

# Shelter Diversion Pilot Annual Report May 2025

Diversion is a key strategy in our work to end homelessness. See in this report the immediate impact of this flexible funding source and intervention.



# Pre 2024: The State of Family Homelessness

Waukesha is a county and Local Homeless Coalition within the Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care.

In spring of 2024 in Waukesha, there were:

- 39 families on the Permanent Supportive Housing list
- 39 families on the regular Rapid Rehousing lists
- 15 families on the DV Rapid Rehousing list
- 5 households with children on the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) list
- 19 families on the Coordinated Entry Prevention list
- in 2023, Family Promise of Waukesha received 255 inquiries for financial assistance to prevent homelessness

Prior to this program, the below resources existed for housing families experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity in Waukesha:

- Hebron Housing Services
- Family Promise of Waukesha County
- The Salvation Army of Waukesha
- The Women's Center
- Saint Vincent De Paul



# Program Set Up and Systemic Structure

Program set up began summer of 2024  
with 2 staff members in the program.

## Initial Strategic Planning

The group met initially to work backwards from what we wanted to know by the end of 5 years. We discussed inputs, outputs, and measurable goals moving forward

## Diversion Advisory Council

This program is not just for Family Promise, but for all Waukesha families. This is the monthly group of agencies getting together to monitor and provide feedback on this work at the coalition level.

## Collaboration with United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha's Safe and Stable Homes Initiative

Both initiatives are guided by the criteria and benchmarks to end family homelessness from the United States Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness. There are other funds from SASH providing services in Waukesha that complement the diversion program.

## Diversion at Case Conferencing - Mezzo Implementation

Family Promise of Waukesha joined the Housing Enrollment Meeting hosted by Hebron Housing Services, the CE lead for Waukesha. Placement into the diversion program now happens with the other organizations at this inter-agency collaborative.

### Identification

Because of this program, Waukesha is able to have more partners that can identify families in need of funding and housing, and places where families can self-identify

### Assessment

Program and CoC staff crafted a diversion assessment from existing questions to help identify families and gauge vulnerability in a diversion way.

### Prioritization

Through the use of the diversion assessment, pulled with the diversion report, Waukesha is able to prioritize families for diversion at the local case conferencing.

### Referral

Diversion staff have made increased connections to other resources to refer out. They have also made connections with identification partners who can refer in.



# Goals and progress

Goals	Expected Outcomes	Measurements: Baseline
<p>Reduction in unsheltered homelessness among families</p>	<p>Reduction in number of calls for shelter - inquiry form, 211 data</p> <p>Increased partnerships with McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons</p> <p>Reduction in families added to Coordinated Entry</p>	<p>Baseline: 2 liaisons were partners during the first year</p> <p>Baseline: 172 families were on the CE list as of April 2025</p>
<p>Reduction in length of time from identification to permanent destination (housing w/subsidy, w/out subsidy, doubled with family or friends, permanent tenure) dates</p>	<p>Reduction in length of time from enrollment to exit to permanent destination - enrollment report</p> <p>Reduction in length of time from inquiry form to enrollment to exit</p>	<p>Baseline: average length of stay entry to exit for program 37 days</p> <p>Baseline: average length from inquiry to exit to PH destination 28.6 days</p>
<p>Reduction in families experiencing first time category 1 homelessness</p>	<p>Fewer families on the System Performance Measures report for this metric</p>	<p>Baseline: Waukesha had 411 people experience first time category 1 homelessness in 2024</p>
<p>Increase in home ownership among families exiting from category 1 or category 2 homelessness</p>	<p>Increase on enrollment report for exit destination category: ownership with or without subsidy</p>	<p>Baseline: the diversion program had 0 families exit to homeownership in 2024</p>
<p>Reduction in returns to Coordinated Entry for families</p>	<p>Reduction in families that exit the diversion program enrollment and then return to having a Coordinated Entry enrollment</p>	<p>Baseline: 12 families exited the diversion program in 2024 and then had a future enrollment in Coordinated Entry program enrollment</p>
<p>Increase of exits to permanent destinations from shelter within 2 weeks of stay, including staying with friends or family intended to be long-term.</p>	<p>Of families staying 2 weeks or less in shelter, more families on the diversion program enrollment report exiting to permanent destinations</p>	<p>Baseline: 2 families in 2024 exited shelter within 2 weeks of stay to a permanent destination</p>

# Stories So Far

**71 Families served overall**

**\$23,226.42 provided for rental assistance**

**\$530 provided for other costs**

**\$4,132 highest amount spent on one family**

## **Diversion Success Story - “From Instability to a Home”**

We met a single father with two young children who was doing everything he could to provide for his family. He was working a full-time job at a fast food restaurant, but without a stable place to live, he and his children were staying wherever they could - sometimes with friends and occasionally even sleeping outside. With few transportation options, poor credit, background challenges, and no long-term support system, the road ahead felt uncertain.

In an effort to create some stability, the father temporarily stayed in a hotel, but the cost quickly became unsustainable with his current income. That’s when Family Promise stepped in.

Our team worked with him to identify housing solutions with low barriers, and he was initially placed in a rooming home. Unfortunately, a bug infestation made the space unsafe, and we quickly pivoted to find something better. Eventually, he connected with a private landlord offering a two-bedroom unit—an ideal space for him and his children to begin again.

With support from the Bezos grant, Family Promise was able to cover the family's security deposit and first month's rent, enabling them to move in and start fresh. St. Vincent De Paul further assisted by furnishing their new apartment. Not only that, but the father found a new job with higher pay, making it possible for him to maintain his new home and provide more stability for his children.

