

 MERCY HOUSING NORTHWEST

Resident Services that Strengthen Families and Futures



Resident services programs and initiatives at Mercy Housing Northwest go beyond the transactional to transform relationships and build community. Resident services are uniquely tailored to the community and informed by resident priorities to increase inter-generational family stability and improved outcomes.

This case study provides insights into the operational best practices and tools leveraged by Mercy Housing Northwest to support housing stability, build community, and support whole family life success through intentionally designed resident services initiatives:



1

HOUSING SUCCESS

Building Stronger, More
Stable Communities
Long Term



2

COMMUNITY CONNECT

A Collaborative
Engagement that Builds
Relationships

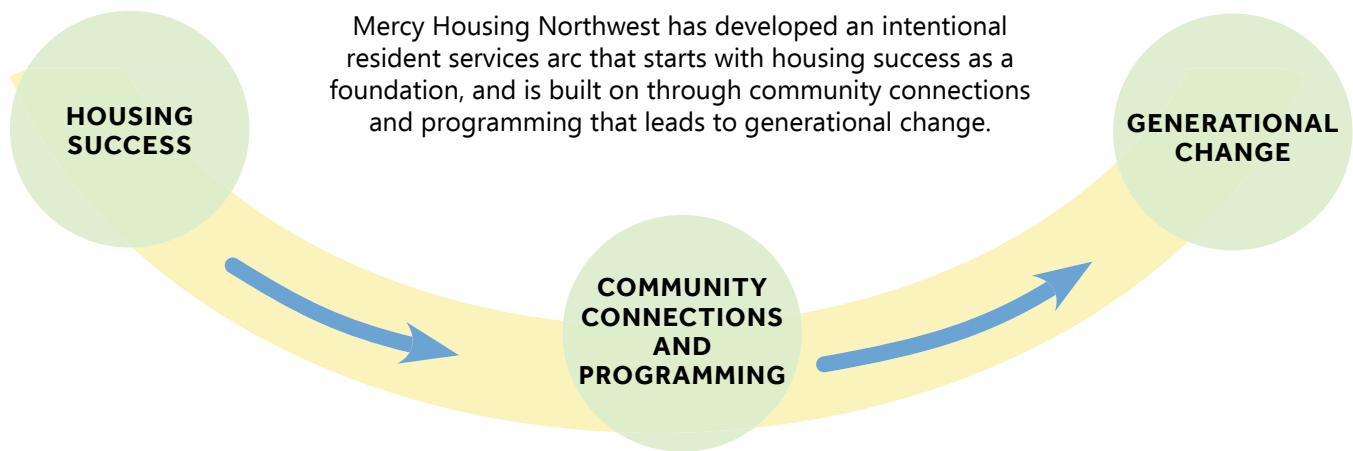


3

MERCY SCHOLARS

Improved Educational
Outcomes and Whole
Family Stability

Three case studies of [True Ground](#), [SCIDpda](#) and [Mercy Housing Northwest](#) highlight how community-driven, responsive resident services can help residents maintain housing stability, access opportunities and achieve their long-term goals. These reports were prepared and published by [Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future \(SAHF\)](#) with support from Amazon.



A Mission-Driven Commitment to Growth and Long-Term Success

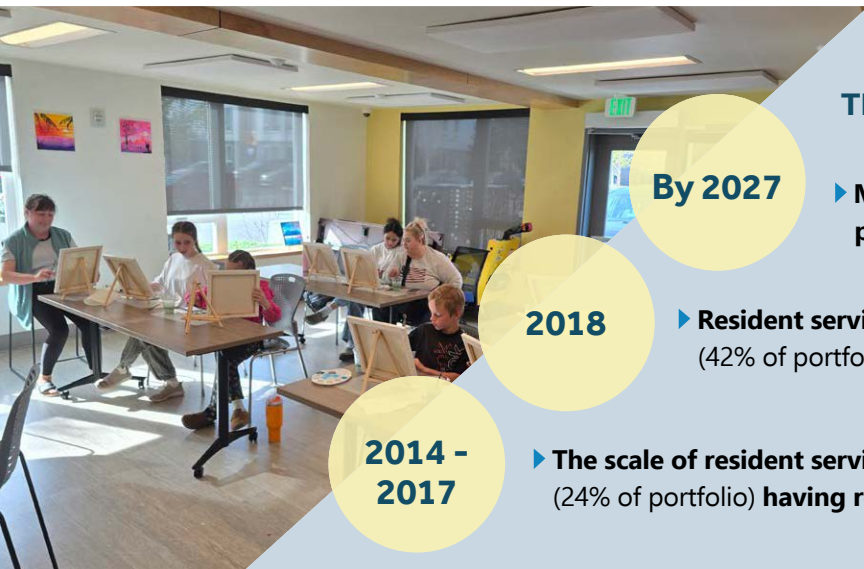
Mercy Housing Northwest is a non-profit organization with 35 years of experience creating stable, vibrant communities through service-enriched affordable rental housing serving families, older adults, and individuals with special needs. Currently, the organization operates over fifty properties with 3,095 apartments in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho that provide homes to 6,265 residents. **They are rapidly expanding with 2,300 homes currently in development.**

