



OUR MISSION

The mission of Thames River Community Service, Inc. is to provide safe housing with support services by creating an environment in which families and individuals who are experiencing homelessness pursue goals for self-sufficiency and control over their lives. This mission is accomplished by promoting family and individual wellness, by empowering people to develop an achievable plan for successful independent living, to pursue significant employment, to acquire life skills and to maintain stability.

OUR HISTORY AND OUR WORK

For 24 years this agency has worked to support the movement to end homelessness in state. Our vision is that by creating a supportive environment, families and individuals can pursue goals for self-sufficiency, independence from public assistance and gain control over their lives. To that end, Thames River Community Service, Inc. was established in 1992, initially with the creation of Thames River Family Program (TRFP), which was a response to the rising number of families headed by single women who were homeless and living in poverty. Located in Norwich, CT and serving Southeastern CT, TRFP is a 24 hour staffed, transitional housing program with 24 apartments. Advocates and other supportive staff work closely with families coming from shelters to assist them in becoming employed and/or more employable, helping them to gain financial literacy by learning to budget and improve their credit, to acquire tenancy skills and to overcome criminal histories. There also is a great deal of effort to provide support and resources around the needs of their children by working collaboratively with other area social providers, the educational system as well as mental health and wellness facilities. Staff works together with all families to establish achievable goals in these areas so that they can leave TRFP for permanent housing, in most cases, in less than a year. Beginning in May 2017, we repurposed our transitional housing program to one in which all heads of households are parenting youth (women, males or parenting couples) between the ages of 18 and 24. To date, we are the only Youth Transitional Housing Program in the State. We follow a Housing First model in which there are low barriers for entry into our program. TRFP receives funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, The CT Department of Housing, United Way of Southeastern CT and private grants and donations.

At this time, we are not just the only youth transitional housing program in our region, but we are the only HUD funded transitional program in the State serving these young parents.

In 2008, the agency's Supportive Housing Program began with a grant received from the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Families receive rental assistance and support from case managers who partner with the nine families to provide comprehensive, individualized services in safe and affordable scattered site housing units. Heads of household in these families have mental illness and/or chemical dependency, histories of trauma/domestic violence, are homeless and have incomes at or below 50% of the median income of this area.

In 2018, we received funding as part of the \$6.5 M award given to the State of Connecticut for a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project. We have a contract with the Department of Housing to provide a Rapid Re-Housing Program for young adults 18-24 years old. Participants receive help with obtaining an apartment, case management, rental assistance and support with housing retention, employment and education, as well as financial literacy.

Since July 2014, TRCS has participated in the Southeastern Connecticut Coordinated Access Network (CAN) which provides for a direct path to getting services, supports and housing. When this idea was brought to our region, we became part of the effort to set up this system, which was the first in the State and to determine how our agency's transitional housing and supportive programs would fit into it.

Finally, we have been instrumental in bringing area youth providers together to sit on a committee as part of our local Sub-Continuum of Care Team (The Partnership to End Homelessness) designed to make each other aware of the existing programs, agencies and schools in the area that provide services to youth. We have identified some of the gaps and needs for services in the region and are looking at ways that we can further address them. This committee has sense morphed into one of eight statewide Youth Engagement Team Initiatives (YETI). These are regional work groups which bring together partners working in youth and housing services to help make homelessness for youth rare, brief and non-recurring. The YETI is also responsible for organizing and implementing their region's Youth Count.