc.
3148 Frankford Ave., Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: Bob Miele, Acting Executive Director

SHP 2 Program

COMHAR’s SHP 2 Program is a permanent supportive housing program that provides services to severely mentally ill adults with a history of homelessness with a focus on recovery. Some individuals also have co-occurring disorders, mainly substance disorders. At full capacity we serve 42 individuals in the community living in one bedroom units. Since its beginning in 2000, SHP 2 has served approximately 85 individuals.

Our philosophy is to place supports where supports are needed. We encourage participants to build upon their unique strengths and allow staff to assist them in the areas that could be improved upon. This includes mental health and substance abuse counseling, medication management, money management skills, nutrition education, transportation assistance, interpersonal skill building, leisure planning, and educational/vocational supports.

Participant Success Story

Lisa S., a 49 year old native of Philadelphia, has been a resident of SHP 2 since May 2008. She has a mental health diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder and Alcoholism. Lisa had her first hospitalization in 2000 as a result of a psychotic episode. After three hospitalizations, her husband sold their house and took her four children with him, leaving her homeless. She ended up living in shelters for a period of three years. When she entered the SHP 2 program, she began volunteering at Nazareth Hospital doing office work two times a week.

She reconnected with music with the help of her Certified Peer Specialist and SHP 2 Counselor, Dawn, a vocalist who encouraged her. They discussed the idea of creating a band with COMHAR administration and the venture began to flourish and grow through connections with other musicians in recovery within COMHAR. Dawn, a vocalist, and Robert, the Team Leader of the SHP 2 program, who also plays base guitar, joined the band which came to be named, “Blessed Recovery.” The band has received wide attention throughout the Philadelphia area, performing at major venues throughout the city.
Dignity Housing
5227-R Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: Beverly Roberts

Dignity II Transitional Housing

Dignity II (DII) is a transitional housing program that consists of 16 apartment units, servicing 14 women with children and two single adult women. All women entering DII are recovering from substance abuse and/or domestic violence. The DII Transitional Housing facility has 16 apartment units located in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. Since its establishment in 2002, DII has served approximately 300 clients (women with children and single women).

Dignity Housing offers a comprehensive range of services to participants including intensive case management, women’s group sessions and home-based family counseling, housing preparation (for successful transition to permanent housing), after school activities for children and youth, and a variety of other educational and cultural activities and services for youth and families.

Most families and individuals come to DII with instabilities and many have experienced family separation due to substance abuse and domestic violence. Dignity staff has frequently had a difficult time promoting this program to applicants and residents because they often cannot associate the intense structured services provided at DII with an increased opportunity to succeed. However, in the end, 75% of residents who complete the program move on to permanent housing and they attribute their family’s success to the intense structure of the program. In some cases, family reunification is attained due to residency in the DII program.

Participant Success Story

A tenant who transitioned from DII was able to find permanent housing through a Section 8 housing voucher after moving into the program from a substance abuse treatment facility. At intake, she and the Dignity staff agreed that reunification with her children would be a significant challenge. She also wanted to improve her education by obtaining her GED. Throughout her residency, the tenant remained focused on securing permanent housing and worked diligently towards her goals. She maintained part-time employment and began attending Dignity’s GED program. Though the family struggled to maintain the level of involvement in family group and other therapy recommended to them by their Case Manager, the resident worked hard to maintain their home, to budget and to save to support her family’s stability. At the time of her transition to subsidized housing, she was promoted to a full-time job in food service at the medical facility where she had been employed. She had also completed four out of five exams, and was prepared to take the fifth to obtain her GED.
Drueding Center
413 West Master Street, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: Anne Marie Collins, MS

Founded by the Sisters of the Holy Redeemer in 1987 as the first transitional housing program for single homeless women and their children in Philadelphia, Drueding Center breaks the relentless cycle of poverty among homeless families by creating two generations of self-reliant adults. Our focus on young single mothers ages 18 to 25 reflects our commitment to serving the most vulnerable population, who stand to benefit the greatest from our program. Intensive case management is provided by our Family Advocates, as well as life skills, education services, and housing assistance. While mothers work on employment and educational goals, their children are cared for on-site in a full-day licensed child care center, with after school programming and summer day camp. An evening tutoring program ensures academic success for children.

