



Lutheran Social Services of North Florida

InnBetween Transitional Housing
&
Success Forward: Advocates for Families



Success Forward: Advocates for Families
Volunteer Handbook September 2014



Be inspired—Make an impact

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Program History, Mission, and Values

History

The Success Forward: Advocates for Families program was developed in 2014 with a grant from Wheat Ridge Ministries as an adjunct to, and enhancement of, the InnBetween Transitional Housing program for families with children experiencing homelessness. Informed by Wheat Ridge's holistic view of well-being, Success Forward recruits and trains volunteer advocates to work directly with families in the InnBetween program on a host of issues. The goal of the program is to increase the probability that the lives of all family members will be measurably better at the end of the program and that the family will remain self-sufficient and stably housed in the future.

For over 20 years, the InnBetween Transitional Housing program has placed homeless families with children in LSSNF-owned, modest, single-family homes in residential neighborhoods throughout the community. The mission of the InnBetween program is to provide families with a safe, secure home for up to two years as they work in conjunction with a case manager toward self-sufficiency. The goal of the program is for families to be able to secure and maintain permanent housing after they complete the program.

We know from our experience as well as from national research on other transitional housing programs that providing a house and case management, even for up to 2 years, is often not enough assistance to help ensure that families will remain housed in the future. In the past, residential stability for most families after transitional housing depended on subsidized housing, which has become increasingly scarce. To paraphrase Martha Burt of the Urban Institute, a period of time in a transitional housing program does not change the basic reality of poverty.

By the time families become homeless, they have likely suffered a series of financial, social, and other losses. The experience and isolation of homelessness is itself traumatic for both adults and children and poses enormous daily physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual challenges. Recovery takes time, support, and connections to committed and skilled individuals within the community. Often the problems of families experiencing homelessness are complex and require skills and expertise outside the scope of case management. Sometimes what families need most is support and encouragement from a committed individual who has the time and compassion to devote to one family.

Two types of Success Forward advocates address these needs: The General Family Advocate who serves as a liaison between family members, the program social worker, service providers, and Specialized or Expert Family Advocates to assure that the needs of each family member are recognized, addressed, and met. The Specialized or Expert Family Advocate uses his or her specialized skills or interests on an as-needed or on-call basis to help families address specific problems or needs.

Mission

To establish through a cadre of dedicated volunteers supportive connections between InnBetween families and the larger community and to break the cycle and isolation of poverty and housing insecurity.

Values

“Being poor or homeless, in our society, means being demeaned, silenced, looked down on, ignored, controlled, and even seen as less than human. It is up to services to create environments of mutual respect in which [people’s] power is recognized and restored.”

We’re Not Asking, We’re Telling, Homelessness Hub Report #8 (2012)

Success Forward is a strength-based, non-judgmental program that promotes dignity, autonomy, and self-determination of InnBetween residents on their paths to self-sufficiency and well-being. The program is focused on the future, on building skills and relationships and not on deficits or “poor” decisions in the past.

Respect: To treat each individual in a respectful manner and to honor their privacy, dignity, and potential.

Empowerment: To enable residents to build a sense of efficacy and personal control over their own lives.

Integrity: To align our language, beliefs, and actions with the philosophy and mission of the program.

Excellence: To demonstrate professionalism through leadership, teamwork, and innovation.

Facts on Family Homelessness

- Homeless families look much like other poor families.
- Much family homelessness stems from deep poverty, lack of affordable housing, and costs of young children.
- Welfare reform, increased unemployment, and drastic cuts in public housing and housing subsidies have increased family homelessness.
- Individuals in families facing homelessness are less likely to have serious mental illnesses or to abuse substances than individuals experiencing homelessness as single men or women.
- There were 222,197 homeless people in families in a single night in January 2013, accounting for 36 percent of all homeless people.
- In January 2013 nearly one-quarter of all homeless people (23 % or 138,149) were children under 18.
- In the past, the vast majority (84%) of homeless families consisted of women and their children. In our community, it is more common for men to be part of families experiencing homelessness, both as single parents and as partners. Of the 77 families served by the HOPE Community between October 1, 2012, and September 30, 2013, 23 included adult males.
- Declines in family homelessness have been more gradual than declines in chronic homelessness and veteran homelessness, in part because of federal funding and policy priorities.
- Children experiencing homelessness are sick four times more often than other children, have three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems compared with other children, and are four times as likely to have slowed development.
- When families become homeless, there is a high probability that children will be placed in foster care at an enormous cost to the family, the child, and the public welfare system.
- Trauma is extremely prevalent among both homeless mothers and their children. Over 90% of homeless mothers have experienced physical or sexual assault during their lifetimes, and 86% of homeless youth have reported exposure to trauma.