Mercy Housing Northwest's expansion includes a significant expansion and intentional investment in resident services coordination, from 13 properties with resident services prior to the pandemic to 35 properties with access to resident services today. Resident services is both a core piece of their mission as well as their business plan. This deepened commitment and expansion is driven by the recognition that resident services coordination is key to supporting property stability, financial health, and life success. **This commitment goes beyond the direct impact resident services has on residents' housing stability and includes an investment in youth and the larger community in order to have long-term, generational impact.**

KEY DEFINITIONS

Resident services are the programs, services, and referrals that are provided in a housing context through trusted relationships, proactive engagement, and coordination across property operations and with community partners. Resident services are typically provided by dedicated services staff and through robust partnerships to support greater stability and resident wellbeing. Programs and services vary to meet the priorities of each community and can include eviction prevention initiatives, afterschool or other youth programs, food access support, health and wellness programming and navigation, financial and asset building, and more.

Housing stability is a resident's ability to remain stably housed. Threats to a resident's housing stability may include significant late rent and lease non-compliance. SAHF-member properties with resident services have lower rates of rent arrears, and lower rates of eviction-related moveouts.



TIMELINE OF RESIDENT SERVICES GROWTH

By 2027

► **Mercy Housing Northwest is projected to have 37 properties** (84% of portfolio) **with resident services**

2018

► **Resident services began to grow, increasing from 22 properties** (42% of portfolio) **to 31 properties** (61% of portfolio) **by 2024.**

**2014 -
2017**

► **The scale of resident services was modest with an average of 13 properties** (24% of portfolio) **having resident services**

Foundational Resident Services Model for Long-Term Success

Core to Mercy Housing Northwest's mission is helping residents achieve housing stability and life success, which may look very different for residents depending on the stage of their life.

Housing stability is viewed as foundational to resident success, and is a platform for longer-term life success. While this includes the financial wellbeing of adults, it also includes an investment in transformative outcomes for children.



Mercy Housing Northwest provides resident services across **five pillars**: youth development, health & wellness, housing success, community engagement, and financial wellbeing. Under these pillars, programming may include food delivery, afterschool and youth programs, access to healthcare and mental health services, housing and emergency resource assistance, resident-led programming, financial education and counseling, employment services and more. This also includes a robust model of resident services staff support with dedicated resident services coordinators, and deepening this engagement model through the support of additional specialized program staff.

1. Housing Success – Building Stronger, More Stable Communities Long Term

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented resident instability. In more recent years, residents continue to face increasing financial pressures and cuts to critical benefits - making it difficult to afford necessities in addition to paying rent. Housing Stability initiatives have become a foundational component of resident services initiatives across the country – bringing together property management, resident services, and asset management teams to work proactively and consistently as a team.

As part of its broader 'Housing Success' initiative, Mercy Housing assessed, updated, and better articulated processes and shared goals for stability. They identified opportunities to build trusted relationships and accountability between property management and resident services staff, as well as between staff and residents.