Drueding Center meets the many needs of our families who have suffered trauma and still face daunting odds on the path to independence. Clinical counseling is provided to both mothers and children individually and in groups. While families in our residential program have up to two years before moving on to permanent housing, the advances made during their stay are preserved through voluntary after care case management. The numbers of clients served since the program began operation are 711 mothers with 1,402 children.

Participant Success Story

Tyisha had been in and out of homeless shelters as a teenager, as her mother struggled with drug addiction. At age 19, just before she delivered her daughter (who is now two), the shelter introduced Tyisha to Drueding Center. Tyisha found her apartment unit clean and safe, and worked hard on setting goals with her Family Advocate. Soon she was back in school, confident that her daughter was well cared for at the on-site child care center. She graduated high school during her stay and succeeded in becoming a certified nursing assistant. Now working as a home health aide, Tyisha plans to become a registered nurse. She is continuing her second year in the nursing program at the Community College of Philadelphia for the fall 2012 semester.
ECS FAST Housing

ECS FAST Housing provides case management and permanent housing to more than 40 families with a history of homelessness and at least one member with a disability. Families live in rental units scattered throughout the city and receive services to help them succeed in independent living. ECS provides comprehensive and intensive case management, including regular home visits, life skills workshops and other family activities. Housing is provided through a partnership with 1260 Housing Development Corporation.

Participant Success Story

Jerry’s family became homeless after losing their apartment in 2004. Jerry’s wife, Dana, is disabled due to a bone disease and he has medical issues that have prevented him from maintaining steady employment. With five children at home and limited income, finding adequate space was difficult.

The family stayed in a homeless shelter for 18 months. Participating in the shelter’s savings and fees program, they saved enough money to move into a three-bedroom apartment. After leaving the shelter and paying a security deposit on their new apartment, the rental turned out to be fraudulent. They stayed in a hotel while trying to make other arrangements. After exhausting their savings, they began moving from one place to another over the course of a year, doubling up with family members and acquaintances.

At one point, the whole family was living in a basement with a broken door that would fly open in the wind. Jerry taped trash bags over gaps in the windows to keep out the cold, but eventually the family had to seek shelter again. This time, they were forced to separate, Dana and the children at a family shelter, Jerry in a shelter for single men.

Today, the whole family is back together thanks to the ECS FAST Housing Program. They benefit from case management and regular workshops that provide information on budgeting, parenting, health and related topics. In particular, Jerry credits ECS with helping him advocate for his children in the school system to make sure their needs are met.
Transitional Housing Program

The Transitional Housing Program (THP) at Friends Rehabilitation Program (FRP) is an initiative to assist homeless families in their efforts to move from emergency shelter into permanent housing. THP’s short term program is designed to assist families in developing and maintaining a plan of action that helps families prepare to move into permanent housing. All participants in THP are referred by the Office of Supportive Housing. Since 2001, THP has served 995 clients.

Among the supports available to THP participants are: rental subsidy, savings management, housing counseling and case management services, consumer advocacy, information and referral, and other social services. THP also solicits donations from the local business community to provide families with food baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas, presents for Christmas and book bags with school supplies. Recognizing the need for mentoring for young women participants, THP implemented The S.O.A.R. (Strength Over All Resistance) Mentoring Program in July 2011. S.O.A.R. participants are matched, for one year, with female mentors.

Participant Success Story

H. S. is a 43 year old single female with two children, one of which is disabled, and a grandchild. Ms. S. had permanent housing with the Philadelphia Housing Authority, but had to move in with her grandfather when he became ill and unable to care for himself. Following his death, she paid the taxes on the house and attempted to live there. However, the house had structural problems and was eventually condemned by the City, resulting in her moving into emergency shelter and then to our program.

After becoming a program participant, Ms. S. dealt with some serious health challenges, while taking care of her family and working hard to increase her employability. Ms. S. made the decision that she did not want to return to subsidized permanent housing. Rather, she wanted to work and support her family independently. During her tenure at THP, Ms. S. was able to double her income through employment. Upon completing the program, Ms. S. was able to stay in her apartment and is paying market rate rent.
Tioga Arms provides housing and supportive services to 22 homeless families. These 22 single head of households are recovering from substance abuse and mental health issues or living with a chronic illness. Residents are recruited from transitional housing programs for homeless persons who have come from the streets, shelters or treatment centers. Prior to treatment, many of these residents have lived on the streets or in an emergency shelter.

