Shelters for Families and Single Adults

Not Alone

Keeping families together and singles safe.

Four shelters for single adults and four shelters for families with children provide not only food and a place to sleep, but also services to help people begin to address some of the issues that contributed to their homelessness. Often lack of employment, underemployment, the absence of job skills, mental illness, limited income, substance abuse, prior time in institutions and bad credit make finding permanent housing extremely challenging. Ultimately, the lack of affordable and appropriate housing is the reason why all of the shelters in our community are always full to capacity.

On the next page are the number of people served in the emergency homeless shelters in FY 2010 in the Fairfax-Falls Church community. On any given day there is space for 54 families and 144 individuals.

Although there is quite a bit of turnover in the shelters, very few leave the shelter and move into permanent housing due to lack of affordable housing options. Instead, possible outcomes may include:

- **Temporary housing**
  (emergency shelters, hotels or motels, staying with family and friends on a temporary basis)
- **Transitional housing**
  (any transitional housing program)
- **Institutional settings**
  (foster care, hospital, jail or substance abuse treatment facility)
- **Other places**
  (places not meant for habitation, or a person may be deceased)
- **Unknown destinations**
  (a person did not report where she or he moved)

The majority of adults residing in family shelters are working but cannot find affordable housing in our community.

"The staff at the shelter taught me the basic skills of being a kind and loving mother, and my children to be respectful toward others and each other.

Shelters for Families

599 people served exited the shelters.
158 of them moved into permanent housing.

Shelters for Single Adults

598 people served exited the shelters.
85 of them moved into permanent housing.

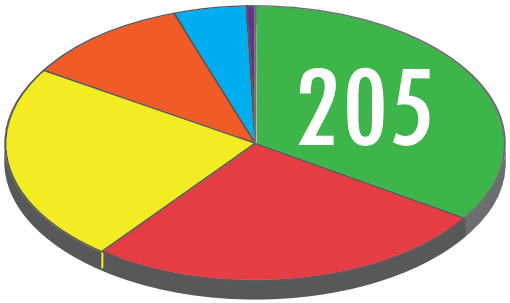
Number of people served: 770

- 251 families: 325 adults, 445 children.
- Average length of stay was 93 days.

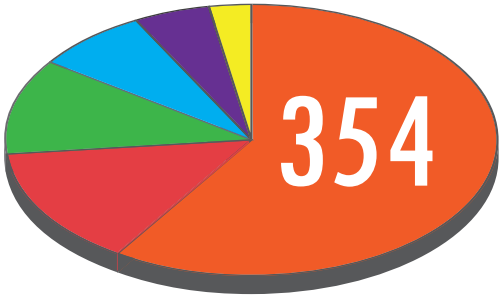
Number of adults served: 699

- Average length of stay was 72 days.

Exit destinations: Where did they go?



158	Permanent Housing	85
140	Transitional Housing	15
205	Temporary Housing	68
29	Other	45
2	Institutional Settings	31
65	Unknown	354



Success Story

A county resident was laid off earlier this year, but a month later he was able to secure new employment. Shortly after, he was laid off again. As a result, he and his wife were evicted from their apartment. The day of their initial eviction they reached out to Fairfax County Coordinated Services Planning (CSP) and were assigned to a caseworker at the Katherine K. Hanley Family Shelter. She arranged a place for them to stay within 24 hours. With the guidance and resources provided by the caseworker, this family was able to find a home of their own.

Survivors of Domestic Violence and Unaccompanied Youth

Surviving Together

Overcoming domestic violence.

Two shelters and four transitional housing programs in the Fairfax-Falls Church area are dedicated to meeting the housing needs of survivors of domestic violence. However, many survivors end up in emergency shelters and transitional programs that are not designed to meet their unique needs. Even more survivors return to their abusers for reasons including an inability to access the shelter and housing they need.

Survivors of domestic violence often face a different set of barriers to overcoming homelessness than others who experience homelessness. For example, survivors of domestic violence often have physical injuries, such as permanent scars from physical violence, ulcers, high blood pressure, flashbacks, self-mutilation, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and psychological injuries including panic attacks, depression, phobias, denial, helplessness and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The number of people served in domestic violence shelters and domestic violence transitional housing, as noted on the next page, may seem low for a community of over 1 million people, but the reality is that the number is low. That is not because the need is low, but because there is very limited space in domestic violence shelters and domestic violence transitional housing. For this reason, many survivors never get the housing support they need.

Helping youth who are homeless.

There are youth (people under age 18 or under age 22 and still in school) in our community who do not have a permanent place to live, or a parent or a guardian who lives with them. Many of these young people drop out of school and are forced to take on adult responsibilities at a very tender age.

There are three specialized programs for unaccompanied homeless youth (youth who are not living with a parent or a guardian) in the Fairfax-Falls Church community. An eight-bed emergency shelter provides crisis shelter for up to three weeks for youth ages 13-17. Most youth return to their family or a relative once they complete the program. Homeless Youth Initiative for people ages 16-22 who are homeless and still in high school provides transitional housing assistance and other supports so that the youth can finish school without entering the shelter system. Assisting Young Mothers is an 18-month transitional housing program for women ages 16-21 who are pregnant or have small children. The program provides housing and services to help these mothers become self-sufficient members of the community.

Youth homelessness is often invisible in the Fairfax-Falls Church community. However, 233 young people face the trauma of dealing with homelessness without a parent or a guardian. In one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, is it okay for even one young person not to have a safe and stable place to call home?

"I like it here better because here nobody tells my mommy how to run her life and how to treat us. We get along a lot better because here there is nobody fighting around us and everybody is nice and we have a lot more fun together here. They play with us instead of yelling and fighting and picking on us. We listen to our mom a little better. We don't get yelled at when we want to see or talk to our mom. Nobody acts like they are better than we are. Nobody tries to beat us up.