Sources: The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2014; U.S. Housing and Urban Development, The 2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress; The Big Bend Homeless Coalition; Hopper, E.K. et al., 2009, Shelter from the Storm: Trauma-Informed Care in Homelessness Services Settings. The Open Health Services and Policy Journal 2: 131-151.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

Job Title: Success Forward General Family Advocate

Purpose: To increase the probability that “homeless” families with children in the InnBetween Transitional Housing program will obtain and maintain self-sufficiency and a higher quality of life after they graduate from the program.

Benefits: The family will benefit from having a committed individual advocate for and with them. The advocate will benefit from challenging work that directly affects families in our community who have experienced homelessness.

Qualifications: Open-minded, flexible, creative, and patient. The ability to problem solve, work independently, and communicate respectfully with the families and professionally with service providers, government agencies, private businesses, educational entities, and others.

Requirements: A criminal background check is required as volunteer advocates will be working with children as well as members of a vulnerable population.

Training: The volunteer will only work with families after completing training and supervised visits with the Success Forward social worker. Training will initially consist of review of the Success Forward Volunteer Handbook and discussion of topics with the Success Forward social worker.

Time: 2-4 hours per week; 1-year commitment required.

Location: LSSNF Office (606 West 4th Ave.) (phone, computer, conference room available) and family's home (scattered sites throughout Tallahassee).

Primary Role: Liaison with the family and program social worker and specialized advocates to assure needs of each family member are addressed and met.

Responsibilities and Activities:

- Work with Success Forward social worker to support, encourage, and actively assist family achieve self-sufficiency and measurably better lives for all family members.
- Work with Success Forward social worker and family to identify areas where family or individual members may need expert or specialized advocacy.
- Work with any expert or specialized advocates assigned to the family.
- Attend twice-monthly staffing meetings with social worker and other advocates.
- Keep logs of time spent with or on behalf of the family, activities, and outcomes.

Reporting relationship: The volunteer advocate will report to the Success Forward social worker.

Job Title: Success Forward Specialized or Expert Family Advocate

Purpose: To increase the probability that “homeless” families with children in the InnBetween Transitional Housing program will obtain and maintain self-sufficiency and a higher quality of life after they graduate from the program.

Benefits: The family will benefit from having a specialized or expert advocate to help them solve specific problems or address specific needs. The advocate will benefit from using his or her professional skills or interests to directly help families in our community who have experienced homelessness.

Qualifications: Possession of a skill or a special interest that can benefit families or individuals in the InnBetween program.

Requirements: A criminal background check is required as volunteer advocates will be working with children as well members of a vulnerable population.

Time: This is a need-based or on-call volunteer position, and the time commitment will vary with the problem or the issue.

Location: LSSNF Office (606 West 4th Ave.) (phone, computer, conference room available) and family's home (scattered sites throughout Tallahassee).

Primary Role: Provide expertise or specialization in areas of client need on an as-needed basis. May include but not limited to: credit/financial, medical and dental (including Medicaid navigation), legal, child support, disability determination, career/educational coaching, mental health, living wage employment, housing, transportation, mentoring of children, and assisting children with special needs. Other areas of needed expertise will become evident as Success Forward develops and as individuals offer other areas of expertise and experience to the program.

