



National Association for County
Community and Economic Development

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COUNTY
COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Success Story Submission

County/Organization Bergen County, NJ - Center for Hope and Safety

Project/Program Name Transitional Housing Program - Director/Counselor

Point of Contact:

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1. **BRIEF SUMMARY:** Briefly describe the problem and solution for the project or program.
2. **RESULTS:** Describe the tangible results of the project or program. Describe how the project or program will be sustained over the long term. If the project or program is not currently operating, please explain why not.
3. **PARTNERS:** List the names of the agencies and organizations involved in the project or program.
4. **COSTS AND SOURCES OF FINANCING:** Describe the source(s) and use(s) of funds to construct the project or start up the program, as well as the sources and uses of ongoing operating funds if applicable. Please indicate which agency or organization secured the source of funding.
5. **PICTURES:** Please include any relevant pictures of the project or program—especially before and after pictures.

**Please submit forms and questions to:
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1. Summary

Economic independence is crucial for battered women, and without long-term housing options, victims of violence may be forced to return to dangerous situations. Three months in the emergency shelter is generally not enough to establish a new life for a victim, away from her abuser. Most women who come to the shelter do not have any assets, have little or no income of their own, and/or are low wage earners. At least 65% receive welfare and/or food stamps. Others minimally support themselves on unemployment, child support or social security. The women are unable to become self-sufficient and begin to seek affordable housing options until they have had time to heal and access opportunities to strengthen their skills for employment. That is why it is so critical for CHS to maintain its invaluable transitional housing stock.

The Transitional Housing Program (THP) provides women with the time they need to build their independent living skills, and to afford them the opportunity to seek employment and secure permanent housing. Once protection and safety concerns are addressed, housing is the number one concern for CHS residents. Due to the severe shortage and resultant high cost of housing in Bergen County, women who plan on living independently need additional time to gain vocational skills, await their eligibility period for subsidized housing (if available) or save for and locate affordable housing. The THP offers low-cost/affordable housing to CHS clients for a maximum of two years.

Today, Center for Hope and Safety's Transitional Housing Program has five facilities, with eight apartments. They are located in residential neighborhoods throughout Bergen County and have a total occupancy of up to 40 women and children at any one time.

The full-time Director/Counselor of Transitional Housing offers clients crisis intervention counseling, assistance with court proceedings, advocacy with community resources and all case management supports. Clients in transitional housing are offered the opportunity to meet with the Director or the Life Skills Case Manager on a weekly basis to work toward established goals. All clients are encouraged participate in monthly group house meetings with staff as needed to discuss and determine responsibilities within the residence. The Director is also responsible to assist with the maintenance and physical plant issues of all of the homes.

The Life Skills Case Manager is a Bilingual staff member who works full-time in this program. She is partially funded by HUD Continuing of Care. The Community Services Case Manager is a Bilingual staff member who works part-time on this program and part-time on CHS' Outreach Program; she is funded by a VAWA Victim Assistance Grant. Their responsibilities include working with the women one-on-one, focusing on independent living skills such as budgeting, meal planning, housekeeping and personal organization. Additional personal goals for the women may include: enrollment into school, job training, day care for children, participation in individual and group therapy,

procuring a job, receiving medical attention, saving money, and completion of a court case.

Once client's crises are stabilized and they have increased their ability to become more self-sufficient, they will move into permanent housing. CHS staff assists the resident in her search for permanent housing when she feels she has the financial capability and self-sufficiency skills necessary to feel confident in supporting herself and her children. CHS staff also assists the clients in their meetings with perspective landlords, completing leases, accessing funds for security, one month's rent and/or subsidy.

2. Results

The Transitional Housing Program has been in existence since 1983, when the first transitional home was opened. By 1987, CHS had two transitional houses and a transitional counselor.

In 2016, the program housed 48 individuals, including 21 families/women, and their 27 children. The average length of stay was 9.4 months.

Following are results from full-year 2016:

1. Goal: 75% will exit to permanent housing upon leaving the TH program.
Outcome: 8 clients moved during this year. 8 clients moved into permanent housing. (100%)
2. Goal: 50% will maintain or increase their income while living in TH program during the program year (excluding those in full-time school or job training).
Outcome: Nineteen women maintained or increased their income out of 21 women who resided in the Transitional Housing Program. (90%)
3. Goal: 75% will participate in education, job training or employment during the program year (excluding disabled/ elderly/ medically exempt).
Outcome: 15 women were employed during this report period. Three women were employed, and simultaneously attended educational classes. One woman became disabled; two women are in the process of enrolling in school. (85%)

At Center for Hope and Safety, we believe that statistics do not fully explain the impact of the work we do. CHS also measures its success by futures brightened and lives saved. Please read about one of the clients in CHS' Transitional Housing Program.

