

New Foundations: A PPL Program

New Foundations: A PPL Program offers comprehensive support services to 44 resident families in east St. Paul to help them achieve stability. Through the New Foundations Permanent Supportive Housing Program, we help families not only with their immediate needs of housing, but their longer-term goals in education, employment, budgeting, parenting and maintaining their recovery of chemical dependency and mental health issues. The adults we work with are among the most vulnerable in our society. Multiple barriers hinder their physical and psychological health, intellectual growth, effective parenting, employment and financial stability. The program has a track record of success, countless families have worked hard to build assets and overcome barriers to make positive changes and improve their lives.

Without PSH, these services and support would not be possible. All families coming into the Program were homeless, Chemically Dependent and have at least one mental health diagnosis. Many have several significant barriers including 200% below poverty, rental histories that include evictions and unlawful detainers and lack basic education to obtain a job.

The New Foundations Program provides comprehensive support services for families suffering with long-term homelessness as a result of issues associated with mental illness and chemical dependency. This intensive program focuses on families living in PPL's Crestview Apartments in St. Paul and has proven to help families achieve their longer-term goals in: education, employment, budgeting, parenting, and maintaining their recovery of life-long chemical dependency and mental health issues. Uniquely, it is one of the few supportive housing programs that accept both men and women who are in recovery from chemical dependency and have a mental illness diagnosis.

The Program's objective is to provide families with the tools and resources they need to achieve mental and physical health, rebuild relationships between parents and children, and maintain sobriety in a nurturing community setting. The specialized focus is on addressing the needs of parents who are dually diagnosed with a mental illness and chemical dependency with stabilizing services that support treatment, recovery, and growth. At the same time, children, many of whom are reuniting with parents after time apart, are given individualized services that attend to their social and emotional development, as well as their academic achievement.

Overall New Foundations Program goals:

- Help families obtain and maintain stable housing within a community of support.
- Facilitate mental and chemical health and a positive outlook.
- Build parenting skills and ensure a safe, loving environment in which children thrive.
- Help families achieve economic stability.
- Expand opportunities and help families build a future.

The adults who come to New Foundations are among the most vulnerable in our society. Multiple barriers hinder intellectual, physical, psychological, parenting, employment and financial stability. **With a capacity of 44 families, the program served a total of 57 formerly homeless families, comprised of 146 individuals in 2011.** In addition to homelessness, chemical dependency and mental illness, the severe challenges to stable housing, effective parenting and healthy child development faced by families include criminal histories, unlawful detainers, and a history of physical or sexual abuse. Many of the children have been separated from their parents, diagnosed with mental health disorders or have Individual Education Plans. Unique among similar programs, it engages the entire family, recognizing that everyone in the family is part of the recovery from homelessness to a life of stability. Individual and family goals related to sobriety, health, parenting, education, employment and housing are established on arrival; in depth and frequent case management provides the structure for measuring each family's progress.

Core components of New Foundations: A PPL Program are:

Case Management: From extensive intake and individual goal planning to weekly individual meetings, all residents are connected with resources to address their specific needs. Family Service Coordinators work closely with families in a variety of ways, including intake, assessment, development of a family services plan, entitlement advocacy, encouragement and support, mentoring and role-modeling, brokering and coordination of services, advocacy for each family member, counseling, and crisis management. Staff develop relationships and coordinate with all agencies involved with the family at move-in (child protection, probation, mental health case workers) within the first two weeks resident moves in to ensure services are being accessed and provided to clients. Staff also develop clear plans with residents to help them secure mainstream resources and advocate for attainment of resources, design individual plans and goals in partnership with each resident and family member, help residents identify goals that promote individual development, address recovery/relapse prevention, family stabilization and community participation. In partnership with the family, we develop an individualized plan to accomplish these goals. Staff meet with residents at least once weekly to monitor and record progress; provide mentoring, on-going family support, and crisis intervention. Case management services are provided to support client goals during their stay at Crestview and six months after leaving our program.

Family Support Services: Dialectical Behavior Therapy focuses on building life and social skills, to essentially help individuals learn how to manage their daily lives. Families who come to New Foundations have a whole host of challenges that preclude them from being "ready" to take on new tasks. Staff have implemented a "90 day window" program for new residents, which means that during their first three months at Crestview the level of skill-building therapy is advanced with frequent contact between residents and Family Services Coordinators. This time has proven invaluable in helping residents gain life skills and a support network that prepares them for making even stronger steps forward in their personal development and quest for family stability. Additional services include: chemical dependency recovery support, drug screening, referrals for mental health diagnostic testing, home visits; Family Focus support groups with topics such as Mental & Chemical Health, Relapse

Prevention, and Self-Esteem Building; Women's Support; Men's Support; individual and couples counseling.

Family Systems Approach: This approach connects to the whole of the family to help provide broader support and broader positive behavioral change. A family's patterns of behavior influence the individual and therefore needs to be a part of any treatment plan or program. Research indicates that using a family systems approach is as effective, and in some cases more effective than standard and/or individual treatments for many mental health problems such as adult schizophrenia, affective (mood) disorders, adult alcoholism and drug abuse, children's conduct disorders, adolescent drug abuse, anorexia in young adult women, childhood autism, chronic physical illness in adults and children, and marital distress and conflict. A family systems approach widens the traditional emphasis on the individual to attend to the nature and role of individuals in primary relationship networks such as marriage and the family.

Children Services/Parent Education: Parent education and parent/child education are provided onsite by full time staff member as well as several partnerships with other agencies. We focus on nutrition education, provide an after school homework help program for school age children, educational camp during school release, childcare for preschoolers, and referrals to community resources. Individual case management and coordination of outside services help parents set and implement goals for their children and help children thrive. When a family is being reunited at Crestview, children receive support during the reunification process and learn to develop strategies to cope with the dynamics of a family newly in recovery. Parents become involved at their children's schools and attend school conferences. Children remain in the same school and are involved in school and extracurricular activities.