

SACRED HEART HOUSE OF DENVER
2006/2007 YEAR-END REPORT/EVALUATION
(June 1, 2006 – May 31, 2007)

NARRATIVE

A. Program Description

With the help of its donors, Sacred Heart House of Denver offered a continuum of services to homeless mothers with children and single women through its In-House Stabilization, Follow-Up and Transitional Housing Programs. Through the In-House Stabilization Program, it provided temporary emergency housing, food, clothing and transportation to meet residents' critical physical needs. With case management, referrals to service providers in the community were made to help them identify and solve problems that caused their homelessness. The Follow-Up Program offered continued support to increase self-sufficiency and prevent future homelessness. The Transitional Housing Program provided affordable housing and case management for mothers committed to increasing their self-sufficiency through education or job training.

B. Results

Between June 1, 2006, and May 31, 2007, 217 homeless individuals, 55 mothers with 108 children and 52 single women, had the opportunity to rebuild their lives through services offered by the In-House Stabilization Program. Forty-two percent of the homeless mothers who came to Sacred Heart House of Denver had one child; 27% had two children, while 22% percent had three children. Seven percent of mothers were homeless with four children. One percent had five children.

Forty-six percent of the women arrived at Sacred Heart House with no income. Eleven percent, mothers with dependent children, received income from the TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) Program through Denver's Department of Human Services. Seven percent of the adult residents of Sacred Heart House received Social Security Income, and five percent received Social Security pensions; three percent received General Assistance. Twenty-one percent were employed, and two percent were employed with additional income. The remaining five percent were supported by other means, e.g., child support or income from a relative. Thirty percent of the women who stayed at Sacred Heart House of Denver were evicted from their homes; 21% faced homelessness after they lost their jobs; 10% were relocating from another city/state. Twenty-four percent attributed their situations directly to family/relationship problems, and 12% could not pay increased rent. Deinstitutionalization and a chronic transient lifestyle were among the remaining causes of homelessness. Thirty-five percent of the residents of Sacred Heart House of Denver during this period were African-American, 24% were White (non-Hispanic), and 33% were Hispanic. Five percent were Native American, and three percent were undetermined. Of the 107 women 25 years of age and older who stayed at Sacred Heart House, 30% were high school graduates or held General Equivalency Degrees. Twenty-nine percent had finished between nine and twelve years of school, and four percent had less than a ninth grade education. Twenty-three percent had some post-secondary education, while 14% were college graduates.

Forty-nine percent of the families who participated in the In-House Stabilization Program successfully moved into transitional housing or rented their own apartments or houses. Twenty-four percent of the families who stayed at Sacred Heart House of Denver were able to reconnect and stay with relatives; 14% moved into other emergency housing, in many cases continuing to work toward stabilization while waiting for housing to become available. The remaining 13% were unsuccessful: They were unwilling or unable to put forth the effort and work to take advantage of the resources available to them through the In-House Stabilization Program; their whereabouts were unknown after they left Sacred Heart House. The average length of stay for families was 20 days.

Thirty-seven percent of the 52 single women who stayed at Sacred Heart House of Denver moved into permanent or transitional housing. Twenty-seven percent reconnected and moved in with friends or family, and ten percent of homeless single women residents moved to other emergency housing. Twenty-seven percent of the single women did not stabilize: Mental illness and the consequences of extended periods of alcohol and drug abuse typically plagued homeless single women. Many of them simply did not have the capacity to change their lives. They needed shelter and support, while they struggled to find ways to maintain their daily existence. Single women stayed at Sacred Heart House an average of 15 days.

