

## COVER SHEET

**Organization:** GreenHouse17

**Authorized Representative:** Darlene Thomas, Executive Director

**Contact Information:**

Mailing Address: PO Box 55190, Lexington, KY 40555-5190

Street Address: 4400 Briar Hill Road, Lexington, KY 40516

Phone: 859-519-1903 (office); 800-544-2022 (24-hour hotline)

Email: [dthomas@greenhouse17.org](mailto:dthomas@greenhouse17.org); [grants@greenhouse17.org](mailto:grants@greenhouse17.org)

**Project Title:** Emergency Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence

**Project Summary:**

Lexington's Consolidated Plan identifies the need for emergency shelter, public services, and affordable housing for victims of domestic violence as a high priority. As the state-designated primary provider of these services in Fayette County, GreenHouse17 operates the only emergency shelter for homeless victims of domestic violence in Lexington. The agency provides best-practice, trauma-informed services that meet the standards of ZeroV, Kentucky's coalition of domestic violence service providers. Community partnerships promote systemic coordination of care and prevent duplication of services. Integration of housing services with GreenHouse17's emergency shelter encourages stability after experiencing abuse. During 2023, 262 adults and children fleeing domestic violence found safety, healing, and stability at the 42-bed facility. Request for LFUCG investment equals 12% of the annual shelter program budget.

## **I. GENERAL SHELTER INFORMATION**

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports Kentucky's rate of domestic violence to be the second highest in the nation. Public records maintained by the Kentucky Administration of Courts indicate victims in Fayette County filed 1,320 petitions for court-ordered domestic violence or interpersonal protection last year, comprising 7% of total petitions filed in Kentucky. Victims must navigate complex barriers to escape abuse and establish safety. Fleeing abuse is the most dangerous time for victims and their dependent children. Access to emergency shelter and supportive services is critically important to the safety of individuals and our community.

### ***Population Served, Operating Hours, Basic Needs***

Although intimate partner violence occurs across age, gender, and other demographics, most victims served by the agency experience complex intersecting issues. Poverty is among the most common barriers for victims. The average victim served is a woman, age 35, with a dependent child, some college, and a job paying less than a living wage. Last year, 64% of victims residing at our emergency shelter had no income upon entry.

The emergency shelter operates 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Victims self-initiate intake at the emergency shelter through calls to the organization's 24-hour hotline, via partner referrals, or during court-based advocacy. Upon entry, victims have immediate access to clothes, personal hygiene, bedding, and other basic needs stored in the shelter facility. Twice daily meals are prepared, many with fresh produce grown on the farm located on the shelter property. Snacks, breakfast food, and a fully-equipped kitchen are available to shelter residents at any time of the day or night. In the initial days following shelter intake, victims have access to services including

safety planning, assistance in obtaining Emergency Protective Orders (EPOs), and medical advocacy.

### ***Shelter Staff***

The emergency shelter is operated by 26 employees who provide 20.9 full-time equivalent (FTE) focus on direct delivery of shelter-based services, maintenance of facilities, preparation of daily meals, and management matters. Advocates are scheduled to ensure 24-hour coverage across day, evening, and overnight shifts. Per ZeroV regulations, direct service staff complete 40 hours of training during their first year of employment to become a Certified Domestic Violence Advocate and maintain certification through a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education each year. Darlene Thomas, Diane Fleet, Diane Willoughby, and Corissa Phillips comprise the agency's leadership team to provide oversight of shelter programming, funding compliance, and community engagement. The program's direct service and administration staff bring more than 90 years of collective experience. A board of directors representing diverse professional specialties provides fiscal oversight and governance for the program.

### ***Shelter Description***

No limitations are imposed on the duration of shelter stay, and residents are never required to leave the facility during daytime hours. Services are provided from a 17,000 square foot, 42-bed facility in rural Fayette County. More than fifteen external security cameras and a coded gate entry ensure safety on the property. The shelter facility includes the following spaces:

- Five bedrooms with four beds and eleven bedrooms with two beds;
- One fully accessible bedroom with two beds and a shower;
- Two half-baths and six full baths, providing seven shower stalls and two tubs with showers;
- Commercial kitchen for meal preparation and a spacious dining room;

- Small and large support group rooms;
- Community spaces, including an art room, sewing room, age-specific children's playrooms, and a family-style living room;
- Individual and shared office spaces;
- Unfinished basement for storage of supplies.

