



School Housing Rocks!

A Community Collaboration Between School District U-46 and HOPE Fair Housing Center to End Family Homelessness

Special thanks to the hardworking staff at Project Access of School District U-46 and HOPE Fair Housing Center for their dedication and service every day. Together we will continue to give homes to the homeless, and hope to the families that need it most.



“[I]t is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart.”

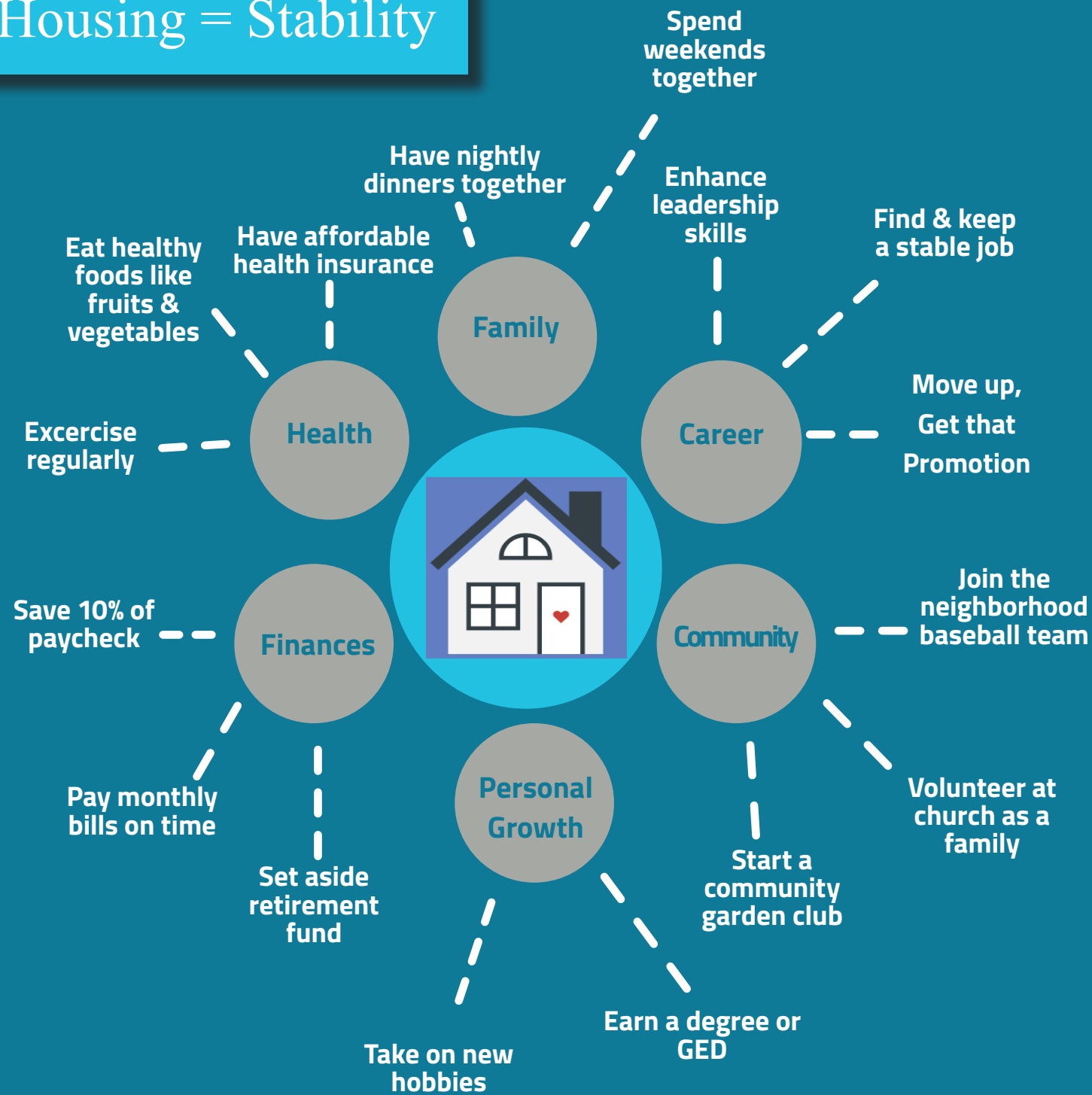
-Matthew Desmond, Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City (P.300)



Contents

Housing = Stability	4
Summary	5
Introduction	6
HOPE As A Solution	8
Elaine, Sabrina, & Melanie	9
About the Program	10
Jorge, Arturo, Roberto, & Geraldo	11
About the Program Continued	12
Nell, Bob, Thomas, & Lucy	13
Isabella, Maggie, Clara, Hailey, Dominic, & Diego	14
Sara, Nathaniel, Jordan, Elise, & Tina	15
Moving Forward with HOPE	16
Terminology	18
In Their Own Words	19

Housing = Stability



Everything in life is interconnected. When a family has basic, stable housing to live in they have the ability to thrive and grow. They are healthier, happier, and can look towards a positive future. Having stable housing means not worrying about where to sleep every night, or how you and your family will survive. Stable housing is a core component to all aspects of life, and above all, normalcy. Housing equals stability.



Homelessness = Desperation

We've been evicted and have nowhere to live, what do we do? What happens if my children get sick? Where will we sleep tonight? These are real struggles faced by homeless families everyday. Without stable housing, everything else falls apart. Families are forced to choose between paying their rent or feeding their children. The overwhelming burden of homelessness affects every part of their lives. Without stable housing, there is no stability.

Summary

In 2016, HOPE Fair Housing Center [HOPE] initiated a pilot rent assistance project. The simple premise of the pilot was: with a small investment of rent assistance to homeless and at-risk families along with support services, can we improve short and long-term outcomes for families and schools? Spoiler alert, the answer is a resounding yes for short-term outcomes. Stay tuned for long term impacts.

Beginning in 2008, the foreclosure crisis in many ways fueled a rental crisis. In order to address this rental crisis, HOPE partnered with Project Access of School District U-46^[1] to provide rental assistance to homeless families within the district. Project Access currently serves as U-46's Homeless Liaison and focuses on providing resources and family support and ensures that homeless children within the district have equal access to education and programs. This partnership provided scaling rental assistance for 21 individuals – 6 adults and 15 children in 5 families - for up to two years.

