



Information for Church Outreach Ministries

Thank you so much for your interest in helping our neighbors who are homeless. As you consider how to engage your homeless ministry, please take a moment to consider how you may fit in with and support existing services in the community.

Scope of Homelessness

On any given night in Indianapolis, there are nearly 1,500 individuals experiencing homelessness. *Almost all are in shelters and transitional housing programs and are actively accessing existing social services that are designed to return them to self-sufficiency.* Nineteen percent work, 15% are in school, 250 are veterans and nearly 300 are women fleeing from domestic violence. The largest population of homeless in our community is children under 18. There are 362 who are part of 191 homeless families. Nearly 40% of the people experiencing homelessness in our community are members of a homeless family. The single greatest reason for homelessness is unemployment.

General Services and Support

Indianapolis is blessed with many social service agencies, both faith-based and secular, providing professional case management, shelter and support for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. All of these organizations have a need for and welcome the assistance of volunteers from church outreach ministries and other organizations. Without volunteer support for these organizations, many of the individuals and families they serve would not be successful in their journey and will experience repeated episodes of homelessness.

Street Outreach

Many church outreach ministries and other organizations perceive a need for street outreach that serves individuals who do not enter shelter or who are not accessing services. This is understandable because for many people, this is the “face of homelessness.” However, on any given night in our community there are fewer than 200 individuals who will not go into shelter, and they are fully engaged by professional outreach workers from faith-based and secular social service agencies dedicated to moving them into shelter and services. These teams coordinate with one another and the city to identify and engage people in the outdoor locations where they are staying.

Because many people living on the street also suffer from mental illness or addiction, the social service outreach teams are multi-disciplinary or partner with mental health and public health professionals to engage clients and to ensure the safety of both the client and the outreach worker. While these teams ensure that the individuals they encounter have access to items necessary for their survival on the street, the primary service and greatest value of the outreach teams is to develop a relationship of trust and partnering with clients, so that over time, they may go into one of the emergency shelters or access services. Once in an emergency shelter or engaged with a service provider, people have access to case management, medical care, meals, and an array of supportive services that are designed to help keep them off the street and move them into permanent housing. Individuals living on the street may not avail themselves of these opportunities if they are provided with everything they need for comfort at their encampment.

How Can You Help?

Educate yourself and others. One way to provide help and support to individuals experiencing homelessness is to understand the scope of the issue in your community and the support structure that is in place to address it. Take time to not only learn about who is homeless in your community, but also become familiar with the causes of their

homelessness and best practices for effectively intervening and sustaining their return to self-sufficiency. Awareness breeds resources!

Partner with Social Service Providers. Please consider engaging your ministry with an existing organization that is working to provide shelter, sustained social services and housing. For individuals experiencing homelessness, and particularly for the chronically homeless individual who is not accessing shelter or services, the most appropriate and effective response is not emergency relief in the form of meals and comfort at their outdoor encampments, but rather rehabilitation and development in a process where they are actively participating in their recovery. There are many providers in our community, such as the following:

Trusted Mentors uses the power of mentoring to help adults rebuild their lives, breaking the cycle of poverty that is so harmful to them and to the community. This organization matches volunteer mentors to individuals who have been homeless or who are at risk of homelessness.

Interfaith Hospitality Network is a faith-based, community-focused program providing emergency shelter, case management, and supportive services to single mothers, fathers and married couples with children. This program partners with hosting congregations to provide shelter to families experiencing homelessness, and it operates a Day Center with showering facilities, storage space for personal belongings, computer access and training, use of telephones, transportation, medical emergency triage, case management and agency referrals. The role of volunteers is fundamental to the IHN program and many are needed to host a homeless family. Opportunities include cooking part of a meal, sharing a meal with the families in the evening, acting as an overnight host, providing food for lunches and breakfasts, and transporting beds to and from the churches. Local congregations provide overnight accommodations, transportation, volunteer support and all meals.

Holy Family Shelter, Dayspring Center, Salvation Army Social Services Center, Queen of Peace, and Wheeler Ministries Center for Women and Children are all shelters that serve homeless families, the fastest growing demographic for homelessness in our nation and in our own community.

Salvation Army Harbor Light is a shelter for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and chronic substance abuse (including alcohol) and addiction.

Wheeler Ministries and **Good News Ministries** provide emergency shelter for homeless men.

HVAF provides emergency shelter and transitional housing for homeless veterans. There are an estimated 150,000 homeless veterans in the United States and an estimated 500 in Indianapolis over the course of a year. HVAF and the **Veteran's Administration Homeless Services Program** are even serving homeless vets that are returning to Indiana from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Horizon House is a day services center that provides a safe refuge and many professional services including legal, medical and employment for homeless men and women, including women with children, during the day and early evening.

The **Homeless Initiative Program (HIP)** provides medical and other professional services to homeless individuals and families. HIP partners with Horizon House, overnight shelters and with transitional housing providers to move their clients into housing.

Coburn Place and the **The Julian Center** provide shelter and transitional housing to homeless women fleeing from domestic violence.

Some of these organizations have professional outreach teams that go out into our community nightly and engage those who, for whatever reason, do not enter shelter. In addition to those teams, several organizations are

themselves focused on outreach. **Outreach, Inc.** provides outreach services to homeless and runaway youth, and organizations such as the **Indy Dream Center** and **The Pourhouse** provide outreach services to individuals and families.

These are only a few of the organizations providing professional services to the homeless in our community. The Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention works with all of these providers and many others to coordinate services and promote housing and an end to homelessness in our community.

There are many ways you and your congregation can continue and enhance your ministry in a manner that not only adds comfort to people experiencing homelessness, but also moves them from the street to services and housing.

Volunteer

Donate your time and talent to an established provider. All of these organizations could use your time and experience to support their efforts, and the experience and training you receive would support your ministry in other ways.

Material Donations

Donate supplies to a shelter or homeless service provider. Needed items include water, blankets, shoes, clothing and nutritious snacks. Please visit the Community Wish List at www.ChipIndyWishList.org to learn more.

Meal Donations

Donate nutritious meals. However, rather than bringing meals to outdoor areas or homeless encampments, coordinate your meal service with an outreach team or service provider. Most providers would note that someone experiencing homelessness in Indianapolis can access seven hot meals a day just using established providers. That does not mean that additional meal opportunities are not important inasmuch as geography, transportation and other factors may create barriers to people accessing meals. If you coordinate your meal service with a service provider, perhaps even co-locating your service at or near the provider's location, it will provide an opportunity for the people you encounter to access the additional services, and will provide the professional outreach teams an opportunity to access your participants. CHIP would be glad to assist you in coordinating your resources with an established service provider.

Financial Support

Donate to a shelter or homeless service provider. Each of these offer services to keep people in shelter and move them to housing, and most have street outreach teams that would appreciate your donations.

In addition to a donation, which is a great way to help, there may be other ways that your congregation can help achieve the goals of the *Blueprint to End Homelessness*. For ideas of other ways in which you can help, please visit www.chipindy.org and visit the "Get Involved" page, and also click on the Community Wish List link to search for donations and volunteer opportunities with local partners.

Thank you so much for your compassion and caring. Success at ending homelessness in Indianapolis will require the collaborative effort of us all.