



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

# ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

Hope House of the Shenandoah addresses homelessness among unaccompanied transition-aged youth (TAY) between the ages of 18-24 in the Shenandoah Valley. It is a program partnership between the Shenandoah LGBTQ Center and Valley Community Services Board's Homeless and Special Needs Housing (HSNH) project, providing Rapid Rehousing (RRH) services to unaccompanied youth. Hope House of the Shenandoah is a member of the Valley Homeless Connection network and its associated Coordinated Entry program and operates under the larger Local Planning Group's oversight. We are the only organization serving this specific age range in the area with a prioritization of LGBTQ+ youth.

## Our Services

- **Housing Navigation**
  - Program participants receive assistance identifying, applying for, and moving into their new homes.
- **Rental and Utility Assistance**
  - Financial assistance is provided based on the program participant's household income for a period of up to 12 months.
- **Supportive Case Management**
  - Case management services are provided in tandem with financial assistance to help ensure long-term housing stability beyond program enrollment. These services can include employment and life skills support, budgeting assistance, community resource referrals, and more!



## How does the Hope House program work?

Our program is designed to assist individuals to quickly transition out of homelessness and into permanent housing while offering supportive case management services as needed to maintain housing stability.

### **Referral**

- Client calls the Hope Line or completes an application on the website or through Coordinated entry.

### **Intake**

- Client meets with Hope House staff to confirm program eligibility and is enrolled.

### **Shelter**

- Emergency shelter will be provided on an as-needed basis for those unable to access existing emergency shelter options.

### **Search**

- The case manager will work with the client to identify appropriate rental options.

### **Apply**

- The case manager is available to assist with rental applications, including fees and deposits.

### **Lease**

- If accepted, the client will sign a lease and work with their case manager to schedule move-in.

### **Support**

- Case managers will work with clients to reach housing stability and provide rental assistance based on financial need for up to 12 months.

# THE CHALLENGES OF HOUSING SEARCH

Fair Market Rents (FMRs) are federally defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and represent the maximum amount of rent and utilities that a recipient may pay for properties leased with COC funds.\* Our Hope House program uses this standard when housing clients within our service area. In the chart below, FMRs are listed by location across our service area and rental size for 2023.

## 2023 Fair Market Rent prices listed by location and apartment size.

Location	Efficiency	One Bed	Two Bed	Three Bed	Four Bed
Augusta County	\$824	\$829	\$989	\$1380	\$1685
Bath County	\$590	\$637	\$795	\$1052	\$1196
Buena Vista	\$615	\$735	\$830	\$1172	\$1197
Harrisonburg	\$775	\$780	\$1027	\$1366	\$1749
Highland County	\$590	\$637	\$795	\$1052	\$1196
Lexington	\$615	\$735	\$830	\$1172	\$1197
Rockbridge County	\$615	\$735	\$830	\$1172	\$1197
Rockingham County	\$775	\$780	\$1027	\$1366	\$1749
Staunton	\$824	\$829	\$989	\$1380	\$1685
Waynesboro	\$824	\$829	\$989	\$1380	\$1685

## 2023 Fair Market Rent compared to Median Rental Price for Staunton City

	Efficiency	One Bed	Two Bed	Three Bed	Four Bed
FMR	\$824	\$829	\$989	\$1380	\$1685
Median	\$875	\$880	\$1050	\$1465	\$1789

Median rental prices for the City of Staunton across all apartment sizes were higher than Fair Market Rental limits, representing a significant challenge for staff to find eligible apartments to house our Hope House participants. To put this into perspective, someone earning a VA minimum wage of \$12/hour would need to work **63** hours a week to afford a two-bedroom apartment at FMR<sup>^</sup>. In addition, our program submitted an average of 3 applications for every 1 successful housing placement.

