

LIAISON REPORT

AGENCY: The Bridge Home LIAISON: Jennifer Schill

1. Need for Program. Describe who the target population is and whether their numbers are increasing or decreasing. Indicate the source of this information. Also, indicate how the program/service is different and how it is similar to others and what would happen if the program/service ceased to exist. List the priorities established by ASSET Funders, which the programming addresses.

The Bridge Home provides transitional housing, acts as a homeless shelter, helps with rent/utility assistance on an emergency basis, and provides homelessness prevention programs. The need is growing with their available resources full and oftentimes overflowing. They utilize multiple buildings and lease additional rooms at a local motel when available for those in need, but simply can't meet current demands. Their office often receives requests from outside Story County and sometimes outside the state of Iowa inquiring about availability.

Emergency Shelter – The shelter opened in 1985. The maximum stay is 30 days. Average shelter capacity is 24. The upstairs is utilized by the men, while the next door apartments are for women and families. The shelter has continuously been at capacity for several years running. They are now able to divert an average of 17 inquiries a month to other resources or find a solution to their living situation that keep them out of the temporary shelter. An average turn away number is still around 5-8 per day.

Homelessness Prevention – Rent and utility assistance is provided once every 12 months to help prevent eviction or utility shut off. ERP works in conjunction with Good Neighbor and several other agencies offering similar services to prevent repetition of services. Annually an individual can receive \$250 and a family \$350.00. Assistance this year for the service is averaging \$13,000-\$15,000 per month.

Transitional Housing – This program has apartments with an average stay of 9 months, maximum of 24 months. With the hiring of a Housing & Volunteer Director and a Housing Support Specialist, the agency is focusing heavily on working with local landlords and finding community resources to help transition people to long term housing on their own affordable terms. The apartments are next door to the shelter offering families a sliding fee scale for their monthly rent. This is the only program of its kind in the area. They are currently waiting to hear on some new funding to support longer time for clients in transitional housing and provide a no hard end/kick-out to their time in transitional housing.

2. Program Strengths. Pick two to four factors that contribute most importantly to the program/service outcomes. Do not list everything that is satisfactory. We will assume that things not mentioned are okay. For each strength describe some supporting evidence.

During the Covid Pandemic The Bridge Home staff was able to keep all programs going. They did have to rearrange the Emergency Shelter due to people not being able to be communally housed. Families are in the two basement apartments and others have been moved to local motel rooms. Staff also worked really hard to move more clients into the Rapid Rehousing program to get them out of the shelter. Increased staffing has helped the organization to begin

more planning for outreach programs. The organization now works with Ames PD and ISU PD to get out in the community to areas where they know homeless individuals spend time to see about getting them enrolled in programs or into shelter to begin the transition back into housing. Staff visit these areas twice a week to make contact with potential clients.

The Bridge Home staff have built great relationships with local landlords to partner with, for the Transitional Housing program. The landlords recognize that clients in this program have support around them from The Bridge Home staff and The Bridge Home can guarantee rent being paid. Financial donations during the pandemic have not decreased, which was encouraging to hear and speaks to staff continuing to do their job of community awareness.

3. Program Weaknesses. Select factors that detract most from the program/service achieving its outcomes. Present details as described above. Recommendations for reducing these weaknesses should follow the discussion of each weakness.

The program doesn't have the space or finances to keep up with demands. They average 5-8 people a day being turned away for shelter services and on average 2 families a week for transitional housing. Having to move clients to motels has increased the financial pressure on this organization. Currently it costs \$25-26,000 a month to house clients in motels and ran out of additional ASSET funds to help with this in July. Staff is waiting to hear on an additional grant from the Iowa Finance Authority to help with this. Staff also thinks the second round of the Care's Act will cover shelter so they can get back paid for the motel costs.

4. Financial Outlook. Current funding concerns should be described. In addition, the assessment of the program's plan to cope with shrinking resources should be given.

The shelter has run with deficit funds over the last decade. Additional grants and fundraising were key in their audit showing positive funds these past 3 years. The long term plans include wanting to build a new, larger shelter to house their single occupants where the offices would be located. This summer The Bridge Home will be conducting a feasibility study for the new shelter which will be followed by a year for the fundraising campaign.

5. Internal Management Practices. Summarize your assessment of the management of the agency, and the role of the Board. If there are deficiencies, details should be provided. Conclude with recommendations when appropriate.

The board along and the ED are working their plan to implement more consistent and varied funding sources. Staff has recently gone from 3 part-time and 3 full-time to 10 part-time and 8 full-time. This has helped with the increased pressure and changes caused by the pandemic.

6. Agency Suggestions/Comments. Make note of any suggestions, comments or questions agencies may have with regard to the ASSET process, budget forms and or anything else that relates to the process.

Issues that staff brought up were discussed with the ASSET Administration Team.

Jodi had an idea for the ASSET Board that each agency should have a night throughout the year where they present who they are and what they do to our board. A deeper look at each agency and then offer time for questions from our board to their staff. They feel the 15 minute interviews and the reports we do, don't offer a full picture of what each agency is or does.