



283

women and children served

12%↑
increase

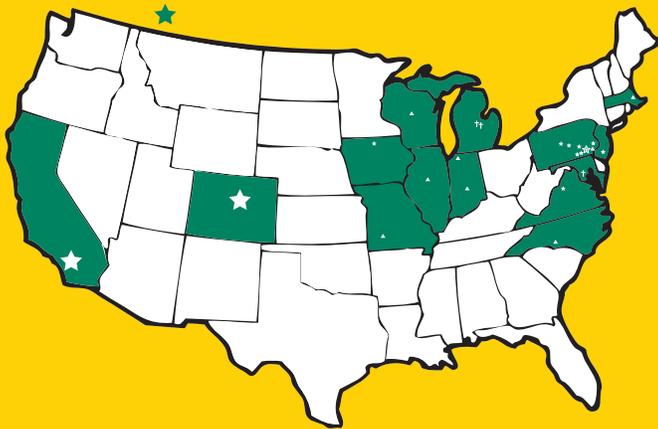
814

mentors from churches offered friendship to homeless families



6.7 = average age of a child in Bridge of Hope

3 New Locations



Dana Point (CA), Calgary (AB), & Denver (CO)

\$5,054

Average amount of rental assistance received (for all exiting participants)

11

Average number of months rental assistance received (for all exiting participants)

Bridge of Hope
Network Program Annual Report
Fiscal Year April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015

As the outcomes on the next page show, the current housing and job markets create challenges for single mothers facing homelessness – as they work towards financial stability. Bridge of Hope mentoring friends journey with families as they face these overwhelming realities.

Though she has a master's degree, *Heather was unemployed as her marriage ended and she faced homelessness. As she searched for housing in State College, PA for herself and her 4 children, rent was \$1,300 or more a month (due to the competitive real estate market because of Penn State students).



Bridge of Hope's provision of temporary rental assistance allowed Heather to find an apartment outside of town (but in the same school district). Bridge of Hope staff and Heather worked on budgeting and a plan for childcare. Heather found employment at the YMCA and also at Penn State on a short-term placement.

Both Heather and her mentors from Centre Church report that they "gained a life-long friend." They built friendships via time together, texts, calls, and emails. Heather even ran a half marathon with one of her mentors.

HOUSING

Since the economic downturn of 2008, increasing numbers of individuals and families are moving from owned homes to rental units. From 2007 to 2013, the number of renters in the U.S. grew by 6.3 million. The result is that middle and higher income renters are filling units previously available to low-income renters. Landlords are raising rent prices. The national fair market value for a two-bedroom apartment is now \$1,006/month. And the vacancy rates (available units of any kind) are extremely low. In 2013, for every 100 extremely low-wage renters, there were just 31 affordable units. In this context, many Bridge of Hope families find themselves in decent housing that stretches their resources to the limit, challenging their ability to sustain their housing long term.

54% of women exiting Bridge of Hope had maintained their housing for at least six months.

35% of the women exiting Bridge of Hope had maintained their housing for at least one year.



EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

The nationwide housing wage – that’s the wage required for rent to consume 30% of income – is \$19.35. The average wage nationwide is just \$15.16. And the federal minimum wage remains stuck at \$7.25. In no state is a one bedroom rental unit affordable on minimum wage. In recent years, a full 50% of renters are cost burdened, with nearly half of those paying more than 50% of their income for rent. Wage stagnation poses a significant barrier to many Bridge of Hope families who are challenged to find work that supports the needs of their families. It is fully expected the most Bridge of Hope families will continue to rely on public supports (such as childcare subsidy, food stamps, etc.) to maintain the stability of their families.

89% of Bridge of Hope participants exiting the Bridge of Hope program were employed.



MONEY MANAGEMENT

Having enough money and being adept and using that money well are two different things. Many families who find themselves homeless struggle to make tough decisions about how to prioritize their spending when they rarely have enough for the basics. Money management skills are critical for maximizing one’s resources in a tough economy. That’s why Bridge of Hope provides tools and training for women to develop these skills, even while they maintain complete control of their spending decisions.

63% of participants exiting Bridge of Hope were paying their basic living expenses, including rent and utilities, without incurring additional debt.

SUPPORT SYSTEM

At Bridge of Hope, we believe that family homelessness is more than a crisis of poverty; it’s a crisis of relationships. The gift of mentoring friendships sets Bridge of Hope apart from most housing programs. Increasingly, a support system isn’t enough to prevent a family from finding themselves homeless, but homelessness is far more likely for families without support.

86% of participants exiting Bridge of Hope reported having a network of personal support.

FAITH

Bridge of Hope does not require participants to attend church or to express any kind of personal faith. Yet our hope is that each woman and her children would experience the love of God through her mentors, and that seeds would be planted and faith would be nurtured.

90% of participants exiting Bridge of Hope reported faith/spiritual life that provides hope, healing, and direction for their daily lives or reported exploring/growing in their spiritual life.