



Long-Term Residential Services

STEPS Transitional Living Program



STEPS (Successful Transitions Effectively Preparing for Self-Sufficiency) is The Night Ministry's transitional living program, providing up to two years of housing and intensive life skills coaching for young adults ages 18 to 22 who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability and serving as a stepping stone toward independent living.

Background

One in ten Americans ages 18 to 25, about 3.5 million people, struggles with homelessness each year.¹ Because a homeless youth is more likely become a homeless adult, supportive housing that address the complex challenges that lead to homelessness are critical to breaking the cycle of homelessness, as are services that help young people develop the independent living skills needed for future stability.

The Program

Located at The Night Ministry's Open Door Shelter in Chicago's West Town neighborhood, STEPS houses up to eight young adults at a time. Each STEPS resident has their own bedroom and shares a bathroom with 1 other resident and a kitchen with 3 other residents. The Program can also accommodate residents' infants or toddlers, and is a safe and welcoming program for pregnant and parenting homeless young mothers. Residents are referred to STEPS through the City of Chicago's Coordinated Entry System, a new initiative to streamline access for youth to all services across the city which prioritizes individuals and households for housing based on vulnerability.

Through the STEPS Program, young people are provided with a stable residence, comprehensive case management, one-on-one life skills training, health care services, and other resources to help them live safe and responsible lives. Residents are empowered to set their goals in consultation with their Case Manager. Stable housing allows residents to focus on educational and vocational goals and serves as an opportunity to save money for future housing needs, such as a security deposit on an apartment or rent.



In addition to working with their Case Manager, residents receive ongoing coaching from Program Specialists and support from their fellow residents. Residents also have opportunities to participate in recreational activities organized by The Night Ministry that promote participation in the community and healthy lifestyles.

Partnerships

Critical supportive services are also fulfilled through partnerships with other Chicago-based organizations.

For example, free mental health services, including psychiatric care and counseling, are provided by professionals from Rush University Medical Center. These services are crucial as a reported seven in ten young people experiencing homeless have a mental health challenge.²

Program Achievements and Outcomes in Fiscal Year 2020

- STEPS served 19 homeless young adults and three of their infants/toddlers, who stayed a total of 2,586 nights
- 100% of residents who transitioned to long-term housing remain housed 90 days after discharge
- 88% of residents report having met someone in the program they can rely on after exiting
- 88% of residents reported they can now navigate the health care system



¹ Morton, M. H., A. Dworsky, & G. M. Samuels. *Missed opportunities: Youth homelessness in America. National estimates*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2017.

² Ibid.

The Night Ministry is a Chicago-based nonprofit that provides housing, health care, and human connection to individuals experiencing homeless or poverty. For more information, please visit www.thenightministry.org or call (773) 784-9000.