Outside the facility, a fully fenced children's playground is accessible through the shelter's dining room. Innovative nature-based services are provided from the small farm on the 40-acre property that surrounds the agency's emergency shelter. The farm provides a healing environment and access to nutritious food for shelter residents. Integration of farm programming with traditional victim services has received several awards, including the Kentucky Nonprofit Network Innovative Nonprofit Award; Commerce Lex Nonprofit Impact Award; and Purple Ribbon Award for Program of the Year, a national recognition from Theresa's Fund and Domesticshelters.org.

### ***Shelter Program Model***

Shelter programming aims to address frequently experienced needs of victims to build a foundation for long-term stability in the weeks, months, and years following abuse. Victims and dependent children self-determine their advocacy team of one or more staff specializing in services related to the following phases:

- Crisis Intervention (intake & safety planning)
- Welcoming (basic needs & continued safety planning)
- Safety & Healing (legal & personal advocacy, counseling, and support groups)
- Transitioning (housing advocacy/assistance, economic justice, and job readiness)
- Stability (permanent housing, job placement, and follow-up support)

Victims also have access to the Enhanced Protective Order Plan (EPOP), launched in 2023 in partnership with the Office of the Fayette Circuit Court Clerk to provide 24-hour access to filing petitions for orders of protection for survivors living at our emergency shelter or receiving outreach advocacy in Fayette County. This program grew from the Violence Against Women Act Needs Assessment conducted by the courts and builds on goals outlined in GreenHouse17's longstanding memorandums of understanding with the Fayette County Sheriff's Office and Amanda's Center to reduce barriers in obtaining protective orders.

Once immediate safety risks are mitigated, victims can focus on emotional healing. Support groups are available for all adult residents at the shelter in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings. During these group meetings, victims support their peers, identify dynamics of domestic violence, and offer parenting support. Adult victims also begin to develop longer-term housing and stability plans to identify opportunities and address potential barriers to achieving independence. A third of shelter residents are dependent children of victims. Their healing and stability needs are met through supervised, age-appropriate activities and regular homework help at the shelter to promote grade-level performance. Parents have the option of enrolling their children in schools in the shelter's district, which provide buses to safely transport children from the shelter facility. Collaboration with school resource centers helps keep children safe and encourages academic engagement.

### ***Person-centered & Culturally Competent Care***

GreenHouse17 honors the standards set forth by ZeroV, Kentucky's coalition of domestic violence service providers, to provide trauma-informed, best-practice services to victims and their children. The agency's policies and practices acknowledge the link between domestic violence and other forms of oppression, while adhering to all federal, state, and local rules for non-

discrimination. Victims are informed of their rights to services, requirements of confidentiality, and community living guidelines upon intake to the emergency shelter.

The shelter welcome packet also lays out the following expectations: “To be treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy; to adhere to communal living guidelines;” and “To give grace because, although we are all different, we have all been hurt by people who claim to have loved us.” Also addressed is an understanding of how abuse impacts children, other family members, and pets, which are accepted to shelter when space allows or placed with foster families.

Trauma-informed shelter services recognize the widespread impact of abuse on the lives of victims and avoids re-traumatization. The agency prioritizes dignity, autonomy, and self-determination through a strengths-based approach, rather than focusing on deficits. This service model encourages healthy coping mechanisms, increased resiliency, and hope for the future. Advocates help each shelter resident develop safety, healing, and stability plans to address each person’s unique needs, challenges, and goals.

Cultural competency modules are included in the previously mentioned ZeroV Certified Domestic Violence Advocacy training required during the first year of employment for all advocates employed by the organization. A biannual survey of the organization’s employees and board members ensures shared lived experiences with program participants: 60% are survivors of domestic, dating, or other power-based violence, and 40% were exposed to domestic or dating violence during childhood. GreenHouse17 staff are diverse in age, race, ethnicity, marital status, gender, body size, and educational background. During the most recent anonymous survey of staff, 17.5% identified as LGBTQ+. Partnerships with Global Lex, Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Pride Community Services Organization, and other local agencies provide ongoing professional training to ensure advocates have the tools for a meaningful response to the needs of diverse victims.