The special housing and supportive service needs of the population to be served, primarily focuses on providing services and skills that will allow the adult head of household to realize their full potential emotionally, mentally and economically.

Gaudenzia believes in a holistic approach to housing services. Some of these services and skills will include, but not be limited to: activities of daily living (ADL) skills; adult education; case management services; access to drug and alcohol services; access to mental health services; nutritional development services; financial planning services; and laundry and recreational activities. Services are made available to residents of Tioga Arms according to their individual needs and may also include: group and individual counseling, life skills and addiction education seminars, educational services, vocational services, family services and children’s prevention services. Over 40 households have been serviced since the Tioga Arms permanent housing program first opened its doors in April, 2006.

Participant Success Story

The success of the Tioga Arms program can best be seen through the collective success of its program participants. Forty-one percent of the adult population in the program in 2012 is actively employed compared to 27% in the prior year. Additionally, 92% of the adult population in need of a GED is actively engaged in some form of GED programming as compared to 28% in 2011. Three Tioga residents are attending classes at the Community College of Philadelphia and two residents have recently received their Associate’s degree and are now pursuing other higher education options.
In 1999, Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) in collaboration with HELP USA, the nation’s largest builder, developer and operator of supportive housing and services for homeless families and those at risk of becoming homeless, partnered in the operation of a transitional housing facility, HELP Philadelphia. Social services are provided through PHMC’s Specialized Health Services division to the 50 single-parent families. The overall goal of HELP Philadelphia is to build self-sufficiency among homeless and low-income families through the acquisition and/or enhancement of key skills necessary for independent living, such as personal self-esteem, parenting, employment, education, permanent housing counseling and health care.

HELP Philadelphia breaks the cycle of dependency by addressing its underlying causes in a way which respects the dignity of each family we serve, by helping them to help themselves. Eligible families will participate in an intensive program for 12 to 18 months, moving through five phases to complete the program. Our goal is to enhance the strengths of all the men, women and children we serve, helping to modify behaviors so that the prospect of homelessness becomes a distant memory and an unlikely future.

Participant Success Story

Ms. X, the mother of a five year old child came to our program after residing at a shelter for domestic violence. Ms. X participated in an array of life skills workshops and attended counseling sessions to assist her with the trauma from abuse. In spite of her history, Ms. X was very motivated and during her stay she obtained her Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration.

Ms. X was referred to our Resource Specialist for employment, and was successful in gaining employment at a local bank. Ms. X’s main challenge was obtaining permanent housing. Ms. X’s maximum length of stay in our program (24 months) was approaching and she needed to quickly secure housing. With financial assistance from the federal Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP), Ms. X was able to move into a month-to-month lease and received a subsidy for several months. After residing in permanent housing, Ms. X was approved for federal subsidized housing, but made the decision to secure a different affordable market rate apartment, thus being free from all subsidies and totally self-sufficient.
Home First

Since 2004, the Home First project has provided permanent supportive housing for 70 chronically homeless, shelter and safe haven-dwelling individuals who have a serious mental illness and a co-occurring substance abuse disorder. These men and women have not responded to increased outreach efforts and engagement over the past several years aimed at getting them into treatment services and more stable housing. Using a “Housing First” model, Home First leases 70 one bedroom, scattered-site, permanent housing units from the 1260 Housing Development Corporation (1260 HDC) and then rents those units to project participants. Since its inception, Home First has served 150 clients.

Participant Success Story

This April, Tony completed the 5K Run for Hunger. He also celebrated his one year anniversary of living in his own place. While running had long been an interest of Tony’s, meeting this goal got pushed aside when mental health and substance use challenges kept him homeless for over two decades. When a friend told Tony about the Home First program, Tony couldn’t believe his luck. Still, it was hard to adjust; over the years Tony had gotten accustomed to life on the street and volleying between abandoned houses, shelters and psychiatric wards. He knew he belonged in a home and that it would be better for him overall, but the reality of having a residence of his own took time to sink in (and is still sinking in). His support team was extremely helpful.