As in the past, the availability of affordable housing was the greatest barrier to stabilization. When residents had felonies and evictions in their histories, their housing options were very limited. It should be noted that, although Sacred Heart House of Denver served fewer families than last year, the percentage of those who stabilized increased from 46% to 49%. The time it took to find housing also impacted the number of families served: The average stay for families increased from 15 days to 20 days. When residents did secure housing, the Follow-Up Program helped them continue

their struggle to reintegrate into the community. To assist in reestablishing households, Sacred Heart House provided furniture and household goods with items donated to Sacred Heart House. Our monthly newsletter, the *Sacred Heart UpBeat*, with its practical advice on parenting and economic issues and recreation information, kept former residents in touch with Sacred Heart House. Personal achievements were published as positive reinforcement for progress toward successful independent living. Holiday help, emergency food, school supplies, resources with problem-solving advice and moral support were provided for over 800 former residents, 219 families with 512 children and 70 single women, through the Follow-Up Program.

With guidance from Transitional Housing Case Manager Joline Sanchez, mothers in our Transitional Housing Program focused on increasing job skills, planning for their futures and ensuring their long-term self-sufficiency in Sacred Heart House of Denver's Transitional Housing Program. These women were involved in educational programs at *Emily Griffith Opportunity School*, *Parks College* and *Community College of Denver*.

The case management at Sacred Heart House of Denver is referral-based, so we worked with virtually every service provider in the Denver metro area that provides services needed by our clients. Upon admission to Sacred Heart House, In-House Case Manager Meghan Salvesson helped each mother and single woman formulate a stabilization plan. School-age children were enrolled in neighborhood schools, most often *Gilpin Elementary*, *Bruce Randolph Middle* or *East High Schools*; children in elementary school attended an after-school program at *Gilpin Elementary School* designed to meet the special needs of homeless children.

The *Shelter Care Program* at *Curtis Park Community Center* and other providers offered childcare for preschoolers and infants, while mothers pursued housing and education/employment goals each day. With a referral from the case manager, *Child Care Innovations*, formerly *Family Resources and Child Care Education at Red Rocks Community College*, a *Qualistar Early Learning* partner, administering the *Child Care Vouchers Project for Homeless Families*, paid for 30 business days or six weeks of child care for resident mothers.

Operation School Bell through Denver Public Schools provided clothing for children through middle school age participating in Programs at Sacred Heart House of Denver. The *Women at Work Closet at Denver Works* provided professional clothing for women for job interviews and work. Clothing donated to *Sacred Heart House of Denver* helped women and children residents dress appropriately for each season.

If they were not already employed, the case manager referred women to *Denver Department of Human Services*, where they applied for TANF and received information on benefits, childcare and education. As part of the qualification process, they paid a mandatory visit to one of the *Denver Workforce Centers*, where they found information on full or part time jobs. Those without high school diplomas enrolled in General Equivalency Degree Programs at the *Department of Human Services*, *Emily Griffith Opportunity School*, *Community College of Denver*, the *Gathering Place* or another educational provider. The *Educational Opportunity Center*, a federally funded Program at the *Community College of Denver*, helped residents look at career options, select appropriate colleges or vocational schools and apply for financial aid. Those who were employed or received TANF benefits were encouraged to save money during their time at Sacred Heart House, so they would be financially positioned to reestablish their households.

Based on individual needs and availability, the case manager made appropriate housing referrals to *Family Homestead*, *Hope Communities*, *Aurora Self-Sufficiency*, *Catholic Charities*, *Colorado Coalition for the Homeless*, *Human Services, Inc.*, *Decatur Place*, *Family Tree*, *Warren Village*, *House of Hope*, *Joshua Station*, the *Colburn* and *Continental Divide*, among others. Public transportation was available with bus tokens from *Denver Department of Human Services* and those purchased by the Agency at a discount from the *Regional Transportation District*. Throughout their residency at Sacred Heart House of Denver, frequent case management meetings provided women with guidance, encouragement and support. They also helped the women remain focused on their primary purpose of securing housing and addressing any peripheral problems that would hinder their stabilization process. Each woman was required to spend at least one session with pro bono family therapist, Sunny Marsh, from the *Denver Family Institute*. After their initial sessions, most women eagerly welcomed the opportunity to see her again.