GreenHouse17 employs advocates who are fluent in Spanish, Arabic, and American Sign Language. Contracts with interpretation services provide 24-hour access to over one hundred languages by phone, video, and/or in-person, depending on the situation and the victim's needs. A newly forged partnership with the National Sign Language Interpreter Service provides additional trauma-informed sign language interpretation by video for Deaf or hard-of-hearing participants. Often-used documents have been professionally translated to Spanish, and contractual agreements allow for the translation of service forms to other languages. The organization's website is compatible with assistive reading software for individuals with visual impairment. Digital and printed outreach brochures are available in Spanish, French, and Arabic.

The emergency shelter facility's parking, walkways, entrances, and corridors are handicapped accessible and meet ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities. One bedroom is fully accessible with an ADA-compliant attached bath for victims and dependents with mobility needs or health requirements.

### ***Engagement in Shelter Operations & Governance***

Victims residing at shelter are empowered to select their own team of advocacy staff to help them meet their individualized safety, healing, and stability needs. Shelter residents may provide feedback, including identifying gaps in service and shelter operation suggestions, during weekly "house" meetings open to all residents. Adult residents have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey upon exit from shelter to rate effectiveness of services and inform needs for improvements. GreenHouse17 also refers former shelter residents for representation on Kentucky's Office of the Attorney General Survivor's Council, an advisory group that informs statewide awareness initiatives, training efforts, and legislative initiatives.

## **II. RAPID RESOLUTION, HOUSING ORIENTED**

The emergency shelter is reserved for victims of domestic violence experiencing the most complicated and dangerous situations. Although the physical safety of victims and their children is always the primary consideration when accepting victims to shelter, practice proves that victims do best when not forced to leave their home, employment, and support network when fleeing abuse. For these reasons, shelter diversion alternatives are explored during 24-hour crisis line calls and other service delivery. Frequently, victims will utilize relocation assistance; homelessness prevention, including emergency financial assistance and referrals to community programs for rental and utilities assistance; and safe temporary stays with family and friends. If a victim chooses one of these alternate routes, they are still connected with an outreach advocate for non-residential services such as legal advocacy, housing assistance, case management, and other services. During the previous year, 93% of people who received services from GreenHouse17 never resided at the shelter.

Victims who do enter shelter stayed on average 53 bed nights during the last reporting period. Residents meet with housing advocates within their first two weeks in the emergency shelter to develop a housing and stability plan. Most victims exiting the emergency departed to permanent housing destinations (53%) or temporary stays with family and friends (43%). Only a small minority (3%) returned to homelessness within twelve months of exit to permanent housing.

### ***Housing Case Management Considerations***

Four advocates manage the agency's housing program, three of whom are focused on assistance for adults who wish to establish permanent housing in Fayette County. No prerequisites except fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence are required for participation in the housing program. Housing advocates are available Monday - Friday from offices at the emergency shelter.



Although staggered start and end times ensure access to housing advocates from 9 am to 6 pm, these core work hours can be changed to meet the needs of victims. Shelter residents also have 24-hour access to a team of shelter advocates trained in basic tenets of the housing program and well-versed in the completion of required housing forms and paperwork.

Housing advocates begin conversations with shelter residents within 14 days of intake or sooner, if possible, depending on the physical and emotional health priorities caused by the abuse. Formal meetings about housing options and activities to ensure next steps are completed occur at least weekly, with frequent informal discussions over lunch and in shared spaces at the shelter. When permanent housing is identified and secured, monthly rental and/or utilities assistance is provided for a duration determined by individualized need, typically six months or more. Access to supportive services continues as clients settle into their new homes and begin to build stability. Housing advocates and clients develop a plan for monthly meetings to celebrate successes and address barriers to sustained stability. Should additional support be necessary between these meetings, clients may contact their advocate by phone or email. Housing clients are also encouraged to contact the 24-hour hotline operated by the organization should immediate crisis intervention be needed.