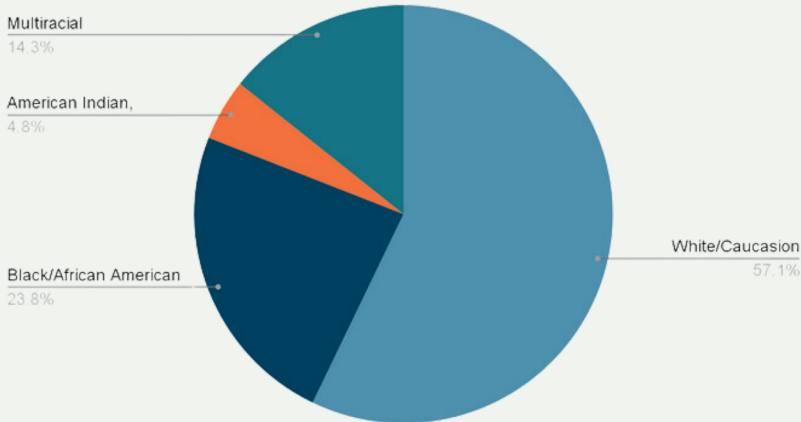
However, available units and rental prices are *not* the only consideration for our clients. We emphasize the value of *client choice* in the housing process. Our case managers will work alongside clients to identify options that best fit their needs - including location, nearby job opportunities, access to public transportation, support networks and more. Addressing these challenging factors from a holistic perspective ensures clients can find long-term stability and success, even beyond our program.

\*<https://www.huduser.gov/Portal/datasets/fmr.html>

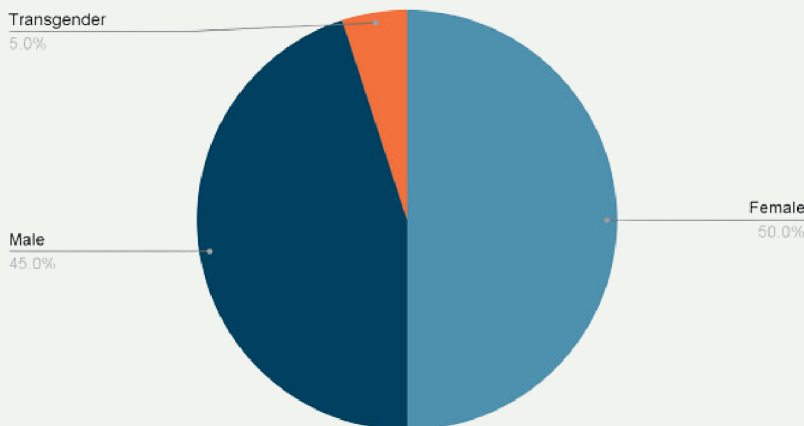
<sup>^</sup><https://nlihc.org/oor/state/va>

# OUR HOPE HOUSE PARTICIPANTS

2023 Hope House Participant Racial Demographics



2023 Hope House Gender Demographics



**43%**

Members of the  
LGBTQ+ community

**10%**

Considered  
chronically homeless

**25%**

Experienced domestic  
violence in their  
lifetime

LGBTQ+ youth face higher rates of homelessness and housing instability.<sup>^</sup> Among all youth experiencing homelessness in the United States, an estimated 20% to 45% are LGBTQIA+.\* In addition, HUD reports that 3% of all unaccompanied youth (up to 25 years) who experience homelessness are transgender or gender-diverse. This is reflected within our program, with 43% of our participants identifying as LGBTQ+ and 5% as transgender.

Hope House participants also face a number of other challenges including previous history with homelessness and experiences with domestic violence. Case managers work with clients to ensure connection to appropriate supportive services and resources and to foster healing and resilience.

<sup>^</sup><https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/homelessness-and-housing-instability-among-lgbtq-youth-feb-2022/>

\*<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Housing-Apr-2020.pdf>

# OUR PROGRAM GOALS

Our program operates on a **Housing First** model, which is an approach that prioritizes rapid placement and stabilization in permanent housing. We do this to quickly connect individuals to housing **without barriers to entry or preconditions**. Housing First recognizes that challenges such as sobriety, employment, and mental health treatment are easier to overcome or address when someone is stably housed.