Residents of Sacred Heart House prepared themselves for independent living by attending weekly living skills workshops, which familiarized them with resources in the community. Representatives from *Community Housing Services, Inc.*, and the *Conflict Center* presented practical information on tenants' rights and understanding a lease and anger management, respectively. Students from *Regis University Nursing Program* and *Colorado State University* presented workshops on health care, parenting and budgeting. *TCF Bank* introduced residents to personal financial

literacy. Case Manager Joline Sanchez used her creative talent in workshops to help women increase their self-esteem. Acquiring the knowledge to solve problems on their own built women's confidence. Some of the living skills meetings featured former residents, who encouraged the women staying at Sacred Heart House by recounting their experiences with homelessness and their subsequent successes.

Wednesday evening focus groups, facilitated by our case managers and representatives from the *Conflict Center*, gave mothers insights into their children's behavior and introduced them to effective parenting. Mothers in our Transitional Housing Program received parenting instruction at a *Love and Logic* workshop. With the help of volunteers, Joline facilitated Family Fun Nights, emphasizing interactive play to develop healthy relationships between resident mothers and their children. *Stout Street Clinic* and the *Mental Health Corporation of Denver* supported the efforts of Sacred Heart House to promote residents' physical and mental health. In addition, *Stout Street Clinic* and *Holy Ghost Church* helped residents obtain birth certificates and identification cards. *Lens Crafters* and the *Denver Rescue Mission* supplied their glasses, and free haircuts from a volunteer cosmetologist boosted self-images.

Sacred Heart House of Denver continues to operate with four full-time and four part-time staff members. Executive Director Janet Morris and Assistant Director Garrett Singer have been with SHHD for 16 years; Joline Sanchez combines the duties of Transitional Housing Case Manager and Program Assistant. She has been with the Agency since 1999. For the first time this year, Sacred Heart House of Denver partnered with the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers (an organization similar to Americorps) to staff the In-House/Follow-Up Case Manager position. Meghan Salvesson was our first CVV placement. In addition to increasing our cost-effectiveness (SHHD pays a stipend to CVV, while CVV provides the participant's housing and health insurance.), we see this partnership as a way to bring new energy and ideas to our residents and our staff. One part-time housekeeper, who has been with Sacred Heart House for eleven years, a part-time Saturday House Manager, and two part-time Night Managers complete the staff. A cleaning service has replaced a second part-time housekeeper each weekday and Saturday morning. Volunteer support by 745 members of the community throughout the year remained integral to the operation of Sacred Heart House of Denver. Volunteers provided services ranging from house management every evening and childcare during living skills classes to evening meals and Sunday dinners.

C. Lessons Learned

Twenty-seven years of experience have reinforced the fact that education is the key to ensuring long-term self-sufficiency for homeless women. Our Transitional Housing Program was implemented based on this belief. Affordable housing was provided in six units for women increasing their education. Personal growth in financial and household management and parenting comprise critical components of accompanying intensive case management.

We are continuing to learn, as we move into the eighth year of the Transitional Housing Program, and the 28th year of helping homeless women achieve and maintain self-sufficiency. In addition to attaining an education, we have seen how critical it is for our clients to address peripheral problems (lack of healthy living habits, household organization skills, personal/relationship problems), which, if unresolved, prevent them from accomplishing educational goals and becoming self-sufficient. The greatest case management challenges we faced in providing our continuum of services were in teaching women how to replace negative behavior patterns with positive ones in such areas as financial management, parenting and other basic living skills.

Unfortunately, homelessness continues to be a major concern in Denver. According to *Homelessness in Metropolitan Denver - Eighth Annual Point-in-Time Study, 2007*, a report by the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative and Mile High United Way, on January 29, 2007, there were at least 8,482 homeless persons counted in the Denver metro area. Of the surveyed homeless, 5,055 or 59.6% are people in households with children. Nine hundred eighteen or 79.3% of the 1,157 homeless single-parent families with children were headed by females. Twenty-two percent of single homeless adults were women.

Sacred Heart House of Denver has a proven track record of helping almost 4,000 homeless families and single women strive for and maintain self-sufficiency over the past 27 years. Because of individual attention and support our residents receive and the extensive relationships the Agency has developed within the service provider community, any homeless woman who is serious about working toward her self-sufficiency, will undoubtedly make significant progress while she stays at Sacred Heart House of Denver.

