



Vision House Frequently Asked Questions

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

What is Vision House?

For 20 years Vision House has successfully provided transitional housing and support services to homeless mothers and their children, and separately to men recovering from drug or alcohol addiction, helping them achieve independence and self-sufficiency.



Where is Vision House located?

- The family program and the child care center are located in north Renton on two sites within a few blocks of each other.
- The men's program is located in two houses, one in Renton and one in Burien.
- Vision House Jacob's Well is being built in Shoreline off of Ballinger Way.

How many people do you serve?

Currently we serve 23 families and 9 men, for a total of approximately 85 people. Since 1990 Vision House has helped nearly 700 homeless children, women and men rebuild their lives.

How and when did Vision House begin?

Vision House began in 1990 after John and Susan Camerer saw the movie *God Bless the Child* about a single mother, who through a series of events that were no fault of her own, became homeless. The mother ended up having to put her daughter into the custody of the state because she couldn't care for her on the streets.

John and Susan felt a strong calling to meet the needs of the homeless and began researching what resources were available for the homeless in their community. They quickly realized that there was a severe shortage of affordable housing and supportive services to help the homeless rebuild their lives. Soon after, they launched Vision House with a dream, a lot of faith, and an \$800 personal check. This husband and wife team is still carrying out their life mission at Vision House. Susan is Executive Director and John is Director of Operations.

What are the main goals of Vision House?

The primary goal of Vision House is to promote self-sufficiency and reintegration back into the community. First, Vision House provides residents with a stable, safe living environment. Secondly, VH provides a range of services tailored to the individual's and the family's needs in the areas of education/job training, employment, counseling, financial management, life skills training, etc. to bring them to the level of self-sufficiency. The final goal is to transition residents to permanent housing, making sure they have adequate income, child care and support to ensure the family will remain self-sufficient in the future.

Does Vision House provide child care?

In addition to providing housing and support services, Vision House also owns and operates the **Children's Village Child Care Center**. This bright, beautiful child care center opened in June 2005 and is licensed for 120 children. Approximately 70% of the children are private pay at full market rates, and 30% are low income and Vision House families. This revenue model allows Vision House to run the child care center as a financially self-sustaining operation.



THE NEED

How many people are homeless in King and Snohomish Counties?

According to the One Night Count that took place January 29, 2010, there were more than 11,000 homeless individuals in King and Snohomish Counties. And surprisingly, 40% (more than 4,500) were families with children. This represents the minimum number of people affected on that one night. National studies suggest that over the course of a year, three times as many people experience homelessness as are counted on any one night.

What are some of the major causes of homelessness?

- **Family violence:** approximately 80% of the families at Vision House have experienced violent relationships at one or more times in their lives. This includes sexual, verbal, emotional or physical violence.
- **Lack of skills and low-wage jobs:** a mother may be a stay-at-home mom or working a low wage job, then her husband leaves and she tries to hang on to the home. Homelessness may be just a paycheck or two away.
- **Medical or other emergency:** Just a few setbacks such as a child getting sick or the car breaking down, and a woman may lose her job and get behind on her rent or mortgage. It's not long before she and her children are evicted and are homeless.

How many people call Vision House asking for help?

We receive more than 2,000 phone calls each year asking for housing and assistance. At times our waiting list is nearly 200 people – men, women and children who are homeless and in desperate need of help.

APPLICANTS/RESIDENTS

How do you screen applicants?

Potential residents fill out an application and are put on a waiting list. As soon as their application makes it to the top of the list, Vision House staff interviews the applicant to determine if they're appropriate for the program.

What are the requirements for living at Vision House?

- We don't take clients with violent history or who are in immediate risk of domestic violence. Victims at risk of violence are referred to a confidential site until they are safe.
- Vision House serves those whose income falls below 30% of the median income.
- Clients in our family program must have custody of their children or prove that stable housing will allow them to get custody.
- Applicants must be drug free and are given a urine analysis test prior to entering the program. If it comes back indicating there are illegal drugs (or alcohol for those in recovery) in the client's system, they are not accepted into the program, but can reapply after 30 days of sobriety.



What support services do residents receive?