## Reduce the length of time program participants spend homeless

We strive to have program participants move into permanent housing in an average of 90 days or less.

## 80% of participants exit the program into permanent housing

This refers to housing that is owned or rented by the client, with or without a subsidy.

## Limit returns to homelessness within a year of program exit

We strive to have no more than 15% of participants who have exited to permanent housing re-experience homelessness within a year.

# IN 2023

## 124 DAYS

**Average number of days for clients served in 2023 to move into permanent housing**

This longer than expected time frame reflects barriers including the lack of available units within FMR as well as the time necessary to obtain initial documentation (identity documents, etc).

## 57%

**Of participants found permanent housing through our program**

Participants can choose to exit the program prior to obtaining housing for a variety of reasons. 19% of participants in 2023 exited to *temporary housing situations*, including staying with friends or family.

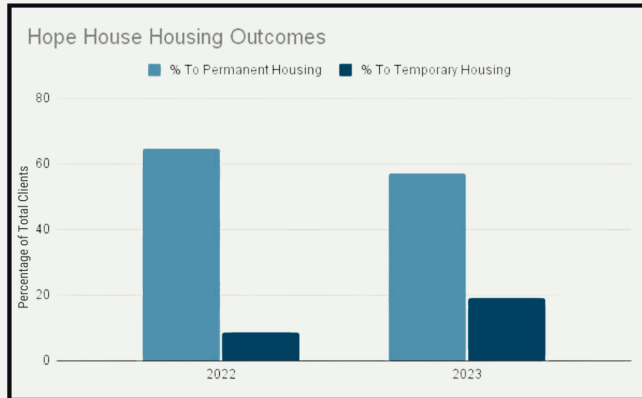
## 22%

**Participants who exited to permanent housing in 2022 who experienced homelessness within a year of program exit**

As confirmed through HMIS, an inter-agency database used to collect data on the provision of housing and services to individuals and families at risk of and experiencing homelessness.

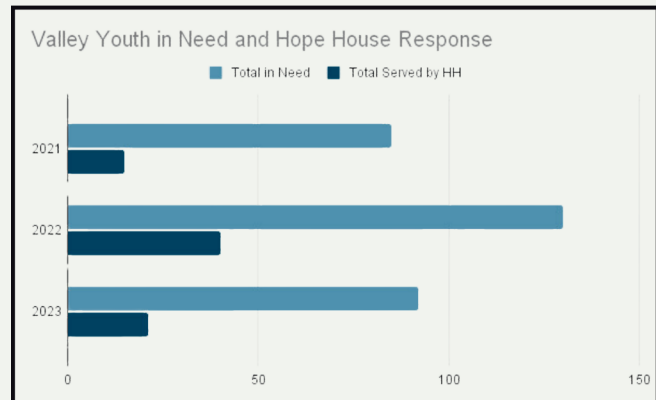
# OUR IMPACT IN 2023

In 2023, Hope House served 21 program participants with 6 participants exiting the program to permanent housing in 2023. Six (6) additional participants ended the year in stable permanent housing, with an expected exit date in 2024. Each participant was provided a move-in kit, fully stocked with apartment necessities including kitchen basics, cleaning supplies, and toiletries. Our case managers also arranged furniture donations by generous community members!



As shown in the Housing Outcomes chart, the majority of Hope House participants are able to leave our program after finding permanent housing, although we are still striving to meet our program benchmark of 80%. Interestingly, we observed an increase in exits to temporary housing situations in 2023. This can include finding housing with friends and family. We will continue to explore this in the coming year.