Project Access identified struggling families within the district in need of rent assistance and invited them to apply and go through a selection process. For accepted families, HOPE paid 100% of the first years' rent for each family, with an additional agreement to pay 50% of the rent for each family in the second year, if needed. Project Access also provided wraparound services to the selected families. Four families were initially chosen to participate in the program after the application process, with a fifth family added in 2018. While receiving aid, one family increased their income to 70% of AMI, not including income from an adult son and the mother's income from driving for Uber. This was enough to stabilize the family and they graduated from the program after their one-year assessment. Three families currently remain in the program, receiving 50% of their rent amounts funded by HOPE into mid-2019. A fifth family is in their 1st year of full rental assistance.

Outcomes for this initiative have been overwhelmingly positive. Families participating in the rental assistance program were able to: increase their income, receive much needed counseling, advance job positions, save money for their futures, improve the health, socialization, and school attendance of their children, and some parents even sought to further their education by going back to school themselves. Every family is on track to be self-sufficient at the end of their rent assistance and saved enough money to provide a cushion in case of future emergencies. This collaboration also proved to be a cost-effective method to help schools save on transportation costs by reducing the distance students lived from schools, thus saving the district money. This pilot program proves that small flexible housing investments pay big dividends.

[1] Elgin Area School District U-46 is the 2nd largest school district in Illinois. Headquartered in Elgin, Kane County, Illinois, it covers 90 square miles and serves portions of eleven communities in the northwest suburbs of Chicago in Cook, DuPage and Kane Counties.



Project Access & U-46

Federal and state law require that every school district in the United States have an appointed Homeless Liaison to help serve and identify homeless students within school districts.

School District U-46 decided to take this one step further and create a program centered around providing services and support to homeless students within the district. Project Access was created with the idea that education is a critical element in breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness and can open doors and possibilities for children in need.

Started in 1995 and guided by the Stewart B. McKinney Act, in Project Access's pilot year it identified and served 96 homeless students. In 2017, Project Access assisted over 775 homeless students within the district and this year they are on track to serve nearly 1000.

* District information provided by School District U-46.

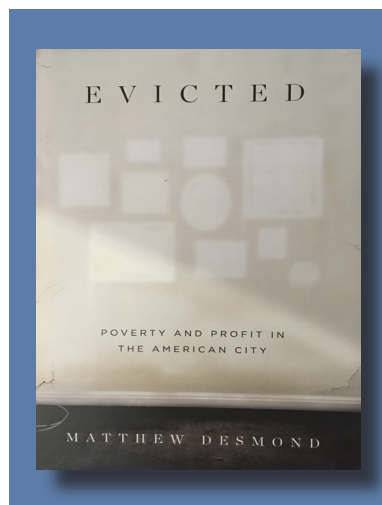


Introduction

Why HOPE?

This project aligns directly with HOPE's vision to expand housing opportunities for all members of our communities to rent or buy any home they can afford, thereby creating economically sound, vibrant neighborhoods. HOPE was inspired to launch this initiative after a study completed by award winning author and sociologist Matthew Desmond. Desmond argues in his book, *Evicted*, that eviction is a cause, not just a condition, of poverty, and that having an eviction on record can lead to a future inability to obtain housing, denial of government housing assistance, and loss of possessions and employment. In 2013 HOPE began investing community development funds into communities harmed by the foreclosure crisis in a variety of ways, most involving home ownership. However, this did not address issues facing renters. The foreclosure crisis resulted in increased investor ownership of rental properties, which also included flipping foreclosures, and as a result there was a profound rise in rental prices and evictions. This happened especially in communities of color.

To read more about this, visit  <https://tinyurl.com/y4qh6ba7>



Matthew Desmond's award winning book, *Evicted*; Poverty and Profit in the American City.

Learn more about Matthew Desmond and his book here:

