

JANUARY 2023



# PRESS KIT



# ABOUT FAMILY PROMISE

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Family Promise envisions a nation in which every family has a home, a livelihood, and the chance to build a better future. What began as a local initiative in Summit, NJ, has become a national movement that involves hundreds of thousands of volunteers in 200+ communities in 43 states. Family Promise delivers innovative solutions for family homelessness including prevention, shelter, and stabilization services. We have served 1 million family members since our founding more than 30 years ago.

Learn more at  
[FamilyPromise.org](https://FamilyPromise.org).

## MISSION

Our mission is to help families experiencing homelessness and low-income families achieve sustainable independence through a community-based response.

## VISION

A nation in which every family has a home, a livelihood, and the chance to build a better future.



## ASPIRATION

We will change the future for 1 million children by 2030 through our community-based programs.



# OUR CORE VALUES

Family Promise's work with families is guided by our commitment to these core values.

## Hospitality

We are more than just shelter. Our hundreds of thousands of volunteers provide support and companionship as families work toward stability.



## Empathy

Family Promise takes the time to understand the perspective of every family we serve.



## Community

Family Promise brings together members of the community to work together to combat family homelessness.



## Dynamic

Family Promise provides a customized, holistic approach to addressing family homelessness.



## Innovative

Our Affiliates create programs to respond to the unique needs of their local community.



## Empowerment

The entire Family Promise network from donors to volunteers to local businesses are empowered to effect change in their community.



# OUR STORY

A chance meeting in 1982 between Karen Olson, a marketing executive in New York City, and Millie, a woman experiencing homelessness on the street, sparked a nationwide movement. On impulse, Karen bought her a sandwich.

Millie accepted the sandwich but asked for something more – a chance to be heard. Karen listened to what Millie had to say. What she heard convinced her that a simple, personal connection can make a profound difference.

When Karen learned homelessness was affecting families right in her own community in New Jersey, she left her marketing career to focus on the issue. Because of their mandate to serve, she reached out to the religious community. Local congregations offered space for shelter and meals.

Volunteers contributed their skills, knowledge, and compassion to help their neighbors experiencing homelessness find employment, reconnect with society, and restore their dignity. The first [Interfaith Hospitality Network](#) opened on October 27, 1986. As word spread, more communities were inspired to develop similar programs.

In 1988, the National Interfaith Hospitality Network was formed. In addition to shelter, meals, and housing, our Affiliates began developing programs for job skills training, transitional housing, childcare, and homelessness prevention.

In 2003, we changed our name to Family Promise to better reflect the broad range of programs being offered. The name refers to the promise communities make to families in need. But it also refers to the promise, the potential, inherent in every family.

In 2016, Family Promise of Shenandoah County, VA opened its doors as the 200th Affiliate. Also in 2016, Founder and President Karen Olson announced her retirement and Claas Ehlers, Director of Affiliate Services, was named as only the second leader in the organization's history.

In 2019, Family Promise engaged in a strategic plan to change the future for 1 million children by 2030. We committed ourselves to developing more resources and partnerships and set a focus on expanding the capability and capacity of Affiliates. In 2023, Claas Ehlers stepped down and Cheryl Schuch, CEO of Family Promise of Grand Rapids (MI), became the third CEO of Family Promise.



**A SIMPLE ACT OF  
COMPASSION SET IN  
MOTION A NATIONAL  
MOVEMENT  
TO END FAMILY  
HOMELESSNESS.**



# PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



## PREVENTION AND DIVERSION

Affiliates work to prevent families from experiencing the loss of housing through:

- Case management
- Rental assistance
- Utility support
- Landlord mediation
- Housing location
- Transportation

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Family Promise also provides alternatives to shelter:

- Temporary hotel/motel stays
- Payments for rent in arrears, security deposits
- Diversion to housing for families in immediate need of shelter
- Creative solutions leveraging a family's strengths



## SHELTER

To ensure the right fit for each family, our Affiliates operate:

- Rotational Shelter – families stay overnight at different community sites throughout their participation in the program
- Static Shelter – families stay overnight at the same location throughout their participation in the program
- Hybrid static and rotational shelter
- Temporary apartments
- Motels with case management support

While the shelter program is centered on families experiencing homelessness, our model is a holistic response. The majority of those we serve are helped by prevention and stabilization.