Today, this family is safely and stably housed—proof that early intervention and compassionate support can prevent homelessness and open the door to lasting stability.

# Profile of staff

Kaitlin Kelly, BSW - Shelter Diversion Family Advocate, Family Promise of Waukesha County  
My name is Kaitlin Kelly, and I serve as the Family Advocate for the Shelter Diversion Program at Family Promise of Waukesha County. I hold a bachelor's degree in Social Work from Dordt University and have dedicated my career to supporting individuals and families through various life challenges. Over the years, I have developed a deep passion for housing justice and am committed to empowering others to lead fulfilling, stable lives. Outside of my professional work, I enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking, running, and paddle boarding, as well as spending quality time with friends and family. What I've valued most about the Bezos program is the flexibility and creative freedom it offers, particularly in how we can use financial support to help families avoid entering the shelter system. I also appreciate the program's strong emphasis on family autonomy, as it allows us to present a range of options while empowering families to make the choices that best suit their unique circumstances.



Drewshika Watkins - Shelter Diversion Coordinator, Family Promise of Waukesha County  
Hello, I am Drewshika...a wife, mother of two, and a dedicated social worker with a passion for helping others navigate life's challenges.



I hold a Masters Degree in Social Work from George Williams College and have spent my career supporting individuals and families through advocacy, mentorship, and career development.

When I am not working, I enjoy crafting, traveling, and spending time with my family. I believe in the power of resilience, faith, and community in creating lasting opportunities for success.

Joe Nettesheim started as the Executive Director of Family Promise of Waukesha County in November 2019. During this time he has navigated a remake of the services offered by Family Promise and developed with the board and staff the Family Homelessness Prevention, Apartment Shelter Programs and implemented a Shelter Diversion program.



Before coming to Family Promise, Joe was the Executive Director of the Adult Literacy Center of Ozaukee County and spent twenty years in Church ministry as a Pastoral Associate. He has a masters degree in religious studies from Cardinal Stritch University and nearly completed a masters program in conflict resolution at Marquette University.

Joe and his wife Maribeth have a blended family of five children, four son-in-laws and 14 grandchildren. They are also constantly entertained by their two Goldendoodles.

Courtney Rutkowski, MSW - Director of Family Services, Family Promise of Waukesha County



I went to college at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater, where I received my masters degree in Social Work. Before working at Family Promise I worked as an early childhood educator and also an in-home safety specialist! I learned quickly that working with families was my passion. The Bezo's Program has helped fill a gap in Waukesha County. It is a social worker's dream to have the flexibility to assist families in innovative ways.

Ryan Graham is the Homeless Systems Manager for the WI Balance of State CoC, a 501c3 non-profit organization that covers 69 of 72 counties in Wisconsin. As Homeless System Manager, Ryan is responsible for assisting those counties in their homeless system development in everything from homeless prevention and diversion, outreach, crisis response, and housing. Ryan has dedicated his life to working in public service, including almost 20 years of direct service with homeless families and individuals before coming to the Balance of State in January of 2018. By using his experience, educational background, and his passion for the people we serve, Ryan has helped shift the narrative to ending (rather than managing) homelessness in Wisconsin.



Erika Olson, APSW - Homeless Systems Specialist  
Erika has a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Prior to her work with the Balance of State, Erika worked for 5 years in the Coordinated Entry system in Milwaukee and facilitated several sub-population initiatives in the homeless services sphere there. She now supports various projects across the Balance of State, including the YHDP implementation, work in family homelessness, and advocacy. In her free time, she enjoys hiking and hanging out with her cats, Waffles and Hughie.



# Coalition Work

The Shelter Diversion program is intended to be for families in the entire Waukesha County community, not just families that interact with Family Promise. Through the implementation of this pilot program, The Waukesha Housing Action Coalition has made updates to its system for serving families.

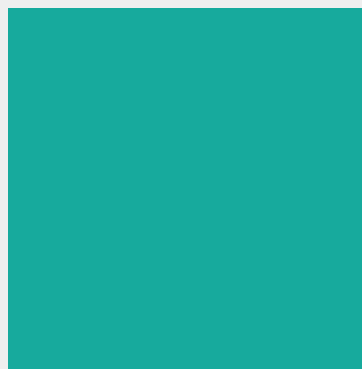
Hebron Housing Services has led the charge for Coordinated Entry Case Conferencing over the past year. A new section for Shelter Diversion has been carved out at the weekly meetings to increase identification of families outside of Family Promise of Waukesha County.

Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin obtained funding from United Way's Safe and Stable Homes Initiative to run a program within Waukesha schools to connect with families experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

Family Promise of Waukesha County also took a look at its Prevention Program to see where there was overlap and duplication of services. The reduction in this duplication has made it so more families are served with the right intervention at the right time.

The Women's Center took on a Domestic Violence Rapid Rehousing grant that can serve families, further boosting available programs for Waukesha families.

Finally, this program invited the addition of a Diversion workgroup under the Waukesha Housing Action Coalition. This workgroup has mobilized family serving organizations within Waukesha towards the goals of ending family homelessness within the coalition.





# Where we are headed

Heading into year two, Family Promise of Waukesha County has goals and proposed action steps to lead on this effort moving forward. These are the overarching beacons we are working towards.

- Fully integrate with school social workers and McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons
  - Build collaborative partnerships with alternative homeownership: tiny homes, trailers, etc.
  - Continue to build out partnerships based on what families are asking for
  - Have a regular presence at community partner agencies to improve identification of families experiencing housing insecurity
- 