<http://www.evictedbook.com/>

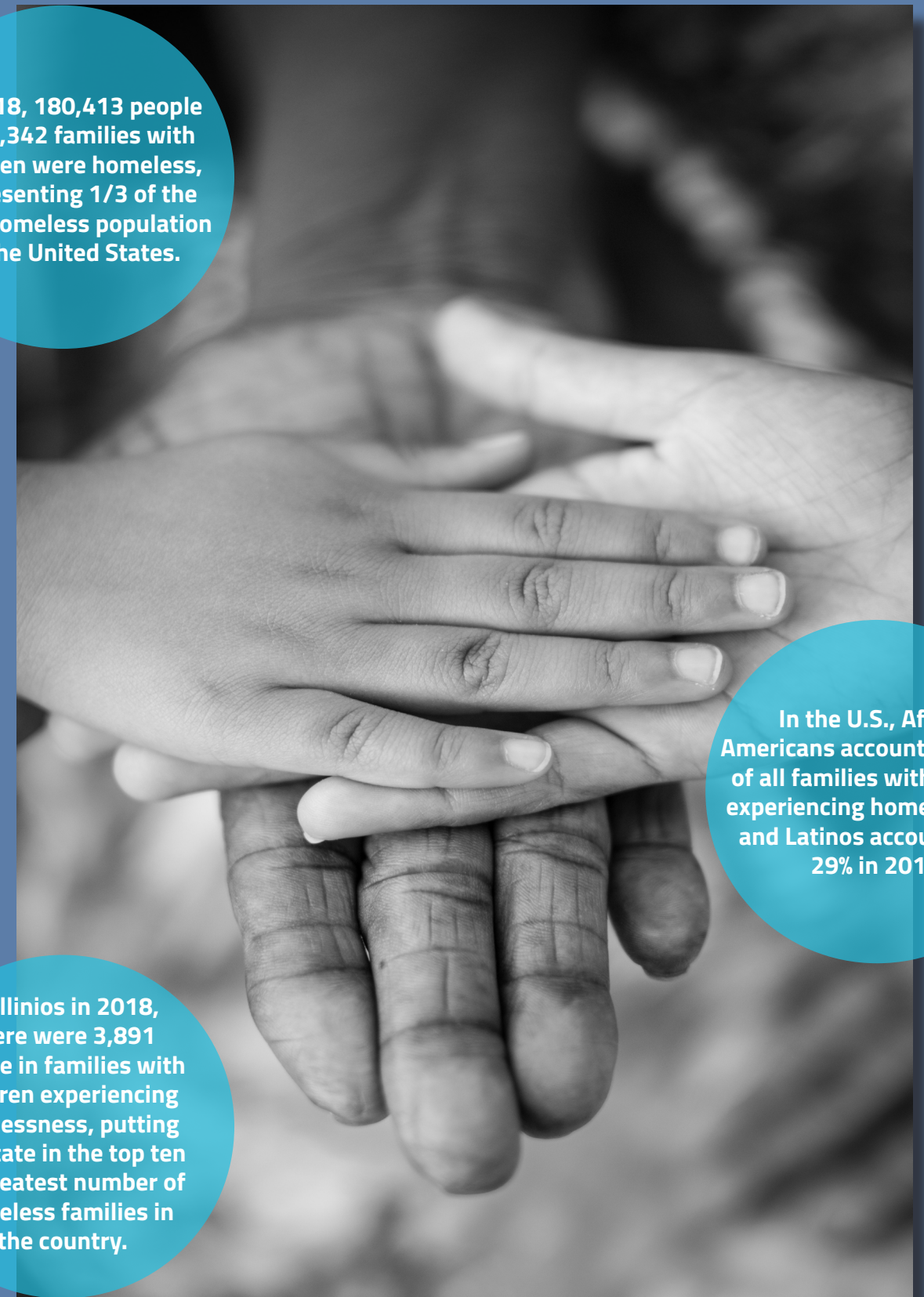
Initiatives to address family homelessness similar to the collaboration between HOPE and U46's Project Access have already succeeded in other areas of the country. One such program was implemented in the San Francisco Bay area by Hamilton Families, a nonprofit organization with the mission of ending family homelessness. Between 2014 and 2016 Hamilton Families partnered with the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) to launch a pilot program that would provide rental assistance and other needed services to homeless families identified through the school district. The outcome of this initiative proved very promising as a successful method to end homelessness for families long-term.

In the pilot, 22 homeless families were placed in permanent housing. Hamilton Families noted in their findings that the most significant outcome of their pilot program was that the 22 families placed in permanent housing experienced homelessness an average time of 8.2 months less than others outside of their program.

In 2018, 180,413 people in 56,342 families with children were homeless, representing 1/3 of the total homeless population in the United States.

In the U.S., African Americans accounted for 51% of all families with children experiencing homelessness, and Latinos accounted for 29% in 2018.

In Illinois in 2018, there were 3,891 people in families with children experiencing homelessness, putting the state in the top ten for greatest number of homeless families in the country.



"If human beings are perceived as potentials rather than problems, as possessing strengths instead of weaknesses, as unlimited rather than dull and unresponsive, then they thrive and grow to their capabilities."

- Barbara Bush, former First Lady of the U.S.



* Information retrieved from the 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress

HOPE As A Solution

Two key elements played a role in the success of the collaboration between HOPE and Project Access. First, providing rental assistance to homeless families allowed them a chance to focus on other important aspects of their lives. Families experiencing homelessness often feel crushed by the grinding stress of not having a home and due to this they may not have the mental capacity to think or plan for their future. Removing the barrier of homelessness gives families the chance they need to get back on their feet and improve their lives.

Next, concurrent, customizable wraparound services are provided for the newly-homed families. In addition to monetary rental assistance, families are supported by a program that assesses the needs of the participants on an individual basis and structures an assistance plan based on their actual needs. Focusing on individualized care for program participants ensures they are provided the services that will help them the most.

Did you know...?

On August 25, 2017 a bill was signed into Illinois law allowing school districts the option to reallocate funding from transportation costs for homeless students to rental and/or mortgage assistance for the parent or guardian of a student. In short, if providing funding for rent or a mortgage was more cost effective for the school district than the transportation costs they incurred when bringing homeless students to school, the school would then have the option of assisting the family of the student by paying all, or a portion of the rent or mortgage of the family. This allows the student and their family to live closer to where the student attends school. Public Act 100-0332

Learn more here:

https://www.schoolhousewa.org/reports/Transportation_flex_fund_position_paper.pdf

<https://www.chicagohomeless.org/new-illinois-law-allows-school-transportation-funds-reallocated-homeless-student-housing/>

It is imperative that these two elements be implemented together for collaborations like the HOPE/U-46 Program to be successful. Rental assistance lifts families out of homelessness, and assistance programming ensures families won't return to it. Also, because both elements are adjustable to fit the needs of individuals, this type of collaboration can work for any family facing homelessness.

New Illinois Law will allow school transportation funds to be reallocated for homeless student housing...



At A Glance - Rent Assistance v.s. Transportation

Among the families in the rent assistance program, Family 2 and Family 3 are on track to receive 2 years of rent assistance. Both families' transportation costs were a significant financial burden on the school districts prior to HOPE's rent assistance program. The graph compares the amount of rent assistance for each family for both years to each family's transportation costs for a single year prior to their enrollment in the rent assistance program.

Meet Our Families...

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the participating families.



Elaine, Sabrina, & Melanie

Elaine and her daughter Sabrina are in year two of our rent assistance pilot. Elaine and Sabrina became homeless after Elaine's job loss and divorce. Elaine also has an older daughter, Melanie, who for several years has been at a campus for children with serious developmental disabilities. When Melanie was younger, Elaine struggled with adequate resources for her during the summer and had too many absences at work because she was attending to her daughter's extra needs. On top of all of this, Elaine had the additional trauma of being relocated to the Chicago area after losing everything in Hurricane Katrina. When Elaine and Sabrina became homeless in Elgin, they relied upon local shelters for housing, but due to length of stay restrictions, they were staying at a homeless shelter in Chicago. Despite the fact that Elaine and Sabrina had been homeless for almost two years, Elaine prioritized education, and made sure that Sabrina continued to regularly attend school, even with the 5:45 am taxi pick up for a 7:30 am start time at school. Though faced with these struggles, Sabrina was an honors student in middle school. Sabrina did, however, endure frequent emergency room visits and hospitalizations while homeless, some of which became much needed mental health breaks from the shelter.