“They are wonderful,” says Tony. He admits, “I didn’t know that there were services like this….that people cared.”

Today, Tony looks and feels better and is healthier than ever. On the 5K, Tony tells, “When I picked up the materials for the race and I saw my name on the envelope and a shirt just for me….well it’s amazing how good I felt.” After the race, Tony was elated. “A million dollars couldn’t buy that feeling. Experiences like that give me a lot of hope for the future.” He and two Home First staff members plan to run a half-marathon.
Methodist Family Services of Philadelphia
4300 Monument Road, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: Angele Marie Parker

Monument Village

Monument Village (MV) opened its doors to residents in September 2004, becoming a permanent housing community for 30 women and their children. All of the women had a diagnosed special need, with a focus on creating a substance abuse recovery community. Located on the MV campus are a licensed early childhood and infant center, and after school and summer camp programs. In addition, the Supportive Services Program offers individual in-home case management to assist women in achieving their self-sufficiency goals, as well as group sessions which focus on an array of topics such as: budget management, career planning, health and nutrition, community building, and parenting classes. Recovery support group is provided and behavioral health services are located directly next door to the campus.

Employment opportunities have also been available on the campus in areas such as administrative support, child care, case aide services, facilities and the campus organic farm. Peer mentoring is a key element to supporting substance abuse recovery, conflict management, raising children safely and striving for advancement. While families are welcome long term, it is the goal for all families to achieve higher levels of independence and wherever possible, to move to non-subsidized permanent housing. Since Monument Village began operation, it has served 205 women and children.

Participant Success Story

Darlene M. was one of the first residents to move into Monument Village. Pregnant at the time and with four children already, she was determined to improve her life’s circumstance. Darlene quickly became recognized as a leader in the community, demonstrating compassion for others in her similar circumstance. Darlene obtained employment at Methodist’s Transitional Housing Program for homeless women. Today, she has advanced to the position of Unit Manager, as well as serves as a member of the Advisory Board for Methodist’s Heritage Farm. Currently, Darlene has moved out of Monument Village into a rent-to-own home ownership program and is engaged to be married. She is pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree and hopes one day to be in a leadership position within the organization.
My Place Germantown
209 East Price Street, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: Mary Ellen Graham

My Place Germantown

My Place Germantown’s (MPG) mission is to reduce homelessness in the Germantown section of Philadelphia by providing community-based permanent housing for 12 homeless males in which they receive case management and supportive services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The 12 efficiency apartments in a newly renovated building consist of a kitchenette, a closet and a private bath. Two apartments in a newly constructed addition accommodate physically disabled men and are wheelchair accessible. One other apartment accommodates the visually/hearing impaired. The residence also includes a large community room, warming kitchen, laundry facilities, physical fitness and computer rooms. To date, My Place Germantown has served 16 clients.

The staff includes a Program Director/Case Manager, Resident Advocates, Property Manager, Maintenance Engineer, and a Community Health Nurse who visits weekly. The staff supports residents in resolving behavioral, mental health, addiction, financial, employment, or any other issues affecting stability, self-sufficiency, and quality of life. Staff also connect residents with agency partners within the neighborhood and beyond.

Participant Success Story

Amos Shattuck came to My Place Germantown after years of homelessness and a series of shelter stays that never seemed to go anywhere. At one time, he was a skilled entrepreneur with a successful business, a wife, a child, and a home. But this life of promise was destroyed in a fire that consumed his loved ones and his home. To ease the pain he turned to chemicals and life for Amos unraveled. Drifting from his New England home, he arrived in Philadelphia angry, addicted, and homeless.

But the story doesn’t end in despair. Amos found his way from Sunday Breakfast Mission and a caring Pastor to My Place Germantown, where he has worked hard to confront his “demons” and seek wellness. Early on, he found it hard to focus and seek help. But gradually, with the help of a staff attuned to his situation and his needs, he began to recover. Within a year’s time, Amos became the resident horticulturist, known for his vegetable garden and the neighborhood worker, tackling odd jobs, skilled in woodworking and construction. In the house, he is acknowledged as a leader, recently being elected by the residents to the My Place Germantown Tenant Committee. Clearly, Amos has grown in many ways, a testimony to MPG, but more so to Amos’ resilience and motivation.
Generations II

The Generations II Program is a Supportive Housing Program (SHP) that provides supportive services to eight homeless mothers between the ages of 17 and 21 with up to two children in their care. Since its opening, Generations II has served 20 clients. The program participants live on the campus in four suites, with each suite comprised of four bedrooms, one bathroom, a great room, a washer and dryer, and a kitchen. Two mothers share a suite, with each mother having a room for herself and a room for her children. These young mothers are supported through life skills training, academic services, individual therapy, vocational planning, as well as participation in ongoing parenting programs.