Programs for survivors of domestic violence do not have the capacity to serve the large number of people who are fleeing domestic violence.

This past year, only one student out of 69 who enrolled in the Homeless Youth Initiative, which is one of the three programs for unaccompanied youth, dropped out of school.

Survivors of Domestic Violence

Number of people served: 496

- Total of 210 households: 212 adults and 284 children.
- 393 people were in domestic violence shelters.
- 117 people were in domestic violence transitional housing programs.
- More than 70 percent of people who participate in transitional housing programs for domestic violence survivors exited to safe and stable permanent housing.

These statistics include only those people who were served in programs that are designated specifically for survivors of domestic violence, and may not be unduplicated numbers. These programs do not participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for reasons of safety and confidentiality.

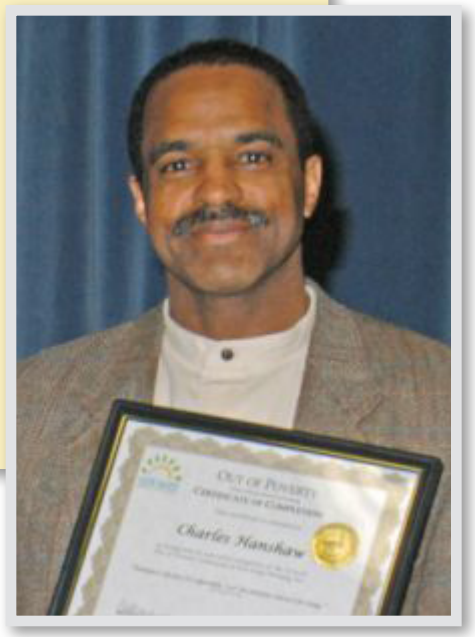
Unaccompanied Youth

Number of youth served: 233

- 208 people exited the three programs.
- 182 people (88 percent) who exited these programs moved into permanent housing.
- The number of homeless youth in our community, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education, is often over 2,000 per year. Included in this count are those who live in an unstable environment, often doubled-up with family and friends.

These statistics include only those people who were served in programs that are designated specifically for unaccompanied youth. The youth who are served in homeless programs with an adult are reported in the appropriate category. During FY 2010, these numbers were not collected in HMIS. A plan for inclusion of these programs in HMIS has been put in place.

Transitional Housing Programs



Transitions

On the way to permanent housing.

Transitional housing programs provide a period of time — up to two years — for families and individuals to address issues that create barriers to moving into permanent housing. Services focus on specific issues, such as domestic violence, language barriers, lack of education or job skills, poor credit, substance abuse recovery, or establishing a stable living environment for a person with serious mental illness.

More than 200 families (with nearly 500 children) and 100 single individuals in our community participated in transitional housing programs this past year, and nearly 75 percent moved on to permanent housing. In the future, our community will look at how to use these more intensive programs to help those who can most benefit from time-limited intensive services, while providing ongoing support for those with long-term disabilities, and rapidly moving those to permanent housing who are able to achieve stability with less intensive support.

Although transitional housing is, by design, not a permanent place to call home, it is necessary for many in this community who face such high barriers to housing that transitional housing is the most appropriate option. Hundreds of people every year are assisted to become self-sufficient because of the high-intensity services available through transitional housing.

People who participate in transitional housing programs are usually struggling with barriers to self-sufficiency, such as lack of employment or education, disability, language issues or poor credit.

Number of people served: 881

305 people served exited the programs; 222 of them moved into permanent housing.

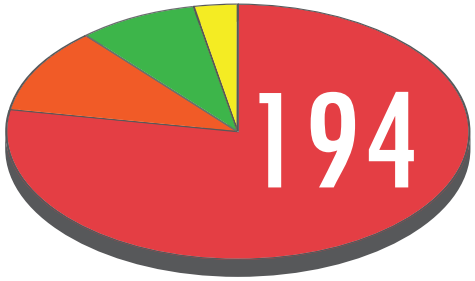
People in families: 774

- 214 families: 288 adults and 486 children.
- Average length of stay in transitional housing was 567 days.

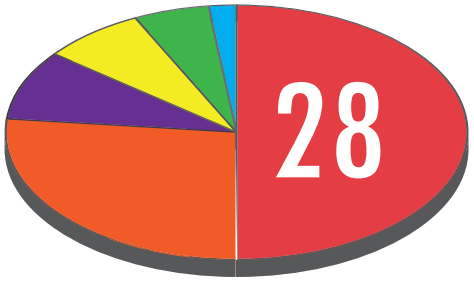
Single adults: 107

- Average length of stay in transitional housing was 336 days.

Exit destinations: Where did they go?



194	Permanent Housing	28
7	Transitional Housing	4
21	Temporary Housing	3
0	Other	1
0	Institutional Settings	5
27	Unknown	15



Success Story

A young woman was admitted into the Journeys Transitional Housing Program in early 2008. She had fled from her abusive husband with her three children to a domestic violence shelter. She utilized all the service components of the program including the monthly domestic violence and life skills groups. She secured employment in a restaurant and enrolled in a licensed practical nurse program as a part-time student. She continued taking care of her children, school and work. When her work hours were reduced and she started receiving child support from her ex-husband, she decided to enroll full time in the LPN program. She completed and passed her LPN board exams and went straight into a registered nurse program. Her case manager encouraged her to apply for the Women Independence Scholarship Program (WISP), a scholarship fund for domestic violence survivors. She received the scholarship and continued to make significant progress. She and her children graduated from the Journey's program this past spring.