## STABILIZATION AND HOUSING

Affiliates provide graduate programs to reduce the risk of a family's re-entry into homelessness including:

- Tenancy training
- Home ownership
- Financial capability
- Educational initiatives
- Career pathways
- Technology support
- Health and wellness

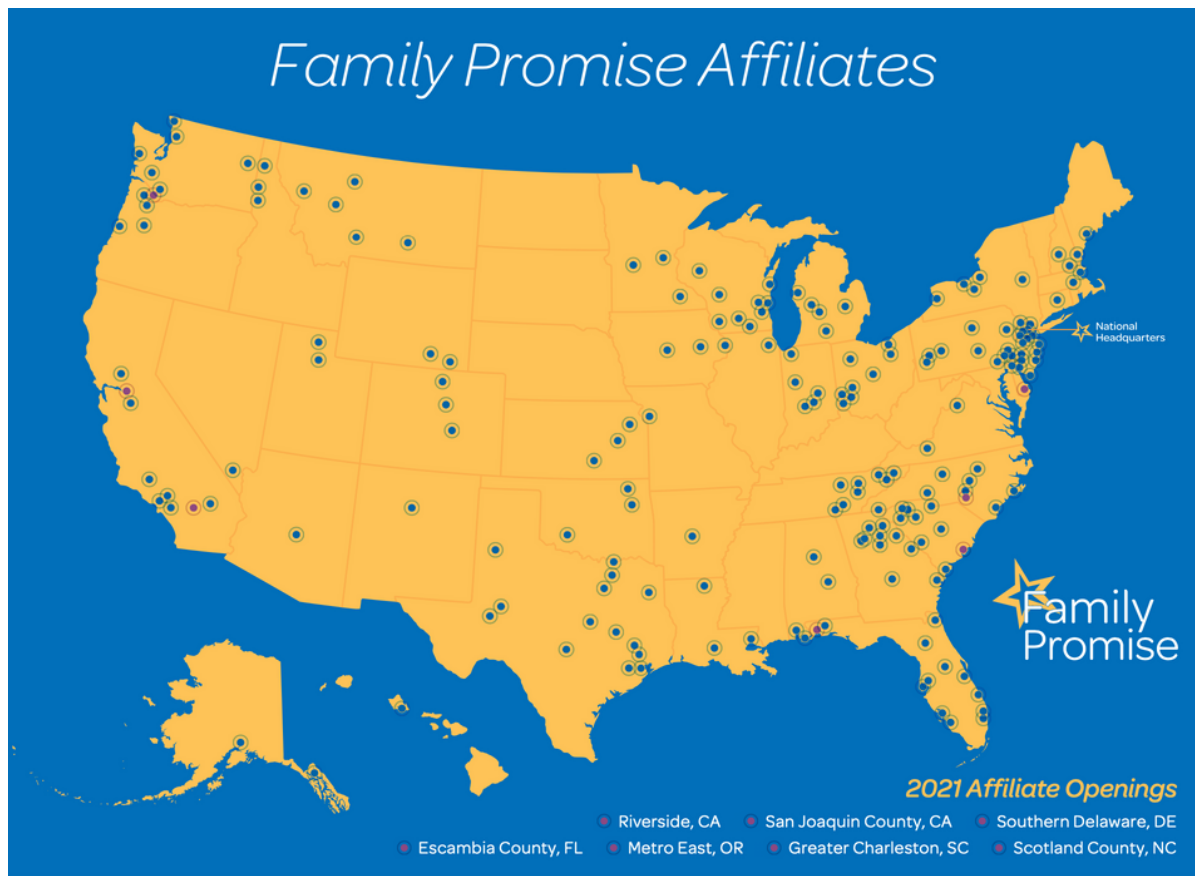
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Communities also organize initiatives to provide for families in need:

- Food pantries
- Furniture donation
- Drop-in community centers
- Clothing closets
- Diaper banks
- Holiday gift drives

Our 200+ Affiliates are committed to providing the necessary guidance, resources and support to empower families at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

# A NATIONAL NETWORK



The Family Promise network consists of 200+ Affiliates in 43 states: AK, AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IA, ID, IN, IL, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, and WY. In 2022, Family Promise also had 7 new Affiliates open: Family Promise Greater Charlotte Metro (NC), Family Promise of Riverside (CA), Family Promise of San Joaquin County (CA), Family Promise of Escambia County (FL), Family Promise of Metro East (OR), Family Promise of Southern Delaware (DE), and Family Promise of Greater Lorain (OH).



Through the mobilization of existing community resources and an average of 200,000 volunteers per year, Family Promise provides comprehensive services to families at a fraction of the cost of government programs.



# By the Numbers

*Working in communities across the country, Family Promise Affiliates engage hundreds of thousands of volunteers to find innovative ways to help low-income families and families experiencing homelessness find stability.*



Family Promise has received a 4 star rating from Charity Navigator for nine consecutive years.

## Our 2021 Impact



**72% of Affiliate staff/board**  
*have people with lived experience*



**31,034 episodes**  
*of homelessness avoided/shortened*



**80% of Affiliates**  
*have prevention/diversion programs  
(double the amount in 2019)*

**200,000**

*volunteers per year on average*

**80%**

*of those served find housing*

**1 million +**

*served since founding*

**6,000**

*community partners*

# Youth Homelessness

The three most cited reasons for family homelessness are lack of affordable housing, poverty, and unemployment.

**2.5 million** children in America will experience homelessness this year.

**1 in 19** children experience homelessness before the 1st grade.

**1 in 30** children in the United States experience homelessness annually.

**30%** of the homeless population is made up families with children.



Students experiencing homelessness are **87 percent** more likely to drop out of school than their housed peers.

