

Homeless Prevention Success Stories: We Should Be Increasing, Not Cutting, Funding

Cuts Are A Bad Short-Term Investment For The State Of Illinois And Devastating For Families That Will Otherwise Be Homeless



A stronger Illinois begins at home



Chicago Coalition
for the Homeless

The Homeless Prevention Program provides one-time grants, primarily for rent and utility assistance, and supportive services that prevent and end homelessness. Since 2000, the program has helped 101,830 Illinois households. The average grant in FY 2013 was \$1,048, and 88% of recipients reported they remained housed when surveyed several months after getting the grant.

State budget cutbacks have decimated the program, leaving just \$4 million available in FY 2015—far less than the \$11 million available in FY 2008. Governor Rauner's proposed FY 2016 budget makes the situation even worse, reducing funding to \$3 million. This cut would result in 955 more households becoming or staying homeless next year. Instead, funding should be increased to \$6 million to prevent homelessness for more than 5,700 households—1,800 more households than current funding allows.

Funds keep families in their home and out of the more costly shelter system when they have a temporary crisis, such as...

Loss of Employment: A family of 5 came to us after the husband lost a job. They had to leave their apartment because of the job loss and the amount of rent was too expensive. The father got another job, but needed lower rent. With Homeless Prevention funds we helped them to get into the new place where they can pay their rent on their own.

Story provided by We Care of Grundy County

A Health Care Emergency: A single mother of one and pregnant with a second was temporarily unable to work due to her doctor placing her on bed-rest. This order made it impossible for her to work and support her family. Winter was quickly approaching and the mother was fearful that her, her son and unborn child would be homeless. We were able to assist with the Homeless Prevention funds to pay her back rent. The mother and her son were able to have Christmas at home and soon after the family was blessed with a new baby boy.

Story provided by Peoria Friendship House

A Domestic Violence Situation: A pregnant mother of two came to our agency seeking rental assistance as she attempted to flee her abuser, who also was the father of her two children as well as her unborn child. We were able to assist her with securing safe and affordable housing, as well as remove the family from this harmful situation.

Story provided by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet

For more information contact Bob Palmer, Housing Action Illinois, at 312-939-6074, or Jennifer Cushman, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, at 312-641-4140.

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More Homeless Prevention Success Stories...

A single mother of three children was living in an apartment with a housing subsidy, paying her portion of rent primarily through day labor and temp work. Her landlord neglected her apartment building to the point that it became uninhabitable and she was forced to temporarily reside in a shelter. She had to quickly find a new apartment or lose her housing subsidy. The Homeless Prevention fund assisted in paying a portion of her security deposit so she could relocate to a new building.

Story provided by La Case Norte, Chicago

A single parent with three children was homeless at the time I saw her. She had a job at a local factory so she had income, but she had left the home she was renting due to mold and other unhealthy housing conditions. She had paid for two weeks at a hotel, but she was running out of money and was at-risk of homelessness. Homeless Prevention funds paid for her security deposit and first month's rent.

Story provided by The Salvation Army, Danville

A single mother came in requesting rent assistance for her and her two children. She was working at her full-time job and had childcare established for her children, but had to go to part-time work after a disruption with her childcare provider. After finding a new childcare provider, she returned to full-time work, but was behind on her rent and other bills and at-risk of eviction. The Homeless Prevention funds helped her catch up on her rent and other bills and remain stably housed.

Story provided by Community Crisis Center, Elgin

We assisted a client that ended up in a homeless shelter after depleting her savings. This individual was emotionally and psychologically beat down when arriving at shelter, but with case management and counseling she was able to secure full-time employment and permanent stable housing. Homeless Prevention funds paid her security deposit and first month's rent.

Story provided by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet

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More Homeless Prevention Success Stories...

A homeless family of four, with the wife and children living in a shelter and the husband on the street, came to us for assistance to end their homelessness. We helped the husband secure employment and the wife was referred to our local community college to achieve her GED. At that point, we were able to use Homeless Prevention funds to help them rent an apartment. We continued with follow-up counseling sessions, which included maintaining a sustainable budget. The family's dignity and self-esteem was restored.

Story provided by Madison County Urban League

A mother and her daughter had been homeless for two months, during which time they had been staying with family members and friends on a temporary basis. Around the same time the family was out of options and was going to have to go to a shelter, the mother obtained employment and located a rental unit in which to live. However, she needed assistance with the security deposit and first month of rent. The Homeless Prevention funds kept the family from having to enter a shelter.

*Story provided by Catholic Charities of the
Archdiocese of Chicago, Lake County Services.*

Homeless Prevention Providers Don't Just Provide Financial Support, But Provide Intensive Case Management...

"Carl" and his wife are a middle-aged couple that had been living in the home of Carl's mother and acting as her caregivers. Both Carl and his wife had been working, but they had both lost their jobs and were receiving small unemployment checks. This combination of unemployment and the mother's Social Security income had been allowing them to cover their expenses until Carl's mother became very ill and had higher medical expenses. They were behind two month's mortgage payments. We tried to work with the mortgage lender to reduce their monthly payments, but the payments were already as low as they could get. We worked with Carl and his wife on ways to save money by using coupons and going to food pantries. We paid the two-month mortgage arrears with one month's payment coming from Homeless Prevention funds and the other month's payment coming from another grant fund. Although this family continues to struggle to meet expenses, they have been able to maintain home ownership for the entire year since we met with them.

Story provided by Mid Central Community Action, Bloomington

All success stories collected during February 2015 from agencies that administer the Homeless Prevention Program.