

## **Arbor Youth Services Permanent Housing/Independent Living Program Proposal**

### **Background**

Arbor Youth Services has provided shelter, support and housing services to homeless, runaway and at-risk youth for more than 40 years. Arbor is nationally accredited and licensed as a state child care facility and is committed to meeting the needs of youth in Fayette County.

### **Current programs include:**

MASH Drop Inn- Emergency shelter for youth up to age 18.

Project Safe Place- Nationally sponsored education and outreach program for youth in crisis.

Outreach Center- Facility based support services for homeless youth between the ages of 18-24.

Supportive Housing- Encompasses two distinct funding streams to provide HUD Rapid Rehousing services and non-HUD rental assistance and case management services.

During 2017 Arbor provided: *1,635 nights of shelter, 3,801 meals and 3,022 basic needs to 219 unduplicated youth* in our emergency shelter; transitioned *24 out of 80 youth to stable housing* through our Outreach Center; and assisted *6 youth in maintaining stable housing for more than 12 months* through our Rapid Rehousing program.

### **Community Need**

Currently, Arbor offers the only youth-centered housing and outreach programs in Fayette County. Although Lexington is extremely active in meeting the needs of various homeless populations within our city, youth are often unable to engage or succeed in adult programs due to a variety of factors. Arbor works closely with the OHPI and other partners to address the needs of youth up to age 24 and has found great support among service partners; however, we continue to face several primary barriers in housing homeless youth:

**1) Homeless youth in school:** This population includes youth who turn 18 while still in high school but are unable to be accepted in our MASH Drop Inn emergency shelter because of age restrictions. Experiencing homelessness drastically increases the chances of trauma, future instances of homelessness and decreased earning capacity on a long-term basis. Although adult shelters accept these youth, they often must quit school to obtain employment, unless they receive some form of financial or housing assistance. Many students who become homeless often do not present a history of chronic homelessness, decreasing their chances of priority placement within HUD based programs.

**2) Employment & Income:** Many youth who experience homelessness are unable to easily or quickly obtain employment and, if employed, they struggle to meet the income requirements of landlords who often insist on monthly income of 2-3 times the rent. Deposits and other move-in expenses present an additional burden. Many of our clients also receive assistance from staff in obtaining government issued identification, Social Security cards and other necessary documents required to obtain employment. At an age when most youth are attending college, remaining in their parent's home or sharing space with roommates, many of our clients have no family or community support systems in place to assist them in these developmental milestones.

**4) Effective age-appropriate services:** Arbor's programming is designed with a primary focus on safety and empowerment. Many of the youth we serve require extensive life skill and soft skill building services before they are able to successfully sustain independent living on a long-term basis. Our case managers consider histories of trauma and assets available to youth to build individualized service plans that address the needs of the whole client, which often requires increased time and attention from staff. Arbor is also structured to anticipate the additional behavioral and emotional support required by youth, such as accompanying them to apply for food stamps or transporting them to a counseling appointment, or most often simply not penalizing them if they happen to miss an appointment. These services are often not components of programs designed for adults but are absolutely necessary for the success of youth housing clients.

#### **Response to Need**

Arbor Youth Services desires to meet these needs by providing a 12- to 24-month independent living program for homeless youth, particularly youth who were not previously part of foster care and are not eligible for such programs. The LFUCG-owned property at 1807 Dalton Court can be a perfect fit for independent living for our youth. The floor plan (two 2BR units, two 1BR units, and 2 studio units) would allow Arbor to serve a variety of both individual and parenting youth under the age of 24, for a minimum of 6 youth served per year. We would utilize one of the units as an office space, where services and support could be provided by Arbor staff. Our independent living program entails a comprehensive, systemic, and multi-phased dynamic service continuum approach aimed at meeting the individual goals and objectives of each housing participant. With this level of support, we expect youth to not only sustain housing but to become self-sufficient and productive members of the community. Program participation would be incentivized by housing vouchers, but youth would have year-long lease agreements and would not lose their housing if they opt out of services. While Arbor has the ability to add this new programming and can financially maintain such a program, we do not have funds to purchase a building required to do so. Arbor already has a very strong relationship with other property managers in this area and has utilized this neighborhood for nearly two years to house our current Rapid Rehousing and Supportive Housing clients. With the current housing programs described above already in place and active collaboration with the homeless provider network, Arbor does not expect any obstacles in recruiting potential clients.

#### **Fiscal & Operational Sustainability:**

If the Dalton Court building was to be given to Arbor, we are confident that we could sustain the building and the programming. If this facility is provided to Arbor at no cost and we are successful in obtaining funding from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for needed repairs, then we expect regular maintenance, utilities and staffing to be the primary long-term costs. We will be submitting a proposal to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for \$250,000 for the repairs necessary for building occupancy, and Rick McQuady supports this project (see attached). Additionally, the Lexington Housing Authority has tentatively committed to provide Arbor with program-based vouchers, if Arbor was to obtain a building for an independent living program. These vouchers would provide the financial support needed for the aforementioned primary long-term costs, and the project would be self-sustaining. Our agency was recently awarded an Americorps Housing Counselor that will begin this September to meet the growing demand for housing services among youth, and this position would be a viable staffing option for this project.

### **Investment Benefit for Fayette County**

Numerous statistics are available that highlight the negative effects of homelessness on children. Given that homelessness is often a complex problem to resolve for adults, the added stressor of youthfulness often presents not only more obstacles to self-sufficiency but further chance of long term trauma while homeless. As outlined above, Arbor has the capacity, expertise and fiscal support required to implement and operate a successful program that will positively impact the youth in our community.

Unfortunately, Arbor is not able to obtain the building located at 1807 Dalton Court without the support of the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government. Additionally, due to Arbor's distinct funding streams and current facility rehabilitation projects, it is not feasible for the agency to purchase property on the private market or to hold a lease through other entities for purposes of operating an independent living program. However, if the City is willing to invest in the long-term success of youth, the provision of this building could provide a cost benefit that is indefinite when considering the comparable cost of chronic homelessness or incarceration.

MAYOR JIM GRAY



LEXINGTON

RICHARD MCQUADY  
DIRECTOR  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

August 2, 2018

Ms. Lori Clemons, Executive Director  
Arbor Youth Services  
540 W. Third Street  
Lexington, KY. 40508

Dear Ms. Clemons,

As the Manager of Lexington Fayette Urban County Government's Affordable Housing Fund I strongly support the Urban County Government donating the property located on Dalton Court to Arbor Youth Services for the housing of 18-24 year old youth. In addition to housing, these youth will receive case management and other supportive services necessary to assist them in obtaining education, employment and life skills. There is a great need for permanent supportive housing for this segment of the population and the Affordable Housing Fund will work with you to obtain funding for the necessary rehabilitation to the property.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard L. McQuady".

Richard L. McQuady  
Affordable Housing Manager