**51 percent** of children experiencing homelessness are under age 6 and, therefore, too young for school and are not counted.

In the 2018-2019 school year, nearly **1.3 million**, or **6 percent**, of children under age six were experiencing homelessness.

Families experiencing homelessness are often hidden from view — they are living in shelters, cars, campgrounds, or doubled up in overcrowded apartments.



# Housing and Poverty

Of those considered eligible for federal housing assistance, only



receive help, due to lack of funding.

**10.4 million**

households spend more than 50% of their income on rent and utilities.

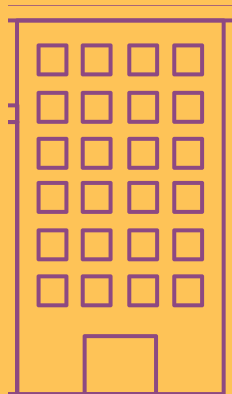
**16.1 percent**

of people under age 18 lived in poverty in 2020.

**37 affordable rental homes**

exist for every 100 extremely low-income households.

In no state, city, or county in the U.S. can a worker earning the federal or local minimum wage afford a **modest two-bedroom rental home at fair market rent.**



In only 218 counties out of more than 3,000 in the country can a worker making the federal minimum wage afford a **Fair Market Rent one-bedroom apartment.**

The federal minimum wage is **\$7.25/hour.**

It has not been raised since 2009.

The official poverty line for a family of four with two children is **\$26,200 per year.**



The U.S. has a shortage of **6.8 million** rental homes affordable and available to extremely low-income renters.



# MESSAGING ESSENTIALS FOR THE MEDIA

The name Family Promise refers to the promise communities make to the families we serve. But it also refers to the promise, the potential, inherent in every family.

As a matter of policy, we do not connect reporters with families facing imminent eviction or currently at-risk of/experiencing homelessness. Family Promise can connect reporters with an Affiliate director who can provide anonymized stories and expertise on the issue or with a member of the National staff for the broader perspective. We can also connect you with graduate guests or families in stable housing receiving other services who are comfortable sharing their stories.

We strive to portray the families we serve in a positive and empowering light. When communicating the impact of our efforts, Family Promise avoids language that can perpetuate stereotypes and we ask that others do the same.

When covering the issue of family homelessness, the focus should remain on the strength and courage shown by families as they work toward stability rather than characterizing those experiencing homelessness as victims. See the list below for some examples of acceptable terms to use when discussing Family Promise.

## TERMINOLOGY

### At risk of

The term "at-risk" should never stand alone. Be sure to specify what a family is at risk of. Ex. Use "at risk of homelessness" or "at risk of losing housing." Do not say "at risk families."

### Community Partners

Though Family Promise is non-sectarian, we work with a wide range of partners including many in the religious community. We use the word community partners to represent the organizations and faith groups of all denominations that partner with Family Promise. We call shelter sites in our rotational model "host sites." We do not use the term churches or congregations when speaking generally about host sites. Community groups and community sites are also acceptable.

### Experiencing Homelessness

Families are not defined by their housing status. Therefore, we refer to our guests as "families experiencing homelessness" and never "homeless families." This rule also applies to individuals.

### Graduate

Family Promise refers to those who have completed a shelter stay as graduate guests.

### Guest

Family Promise refers to the families who stay in our shelter as guests, not as clients.





# IN THE NEWS

## The New York Times



### An Overlooked Cure for Loneliness

Science tells us the solution may lie in what we do for others, not ourselves.

Even during the height of the pandemic, Patricia Novy of Clark, N.J., 72, a retired art teacher and former Girl Scout leader, rallied former teachers, family members and neighbors to fill Easter baskets and Christmas stockings for those who could not afford them. They were distributed by [Family Promise](#), an organization that assists low-income families with housing and other services.



## The California mothers fighting for a home in a pandemic – photo essay

Cherokeeena and Priscilla both rely on a program called Family Promise, one of several in California that help families experiencing homelessness and low-income families achieve independence by providing resources such as transitional shelters, daycare, money vouchers, clothing, food and trauma-informed care.

And while programs such as Family Promise serve as a vital lifeline, the pandemic has exposed how precarious the safety net is for such families, and how the inequities baked into the housing system have only continued to widen. At the end of 2020, 19 million Americans were at risk of losing their homes to an eviction. A moratorium on evictions has been in place in California since March, but its eventual expiration could have devastating consequences for those already living on the edge.





These moms overcame homelessness. But the fight for a better life is far from over



I think if it wasn't for Family Promise and if I wasn't able to come on my own with my children, I would still be stuck and I would not be able to do this.

Ramona Bravo

Family Promise Graduate



## 'It Could Happen To Any Of Us': This CEO Shares How Her Social Work Career Led Her To Fight The Homelessness Epidemic



A lightbulb went off. These are families I connected to when I went to a Walmart or a Starbucks or Target, you know, everyday life, not knowing that when I left to get in my car, the car next to me was actually somebody's home.

~ Katrina Bostick, Family Promise of the Coastal Empire Executive Director



# Contact Information

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

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