RESOURCES TO GUIDE HOUSING SUCCESS PROGRAMS: WORKING TOGETHER TO PROMOTE RESIDENT SUCCESS

Mercy Housing has developed and implemented several practices and tools to create more effective and efficient management across their staff that also supports improved resident stability, lower eviction rates and stronger relationships:

- ▶ **Partnership Resource Guide and Agreement:** Formalizes collaboration between resident services and property management staff at a property, detailing expectations on communication, partnership development, and specific guidance around eviction prevention roles and responsibilities
- ▶ **Housing Support Policy:** Outlines very clear roles and responsibilities, points of collaboration, and processes for resident services and property management staff to address potential challenges to housing stability.
 - **Eviction Prevention Checklist:** As part of this policy, a checklist helps document the steps that must be taken by each member of the team to avoid evictions, including offering residents housing support, attempting to engage residents, documenting and discussing lease violations, and reviewing and approving proposed filings by multiple staff departments.
- ▶ **Resident Services & Property Management Weekly Meetings:** Resident services and property management staff hold weekly meetings using a standard agenda to ensure certain topics are discussed.
- ▶ **Operating Protocols:** Resident services and property management staff are cross trained on operating protocols which outline roles, shared responsibilities, goals, and areas of accountability to residents - such as seeking to understand resident experience, promoting community building, and supporting housing stability.



IMPACT

The strategies have been largely successful, demonstrated by Mercy Housing Northwest's **low eviction rate** across the portfolio:

FAMILY PROPERTIES

2.13%

SENIOR PROPERTIES

0%

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROPERTIES

4.59%

TOTAL EVICTION RATE

1.71%

2. Community Connect – A Collaborative Engagement that Builds Relationships

Mercy Housing recognizes the importance of proactive resident engagement and relationship building between residents, resident services, and property management staff. Community Connect has been one of these collaborative touchpoints.

During the pandemic, many residents became disengaged from their community and had limited interactions with resident services staff. As part of the solution, Mercy Housing launched **Community Connect** – a space for residents, resident services, and property management staff to connect and solve problems together. Instead of a top-down approach which is often seen in resident community meetings, residents are co-creators to solutions in communities and partners with resident services and property management staff.

Community Connect meetings are led jointly by property management and resident services staff to engage residents, build relationships, and work together to address potential community challenges. **Mercy Housing Northwest’s regional staff train frontline staff to facilitate Community Connect meetings, which include a standardized agenda and are often paired with food and social programming.**

Community Connect is designed with three distinct pillars:

1. New and Good

First, all participants introduce themselves with a “New and Good” check-in. The check-in infuses positivity in the space and allows each participant to get to know one another better.

2. Table Talk

Table Talk is the second pillar and uses an ‘Open Space’ meeting structure to have conversations guided by residents or staff on what they would like to discuss. Everyone is invited to host a conversation, and participants choose what topics they want to engage with. One participant takes notes and participants then ask each other, “What can we do together to address this issue?” The participants in each Table Talk have the opportunity to start working on a concern in real-time and move forward any initiatives that arise.

3. Marketplace

The final pillar is Marketplace, where participants exchange small favors. The Marketplace is an opportunity for the community to ask one another for support or offer a gift or talent.

Housing and services must be connected in a way that recognizes and supports the agency of residents and gives them a real voice in how day-to-day life is carried out in their community. This builds trusted relationships and supports improved housing stability. This work also lays the groundwork for other improved outcomes, including greater economic mobility.

“Mobility from poverty also requires autonomy and power—the ability to exercise control over one’s personal circumstances and to influence policies and practices that affect one’s life—and a sense of belonging—being valued by one’s community.”

Report, U.S. Partnership on Mobility from Poverty “Boosting Upward Mobility”



Kelly, Property Manager [pictured far left], and Daniela, Resident Services Coordinator [pictured center left], work together alongside the staff at Mercy Othello Plaza, a family building in Seattle, WA, composed of 68 households, to engage residents through Community Connect meetings and collaborate to support housing stability.

Community Connect centers on identifying opportunities for both residents and staff to continue to connect and build the community in which they want to grow and thrive.

Follow-Up is Key: Follow-up is critical after a Community Connect. The leadership team gathers soon after the Community Connect and looks for opportunities to co-create solutions to the issues discussed. If commitments were made during the gathering, a plan is made to follow up. Supervisors of the site staff are expected to check in and see how they can support solutions.

3. Mercy Scholars – Improved Educational Outcomes and Whole Family Stability

One of Mercy Housing Northwest’s flagship programs is Mercy Scholars, which supports youth development through educational programming and year-round support focused on social-emotional learning, homework help, computer literacy, and more. This includes programming for both elementary school-aged youth and teens, with afterschool programming during the school year and summer programming in July and August to reduce summer learning loss.