Since receiving rental assistance, Sabrina has continued to thrive in school, with a 4.16 GPA in the high school honors program. She has also had the opportunity to participate in more extracurricular activities and socialize with peers, instead of spending up to 4 hours a day in a taxi from the shelter to the school. Elaine has gone from inconsistent employment and income, to being steadily employed for one year. Although her commute on public transportation takes at least 2 hours every day, Elaine is committed to her job and hopes to purchase a car soon. She also is on track to graduate with an IT Support certification from a local college in the next few months. Because Elaine and Sabrina were in a shelter, Melanie was unable to have overnight visits with the family. Having their own place now allows for more family time. Since being housed, Sabrina has also only had one emergency room visit in the past 18 months. This cost savings to Medicaid was a welcome, unanticipated outcome of the rental assistance program.

Career

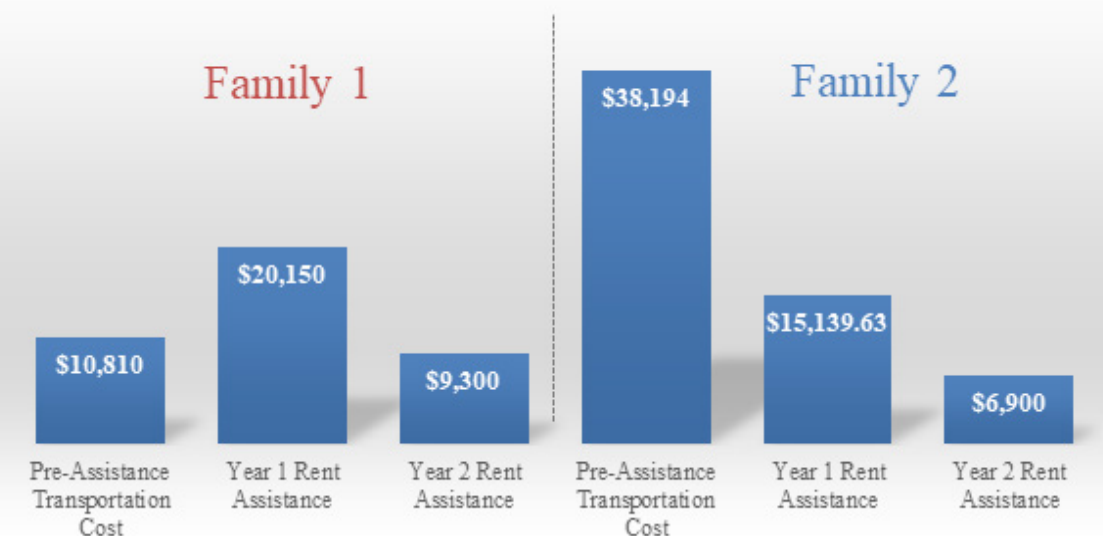
Personal Growth

Community

Family

Health

Cost Savings in Transportation Dollars



About the Program



Program Activities and Service Utilization

Project Access believes that education is a critical element in breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness and includes services in its program to provide stability and support to children facing these hardships. Activities and services offered by Project Access are customized to the needs of each child, and can include the following services, among others:

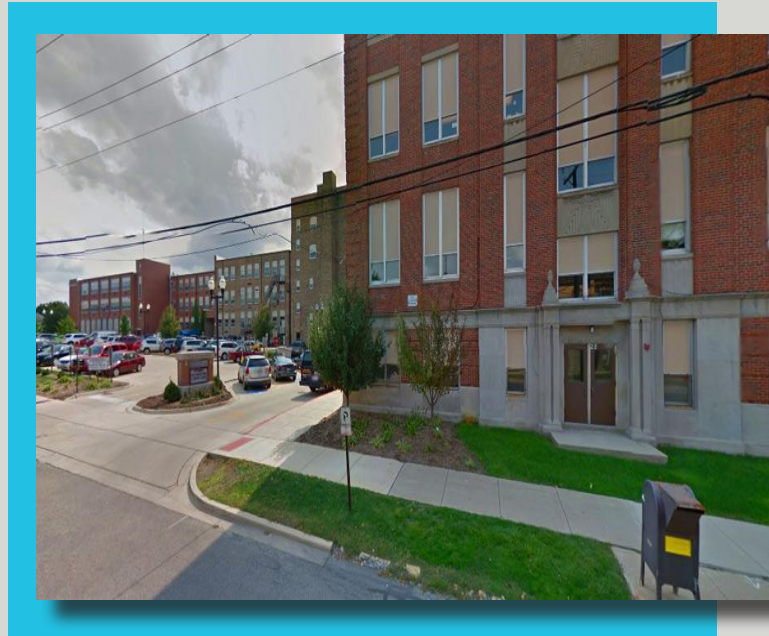
- Advocate for homeless children and their families.
- Help insure that homeless children in the district will not feel stigmatized due to their homeless status.
- Provide school supplies, including backpacks and/or uniforms to each child.
- Coordinate efforts of district transportation and external resources to take students to and from school as needed.
- Make all school activities, including before and after school programs accessible to each child.
- Provide tutoring and/or accessibility to tutoring as needed.
- Help parents complete enrollment forms and assist in obtaining school records, immunization records, birth certificates and other records as needed.
- Coordinate efforts with local community agencies to provide basic needs and services for homeless students and families, including medical, vision and dental care on a limited basis.
- Create awareness of, and promote sensitivity to, the educational and legal rights of homeless children and youth by school personnel.

Program Funding

Funding for this initiative was made possible thanks to Wells Fargo Bank. HOPE, along with the National Fair Housing Alliance and fair housing groups around the country, had filed a complaint against Wells Fargo Bank, alleging discriminatory treatment of their foreclosed (REO) properties in neighborhoods of color. Wells Fargo took a leadership role in changing its policies and entered into an agreement with the organizations, allowing those agencies to invest \$27 million in 19 cities around the country.

