



ImagineLA

FACT SHEET

Empowering Faith Communities to help end family homelessness...one family at a time.

Vision

Imagine LA is a non-profit organization whose vision is a city where no child sleeps on the street. Our efforts are focused on the Los Angeles County homeless-family population, which is growing at an alarming rate – 35% just in the last year. Currently, there are nearly 8,000 such families with over 18,000 children. In Los Angeles, there are also over 8,000 churches, synagogues, and mosques. *Just imagine if each one of these faith-based organizations aided a homeless family in achieving long-term housing and self-sufficiency...*

Mission

Imagine LA's mission is to empower faith communities to provide homeless families with the support and resources they need to help themselves move into permanent housing, obtain the life skills needed to sustain self-sufficiency, and ensure that their children thrive in the future. We seek to provide faith communities with a volunteer-led mentorship program that enables them to participate in a comprehensive solution to end family homelessness; one family at a time.

Background

Imagine LA began as an initiative of the Bel Air Presbyterian Church in 2006, prior to becoming a separate 501(c) 3. In 2007, Imagine LA began working with our first homeless family and developing the Supportive, Sustainable Family Housing and Mentorship (SSFH&M). Currently, 10 families and 10 faith communities (five churches and five synagogues) are progressing through our program and two are about to graduate. In 2010-2011, we are expanding geographically into the San Fernando Valley, Hollywood/mid-city, South LA, Pasadena and South Bay areas of Los Angeles.

Approach

In the world of family homelessness, the largest barriers to achieving lasting independence are: the initial cost of obtaining housing; securing housing (especially with a record of an eviction or bad credit); obtaining an education; making a living wage; as well as, acquiring and maintaining the basic skills and necessary discipline to support a self-sufficient life.

Imagine LA's Program, a two-year comprehensive program of rapid re-housing and step-by-step mentorship, effectively addresses these major barriers confronting homeless families. Imagine LA acts as a facilitator by harnessing the efforts of faith-community volunteers, primarily as mentors, and linking them to the full spectrum of existing social services and financial resources. In this way, we provide a continuum of care and access that allows families to permanently exit homelessness and poverty.

Process

People want to help, and Imagine LA shows them how. The SSFH&M Program begins by screening potential families. Next, the Faith Partner and its Family Support Team are trained in homelessness sensitivity and mentorship and matched with an appropriate nearby family. Then, under Imagine LA's guidance, the family and the Faith Partner's Family Support Team create the family's two-year Plan & Budget.

Each family's Plan & Budget is based on their unique situation and includes goals pertaining to: careers, education, transportation, health & nutrition, childhood development, and home economics.

It identifies specific areas where the Family Support Team can provide services, educational and employment opportunities, transportation and mentoring as needed for each family member. If needed, the Faith Partner, via Imagine LA, provides the funds to cover the initial lease costs to secure housing (e.g. first and last months' rent plus a security deposit). The Faith Partner also furnishes the apartment through donations from the congregation.

Once the family is settled, the Faith Partner Family Support Team volunteers work as mentors to help the family members maintain a budget, build life skills and knowledge to ensure that each family member achieves his or her Plan & Budget goals. **This is a gradual step-by-step process that builds lasting relationships and promotes self-esteem.**

Supportive, Sustainable Family Housing and Mentorship (SSFH&M) Program Facts:

- Faith-based organizations agree to provide both a two-year Family Support Team and sponsorship funds ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000, depending upon ability. These funds are used primarily for rental deposits and Budget-specified items, such as job training and tuition, but may also serve as a general safety net.
- Imagine LA trains, guides, and monitors volunteer activities so that the program is not a burden on faith community staff or clergy.
- Homeless families are selected from among those in temporary housing who agree to financial transparency and voluntarily participate. One parent in the family must be working at least part-time prior to becoming an Imagine LA family.
- Rental deposits and other funds are provided directly to the landlord or vendor.
- Faith Partner Family Support Teams are involved with their families for a minimum of two years. Each Support Team agrees to:
 - Participate in homelessness sensitivity and mentorship training
 - Furnish the family's home through donations from their congregation
 - Refrain from exerting force for, or requiring any religious activities
 - Maintain confidentiality and, if working with any member of the family, agree to complete a background check
 - Not give money or gift cards directly to the family

Powerful and Measureable Results

Imagine LA's proprietary performance measurement system has been developed with the help of United Way, numerous national mentoring organizations, and the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Our measurement system assesses 11 areas of a family's life (both qualitatively and quantitatively) and tracks their quarterly progress in stages from crisis and vulnerable to stable and thriving.

Board of Directors: Rev. Dr. Mark Brewer *Founder*, Brad Rosenberg *Chair*, John Emerson *Vice Chair*, Larry Murphy *Vice Chair*, Gary Hunt *Treasurer*, Michael Greer *Secretary*, Ken Braskamp, Brent Brockermeyer, Rabbi Ken Chasen, Rafer Johnson, Dana Kiesel PhD, Rev. Dr. Donn Moomaw, David Rognlien, Lee Silver, Charles Sipkins, and Toby Waldorf.

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