



# Hope House of Milwaukee, Inc.

209 West Orchard - P.O. Box 04095  
Milwaukee, WI 53204

*Ending homelessness and creating healthy communities*

## THRESHOLDS PROGRAM

### Annual Report: January 1 – December 31, 2012

Single men face unique challenges in overcoming the barriers of homelessness. As the needs differ, so do the objectives. The **Thresholds Program** is designed to provide short-term shelter and supportive services to chronically homeless single men. With a significantly shorter length of stay, program personnel work quickly with the men to develop gainful employment opportunities and to secure permanent housing. By providing practical, applicable information, education, and services in a condensed timeframe, men are provided intensive, “life-ready” skills in the shortest period possible. This efficient process moves men into stable, permanent housing swiftly but carefully. Moreover, they are provided other necessary resources and tools that will ensure that they can maintain it.

### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The population served in the Thresholds Program is homeless single men from the city of Milwaukee. These individuals have entered the program from extremely low-income backgrounds with inadequate resources to secure housing.

**During the year of 2012, 160 single men were served by the Thresholds Program. There were 148 new intakes and 149 discharges. Demographically, of the new intakes, 49% were African-American and 47% were Caucasian. The average length of stay was 30 days, with 24% staying fewer than 7 days.**

**Issues other than homelessness faced by the new intakes include Mental Illness (36%), Alcohol Abuse (16%), Drug Abuse (14%), and Physical Disabilities (32%). Many of these men faced multiple issues simultaneously.**

### PROGRAM GOALS, OUTCOMES, AND RESULTS

The Thresholds Program is based upon the active and rapid involvement of single homeless men in a variety of activities, workshops, and concrete tasks that increase knowledge, improve skills, and teach new behaviors and strategies for future success in stable, long-term housing.

#### **GOAL 1: TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS IN SINGLE MEN.**

**Outcome:** Participants will obtain stable housing.

**Benchmark:** 40% of participants will obtain stable housing.

**Result:** 39% of participants in Thresholds obtained stable housing upon discharge.

#### **GOAL 2: TO ADDRESS OBSTACLES TO SECURING STABLE HOUSING**

**Outcome:** Participants will receive information, services, referral and linkage appropriate to employment needs.

***Benchmark:*** 30% of participants will have obtained employment or disability benefits prior to discharge.

***Result:*** 56% of participants have obtained employment or SSI/SSDI benefits prior to discharge.

## **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

1. Extended Emergency Shelter and Supportive Case Management Services: Hope House has successfully provided shelter and supportive case management services for homeless single men for nearly 20 years. Guests involved in the Thresholds Program have the opportunity to stay in the shelter for the up to thirty days, with a possible thirty day extension if they are progressively working towards employment and independent living. Upon arrival at Hope House, case managers work with the men to create an **Individual Service Plan**, which includes clearly defined goals and objectives for the clients to work on during their stay in the shelter. Instead of a “one size fits all” approach, each individual is able to receive specific, targeted services and programming, increasing the probability of personal investment, effort, and long-term success.
2. Practical Onsite Education and Development Opportunities: Applicable, useful education and development opportunities available onsite for guests are essential for success. Hope House offers educational workshops, participant-based discussion groups, and supplemental resource referrals and linkage activities. Additional adult education opportunities such as General Education Diploma (G.E.D.) courses are available onsite and at no cost via the Pathways to Progress Adult Education Program. Single men are obligated to actively participate in onsite initiatives assisting in meeting the goals and objectives of their work plan.
  1. It is not enough to simply help the men prepare resumes or submit applications. It is that connection between employability and potential employers that seems to be the biggest barrier for the men in securing a job. Hope House is working to create partnerships with local job training programs and employers to ensure the men’s success in obtaining and maintaining appropriate employment.
  2. Consistent Reinforcement and Role Modeling: The Thresholds Program emphasizes learning through frequent, consistent reinforcement from a variety of sources. Acting as catalysts for change, staff and volunteers are multiple points of reinforcement and support to promote the application of new constructive behaviors, skill sets, and strategies. In addition, they also act as mentors in areas of daily household maintenance such as personal and home hygiene, food preparation, childcare, conflict resolution, and other practical self-sufficiency activities. Sanders and Dadd (1993) reported that this continuous reinforcement process strengthens learning, improves self-empowerment, and increases application.
  3. Referral, Linkage, and Engagement to Community-Based Services: As it is impossible to meet every guest service need at Hope House, guests are referred to necessary and appropriate external resources. Hope House staff facilitate linkage and engagement to needed services from initial assessment through discharge, building a support network around guests and families; thereby increasing success in self-sufficiency and stability.

## **SUCCESS STORY**

August\* was originally from Green Bay, Wisconsin. He moved to Milwaukee in 2006 to take a job as a respiratory therapist at St. Luke's Hospital. He held that job until, in 2010, his father had a severe stroke. At that time August moved back home to Green Bay to take care of his father while he recovered from the stroke.

Once his father was able to take care of himself again, August began looking for a job in Green Bay, and was able to get some factory work, but was more interested in pursuing work related to his education in the medical field. Unfortunately for him, there was not a lot of work in Green Bay for respiratory therapists, so August decided to return to Milwaukee in hopes of having a better chance at finding work.

August had nowhere to stay in Milwaukee, so he came into the shelter system. August hit the ground running and quickly picked up some temp work, but knew right away that he would not be able to survive on that alone, so he continued searching for more stable employment. Within another month, August was able to get a full time, permanent job working at CapTel. He still is looking for work as a respiratory therapist, but the job at CapTel was at least enough to get him back on his feet and get him into an apartment.

Through hard work and determination, August proved that anyone can pick up the pieces of their life and get on the right track.

*\*Name changed for privacy.*