Learn more here:

<https://nationalfairhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Investing-in-Inclusive-Communities-FINAL-8-26-2016.pdf>



School District U-46's headquarters, located in Elgin, IL.

Meet Our Families...



Jorge, Arturo, Roberto, & Geraldo

Jorge and his three sons, Arturo, Roberto, and Geraldo are in year two of our rent assistance pilot. The boy's mother had previously taken them back to her home country, where they were subjected to terrible abuse. Jorge brought the boys back to the U.S. and was struggling as a father of three to provide adequate shelter for the family. The family lived doubled-up in a house-sharing situation and because of the living circumstances, Jorge's availability to work faced limitations.

Since receiving rent assistance, the family has been able to enjoy their own kitchen with their own refrigerator and stove access for the very first time. Jorge and his boys have loved being able to cook meals and eat together as a family. Jorge has also been able to work more hours and become permanently employed by a company instead of relying on unsteady, temporary work. His income has increased significantly during the rent assistance period. His oldest son, Arturo, is also on track to graduate from high school in the near future and is able to work and contribute to the household income.

Family

School attendance for the youngest son, Geraldo, dropped the first semester after receiving rent assistance. Unfortunately, the school was not in regular communication with Project Access and the attendance issue was not caught for several weeks. After finally becoming stably housed, Geraldo's system allowed him to react to the trauma of his past abuse, and he experienced issues with incontinence, resulting in pants-wetting. He was bullied at his school because of this and began sitting alone in the park most days after being dropped off at school. Once Project Access was notified of the issue, they were able to (1) provide adult diapers as a temporary solution, (2) get access to counseling for Geraldo, (3) advocate for a school transfer to address the bullying issue, and (4) institute and implement policies and procedures to ensure that all schools know to contact Project Access. Jorge has been committed to ensuring that his son receives counseling and assistance, which simply could not have been managed without stable housing. Geraldo's issues with incontinence have been largely resolved with the help of therapy. These boys now have a serious chance at reaching their full potential and thriving in ways that would not have been possible without this rent assistance pilot.

Finances

Career

Health

Did you know...?

"On average, just 64% of homeless students graduated high school on-time, well below both the national average of 84.1% and their low-income peers at 77.6%. Without a high school diploma, youth are 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness as young adults."

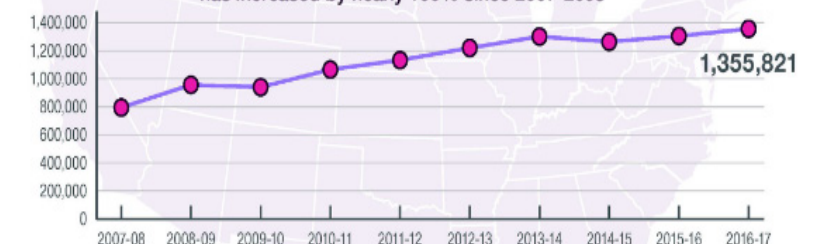
Education Leads Home

Snapshot on Student Homelessness



The National Picture

The number of students identified as homeless in the United States has increased by nearly 100% since 2007-2008



These numbers do not capture homeless children and youth who were not identified as homeless; who were not enrolled in school; or who dropped out of school. Nor do they include young children who were not enrolled in preschool programs administered by local educational agencies.

*Information retrieved from Colombia Legal Services Transportation "Flex Fund" Position Paper



The Project Access Mission is to...

ENSURE

that homeless students are identified by school personnel;

PROVIDE

school supplies, including backpacks, and/or uniforms to each child;

SUPPORT

and insure that homeless children in the district are not stigmatized due to their homeless status;

COLLABORATE

and coordinate efforts with local community agencies to provide basic needs and services for homeless students and families, including medical, vision, and dental care on a limited basis;

ASSURE

district transportation and external resources are available to take students to and from school as needed;

Eligibility Requirements

For families to be eligible to participate in HOPE's rental assistance program in partnership with Project Access, they had to meet the following requirements:

- Families must have at least one child enrolled in U-46.
- Families must be currently experiencing homelessness (lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence).
- Families who moved more than once during a school year but were not homeless as of the application date were considered highly mobile and were also eligible for assistance.
- Family income cannot exceed 50% of the area median income as determined by HUD for the metropolitan area (less than \$3,204/month for a household of four at program entry) within the past 18 months.

Program Preferences

- Families that had engaged in the past year with Project Access.
- Single-headed households.
- Families with persons with disabilities in household.

Program Expectations

Certain expectations were set at the start of the rental assistance program to help hold families accountable for their outcomes while concurrently helping participants plan for their futures. These included:

- Work on the educational goals and improving the school attendance of your child(ren).
- Communicate with U-46 Project Access at least every 30 days.
- At three months into the program, create at least 3 short- and long-term goals.
- At the end of the program, have two months' rent saved.
- Only occupants listed on the application can be occupants in the house without prior written authorization.
- Applicants will find decent, affordable housing that suits their family size. HOPE will provide landlords a letter verifying rental assistance amount.

Learn more about Project Access and the work they do here:

<https://www.u-46.org/domain/2919>



Meet Our Families...



Nell, Bob, Thomas, & Lucy

Finances

Nell and Bob "graduated" from HOPE's rent assistance pilot after the first year of assistance. They had been living with their teenage son, Thomas, and teenage daughter, Lucy, in an extended stay motel for almost a year. Following a work injury and instability in temporary employment, they were unable to pay rent and ended up in a shelter. After their son graduated from high school and Bob's temporary job hours were increased, the family was able to earn enough to pay for "temporary" lodging at an extended stay motel. Paying between \$2,400/mo to \$3,000/mo at the extended stay hotel left the family unable to save any money for a security deposit or a monthly rental payment. Nell and Bob also had difficulty paying their income taxes. The family only had one car, which limited the ability of Nell to work at another job while Bob and Thomas used the car for work. Nell and Bob also defaulted on their student loans during the time they had job instability in addition to paying so much for the motel.

