



Early Intervention Services

# Interim Housing Program

The Interim Housing Program is one of The Night Ministry's five Youth Housing Programs, providing critical shelter and supportive services to young people ages 14 to 21 who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability. It is one of the only programs in the city of Chicago that provides emergency shelter to homeless young people on an immediate basis with no waiting list.



## Background

Nearly 16,000 unaccompanied people between the ages of 14 and 24 experience homelessness a year in Chicago.<sup>1</sup> Reaching homeless youth at a young age is critical to breaking the cycle of homelessness, as a homeless young person is more likely to become a homeless adult. Research indicates that many young adults experiencing homelessness had periods of homelessness or housing instability that began in childhood or adolescence.<sup>2</sup> In addition, many homeless young people have had little opportunity to develop the basic skills needed for independent living.

## The Program

Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the Interim Housing Program provides up to 16 clients with short-term housing at any one time, and is equipped to serve the infants and young children of pregnant and parenting young mothers as well. Residents are referred by local schools, police, social service agencies, or through self or peer-referral.

In addition to housing, residents receive one-on-one support from Case Managers, who work closely with clients to identify their immediate needs and develop individualized case plans, offering a supportive framework for the achievement of goals, greater stability, and independence. In tandem with Case Managers, Program Specialists provide around-the-clock supervision and assistance with meeting case plan goals and developing independent living skills. Staff frequently assist and accompany clients to get IDs, visit doctors, and other important appointments while also helping them find ways to navigate additional community resources.



When possible and appropriate, program staff provide counseling and support to reconnect residents with their families. When family reconciliation is not possible or safe, staff work to link clients with transitional housing or an independent living situation within four months. Case Managers advocate for placement in subsidized and supportive housing programs through active participation in the City of Chicago's Coordinated Entry System, a new initiative to streamline access for youth to all housing services across the city.

## Partnerships

Critical supportive services are also fulfilled through partnerships with other Chicago-based organizations. 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 homelessness have a mental health challenge.<sup>3</sup> Minors entering the program also work with Alternatives, the Chicago-area Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services agency, to ensure reunification services are accessed and family reunification is considered. Meanwhile, experienced volunteers from Chicago Cares provide cooking and career building lessons on a weekly basis.



## Program Achievements and Outcomes in Fiscal Year 2020

- The Interim Housing Program served 129 homeless young people (69 young adults and 60 minors), who stayed a total of 4,652 nights
- 74% of discharged residents transitioned to more stable housing
- 32 clients enrolled or maintained enrollment in mainstream benefits, vocational, or educational services
- 76% of residents reported meeting someone while in the program they can rely on once the exit

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<sup>1</sup> Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. *2017 Estimate of Homeless People in Chicago*, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://www.thenightministry.org) or call (773) 784-9000.