"The Transitional Housing Director (THD) worked closely with a single 27 year old woman who was the victim of an arranged abusive marriage. The client had been in a PHD neuroscience program in her country of origin, and was forced to leave the program in order to engage in an arranged marriage. She had met the fiancé briefly one time and then the only

contact before marriage was through social media/skype and through written letters. She was married in her country of origin and then brought to the United States to live with the husband and his mother.

The client was physically and sexually abused by her husband and emotionally and physically abused by the husband's mother. She had no idea how she would escape this marriage. Her mother contacted friends in the United States who came to visit her and check on her wellbeing. Eventually this family assisted the client to escape from her abusers. The client stayed for a short time with this family and through research on the computer they contacted "Unchained at Last". (Unchained At Last is the only nonprofit in the US dedicated to helping women and girls leave or avoid arranged/forced marriage. Unchained was founded and is led by an arranged/forced marriage survivor). Although the client's mother initiated assistance for her daughter, the parents have since disowned her over her separation and divorce proceedings. Unchained at Last referred the client to The Center for Hope and Safety and the client entered the emergency shelter. After a brief stay in the emergency shelter, she entered the Transitional Housing Program.

The THD has been providing her with a great amount of support and assistance in regards to her emotional and physical wellbeing. She had applied for a restraining order while in the emergency shelter and was provided with a pro-bono attorney through Alternatives to Domestic Violence. She describes the 10 month trial as a difficult and draining experience that left her depressed and in poor health. She was denied a restraining order, as it was very difficult to prove the abuse. The client's depression and lack of appetite resulted in a short hospital stay to be evaluated and prescribed medication for depression.

Her next hurdle is the completion of her divorce. She states that her abuser is refusing to provide any monetary support in the divorce, which leaves her on her own, in a foreign country with very few resources. Staff has been providing her with Shop rite food gift cards and bus passes for her to travel to appointments. Fortunately she is resilient, and has made her own connections with a prestigious NY University and has been tutoring students for a small stipend, which also helps her with basic needs. The client has recently been accepted into a fellowship that one of her professors applied/referred her to. As stated prior, the client was pulled out of a PHD Neuroscience Program for an arranged marriage. She had to finish her Master's degree here in the United States. The client is very excited and is looking forward to finishing her Master's Degree and seeking employment in her field.

Staff continues to assist her in applying for a U-Visa. (U visa status was created by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. It is designed to provide lawful status to noncitizen crime victims who are assisting or are willing to assist the authorities in investigating crimes. The U visa status may be available to victims of domestic violence crimes or victims of certain other crimes.)

Staff meets with her on a weekly basis and provides emotional support and ongoing resource referrals. She often expresses gratitude in having a safe home to live in and the support of the Center for Hope and Safety, while trying to cope with domestic violence issues and life in a new country."

Please also read about some activities that clients participated in October 2016:

October 15: “Walking Against Domestic Violence.” Center for Hope and Safety organized a walk at Van Saun Park, Paramus, NJ. During this event, clients from the main shelter, transitional, follow up clients, volunteers, and staff walked together for the same cause. The event united us as one. Three adults and two children from transitional program attended the walk. Transportation was provided by us. Clients danced, ate, and played games. Outreach clients were invited to attend.

October 15: Beauty day. The Empire Education located in Paramus NJ invited our clients to be part of this magnificent event, where clients were treated to different services. At this event, there were 6 women attending, including one teenager from our transitional program. 10 clients from the outreach program attended. It was amazing to see these ladies with beautiful smiles and gratitude in their faces; looking at themselves and admiring their own beauty. The Empire School also gave our clients a goody bag with a lot of treats for them. This day was an exciting and memorable day for the ladies.

October 17: Mental Health Workshop NJ Center for Tourette Syndrome: “Living with Tourette Syndrome, OCD, ADHD and Anxiety: Challenges and triumphs” at Washington Township Public Library. Three clients attended this event. Transportation was provided. During this event, clients were able to recognize and understand a little bit more about Tourette Syndrome.