After receiving one year of rent assistance, the family has been able to increase their household income to over \$50,000 per year. They were also able to purchase a second car and earn additional income through a car ride service. Nell and Bob reorganized their debt and were able to file their income taxes and become current on student loan payments. Their credit scores increased as well. Lucy began high school during this year of rent assistance and joined the Speech and Debate team in addition to participating in other extracurricular activities. The family was also able to plan and enjoy many more activities together as a family. Because their income had increased substantially at the one-year assessment, they were able to graduate from the program and maintain rental housing on their own.

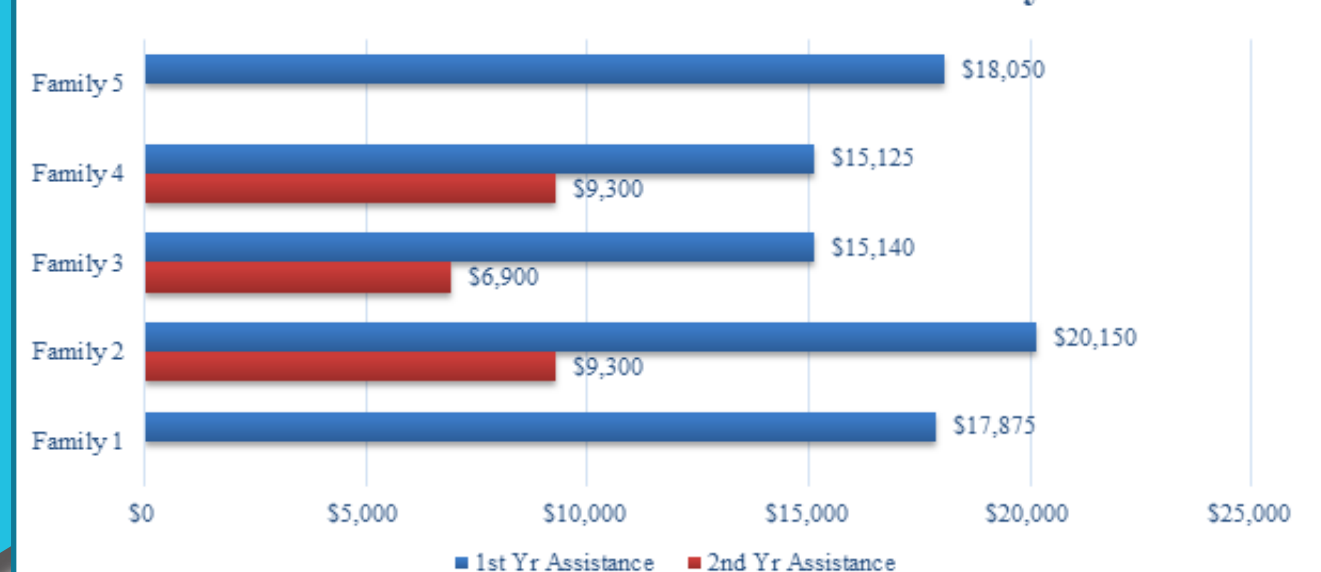
Community

Family

Career

HOPE provided a total of \$111,840 in rent assistance to U-46 families. The graph shows the breakdown of assistance by program year for each family. HOPE paid for 100 percent of the rent in the first year and 50 percent of the rent in the second year. Second year numbers might be less than half of the first year numbers due to security deposit expenses in the first year. Because Family 1 graduated from our program after 1 year, a dollar amount for the 2nd year is not listed for them. Family 5 is still in their first year of rent assistance and their number reflects the assistance amount to date (10 months).

HOPE Rent Assistance to Each Family



Meet Our Families...



Isabella, Maggie, Clara, Hailey, Dominic, & Diego

Health

Isabella and her four children were in unstable housing for almost a year before receiving rent assistance. Isabella left an abusive husband and lived with her children at a domestic violence shelter for almost 6 months. After the shelter, they lived doubled-up with another family in a very small unit for several months. Isabella briefly returned to her abusive husband when she had exhausted all other housing options. While Isabella received some child support, it was inconsistent, and her ability to work was constrained by her young children and living circumstances.

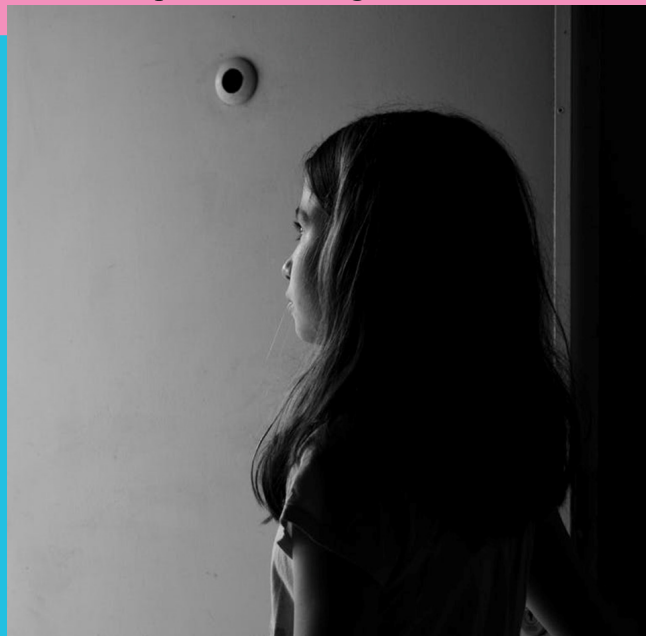
Personal Growth

After receiving rent assistance, Isabella and her children moved to a house with a yard. The young children were excited that they had a “park” at their house because their fenced yard included a playset. This was a huge change for the children who had needed to be kept inside and quiet per their father’s rules or when they were doubled up. Project Access helped Isabella obtain daycare assistance, which allowed her to work, and gave the children a structured environment as well. Isabella worked many hours and was promoted to Manager by her employer. About seven months into the first year of the rent assistance, Isabella gave birth to a fifth child. When her youngest child’s health problems limited Isabella’s ability to work, she was able to use some of the money she had saved to file for and complete her divorce. Getting a formal divorce with court-ordered child support and a structured visitation schedule has allowed Isabella and the children to thrive. Isabella has also saved money and would like to one day own a home. She has also taken additional classes to improve her earning potential.