Housing advocacy is grounded in the same trauma-informed, strengths-based, and voluntary services models as the emergency shelter. Staff complete at least 12 hours of continuing education related to evidence-based practice during each year of employment to maintain the ZeroV Certified Domestic Violence Advocate credential. Additionally, one housing advocate is SOAR certified to assist clients with application for social security benefits. Because the delivery of housing services intersects with acute domestic violence crisis and trauma, the average case load per housing advocate is typically limited to 15 clients of varying housing stability.

## ***Housing Solutions***

Services to encourage rapid housing-oriented resolutions include but are not limited to the following:

- Assisting with transportation, form completion, and fees to obtain identification and other documentation (driver's license, birth certificate, social security card, etc.);
- Applying for SNAP, WIC, health, disability, and/or other benefits;
- Identifying housing options and completing applications;
- Providing financial assistance with outstanding rental and utilities balances;
- Paying fees associated with housing applications;
- Conducting personal advocacy with landlords and utilities companies;
- Providing transportation to related meetings and appointments;
- Assisting with payment of rental and utilities deposits;
- Moving assistance in partnership with area moving companies;
- Purchasing basic furniture and small appliances via financial assistance or vouchers;
- Making full or partial payment of rent and utilities for an established period of time.

Victims may apply to receive one of the 24 permanent housing vouchers reserved by the Lexington Housing Authority for survivors of domestic violence who transition to ZeroV Homes, a scattered-site housing program launched eight years ago with federal, state, and local support. Half of the units are in two apartment complexes in downtown Lexington, while the other half are located on the organization's property behind the emergency shelter facility. GreenHouse17 also receives a transitional housing grant from the Office of Violence Against Women and HUD Domestic Violence Bonus grants administered by the Lexington Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention, Community Action Council, and Barren River Area Safe Space.

Housing policies, procedures, and paperwork comply with funder requirements and the Lexington Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures.

### ***Housing Trends, Systems & Partnerships***

The housing program manager monitors service data for thoroughness and accuracy on a weekly basis. Regular review of program reports by the leadership team identifies promising practices and improvement needs. Monthly and quarterly staff meetings bring together shelter, community, and housing advocates in collaboration, training, and discussion to address trends in services. Programmatic response to these needs has informed partnerships with Jubilee Jobs and the Kentucky Career Center to provide career readiness and job placement services for victims. While staying at the emergency shelter, victims have the option to participate in a six-week, nature-based work program on the organization's small farm. This allows victims to gain work experience in a supportive environment and build their resume and skillset for future employment. Participants in the voluntary farm program earn a stipend for up to 10 hours of weekly participation.

GreenHouse17 maintains numerous formal and informal community partnerships to reduce barriers to service, avoid duplication of efforts, and identify systemic barriers. Reciprocal referral agreements are maintained with diverse organizations, including Legal Aid of the Bluegrass, Ampersand, Global Lex, Hope Center Recovery Program for Women, The Nest Center for Women and Children, Lexington Housing Authority, Lexington Police Department, and Lexington Animal Control & Care. The agency also participates in community consortia, including the LFUCG Homelessness Prevention & Intervention Board, Lexington Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Coalition, and Lexington-Fayette Strangulation Task Force. GreenHouse17 leadership and staff often facilitate professional training events for social workers, law enforcement, elected officials, and other entities.

### **III. LOW-BARRIER ACCESS**

GreenHouse17 follows a low-barrier and voluntary services philosophy that exceeds ZeroV Designated Program Service Standards. The organization believes that intimate partner abuse is a community issue that requires community-based solutions. Policies and procedures encourage referrals to community-based services and embrace Coordinated Entry.

Every effort is made to ensure shelter access is flexible yet predictable, an especially important balance for services that intervene during acute and often very dangerous crises. Shelter intake paperwork includes an agreement for residents to not harm themselves or others, maintain confidentiality of other residents, and respect community living expectations. Examples of expectations include keeping windows locked and entering through the front door to maintain security of the facility, as well as smoking only in designated areas. Additionally, shelter access is informed by the following low-barrier guidelines:

- Self-defined families are housed together.
- Program participation or labor is not required as a condition for services.
- There is no requirement to leave the facility during daytime hours.
- Residents may use storage provided in the emergency shelter, on the property, or temporary facilities.
- Service animals are welcomed to the shelter, as well as family pets if the shelter facility is a fit for their needs. If preferred, assistance is provided to identify foster families for pets while their humans live at the emergency shelter.
- Weapons are prohibited on the property.
- Drug testing is not required at intake or during the course of shelter stay, although alcohol and illegal drugs are prohibited on the property.