Support services are tailored to the individual's and family's needs and may include the following: education, life skills training, money management skills, parenting skills, family and individual counseling, discipleship, employment, and permanent housing referrals. Each resident is required to meet weekly with a family advocate to develop these skills and remain accountable in reaching set goals.



Are there mandatory spiritual activities?

Although Vision House was founded on Christian principles, there are no mandatory spiritual activities for residents. Bible studies and spiritual guidance are optional. We have residents of many different beliefs at Vision House and we welcome all.



Do residents pay rent?

Residents sign a lease when they move into Vision House and pay 30% of their income towards rent. If they don't have any income, then they don't pay any rent. No one is turned away because they can't pay. We work with residents to find an income source so they can pay some level of rent, which is part of their financial management training for handling life after Vision House. Since many of our residents have evictions on their record, having them sign a lease and then pay rent allows Vision House to be a reference for them when they seek permanent housing.

How long can residents stay at Vision House?

Residents can live at Vision House for up to two years, but longer stays are encouraged if more time is needed for the family to stabilize and reach their goals, or if a resident is in a longer term education program.

What's the success rate at Vision House?

Since 2002 our average success rate is 93% in our family program, meaning that 93% of families transition successfully to permanent housing and a better way of life. And three out of the past four years, the success rate was 100%. In our men's program, approximately 75% transition successfully out of drug/alcohol addiction to clean, independent living.

HOUSING COMPLEXES

What are the housing units like?

Vision House has a total of 23 family apartment units in two locations. The 12 units in the main complex overlook a central courtyard and grassy area. The main complex also has a two-story community center where many activities are held for Vision House families.

Another Vision House complex is located a few blocks from the main facility. In this complex are 11 apartment units, a child care center for 120 children, and counseling and administrative offices.



The men's program is housed in two single-family homes in Renton and Burien. They live "family style" with individual bedrooms and a shared common area. A counselor works with the men, and one of the residents who has progressed in the program acts as resident manager.

Do you have plans for additional Vision House complexes?

In March 2010, Vision House broke ground on a transitional housing complex in Shoreline, Washington. This facility, named Jacob's Well, will include 20 apartments, a child care center and a service center that will provide counseling offices and space for a variety of support services.



VISION HOUSE

STAFF

Who are the Vision House staff?

Vision House employs 36 staff, half of whom work in our child care center. Our employees speak nine different languages, which is a great asset when reaching out to the homeless. Vision House staff work in our two family complexes, two men's homes, administrative offices and our child care center.

What is the ratio of residents to staff?

We maintain a ratio of 8 – 10 adult residents to one full-time family advocate. We also have a child advocate who works with the approximately 45 children living at Vision House. In addition, we contract with a crisis counselor who comes on site as needed to work with families who require additional support.

Do you have staff in the complex at all times?

Vision House staff are on site during regular business hours and available by phone off-hours. A resident manager is on site at all times who is further along in the program and can answer questions and support other residents with minor needs.



FUNDING AND OPERATIONS

What is your annual operating budget?

The 2010 budget is \$1.7 million for all Vision House programs, which includes resident housing, support services, counseling and our child care center.

Where does Vision House get its funding? The majority of our funding comes from earned income (child care center and rent), followed by individuals, foundations, businesses and churches.

What percentage of your dollars goes directly to programs? On average, 79% of our expenses go to resident programs and services, 14% to administration, and 7% to fundraising.

Is it possible that Vision House could sell the transitional housing or convert to market rate condominiums, thus reaping a huge profit from all of the donated labor and materials that many builders and vendors have provided? As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, assets cannot be sold to benefit any private individual or group. All assets must stay with the non-profit or be transferred to another similar non-profit that provides housing for homeless families.

Does Vision House undergo financial audits?

An independent certified public accounting firm audits Vision House annually. Copies of the latest Vision House audited financial statement can be obtained by contacting Vision House at 425-228-6356 or info@vision-house.org. The Vision House tax ID number is 91-1493474 and our Washington State Charitable Solicitation Number is 5021.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Contact Vision House at 425-228-6356 or info@vision-house.org. Or visit our Web site at www.NoHomelessKids.org – from there you can join our social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and our blog.