Participant Success Story

Our young mother entered the Generations II Program from a shelter. At age 20 she was living there with her young son because she had no other family or friends to turn to for a home for her and her son. She had been in and out of foster care placements her entire childhood. She struggled in school, always feeling that she was different from her friends and never wanting to reveal that she lived in foster homes, away from her family. In eighth grade, her English teacher encouraged her to start keeping a journal. Writing became a way for her to express her feelings. She states that for a long time, writing was easier than talking.

High School was a very positive experience for her. She learned to share her experiences with friends and others around her who could support her. She joined a mentoring group which enabled her to discuss her feelings and relate to others with similar experiences. As part of the Generations II Program, she attended individual therapy and enrolled in a jobs program. While enrolled in the jobs program, her son attended the daycare on the Northern Children’s Services Campus. She now serves as a Youth Advocate in the Juvenile Law Center’s Youth Fostering Change Program. She is currently completing her job training program and is ready to find permanent housing. She aspires to attend college, earn a psychology degree and work as a counselor for people who need help.
Northwest-Northeast Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network
7047 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: Rachel Falkove

Since their founding in 1991, Northwest-Northeast Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network (NPIHN) has moved over 300 families – 840 individuals – from homelessness to stability. The NPIHN program provides assessment and referrals, emergency housing, supportive services and transitional housing. Equipped with new skills and relationships, 92% of their families do not return to shelter after their NPIHN experience.

NPIHN offers a safe and child-friendly alternative to more chaotic public shelter settings, allowing families to remain intact. Because NPIHN is small, it can accommodate couples, single father households, adolescent boys, as well as single women with children. NPIHN strongly emphasizes taking a holistic approach to rebuilding from homelessness. They are proud that our guests call us “the shelter that’s more like a home.”

NPIHN’s hospitality network is comprised of 1,200 caring volunteers, 30 congregations, concerned citizens of the community, community businesses, and institutions.

Participant Success Story

Ginger had been in several shelters. She felt lost and had no other alternatives. She stated, “I was treated as a number rather than a person in distress. It was rock bottom for me.” After entering NPIHN, she felt secure and stable. She participated in regular self improvement meetings which she enjoyed because they offered her an opportunity to grow. She was there only a few months before she moved into her own rental apartment and was offered a job at a local bank. “I was still at the NPIHN office daily; whether it was to eat a meal, attend a meeting, or use the computer to write papers while I attended college. The staff and volunteers were there for me every step of the way – even during the birth of my children. It was a humbling experience being so needy. I was thankful that this was a shelter not like a shelter,” she expresses. Ginger now has a college degree, has been promoted at the bank, is married with six lovely children and is a homeowner.
Overington House
1528 Overington Street, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: Ann Mason

Overington House

Overington House is a transitional living facility for homeless women with children who are in need of intensive support in a nurturing environment. Our purpose is to encourage and support the return of women with children to mainstream society with the emotional and spiritual strength, life skills and work skills to enable them to support themselves, live independently, and successfully parent their children. Since its opening in 1999, Overington House has served 200 families.

Participant Success Story

Her name is Veronica. Veronica came to Overington House four years ago with her one year old son. After being here for about six months, we helped her get her two daughters back into her custody. We helped her get through the adjustments and hard times, going from one child to three children. It was a big adjustment for her, but by being at Overington House she received the help and support to learn how to take care of her three children. She learned parenting skills and patience, and how to “just love” her children. She eventually moved into her own place with her children. After being on her own for a year she came to a staff member about a job because she wanted to give back to Overington House. The staff member hired her on a temporary basis as a residential staff member to see if she really wanted to do this type of job. She has been working for Overington House for almost a year and she has enrolled in school to get her degree in human services. Without HUD funding, Overington House would not be here to give these women with children the help and guidance they need to take care of themselves and their families. Veronica is the second former resident to come back and work for Overington House.
Pathways to Housing