In the case of a shelter resident not abiding by these community guidelines, shelter staff must make repeated attempts to counsel and develop mutually agreed-upon expectations for future behavior. The organization prioritizes victim safety, and it is rare for a resident to be exited from the emergency shelter for noncompliance with these guidelines. During the previous 12-month period, only eleven shelter residents were involuntary exited to maintain the physical safety of others staying at shelter. Involuntary exit does not disqualify a victim from receiving non-residential services, and program policies require temporary financial assistance for hotel stays and basic needs until an alternate living arrangement is identified. Victims are encouraged to pursue supportive services and housing assistance. Re-entry to shelter may be possible following agreements that establish clear expectations.

Residents experiencing substance abuse issues are not removed from the emergency shelter if intoxicated; rather, advocates work with residents to establish boundaries and solutions, including referral to residential treatment programs and sobriety support from partner organizations. Residents are notified of and have the opportunity to submit grievances from intake to exit from the emergency shelter. If a resident is not satisfied with a proposed resolution, they may escalate the grievance from review by service experts representing ZeroV member programs.

#### **IV. ACTUAL RESULTS**

GreenHouse17 has uploaded a CoC APR and CAPER report from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, per RFP requirements. The agency uses an HMIS-comparable database that is locally hosted at the emergency shelter, per Violence Against Women Act confidentiality requirements for Victim Service Providers. The system meets data requirements established by various federal housing funders and LFUCG Homelessness Prevention and Intervention Board's Data Quality Plan.

## V. BUDGET, CAPACITY & COST EFFECTIVENESS

In addition to the completed chart below, a detailed budget has been prepared using the required form and submitted as an accompanying attachment to the narrative responses.

***Number of individual beds available:	<b>42</b>
***Number of units available for families, if applicable:	---
Funds requested from LFUCG	<b>\$190,000</b>
Average nightly census for individuals based on KYHMIS data:	<b>48</b>
Average nightly census for families based on KYHMIS data:	---
Total annual budget for shelter (all funding sources):	<b>\$1,632,782</b>
% LFUCG investment (LFUCG Request/Total Budget * 100):	<b>12%</b>

### *Capacity*

The emergency shelter typically operated near or at the 42-bed capacity. In certain situations, such as a confirmed case of COVID-19, hotels may be utilized to house shelter residents. Daily meals, advocacy access, remote support groups, and other supportive services are available to victims while residing at hotels.

### *Cost Effectiveness*

GreenHouse17 requests LFUCG investment of approximately \$12.40 per bed per day, which will support 12% of total costs associated with 24-hour operation of the emergency shelter and concomitant services. The remaining shelter operation costs are covered by diverse funding sources, including the organization's subcontract with ZeroV, comprised of federal and state sources; direct and subrecipient federal awards from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Victims, Office of Violence Against Women, and Department of Housing and Urban Development; and local funding, including United Way support, private donations, foundation grants, special event revenue, and social enterprise sales of value-added products from the organization's farm.

## ATTACHMENTS

These documents have been submitted as attachments per requirements of the RFP:

- 1) Addendum #1, Program Budget & Budget Narrative
- 2) GreenHouse17 Policies & Procedures (*guidelines, person-centered & cultural competence*)
- 3) ZeroV Designated Program Service Standards (*rules, person-centered, cultural competence, governance, documentation of no program fees*)
- 4) Resident Welcome/Intake Packer (*minimal expectations/requirements, dignity & respect, grievance, substance abuse at shelter, etc.*)
- 5) Resident Departure/Exit Survey (*dignity & respect, governance, performance, grievance*)
- 6) GreenHouse17 Language Access Policy (*limited English proficiency*)
- 7) HUD Shelter APR (1/1/23 – 12/31/23)
- 8) HUD Shelter CAPER (1/1/23 – 12/31/23)
- 9) Emergency Shelter Staff List