

## Vision House Frequently Asked Questions

### HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

#### What is Vision House?

Vision House is a Christian non-profit that provides transitional housing and homelessness prevention services to help struggling families achieve self-sufficiency and housing stability.

#### Where is Vision House located?

Vision House has three locations:

- In Renton – on two sites within a few blocks of each other
- In Shoreline – our complex known as Jacob's Well
- In Burien – a house shared by two families who have graduated from the Vision House program

#### How many people do you serve?

We serve approximately 185 children, women and men each year – more than 60% are children. Our transitional housing accommodates 36 families (22 in Renton, 12 in Shoreline, and 2 in Burien). The number of individuals we serve is increasing as we have added homelessness prevention services to help families before they are evicted, as well as a diversion program, and a fast track (rapid re-housing) program.

#### How and when did Vision House begin?

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

John and Susan felt that God was calling them to meet the needs of the homeless, and realized there was a severe shortage of housing and supportive services to help the homeless rebuild their lives. Soon after, they launched Vision House with \$800, a big dream, and a lot of faith. For 27 years, Vision House has grown and evolved into a successful, life-changing ministry.

#### What are the main goals of Vision House?

The primary goal is to promote housing stability for families who are homeless or who are on the verge of becoming homeless. Our three-tiered program promotes self-sufficiency, including re-integration back into the community.

#### What is the success rate?

In 2016, 81% of Vision House families transitioned successfully to permanent housing and self-sufficiency. In addition, 57% of residents increased their education while at Vision House.



*Vision House founders,  
John and Susan Camerer.*

### THE NEED

#### How many people are homeless in King County?

The January 2016 One Night Count in King County found 10,688 homeless individuals, of which 4,505 were outside without shelter. The 4,505 unsheltered men, women and children was an increase of 19% from the previous year's count of 3,772. The One Night Count figure represents the minimum number of homeless individuals on that one night, but there are many more homeless that are hidden or are "couch hopping" between friends and family members. Studies show that families with children are 28% of the homeless population and are also the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

### What are some of the major causes of homelessness?

- **Lack of affordable housing:** Nearly 23% of King County renter households make less than 30% of area median income. Yet, only 10% of apartments in the county are affordable to these households.
- **Lack of skills and low-wage jobs:** Homelessness may be just a paycheck away when a person does not have the skills to acquire a living wage job. In King County, the fair market rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,415 per month – a worker must earn more than \$27 per hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment and cover basic living expenses.
- **Medical or other emergency:** Just a few setbacks such as a child getting sick or the car breaking down, and a parent may lose their job and get behind on the rent or mortgage. It's not long before the family is evicted and is homeless.
- **Drug and/or alcohol addiction:** Approximately 60% of Vision House adult clients are in recovery from a drug and/or alcohol addiction.
- **Family violence:** Approximately 56% of the families at Vision House have experienced domestic violence.
- **Mental health issues:** Approximately 28% of Vision House clients suffer from mental health problems.



*Families with children are 28% of the homeless population and are **the fastest growing segment** of the homeless population.*

## VISION HOUSE PROGRAMS

### What programs does Vision House provide?

Transitional housing with support services has been the focus of Vision House over the past 27 years. We have recently added additional services to help even more struggling families by providing a tiered approach. These tiers include:

1. **Tier 1: Prevention and Fast Track**
  - **Eviction Prevention** – Vision House provides financial support and housing stability counseling to help individuals already in permanent housing avoid eviction. Guidance and counseling are also available for landlords.
  - **Diversion** – a strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements.
  - **Fast Track** – based on the federally preferred rapid rehousing model. Through this approach, Vision House assists families that have lower/fewer obstacles and immediately helps them obtain and maintain permanent housing. While living in their own housing, we provide supportive services to promote housing stability and teach the skills required to remain self-sufficient.
2. **Tier 2: Transitional Housing** is our traditional model, with families living at Vision House approximately 6 - 18 months. They receive case management and support from youth and family advocates so they can develop the skills and confidence to acquire permanent housing and remain self-sufficient.
3. **Tier 3: Transitional Housing with Intensive Support Services** is designed for individuals with higher obstacles and a great number of housing barriers. Families live at Vision House up to three years and receive intensive support services. Vision House will support them through our program with a focus on finding a long-term permanent supportive housing solution.

All three tiers have access to our **continuing education classes**: financial literacy, parenting, housing sustainability, boundaries, transformations, cooking matters, and education sustainability. The classes are provided along with child care and a light meal.