Pathways to Housing came to Philadelphia in 2008 to implement the “Housing First” scattered site housing model. The Pathways model offers clients the highly desirable independence provided by their supported housing model and the intensive clinical services they need provided through the ACT teams. The ACT teams offer clinical, vocational, health, and other support services; and the staff work collaboratively with clients to articulate goals that move the client toward recovery—as defined by the client. In addition to the traditional treatment services, clients are able to participate in wellness groups, have consultations around nutrition, family, therapy and vocational planning and services. Consistent with the “housing first” approach, clinical and housing services are closely coordinated, but are considered as separate and distinct domains: a tenant’s housing status is not jeopardized by his or her mental health or substance abuse use status.

Since its inception in Philadelphia, Pathways has served a total of 175 consumers in permanent housing. Our “Housing First” model provides people with what they actually need to transform their lives—the dignity of a place to live combined with appropriate services and supports. Using a person-centered approach, we have achieved an unprecedented 94% housing retention rate with people who have been chronically homeless and considered “not housing ready” by most other programs.

Participant Success Story

Claude had experienced chronic homelessness for many years living in Philadelphia’s Center City area. On February 4, 2010, Pathways to Housing PA was authorized to begin working with Claude to provide him with housing and case management services. In the beginning, Claude was open to meeting with the Pathways to Housing staff but declined accessing housing because he said he wasn’t ready. Pathways to Housing staff consistently worked on spending time with Claude to build a trusting relationship with him while he remained on the street. The City’s homeless outreach teams along with Pathways to Housing staff engaged Claude for over a year before he moved into a beautiful apartment in West Philadelphia on February 18, 2012. Currently Claude is still in the same apartment which he calls home.
People’s Emergency Center (PEC)
325 N. 39th Street, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: Farah M. Jimenez

Jannie’s Place

People’s Emergency Center (PEC) seeks to change the life trajectory for the families who seek its services and inspire them to aspire to new heights. Jannie’s Place, PEC’s latest development, is part of a community of more than 200 housing units and three educational centers offering job training, parenting and early childhood education, and technology coursework to families at varying places on the road to independence. Jannie’s Place consists of 17 new affordable supportive housing units that are part of PEC’s comprehensive housing and programs for families experiencing homelessness. Residents of Jannie’s Place are formerly homeless families with special needs. Thus far, a total of 16 families have been served by the program.

Completed in September 2011, Jannie’s Place is located in the Mantua neighborhood of West Philadelphia. This development transformed six vacant lots and improved nine units of existing affordable housing on the third floor of PEC’s emergency and transitional housing facility. Jannie’s Place offers homes where formerly homeless can create new beginnings. The families are able to participate in PEC’s Center for Employment and Training, Center for Parenting and Early Childhood Education, and Center for Digital Inclusion and Technology.

Participant Success Story

Ruth battles depression and bipolar disorder, and struggles with substance abuse issues. Finally able to maintain her treatment plan and two years sober, she looked for a supportive housing program that could meet her needs and encourage her stability. She has three children, two boys ages eight and five, and one daughter age 12. She moved her family to Jannie’s Place in March 2012.

Jannie’s Place provides Ruth and her family with a stable home, the support of a case manager, and access to PEC programs. Ruth loves to find time for cooking with her children and ensures that they attend school and do well. She is inspired to obtain her GED and find a job in order to enhance her family’s new, stable homelife with the independence that gainful employment can bring. Her aspiration is to obtain her GED and to go back to school to become a nurse. With the stability provided by affordable supportive housing, she is confident in maintaining her sobriety and looks forward to reaching her goals.
Veterans Home Project

The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center’s (PVMSEC) Veterans Home Project provides subsidized, supportive housing to ten honorably-discharged homeless veterans with special needs and an income below 30% of the median income level for Philadelphia County. The population of the Veterans Home Project consists of chronically-homeless veterans, physically or mentally disabled veterans, and veterans with chronic substance abuse histories. Veterans Home Project consists of 10 scattered-site, one-bedroom and efficiency-type units located throughout Philadelphia. Since its inception, a total of 16 clients have been served.

