



## **TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM**

River of Refuge opened its Transitional Housing Program in May 2016 and added eight more family units in October 2022. Although it is young in terms of similar organizations in the area, it continues to make a positive impact! Not a single graduate has moved into another program or shelter upon completion. The goal is not to just provide a roof over a family's head but to provide them the tools to make long-term lifestyle changes needed to remain stably housed.

### **What we do**

River of Refuge helps working families move from homelessness to stable housing. Many of the applications received are from families that are couch-surfing, program hopping, or using all of their money on pay-by-the-week motels to keep the family together. Being homeless takes a toll on the entire household. The approach taken is to look at the needs of each family member. Bible study, recovery support, and mental health counseling are all offered on-site. There is a staff person that lives on-site offering additional support, as well.

### **How we do it**

Families are provided with a fully furnished apartment rent- and utility-free in a secured facility. The length of stay is based on how much debt the family has accumulated that prevents them from obtaining permanent housing. The average stay is four to six months. The staff serves as an accountability partner with clients and tailors their program based on their specific needs. Once a family accepts responsibility for their role in their current situation, they are able to take steps necessary to make changes. While in the program, families are expected to:

- Adhere to a strict budget based on an "all needs, no wants" philosophy
- Actively participate in weekly case management meetings
- Attend mandatory weekly Parenting and Life Skills classes
- Follow an individualized debt-reduction plan. Non-perishable food, hygiene products, cleaning items, and laundry services, are provided. The money saved on those items goes towards paying their debt.
- Complete a weekly assigned chore
- Build savings

## **Why we are different**

- The organization does not receive HUD funding, therefore, can require the families to keep full-time employment, submit to random drug and alcohol testing, and follow program rules to remain in the program.
- River of Refuge measures success by more than just a graduation rate or how many people have been served. Other measures include:
  - Children felt stable, safe, and supported
  - Sobriety has been maintained
  - Debt has been paid or greatly reduced
  - Savings has been established
  - Legal issues have been addressed such as obtaining valid driver's license, getting current on vehicle registration and insurance
  - Parenting skills have shown improvement
  - Employment situation is better
- Staff does not take control of a family's money, instead they are taught how to manage it themselves.
- Families are expected to pay off the debt they created. However, resources may be offered when they have taken responsibility to reduce that debt significantly themselves.
- We welcome single dads, single moms, partnered couples, married couples, all races and genders and LGBTQ.

Families are rewarded for their hard work and sacrifice. They are given the opportunity to earn money from their own budget for discretionary spending. They enjoy monthly birthday parties, holiday celebrations, and other events such as bar-b-ques, movie and game nights, and community outings. There are also talent shows and essay contests for the children to win prizes.

## **Am I Eligible?**

- There must be at least one child 18 or younger living in the household full-time.
- Adults must be working at least 35 hours per week.
- Family members must be drug and alcohol-free. This includes marijuana and kratom.

Still interested? Complete and online application and begin doing a weekly check in. Wait times can vary and could be several weeks.

**<https://www.riverofrefuge.com/transitional-housing-program/>**