



Overview

St. Mary's Center for Women and Children offers eight innovative and family-centered programs for women and children who have experienced trauma and are living in poverty. Placing families at the center of our efforts, the Center works in partnership with young women, many of them mothers, to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and achieve lasting, powerful change by building their emotional well-being, educational achievements and economic independence. Located in Uphams Corner in Dorchester, Massachusetts, St. Mary's Center supports 600 women and children annually with shelter, clinical and educational services, job training, employment placement, and search for affordable permanent housing.

Residential Programs

Margaret's House provides family shelter, a welcoming environment and the resources needed to create pathways out of poverty for more than 85 homeless women and their children, annually. Many of these families, which may include more than 150 children, have a history of trauma, domestic violence and substance abuse. Assessing each family individually, in terms of its strengths and needs, Margaret's House offers access to a comprehensive array of services, including maternal-child health and nutrition education as well as parenting, child development, financial literacy and employment-skills training. Housing advocates prepare and support each family's move to permanent housing and continues to support more than 70 formerly homeless families during a 12-month stabilization period.

Each year, **St. Mary's Home** provides a comprehensive array of services to 18 pregnant and parenting teens and their children. These young women, between the ages of 13 and 19, are on their own, struggling to care for themselves and their children. Most are burdened by a history of trauma, domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse or neglect. The teens are encouraged and supported to play a central role in their treatment and are provided with clinical and health care services, group and family therapy, independent living, and parenting education. Additional support helps teens finish high school and explore academic, vocational, and housing options. St. Mary's Home actively engages the teen's family and her child's father in services to ensure that healthy attachment and strong, safe, family supports are established.

Bridge Home is a family-centered emergency diagnostic and residential program for children from birth through 12 years of age, referred as the result of an acute family crisis. This program provides a thorough assessment, medical services and support, combining specialized diagnostic, behavioral and crisis stabilization services with compassionate, personalized care. While offering families time to heal, parents and children simultaneously begin to develop family routines to ensure a successful transition when their child returns to the community. Bridge Home offers access to social, educational, psychological and medical services which help families cope with trauma and increase their ability to manage the stresses of daily life.

A subsidiary of St. Mary's Center located in East Boston, **Crossroads Family Center**, provides family shelter, case management, housing search, stabilization services and a food pantry to more than 70 families each year. Crossroads was established in 1985 in response to the well-documented housing crisis which led low-income families into homelessness. For many families their personal, social and economic factors prevent them from moving from poverty to self-reliance. Crossroads' housing

advocates prepare each family's move from shelter to permanent housing and support more than 50 formerly homeless families during a 12-month stabilization period.

Our newest residential program, **Massachusetts Maternity First Home**, is a new supportive housing that provides 12 homeless families at any one time with the tools, developmental experience, and learning opportunities that families need to thrive and succeed. The new program offers a multi-disciplinary approach, which includes social workers, nurses, and case managers who will partner with families to bridge serious gaps in skills, address emotional and social challenges, and overcome barriers to employment and increased financial independence.

Education, Employment, and Prevention Programs

Women@Work Plus is a transitional employment program designed especially for women, mostly single, head of household mothers facing multiple barriers to employment and self-sufficiency. The program integrates contextualized classroom instruction and college-level coursework with paid work experiences through Roxbury Community College and employer partners in several high-growth industries. At the program's conclusion, participants have increased their workplace skills, earned income, gained vital references, created a network of support and decreased their reliance on public assistance.

The **Women's Learning Center** meets the educational needs and real-life demands of women with low-literacy levels and learning disabilities who are or have been homeless and have had difficulty succeeding in traditional educational programs. The Center provides intensive, multi-level classroom and one-on-one instruction to more than 100 women each year. This program is designed to expand on each student's basic educational skills, help them earn their high-school equivalency, prepare them for higher education and gain the competencies needed to obtain employment. The instructional methodologies represent a combination of contextualized learning, direct instruction, interest-based classes and technology-based learning.

GRLZradio.org is a first of its kind youth leadership development program for teen girls who also learn to run a 24/7 web-based radio station where girls' voices are heard and respected. GRLZradio.org provides a nurturing, supportive environment that encourages academic achievement and cultivates essential critical thinking, communication, social and employment skills by offering a safe forum, mentoring, and a paid position. Last year, GRLZradio provided 120 opportunities to participate in the fall, spring, summer and two intersessions as well as two school-vacation week camps, serving nearly 100 girls.