Program participants receive comprehensive case management services. An achievable service plan is customized for each veteran in the program based on a review of military history, current housing situation and employability, as well as an assessment of any medical, mental health or substance abuse needs. Income source is assessed for additional income resources, and an in-depth VA benefit evaluation of VA Entitlements, service-connected compensation, pension, vocational rehabilitation opportunities, and home loan guarantees is completed by our Service Officers. Employment and training opportunities are offered five days a week at our employment center.

Participant Success Story

Joe B. presented at PVMSEC in October of 2008. He was experiencing homelessness for the first time in his life due to loss of employment and insufficient income. He was receiving welfare cash assistance of $205 per month, hardly enough to make ends meet. Joe had also been suffering from depression due to his current circumstances.

Through working with various staff members at PVMSEC, Joe found an interest in learning about computers. He first enrolled in a computer applications class offered at the center. Based on his excellent performance in this course, he then opted to take an A+ Certification course. Again, Joe’s skills in this class were exceptional. His hard work and positive attitude gained the attention of staff members and led to his acceptance into the Supportive Housing Program.

In October of 2009, one year after he first came to PVMSEC for assistance, Joe moved into his current apartment. He began working part-time as a security guard at a local shopping center. Later on, Joe was able to obtain a full-time, career conditional job with the IRS. With this new job and the increase in income, this veteran was able to obtain his ultimate goal, to sustain housing without a subsidy.
James Widener Ray Homes

The James Widener Ray Homes, located in the Tioga and Nicetown neighborhoods of Philadelphia, was completed in the fall of 2011. The City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth directed federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds to this project to support development efforts in the neighborhood, which has experienced a decline in population over the past two decades. The project includes 53 units of permanent housing for low-income individuals, including those who have experienced homelessness. The James Widener Ray Homes is funded in part by HUD’s McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Program and Shelter Plus Care Program. Twenty-six of the 53 renovated units are set aside for adults with a history of homelessness who are successfully managing a serious mental illness, a substance use disorder, or co-occurring disorders. The remaining units are available for low-income individuals. As part of Project H.O.M.E.’s commitment to ending veteran homelessness, several veterans have been served by the program.

Residents of the James Widener Ray Homes benefit from an array of supportive services, including case management and linkages to community services and activities. Residents also have access to supported employment, adult education opportunities, and health and wellness services through Project H.O.M.E. Since its opening on November 11, 2011, the James Widener Ray Homes Shelter Plus Care Program has served 28 adults with a history of homelessness.

Participant Success Story

Instead of dealing drugs in the streets of Boston, Esterlina now rises at 4 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday every week in her apartment at Project H.O.M.E.’s new James Widener Ray Homes, so she can catch the bus to meet her friends from Back On My Feet for their 5:30 a.m. run. Not many people adhere to such an exercise routine, let alone a formerly displaced, homeless woman who only moved to Philadelphia a little over a year ago.

Recently, one of Esterlina’s dreams came true—she moved into her own apartment at James Widener Ray Homes. At the March 5th formal opening of the apartment project, Esterlina stood at the podium, in front of over 150 people, and eloquently told her story. Those who knew her felt a sense of pride and inspiration as she candidly recounted her move from Boston, and then cut the ribbon with Mayor Nutter.
Valley Youth House of Greater Philadelphia
42 S. 15th Street, Suite 800, Philadelphia, PA
Executive Director: David Gilgoff, PhD

Philadelphia Supportive Housing Program

Valley Youth House operates the Philadelphia Supportive Housing Program (P-SHP) to provide transitional, scattered-site housing and supportive services for homeless older adolescent youth ages 18 to 21 and their children. Since its inception, P-SHP has served 450 young adults. The program provides rental assistance and supportive services for youth that became homeless after being discharged from the dependent care system. Life Skills Counselors work with the youth to define and reach individual goals in the areas of housing, life skills development, education and employment. Goals for the youth, and the process and timeline for achieving them, are outlined in an Individual Service Plan (ISP). If the youth is parenting, the ISP also includes meeting the basic needs of the children.