October 18: Habitat for Humanity of Bergen County and Women Build organized an event called “Women’s car repair and maintenance 101”. Three clients from transitional attended this event. Transportation was provided by staff. In this workshop clients were able to understand the basic concepts of the maintenance of a vehicle. The presentation was smooth, simple, and practical. Clients had to give a small donation of \$10 but in exchange they received a car repair kit and jumper cables, which are very necessary in any emergency that may occur.

Clients learned the parts of the car, how to check the oil, change a flat tire and wipers, etc.. When we left, the clients were very excited to know they would be able to take care of their own cars.

October 19: Monday night, a Board member set up a special night for our women in Saddle River. A night of massage, yoga, reiki. Transportation was provided by staff. 8 clients attended this event from transitional/outreach program. Clients learned the benefits of meditation using yoga and reiki practice. After this event, clients left relaxed and super positive.

October 24: Mental Health Workshop at Township of Washington Public Library - “Peaceful Minds in Anxious Times: Managing Stress for a Healthy Lifestyle.” During this workshop, clients were able to understand and comprehend ways to manage stress. Facilitator Jill Pantaleo, LCSW. 3 transitional clients attended this event/transportation. Clients learned ways how to manage stress on a daily basis. Using different techniques for coping with stress helps our clients.

The Transitional Housing Program is sustained by a combination of Federal, State, County and private grants. Government funding represents over two-thirds of support. Should there

be substantial cuts in government grants, CHS will be forced to reduce case management staff, with the resultant reduction of services and support to our clients.

3. Partners

CHS has a long-term lease and a working relationship with The Presbyterian Church in Leonia and their Interfaith Advisory Committee to support a primary transitional home and its residents, and similarly with the Bogart Reform Church in Bogota.

CHS also has an MOU with Greater Bergen Community Action (GBCA), Inc. and Women's Rights Information Center (WRIC) for CHS' OVW Transitional Housing Grant. CHS offers its THP clients GBCA's 6-week Financial Literacy training workshops, and GBCA informs clients about its credit union and its benefits. CHS also partners with WRIC, and other agencies, to provide job readiness workshops, one-on-one resume support, and certificate courses on Microsoft Office and Bookkeeping. CHS cover THP client enrollment cost for GBCA's ESL, Citizenship and HSE classes. TH staff also assists women with job-readiness preparation, computer usage and referrals.

Center for Hope and Safety also has developed a Memorandum of Understanding in connection with a NJ Division of Criminal Justice - Victims Assistance Grant for the Transitional Housing and Outreach Programs, with both Women's Rights Information Center and the Bergen County Department of Human Services, Division of Alternatives to Domestic Violence (ADV), utilizing each agency's particular strengths and expertise to minimize service gaps and ensure the best possible service for the target population, The overarching goal of this collaboration is to ensure that critical services and work readiness/job training opportunities are readily available to victims of domestic violence in Bergen County from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2017.

In order to best network and navigate the system for the benefit of our clients, CHS staff are actively involved as: representatives on the county's Homeless/Housing HUD committee; the HUD CoC Coordinated Assessment of homeless in Bergen County, which identifies permanent housing availabilities, and prioritizes those with the highest needs in the County; the Bergen County Domestic Violence Working Group; and the NJCEDV to name a few. Staff takes advantage of opportunities to collaborate on local and state projects when participation is to the benefit of the families we serve. CHS participates in. Center for Hope and Safety has a history of both formal and informal partnerships with many other countywide organizations whose principal missions are to meet the needs of the women and children who are in need of assistance as a result of their victimization.

4. Costs and Sources of Funding – see attached program budget

**CENTER FOR HOPE AND SAFETY
ANNUAL OPERATIONAL BUDGET
July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017**

	Transitional Housing Budget
INCOME	
Federal Grants Total	\$ <u>278,265</u>
Community Development	6,384
HUD-Homeless Cont. Care	23,020
HUD-Homeless Cont. Care - E1	15,801
Div. Crim. Just.-Victim Asst. Grant	116,394
Federal OVW-THEAP Off of Viol Against	116,666
County Funds Total	\$ <u>81,367</u>
BC Board Social Services	81,367
Private Funds Total	\$ <u>172,459</u>
Donations, Fundraising and Private Grants	155,459
Transitional Housing Fees	17,000
TOTAL INCOME	\$ <u>532,091</u>
EXPENSES	
Personnel	353,157
Consultants	14,998
Materials and Supplies	4,546
Facility Costs	107,813
Specific Assistance	20,350
Other (travel, training, etc)	27,227
Equipment	4,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ <u>532,091</u>
NET DIFFERENCE	\$ <u>-</u>