There have been times this past year, because of the availability of hotel vouchers through the *Department of Human Services* and the *Colorado Coalition for the Homeless*, that women who could have come immediately to

Sacred Heart House of Denver either postponed coming or declined our services, because they preferred to stay at a hotel rather than actively participate in a program designed to help them find stable housing. Although the vouchers fill a critical need when shelters are full, they provided an easy alternative for women who were not motivated to become self-sufficient: They were temporary “band-aid” measures for “getting people off the streets.”

While it is impossible to meet all the needs of every homeless mother with children and single woman through *any* program, the In-House Stabilization Program at Sacred Heart House of Denver, with its staff and volunteers, was able to meet critical physical needs of our residents. It also provided them with as much information as possible to create a basis for future growth in self-sufficiency. With the continuing support of the Follow-Up Program, residents who stabilized were able to remain shelter-free and continue the process of reintegration into the community. Our Transitional Housing Program provided mothers with affordable housing and case management, while they focused and intensified their self-sufficiency efforts, eliminating the risk of homelessness from their children’s futures.

This year, thanks to the generosity of our donors, notably a donor-advised fund of The Denver Foundation, the UPS Foundation and University Hills Rotary Club, Sacred Heart House of Denver was able to replace our carpeting, install new windows, purchase a new resident refrigerator and a microwave, two new high-efficiency washers and dryers and update our playground material. A grant from the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation allowed us to have our web site redesigned and updated to maximize its potential. The quality of our services increased with these improvements.

D. Future Plans

In October 2003, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper appointed members to the Denver Commission to End Homelessness with a mandate to create a plan to end homelessness in ten years. The Commission focused on eight core goals, realizing that “affordable housing and services to help people return to full participation in the community are fundamental.” Sacred Heart House of Denver has worked toward these goals by providing emergency shelter beds, supportive services promoting long-term stability and improved functioning and transitional housing opportunities, as presented in the *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness or Denver’s Road Home*, as it is now called, even before the Plan was conceived and implemented. To increase its effectiveness in the service provider community and help Denver achieve its goals, Sacred Heart House of Denver has completed requirements to become an active participant in the Colorado Homeless Management Information Systems.

Sacred Heart House of Denver plans to provide its continuum of services to homeless mothers with children and single women with the help of those who support our In-House Stabilization, Follow-Up and Transitional Housing Programs. During our 2006/2007 Fiscal Year, Sacred Heart House of Denver was supported by foundations (44%), individuals (9%), competitive public funds – Emergency Shelter and Community Services Block Grants (9%), faith-based organizations (4%), business organizations (8%), Caring Connection – workplace giving (2%), interest and investment income (7%), unrealized gain on short term investments (10%), unrealized mortgage payable (5%) and rental income (2%). Sacred Heart House of Denver submits applications to foundations, corporations and faith-based organizations each year. Cultivating new donors within these groups is always a priority. Sacred Heart House competes annually for public funds in the form of Emergency Shelter and Community Services Block Grants. Fortunately, Sacred Heart House of Denver also has many individual donors, who have remained faithful to the support of our mission for the past 27 years. Sacred Heart House intends to keep its Programs worthy of their continued support and attractive to new ones. WFS Financial has sponsored four golf tournaments for the benefit of Sacred Heart House of Denver in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006, respectively.

We are hoping for an opportunity to apply for funding to replace our roof, linoleum, bedroom dressers, dining tables and chairs and family room furniture during the 2007/2008 fiscal year.

II. FINANCIALS

The fiscal year at Sacred Heart House of Denver extends from June 1st through May 31st. All expenditures were made in conjunction with the 2006/2007 Fiscal Budget approved by the Board of Directors in May 2006. There were no material variances. The 2006/2007 financial statements for Sacred Heart House of Denver are audited by Heider, Tanner and Dirks, Inc.; they are expected to be available in late September 2007.