Responsibilities and Activities:

- Complete training--to initially consist of review of Success Forward volunteer handbook and discussion of topics with Success Forward social worker.
- Work with the family or family member and other volunteers to address problem or issue identified by family in consultation with general advocate or social worker.
- When actively working with a family, attend twice monthly staffing meetings with social worker and other advocates.
- Keep logs of time spent with or on behalf of the family, activities, and outcomes.

Reporting relationship: The volunteer advocate will report to the Success Forward social worker.

Professional Boundaries

Understanding professional boundaries is critical for both staff and volunteers working directly with vulnerable populations. Boundaries are the limits that allow for the safe connection between staff and volunteers and clients based on the client's needs. Success Forward volunteers will work with members of two types of vulnerable populations: families facing homelessness and children. Volunteers are held to the same professional boundary standards as staff.

What are boundaries and why are they important?

- Boundaries set the parameters of what is and is not acceptable behavior by volunteers and staff in relation to clients.
- Boundaries help to protect and inform volunteers and staff by clarifying what types of behavior are inappropriate.
- Boundaries protect clients both from exploitation as well as from developing unrealistic expectations regarding the role of the volunteer.
- Boundaries are essential for developing trust and establishing rapport with individuals who have experienced trauma.
- Boundaries give volunteers and staff confidence that they know how to react to different situations.
- Clear boundaries help to develop trusting relationships between volunteers and staff, between family members, service providers, and other agencies, organizations and persons.
- Boundaries help to develop professionalism by encouraging consistency among volunteers and staff.
- Boundaries clarify the difference between befriending someone in order to offer support and being their friend in a social sense or in way that meets the needs of the staff member or volunteer rather than the needs of the clients.
- Boundaries help volunteers and staff members manage stress by separating work and private lives.

Dos and Don'ts

- Do: Be clear with families about your role and its limitations
- Do: address clients with terms of respect: Mr., Mrs., Ms. Ask clients for their preference.
- Do: Ask questions if you are not certain whether a behavior constitutes a boundary violation. Debrief experiences with other volunteers and the Success Forward director.
- Do: Always consider whether an action is in the best interest of the client.
- Do: Respect clients' rights to privacy. Do not push for information they do not want to share.

- Do: Respect other volunteers and staff at LSSNF and work as a member of a team.
- Don't: Socialize with clients outside of your role as their volunteer advocate.
- Don't: Assume the role of a therapist or counselor. Your role is to be supportive and to help clients reach the goals they have set for self-sufficiency, well-being, and housing security.
- Don't: Give out personal information about yourself, including your address. At your discretion in consultation with the Success Forward director, you may give families your phone number or they can contact you through the LSSNF office. When phoning clients from your personal phone, dial *67 to block your call from caller ID. Volunteers will also be provided with a LSSNF Gmail address.
- Don't "friend" clients or their children on Facebook or interact with them on any other social media site.
- Don't photograph, videotape, or formally interview clients or their children without written permission of both the clients and the Success Forward director.
- Don't: Condone or participate in any illegal behavior.
- Don't: Give or accept personal gifts. If a family has a need, inform the Success Forward director. Items can then be given as gifts from LSSNF and not personally from the volunteer.
- Don't: Give, loan, or borrow money.
- Don't: Buy anything from or sell anything to a client.
- Don't: Babysit for children. If your role is as an advocate or mentor for the child, discuss appropriate activities with the Success Forward director.
- Don't: Transport clients or their children. This policy may change but currently our insurance does not allow for transport by volunteers. In the event of an emergency call 911 and contact Success Forward director.
- Don't: Invite a client or a client's child into your home.

Confidentiality Guidelines

Confidential information is that which is regarded as ‘personal’ and includes names, addresses, social security numbers, and marital status as well as medical and financial information. Volunteers as well as staff must protect the confidentiality of all client information obtained in the course of their service except in the case of suspected abuse, neglect, or harm to self or others. Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes requires everyone to report suspected abuse, neglect, or abandonment of a child to the Department of Children and Families’ abuse hotline (1-800-96 Abuse).

As part of the program agreement, InnBetween, residents waive confidentiality insofar as staff and volunteers are assisting them to meet the goals they have set for self-sufficiency, well-being, and housing security. However, neither volunteers nor staff should contact service providers or others (for example, financial organizations, courts, educational institutions, past or potential employers) without explicit permission of the client. In many instances the organization will require written permission from the client.