**Does Vision House provide child care?**

The Vision House child care center, Children's Village, is located at both our Renton and Shoreline campuses. Highly trained staff provide child care and early childhood education to resident children, alumni children and children from the community. Children's Village is accredited by the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs.

**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 offered, but are optional. We have residents of many different beliefs at Vision House and we welcome all.



*Parenting classes are just one of the educational opportunities provided at Vision House.*

**REQUIREMENTS TO APPLY**

**How do people apply to Vision House?**

Applicants call the Vision House point-of-entry (POE) number and provide information to our entry coordinator which is entered on the POE form. Eligibility is determined through the screening assessment process, which includes interviews with the applicant. Vision House staff determine what level of assistance the applicant needs, and if they will be placed in Tier 1, 2 or 3.

**What are the requirements for living at Vision House?**

- We don't take clients with a criminal history of violence or who are in immediate risk of domestic violence. Victims at risk of violence are referred to another agency that can provide 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 at least one of their children or prove that stable housing will allow them to regain custody.



*One of the Vision House complexes in Renton.*

**Do residents pay rent?**

Residents sign a lease 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 becoming self-sufficient. Since many of our residents have evictions on their record, having them sign a lease and pay rent allows Vision House to be a reference for them when they seek permanent housing.

## HOUSING COMPLEXES

### What are the housing complexes like?

Vision House owns and operates a total of 34 family apartment units in Renton and Shoreline and a shared home for 2 families in Burien.

The two Renton complexes have a total of 22 housing units, as well as a resident community center, the Children's Village Child Care Center, and counseling and administrative offices. The Shoreline complex includes 12 apartments, a before and after school child care center, and a service center that provides counseling and space for a variety of support services.

### Are there plans to build additional Vision House complexes?

A second building on Vision House's Shoreline property called Jacob's Well, is being planned. This facility will add 10 apartments, an expanded child care center, and a youth and family multi-purpose center. Vision House also owns additional land on the Renton campus. Plans are to complete the second Shoreline building in 2017 and then expand on the Renton campus.



*Vision House/Jacob's Well building A in Shoreline opened in 2014.  
Building B will be constructed in 2017.*

## STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

### Who are the Vision House staff?

Vision House employs approximately 60 staff members. Our employees speak 14 different languages, which is a great asset when reaching out to the homeless. Vision House staff work in our housing complexes, administrative offices, resale operations and child care centers.

### Are staff members in the complex at all times?

Vision House staff are onsite during regular business hours. Residents live independently and are responsible for following the rules of the program even when staff are not onsite. Vision House maintenance staff can be reached at any time for a maintenance-related emergency.

### Does Vision House have a volunteer program?

Volunteers provide key services supporting our resident programs, tutoring, participating in children's field trips, sorting in-kind donations, fund-raising, office work, furnishing and decorating apartments, yard work, maintenance, construction and more.

In 2016, a total of 325 individuals volunteered at Vision House in both Renton and Shoreline. They donated over 9,100 hours, valued at nearly \$264,000. This contribution is significant as it allows Vision House to stretch resources and use financial contributions in ways that best serve the families in our care.



## FUNDING AND OPERATIONS

### **What is your annual operating budget?**

The 2017 budget is \$3.47 million for all Vision House programs, which includes resident housing, support services, counseling, our child care centers and resale operations.

**Where does Vision House get its funding?** The funding to cover the costs for Vision House programs comes from earned income (child care tuition, resale revenue, and rent), as well as donations from individuals, foundations, businesses and churches.

Supporters also provide a large number of in-kind donations, which are used to furnish Vision House apartments, at an estimated \$50,000 annual value. In-kind donations not used directly for residents are sold through our resale operations, with the proceeds going to support Vision House clients/residents.

**What percentage of Vision House dollars go directly to resident programs?** On average, 81% of our expenses go to programs, 9% to administration, and 10% to fundraising.

### **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](mailto:info@vision-house.org). The Vision House federal tax ID number is 91-1493474 and our Washington State Charitable Solicitation Number is 5021.

### **ECFA Accreditation**

Vision House is accredited by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA). The ECFA provides accreditation to leading Christian nonprofit organizations that faithfully demonstrate compliance with established standards for financial accountability, transparency, fundraising, and board governance. This accreditation gives donors assurance that their donations are handled in an ethical and financially responsible manner.



*Enhancing Trust*