This chart represents the identified local youth in need<sup>^</sup> compared to how many have participated in Hope House from 2021 - 2023. Our program has consistently operated at capacity throughout much of our history. As we continue to grow our program and increase staff capacity, we hope to be able to decrease the gap between need and our Hope House response.



Financial assistance provided by the program varies widely across program participants, as need is defined by participant income among other factors. The average financial assistance provided per participant in 2023 was \$7,916. Prior to housing, assistance is provided for rental application fees, as well as emergency shelter assistance, for those who would be unsafe in traditional shelter settings. Once housed, financial assistance includes security deposits, as well as rent and utility payments.

**\$7,916**

Average financial assistance provided per participant in 2023

**\$8,096**

Emergency shelter assistance provided in 2023

**>\$10,000**

in community donations to our Hope House program!

<sup>^</sup>As identified within HMIS and Coordinated Entry program, and eligible on the basis of age.

# LETTER FROM OUR CASE MANAGER



Dear Hope House Supporters,

Our program, alongside our clients, have seen many achievements and challenges this year. The housing team, composed of the Center's Executive Director, Programs Administrative Director, and the Housing Focused Case Manager have identified areas of opportunity to improve our program, strengthen engagement, and create more sustainable success for our clients.

## CHALLENGES

A major challenge to our program success has been the state of the housing market in our area. While we have made some strides in building good working relationships with local landlords and property managers, the **lack of affordable units coupled with a challenging job market with lower wages and opportunities**, has made it difficult to find sustainable housing options for clients. Clients have difficulty accessing the necessary job opportunities that would greatly increase their income and provide more long-term stability to the household. It may come as no surprise that the long wait times and difficult transition period to housing have presented challenges for our clients in staying engaged and positive.

**Engagement and outreach** across other facets of the program were also challenges during the year. Being a fairly young program, we know that building trust is an essential part of creating a trustworthy name in the community. We know it takes an cooperative ecosystem to transform our clients' lives.

## SUCCESSSES

Despite the challenges, we also celebrated many successes both for our clients and the program. We attended conferences to connect with and learn from other established programs. We began **implementing changes to our program based on best practices**. We reduced the number of clients on a caseload which allow us to **prioritize and focus on holistic client needs**. We began using **narrative change tactics** when talking about the program to the community, landlords, and others to build relationships, unearth stigma related to our target population, and create more exposure of Hope House. We are also utilizing ideas from successful **Youth Advisory Boards (YAB)** to create a framework for our very own YAB to ensure we are creating a space where participants are able to evaluate and generate change for the program.

## WHAT'S AHEAD?

Our main priority is to increase staff capacity and **open our waitlist to enroll more clients**. With the help of our intern at MBU, we are continuing recruitment for the **YAB** and **establishing our first cohort of members**. With the YAB's insight, we will offer more **skills based opportunities for our clients** such as housing maintenance, budgeting, and interpersonal skills to impact client success and stability beyond program participation. Additionally, we plan to **increase outreach and partnerships** within our service area. With these plans, we hope to address some of the challenges we faced in the last year and continue to serve and have a positive impact on our community at large.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Shenandoah LGBTQ Center

Executive Director - **AnhThu Nguyen**  
 Programs Administrative Manager - **Emma Kirby**  
 Housing Focused Case Manager - **MeShawn Macklin**  
**Emma Neville**

## Valley Community Services Board

Community-based Services Manager - **Lydia Campbell**  
**Homeless and Special Needs Housing Team**

## Valley Homeless Connection

### *Funding Support provided by:*

Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) -  
 Virginia Housing Trust Fund grant  
 Enterprise Holdings Foundation - ROAD Forward grant  
 Community Action Partnership - Staunton, Augusta, Waynesboro (CAPSAW)  
 Community Foundation of Central Blue Ridge



# **THANK YOU**

**FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF  
 ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS  
 IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY**

**Shenandoah LGBTQ Center**  
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Donate Here

To learn more about Hope House:  
<https://www.shenlgbtqcenter.org/hope-house>