Prior written permission is required for any video/audio taping, photography, or interviewing of clients.

General guidelines:

- Be clear about the limits of confidentiality with clients.
- Do not share information about clients with friends. Debrief with the Success Forward director when needed.
- Do not discuss clients even with staff members in public.
- Take care when talking on the phone not to mention names or other identifying information within earshot of others.
- Do not leave notes containing client information in view of any other person.
- If you meet a client in the street, let that person make the decision to recognize you or not.
- Never become involved in conversations with clients about other clients.
- When visiting a client, you may see and speak with relatives, friends or others associated with clients. Do not discuss the client with these people.
- Confidentiality guidelines remain in effect upon leaving the organization.

Release of Liability

I hereby fully and forever waive, release, and relinquish all claims, demands, and actions whatsoever that I may have or may accrue to me against Lutheran Social Services of North Florida, Inc, its officers, agents, employees and staff arising out of this volunteer activity. Furthermore, I agree to indemnify and hold harmless Lutheran Social Services of North Florida, Inc., from any and all claims and actions resulting from injuries, damages, and losses sustained by me arising out of, connected with or in any way associated with my volunteer activity.

I have read and understand this statement and sign it of my own free will. I further certify that I am eighteen (18) years of age or the parent/legal guardian of a minor participant.

Name of volunteer (print):

Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Signature of parent/legal guardian (if applicable):

Statement of Confidentiality

As a condition of participating as a volunteer advocate with Lutheran Social Services of North Florida, I _____ agree to keep confidential any information shared with me. I understand that no information concerning clients shall be released to other agencies or persons without signed, written consent of those involved.

I recognize that the unauthorized release of confidential information may make me subject to civil action under provisions of the Welfare Institutions Code. I further understand that violation of this agreement is grounds for termination of my service.

Signature: _____

Background Screening Consent Form

Because you will be working directly with members of vulnerable populations (families who have experienced homelessness and children), for your safety, the safety of the organization, and the safety of clients, a criminal background check is required.

I, _____ authorize Lutheran Social Services of North Florida to conduct a background check.

Social Security #: _____ DOB: _____

Current Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Photographic / Media Consent Form

I hereby consent to the collection and use of personal images by photography or video recording.

Please read and check the following acknowledgements:

- I acknowledge these may be used on the Lutheran Social Services of North Florida website, in newsletters publications, etc.
- I acknowledge that no personal information, such as names, will be used in any publications unless express consent is given.
- I acknowledge that my consent can be withdrawn at any time in writing to Lutheran Social Services of North Florida

CONSENT FORM

I _____
Name of person giving consent & parent/guardian if under 18 years of age

Consent to the use of collected photographs or video footage for use on the Lutheran Social Services of North Florida website, in newsletters, publications, etc.

I further understand that this consent may be withdrawn by me at any time, upon written notice.

I give this consent voluntarily.

Signature of person giving consent

Date _____

Volunteer Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number (Please include area code): _____

Email Address: _____

Education Level: _____

Employment Status: Student Employed Retired Other: _____

Place of Employment / Study and Position / Grade Level:

Church Affiliation (Optional): _____

Volunteer / Civic Experience: _____

Position of Interest: General Family Advocate Specialized / Expert Advocate

If Specialized or Expert Family Advocate, please check areas of professional training, experience, and/or interest:

- Credit / Financial Medical / Dental (Including Medicaid Navigation)
 Disability Determination / Advocacy Legal Child Development
 Mentoring Career / Educational Employment
 Other: _____

Please Provide at least One Reference: _____

Volunteer Reporting Form

Volunteer Name: _____

Family (by address of home): _____

Date: _____

Hours: _____

Location: _____

Activity: _____

Comments (outcomes, needs, etc.): _____



Volunteer Reporting Form

Volunteer Name: _____

Family (by address of home): _____

Date: _____

Hours: _____

Location: _____

Activity: _____

Comments (outcomes, needs, etc.): _____
