

Giving Hope. Changing Lives.

*Our Comprehensive Approach to
Helping People Experiencing
Homelessness*



JUNE 2023



Our Why

Hope Ministries has been serving homeless individuals and families since 1915. One thing that's become increasingly clear in our 100+ years of steadfast service to Central Iowans in need is that the "problem of homelessness" is not merely about homelessness . . . and that effective help involves much more than putting a roof over someone's head.



The 10,000+ Iowans who face homelessness every year are often dealing with a wide range of life struggles: chronic poverty, mental health issues, addiction, abuse, incarceration, outstanding and ever-growing debts and fines, and joblessness. Most are dealing with the after-effects of traumatic experiences in their childhood. Hope Ministries' own five-year survey of more than 1,000 men participating in our long-term life recovery program revealed that on average, the homeless men we serve had more than four adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) – a measurement of 10 potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood including abuse, neglect and more.

The heartbreaking cycles of hardship, hurt and painful life choices our homeless guests have been through mean they need more than a roof over their head.



Our Comprehensive Approach

At the heart of our work at Hope Ministries is a deep desire to help men, women and families find long-lasting healing and hope—the kind of hope that leads to health, wholeness and productivity for years to come. Our approach begins with meeting an individual's most essential needs. We provide warm meals, safe refuge and a loving environment at our three residential centers.



But we don't stop there. The struggles that lead to a person becoming homeless are complicated and unique to each individual. Therefore, our approach needs to be comprehensive and individualized. We help each person overcome their unique challenges as they work to rebuild their life.

In other words, housing and meals are just one piece of a much larger wraparound system of support. **We must address the root causes that lead to homelessness—otherwise, returning them to housing is just a band-aid.**



Our Support Services



Every individual who comes to Hope Ministries is assigned a case manager who walks alongside them throughout their journey with us. Whether that individual is staying at our shelter for only a short period or joins one of our free, one- to two-year life recovery programs, our mission is the same: to uplift the individual and help them take their next steps in life.

Our support services are wide-ranging and varied according to the individual's needs, including:

- **Addiction recovery**—We have a certified substance abuse and addictions counselor on staff who is trained in trauma-informed care, as well as case managers with a long history of working with individuals facing addiction. Residents also participate in local recovery groups, as well as classes and other activities designed to encourage and support their sobriety.
- **Life skills**—Individuals in our life recovery programs take a wide range of life skills classes on topics such as money management, parenting, setting boundaries, etc. Our case managers help residents with practical accomplishments, including opening bank accounts, setting up debt repayment plans, earning their driver's license, obtaining appropriate identification and more.
- **Mental health**—We work with local therapists and mental health providers to help our residents access needed mental health care.

Support Services Cont.



- **Work skills training**—Men and women in our life recovery programs participate in work skills training to prepare them for future employment. Assignments range from helping in the kitchen to taking a shift at the front desk to working at our thrift stores. These work skills assignments help our residents learn essential employment skills including dependability, taking direction and cooperating/communicating effectively with a diverse range of personalities.
- **Education**—We help men and women obtain their high school equivalency degree and, in some cases, enroll in college courses.
- **Spiritual life**—Although we don't require our residents to share our faith, our hope is that individuals will experience the love of Christ in tangible and life-changing ways while they're with us. We offer a variety of spiritual development opportunities—such as optional chapel for those staying in our shelter—as well as Christian counseling and classes for individuals and families in our life recovery programs.
- **Outreach services**—We also want to support community members who may not be staying at our shelter and/or life recovery centers but are homeless or near-homeless. At our Hope Ministries Outreach Center, we offer help with job and housing applications, referrals to other community resources, free computer use and other practical assistance. We also go out to unsheltered people in tent camps, with a goal of establishing relationships and inviting them to our shelters.

Equipping & Empowering



Through providing these wraparound services and addressing an individual's underlying issues, **we are equipping men, and women experiencing homelessness with the skills and tools they need to thrive—**including achieving and sustaining permanent housing, rewarding employment, sober living, and improved relationships.

Our approach also has an accountability factor that plays out in a positive way. Every individual we serve has some “skin in the game.” A shelter guest, for instance, will complete a simple chore. If they've stayed with us for more than 60 days in a calendar year and are not participating in free long-term life recovery, they will pay a \$5/night program fee. There's a purpose for this—we want individuals and families to feel productive and invested in each step they take toward improving their situation.

We believe the quality and effectiveness of the care we provide is reflected in how our residents feel supported. In 2023, we asked all the men in our Bethel Mission shelter to anonymously rate how they feel about their stay with us on a scale of 1 to 10. On the question, “Do you feel the staff cares for you?” our average score was 8.84. On the question, “How satisfied are you with your stay with us?” our average score was 8.73. When we interview life recovery residents who are open to sharing their story with our ministry partners, we consistently hear they feel safe, valued and supported.

In summary, homelessness is a persistent, growing issue in Iowa—but it doesn't have to be a never-ending cycle for individuals and families who are desperate for hope. **By addressing the root causes of homelessness and providing support services tailored to each individual's unique needs, we can empower men, women and children for brighter futures and lasting transformation.**