Career

Finances

Attendance improved for the two older children already in elementary school, with each child reducing missed school days by over one week. Project Access also helped Isabella access early childhood learning opportunities for her younger children as well, which will have positive impacts in the long-term outcomes for this family.



Domestic Violence and Homelessness...

In a 2012 survey of 25 cities,
28% of Mayors cited domestic violence as a leading cause of homelessness among families with children.

*Information retrieved from Family and Youth Services Bureau

Meet Our Families...



Sara, Nathaniel, Jordan, Elise, & Tina

Sara and her four children left an abusive and violent home and had experienced living in both a shelter and doubled-up with family before receiving rent assistance. We initially selected Sara to receive rent assistance in 2017, however, due to pressure from her children and mother about cultural and religious beliefs, Sara decided to return to her husband to try to work things out.^[1] Sadly, things did not improve at home. After Sara’s mother came for an extended stay and saw her daughter’s circumstances, she agreed that Sara and the children needed to leave. Because Sara had spoken with Project Access several months after our initial rent assistance families had been selected, we were unable to commit funds to a fifth family at that point. However, one of our other families, Nell, Bob, Thomas, and Lucy, graduated from our program earlier than expected, and we were able to add Sara and her family in 2018.

Personal Growth

Sara had been working up to 20 hours a day to provide for her family. After receiving rent assistance, Sara still works very hard, but has been able to cut back her working hours to spend more time with her children. She has also taken additional classes to improve her employability and has finalized her divorce. Her three older children are now flourishing, with increased attendance, participation, and focus at school and her youngest child has benefitted from early childhood learning opportunities.

Family

Did you know...?

38% of all domestic violence victims become homeless at some point in their lives.

Learn more here:

<https://tinyurl.com/myaw4dt>



According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline: <https://www.thehotline.org/2013/06/10/50-obstacles-to-leaving-1-10/> “Leaving is not easy. On average, it takes a victim seven times to leave before staying away for good. Exiting the relationship is the most unsafe time for a victim. As the abuser senses that they’re losing power, they will often act in dangerous ways to regain control over their victim.”

Moving Forward with HOPE





HOPE's initiative demonstrates the crucial connection between stable housing and essential life outcomes. It also documents that small investments in housing can have a huge payback in the short-term. While the data provided by this initiative includes only a small number of families and does not meet the standards of social science research and the numbers necessary for statistical methodology, it does provide enough initial data to warrant a much larger initiative. As we are able to secure funding to continue our program, we will also update this report over the next decade to include longer term outcomes.

The fact that the pilot was small enabled both HOPE and Project Access to administer the program without using any administrative funding. Staff from both organizations stepped up to add our program to their normal duties. It was truly a labor of love. Our partnership with Project Access also allowed us to quickly identify families in need and limit the time they spend homeless. Connecting rent assistance, fair housing, and equal access to opportunity with social services provided through homeless liaisons proved to be an effective model that is both replicable and scalable.

While this initiative shows great promise for interventions and solutions for individual families, it does not address the root causes of housing instability. Affordable housing is a crisis across the United States and there must be bold policies and legislation implemented to change this. To do so, we must commit to doing two things. First, we must do all we can to help house families currently in crisis. Second, we need to make affordable, equitable, and decent housing a fundamental right in this country. It's a difficult task, but Desmond's book *Evicted* outlines some actionable solutions, all of which we endorse. As for our own efforts, there are some closing thoughts we'd like to impart.

- Because funds were limited (and to decrease administrative burden), HOPE opted to pay **full rent assistance** for one year, avoiding complicated calculations and affordability determinations. This allowed us to include families with little to no income at the start of their rent assistance. All families greatly increased their income and earning capacity during the program and appear to be on track to successfully graduate. A **shallow rent subsidy** may work in some circumstances and allow more families to be assisted, however, it would prevent someone like Elaine, who had virtually no income at the start of this program, to participate.
- The overwhelming stress of homelessness, inadequate housing, and poverty changes the brain and prevents even short term planning. As noted in *Evicted*, "[r]esidential stability begets a kind of psychological stability." The longer someone has been in unstable housing, the more time they will need to rewire their "stress" brain. **Be patient** and allow sufficient time for these people to properly adjust. Elaine, who had been homeless for two years and had experienced the added trauma of losing everything to Hurricane Katrina, took the longest to find housing, which included arranging to move and setting up utilities, and to find stable employment. Six months into the first year of full rent assistance, it wasn't clear if she would be able to succeed after our program concluded, prompting Project Access and HOPE to discuss potential alternatives and how to ensure long-term stability. Nine months into the program, Elaine had found employment, where she has now been stable for one year and has received a promotion and recognition. It is important to have the ability to pivot supportive services to ensure that as participants adjust to their rent assistance programs and begin to decompress, the organization supporting them can adjust to their individual needs and help them move toward self-sufficiency.

- For some families burdened by paying excessive "rent" to temporary housing options such as extended stay hotels, a smaller investment from a **fund to assist with first month's rent and security deposit** may be sufficient to stabilize their housing.
- A **fund to prevent homelessness and/or eviction** altogether may also be effective at reducing homelessness for families. The Hamilton Families study is indication of such a fund's efficacy, as during the first year of Hamilton Families' pilot program, the number of homeless students decreased by 255 within one school year and 29 at-risk families (for homelessness) were able to avoid eviction and homelessness.
- Ensuring that the amount of rent assistance is enough to allow families to live in **adequate housing in opportunity areas** is critical in protecting them from substandard housing in concentrated areas of poverty. HOPE helped identify a few key factors that aided families in accessing decent housing. Factors such as determining fair market rent based upon precise geographical location and family size, including a utility allowance, and allowing for a 10% increase above 50th percentile in rent all proved equally valuable in guaranteeing adequate living conditions. Project Access staff also conducted on-site visits prior to lease signing to ensure the adequacy of the housing, and HOPE staff conducted their own due diligence of the landlords and property ownership as well.
- After the Hamilton Families' shallow rent subsidy and eviction prevention program results were reported upon, some of the largest employers and philanthropies in the Bay Area funded an initiative focused on rapid rehousing and ending homelessness for families in the San Francisco Unified School District. As of today, they have housed 307 families, with a goal of housing 450 families by 2020. **With appropriate philanthropic and corporate investment, HOPE and Project Access could end homelessness for U-46 families.** With that in mind, a few key things to consider are:

