

**WALKER'S POINT**  
**YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTER**

February 14, 2023

# Agenda

- Mission & brief history
- Program overview
  - Emergency shelter
  - Mental Health Clinic
  - Housing & Case Management
- Problems
- Expansion on the horizon
- Advocacy



# Mission & History

Our mission is to be a place of sanctuary for young people during their time of need by providing free and confidential counseling, emergency shelter, and housing.

Since 1976, we have worked to help families to resolve conflicts and overcome challenges with focus on serving young people experiencing homelessness.

Experts estimate that 1 in 30 children and 1 in 10 young adults experience homelessness over the course of a year. Each young person comes to us for unique reasons. We work with them to identify and resolve problems, decide on safe next steps, and ensure housing stability.

Major milestones:

- Founded 1976, serving 213 youth by year's end
- Purchased shelter in 1981
- Housing program for young adults begins 2002



# Emergency Shelter

- Located on 732 S. 21st St., Milwaukee 53204
- Accommodations for up to eight young people at a time
- Can serve pregnant and parenting teens
- Young people can stay up to three weeks, but stay on average five days
- Served 200+ young people on average, pre-pandemic
  - 92% live below the poverty line
  - 73% are African American
  - 27% identify as LGBTQ+
- 89% leave feeling better able to cope with the problem that made them seek help



# Mental Health Clinic

- Two licensed professional counselors on staff, and 3-8 graduate level interns
  - One is bilingual - Spanish & English
- Expectation to participate in group, family, individual therapy five days/week
- Follow-up check-ins after youth leave the shelter (one week, 30, 90 days)
- Ages 14 and up can self-refer for mental health treatment without parental permission
- Therapy is completely free and we do not bill insurance
- Youth can continue services with counselors after they leave the shelter & transportation will be arranged
- Counselors serve non-resident youth as well (100+/yr, pre-pandemic)
- Field 1600+ crisis calls a year



# Housing and Case Management

- INSIGHTS Housing Program - 30 years experience
- Serves 18-25 year olds who are experiencing homelessness
- Intense intervention at this stage prevents future chronic homelessness
- 90% of participants maintain their housing upon completion of the program
- Three case managers, each with decade plus experience in human services
  - One is bilingual - Spanish & English
- Each case manager can work with up to 12 clients and dependent children
  - Currently serving nine each
- Up to 24 months of rent, security deposit, and basic need support
- 200 young people on the waiting list



# Problems Faced

- Calls for non-residential therapeutic services for 11-17 year olds has grown exponentially vs. pre-COVID levels
- Parents and caregivers are having difficulties finding child/adolescent therapists that are accepting new patients and accept BadgerCare
- Many of our youth face cultural and familiar barrier to seeking therapy services (especially when dealing with sexuality and gender issues)
- There are difficulties in transportation to access services (particularly for our homeless youth)



# On the Horizon

- Entering into a partnership with Milwaukee Christian Center to embed licensed professional counselor in the MCC youth development program at Kozy Community Center and Forest Home Avenue School

Two year pilot program using funds from Greater Milwaukee Foundation & grant funds from Milwaukee County ARPA Taskforce (final approval expected in March)

- 1 FTE Therapist to serve LGBTQIA+ youth/young adults and young adults in our housing program

Pilot program using funds from City of Milwaukee Health Department ARPA Funding (awaiting final contracts)

## Goals

- Increase access to mental health providers in underserved community
- Equip young people with tools to resolve conflicts and trauma
- Strengthen relationships with community and youth serving organizations





# Advocacy Opportunities

- 2023 Assembly Joint Resolution 9 - proclaiming January 2023 as human trafficking awareness and prevention month
  - Bipartisan support in Assembly & Senate
  - Referred to Committee on Rules
  - Senate available for scheduling
- Safe Harbor Bill (2023) - under this bill, a child under 18 may not be charged with prostitution because a child cannot consent to sex
  - Change would align WI with 30 other states
  - Bipartisan support over several sessions
  - Strong support in Assembly, may face challenge in Senate
- AB284 (2021) - this bill extends the notification window from 12 to 72 hours from child's arrival at the shelter for intake workers to notify families
  - Would align with Federal law
  - Only support from Democrats
- Expand Health Care and Mental Health Care for Unaccompanied Minors
  - In 2019, WI Chapter 48 was expanded to allow 17 year olds to access shelter without guardian consent
  - 29 states allow unaccompanied minors to consent for their own healthcare services

