



## Thames River Supportive Housing Program

*A Program of Thames River Community Service, Inc.*

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To the Appropriations Committee,

2/17/09

It is a pleasure to advocate for the restoration of funding for The Next Steps 3, supportive housing for families in the DCF budget, PILOTS, and the Housing Trust Fund as well as funding for rapid rehousing.

I am currently a Case Manager for the Thames River Supportive Housing Program. I work with 6 families who received Section 8 vouchers after being formerly homeless. The Next Steps program works. These families were homeless due to domestic violence, foreclosure, mental illness or loss of income.

I believe Next Steps is a vital program because it assists families in keeping their housing. Case Management makes it less likely that a family will fall behind on rent, make poor decisions and force families to engage in behaviors that put them at risk to lose their housing again. I see the growth in these families daily. Some are working and others are in college. All have made tremendous progress in the 10 months since they have been in the program.

My office is located inside the Thames River Family Program. Every day the residents, formerly homeless, single mothers, worry that when they graduate the program after 2 years that they will not have a home to go to. Their case managers urge them to apply for subsidized housing early on. Unfortunately, local subsidized housing has wait lists from 9 months to over a year. Families in need of a 3 or 4 bedroom may wait years.

Before I came to this program, I worked in a domestic violence/sexual abuse shelter .Ask any woman in a domestic violence situation why they don't leave their abusers is primarily because cannot afford a place to live, in spite of working .Their children are exposed to violence daily because the alternative is to sleep in a car. One woman was raped due to sleeping under a bridge because she was homeless after leaving an abuser.

Families are in need of affordable housing now more than ever; they can not wait any longer. When a family loses their home they are not just losing a physical structure. They lose their dignity, their memories, and their foundations of their lives. People should have a place to call home, not a couch, bench or a car.

I urge you to include neutral rapid rehousing pilot in the budget to decrease the time families spend in the shelter and to please restore funding for The Next Steps 3, supportive housing for families in DCF budget, PILOTS, and the Housing Trust Fund.

To solve the homeless crisis we have to stay on task .Viable, affordable housing should never be .It should not be a budget negotiation, ever.

Respectfully,



Sheila L. Hayes-Case Manager

Thames River Supportive Housing Program