- Because Illinois has a state law allowing school districts to allocate homelessness funds to housing rather than transportation, all funders – government, corporate, and philanthropic – should dedicate sufficient funds to allow schools to provide flexible rental subsidies. Learn more [HERE](https://tinyurl.com/y6peghgi).
 <https://tinyurl.com/y6peghgi>
- Supporting legislative policies such as sealing tenant eviction records until an eviction is actually completed would prevent tenants from being blackballed by inaccurate eviction records.
 <https://povertylaw.org/clearinghouse/article/blacklisting>
- Working towards undoing the ban on rent control measures in Illinois would help provide affordable housing for families in crisis.
 <https://tinyurl.com/y5atvetr>
- Supporting local efforts to increase affordable housing unit production and local inclusionary zoning ordinances would help shape a strategic approach to affordable housing development.
 <https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Economics-of-Inclusionary-Zoning.pdf>

While housing discrimination does occur at all economic levels, our initiative highlighted the barriers faced by families with an intersectionality of race, gender, familial status, national origin, and victims of domestic violence. Supporting fair housing education, outreach, complaint intake, and advocacy – especially non-profit private fair housing organizations such as HOPE Fair Housing – is critical in ensuring that our hope for fair housing becomes a reality.

Terminology

Please note that terms here are used for reporting purposes and reflect data used in this report. Definitions of these terms may vary slightly to those found in HUD regulations and the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act.

- **Chronically Homeless Individual/People in Families** – Individuals or people in families whom have been continually homeless for one year or more and have experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years where the combined length of time homeless in those occasions is at least 12 months.
- **“Doubling up”**– A situation where a person is unable to maintain housing of their own and is forced to stay with a series of friends and/or family members.
- **Emergency Shelter** – A facility with a primary purpose of providing temporary shelter for homeless people.
- **Homeless Individual** – A person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and may live on the street, in a shelter, vehicle, or other non-permanent housing situation.
- **Opportunity Area** - Places where jobs are relatively plentiful and access to education, healthcare, and other amenities are close at hand.
- **People in Families with Children** – People who are homeless as part of a household that has at least one adult (age 18 and older) and one child (under age 18).
- **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)** – A housing model designed to provide housing assistance (project and tenant-based) and supportive services on a long-term basis to formerly homeless people.
- **Rapid Rehousing** – A model that is designed to move quickly to provide housing for homeless people and provide short-term services such as rental assistance and/or other supportive services.
- **Safe Havens** – Temporary, supportive housing that provides shelter and services for hard-to-reach homeless individuals.
- **Sheltered Homelessness** – This refers to homeless people staying in shelters, safe havens, or transitional housing.
- **Transitional Housing Programs** - provide people experiencing homelessness a place to stay combined with supportive services for up to 24 months.
- **Unsheltered Homelessness** - refers to people whose primary nighttime location is a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for people (for example, the streets, vehicles, or parks).



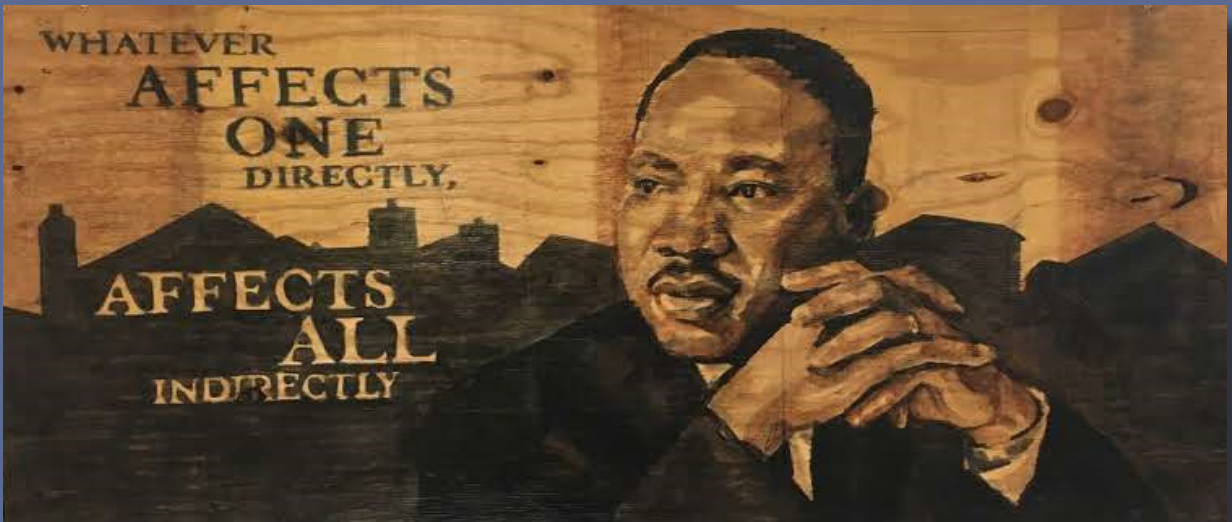
In Their Own Words...

“My children have had a great school year. I am very thankful and would not have been able to have such a good year and obtain a divorce without the help HOPE gave me.”

-Isabella

“We love our home and are very thankful for it. With the rent assistance from HOPE, I have been able to obtain a full-time job. Sabrina – I have my own bedroom and can participate in after school activities because I live closer to school.”

-Claine



“The stability of housing helped our family tremendously. We knew that once we had a place to live, things would change. We are consistently looking for ways to improve our lives and this program has given us the ability to do so. Thanks from the bottom of our hearts,

Nell, Bob, Thomas & Lucy.

“My boys and I are very thankful and have been able to accomplish so much as a family this past year. We have been able to experience eating as a family for the first time and cooking for ourselves. We had never slept in beds or had our own refrigerator. We are also grateful to Project Access for helping the boys with tutors and counseling referrals.”

-Jorge



202 W. Willow, Suite 203
Wheaton, IL 60187
630-690-6500