Program components include: housing, life skills instruction, and services to advance education and employment. Youth receive subsidized housing for up to 24 months and make gradually increasing monthly co-payments on their rent, until they assume full responsibility for their leases and are paying for the apartment by themselves. Youth are encouraged to advance their education and sustain employment. Youth re-enroll in school or a GED program, pursue traditional college programs or attend post-secondary job training programs. All participants are required to work (unless they are full-time students) with the expectation they will get lease payments and build savings account.

Participant Success Story

Sam came to Valley Youth House’s Philadelphia Supportive Housing Program with a troubled past. He had been removed from his parents at an early age because of a family history of physical abuse and drug use in the home. He was placed in foster care, but struggled. He bounced from foster home to foster home, going to a different high school each year and failing his classes. He became truant and involved in petty crime, and eventually ran away from foster care.

After months of “couch surfing” at friends’ homes, Sam checked into a homeless shelter. Soon after, the shelter referred Sam to Valley Youth House. Within two months of starting the program, Sam was hired by U.S. Air on the ground crew, directing flights to the gates. He went on to earn an Associate’s Degree from the Community College of Philadelphia and secure a steady job in the construction industry.
New Neighbors

In November 2005, Women’s Community Revitalization Project (WCRP) kicked off its New Neighbors Program, a supportive housing program for homeless families in which one or more members has a disability. Among those served are families who have been in emergency shelter but have the ability to become more self-sufficient if they can obtain subsidized housing. The program serves 18 families at any one time and has served a total of 24 families since its inception.

The New Neighbors Program provides three areas of services: housing counseling, leasing dollars, and case management. Under the SHP-funded portion of the program, participants are linked with permanent rental housing and are provided with a subsidy, which enables them to afford these units. Our Housing Counselor helps participants locate housing, coordinates timely inspection of units, provides guidance through lease-up and move-in, ensures that rents are paid on time, and trains participants on how to apply for utilities and utility assistance programs.

New Neighbors participants attend workshops and receive individualized support to develop and sustain good habits around paying rent and utilities on time. They receive training and coaching on housekeeping and learning how to positively interact with landlords to request repairs. With the support of their Case Manager, they more easily and consistently access the medical, mental and behavioral health and other services they need, and have confidence that these services are being coordinated as appropriate. Those who are able to do so secure employment and continue to build up their savings.

Participant Success Story

C. left her house when it was discovered that her son was suffering from lead poisoning. She and her five children thus became homeless. When C. joined New Neighbors, she had a history of very poor housekeeping that had, in fact, resulted in a case with DHS. She also had trouble managing her budget and made poor judgments about relationships, often losing money or belongings to people who took advantage of her. With weekly contact from WCRP, her housekeeping greatly improved. Through workshops and one-on-one support, she developed the ability to manage her budget; she learned to shop at the local grocery store and prepare meals at home, saving hundreds of dollars each month. She also learned to stay focused on relationships that are positive. After five years, she applied for and received a Section 8 voucher, and was able to successfully complete the program.
McKinney Strategic Planning Committee Membership

The following organizations are represented on the McKinney Strategic Planning Committee:

- 1260 Housing Development Corporation
- AchieveAbility
- Bethesda Project
- City of Philadelphia, Department of Behavioral Health
- City of Philadelphia, Department of Human Services
- City of Philadelphia Office of Supportive Housing
- Covenant House Philadelphia
- Dignity Housing
- Formerly homeless consumer
- Keystone Mercy Health Plan
- Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities
- Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania
- People’s Emergency Center
- Philadelphia Prison System
- Philadelphia Public Housing Authority
- Philadelphia Veterans Affairs Medical Center
- Philadelphia Veterans Multiservice & Education Center
- Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation
- Project H.O.M.E
- Public Health Management Corporation
- School District of Philadelphia
- Valley Youth House
- Women Against Abuse
- Women's Community Revitalization Project
- Youth Services Inc.
Acknowledgement

This report was created by a subcommittee of the McKinney Vento Strategic Planning Committee. Contributors included: Michelle Butler, Roberta Cancellier, Trish Downey, Rachel Falkove, Michelle Frankenfield, Carly Maurer, Jamila Harris-Morrison, Joe Savage, Elle Tremble, Joe Willard, and Jennie Young.
For more information regarding these programs and other homeless assistance programs in the Philadelphia area, contact:

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