A key strength of Mercy Scholars is the important connection staff maintain between school and home. Dedicated program staff support students not only during programming, but also through school visits, communication with educators, and partnership with parents and caregivers. This helps families better understand and navigate complex school systems, including academic expectations, attendance, special services, communication with teachers, and access to resources. By strengthening the bridge between families, schools, and on-site support, Mercy Scholars helps create a more consistent and supportive learning environment for youth.



Partnerships: Mercy Housing Northwest tracks the success of programming through resident satisfaction surveys, engagement touchpoints, and educational metrics such as graduation rates. Established partnerships and data sharing agreements with the school systems also help keep track of student grades and expected graduation. This has been critical to ensuring students meet educational outcomes. These partnerships take time, trust, and ongoing communication – but are essential to ensuring the success of students. Through this model, Mercy Housing Northwest ensures that youth are on track to graduate, often by addressing communication breakdowns when families are navigating the school system.

Mercy Scholars not only provides a space to support educational outcomes, but also an opportunity to address whole family stability:

Program Design:

Currently, Mercy Scholars operates at nine communities offering programming and connection to 825 children.

Mercy Housing Northwest prioritizes Mercy Scholars in communities that:

- ☑ Have a large youth population and adequate program space
- ☑ Are disproportionately impacted (i.e., higher need / inequities)
- ☑ Have gaps in existing youth or educational programming
- ☑ Would benefit from stronger connections with local schools

Core Program Components:

- ▶ Academic (homework & tutoring) and social-emotional learning opportunities
- ▶ General enrichment activities (field trips and physical activity/sports partnerships)
- ▶ College & career readiness (application & scholarship assistance, 529 plan funding opportunities, community service opportunities)
- ▶ Parent engagement and parent-school advocacy assistance to help keep students on track and have clear and effective communication channels between schools and home
- ▶ Academic partnerships with schools and educators to build trust and relationships and when possible, provide data
- ▶ Leadership and mentoring programs
- ▶ In coordination with resident services staff – identification of other areas to support family stability, such as food insecurity, healthcare access, navigating economic challenges, language barriers, and more

Staffing & Support:

Mercy Scholars staff coordinate closely with onsite resident services and property management staff to address other challenges and stabilize families. The program is enhanced by regional support that oversees programming and develops local partnerships - including an Associate Director of Education and a Youth Initiative and School Liaison to build relationships with young residents and bridge the gap between home and school.



“Whole family stability is the foundation of lasting housing success—when children are supported to thrive academically and families are connected to the resources they need, we create pathways not just to stability, but to opportunity across generations. Mercy Housing Northwest invests in Mercy Scholars because we know that by strengthening the bridge between home, school, and community, we can disrupt cycles of poverty and build long-term, equitable outcomes for the families we serve.”

Joe Thompson, President of Mercy Housing Northwest

MERCY SCHOLARS AT MAGNUSON

At Magnuson (a Mercy Housing Northwest building) in the 2024-2025 school year, the Mercy Scholars program has served over 75 youth in grades K-12, with strong engagement from both students and parents with the program. Programming is available four times each week for K-5th grade students and three times per week for 6-12th grade students. In addition, program staff visit each school monthly to meet with staff and advocate for youth and families. **Impact is significant, with students reporting strong measures of improved support systems (2025):**

► **100% of youth feel there is an adult who:**

- Cares about what they think
- Is available when they are upset

► **95% of youth feel there is an adult who:**

- Helps with problems
- Listens and earns their respect

► **95% of youth feel confident in school performance**



To continue to look at this impact on generations, Mercy Housing Northwest has engaged in a research study with a professor at Western Washington University to evaluate the cascading, long-term impact of Mercy Scholars on children, including their support systems.





CONCLUSION

Laying the Foundation for Continued Growth

Through their robust commitment, Mercy Housing Northwest has invested in rapidly expanding their resident services to support resident-centered programs and services that support the whole family and lead to generational opportunity. Mercy Housing Northwest builds on the foundation of household stability to provide residents with the opportunity to be leaders in the community and ensure that the futures of the children residing in their buildings are supported. This creates a solid platform for long-term resiliency and economic mobility of residents and success of the larger community.