

# TINY HOUSES, BIG BEGINNINGS

by Southeast Kansas Community Action Program, Inc.

Region 7 • Girard, Kansas  
sek-cap.com



## Housing • 2Generation Approach • Job Training

### INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

“Tiny Houses, Big Beginnings” is a two-generational approach to Transitional Housing for homeless families with children who are eligible for or receive Head Start services in Southeast Kansas Community Action Program (SEK-CAP). Families work with the Housing Self Sufficiency Coordinator to create a Housing Self-Sufficiency Plan that includes goals and action steps, leading them to self-sufficiency within a two-year timeframe. Families will have the opportunity to build a savings account, budgeting, job skills training, interview skills, nutrition, childcare, and any other goal that will help them achieve self-sufficiency. Community partners assist with life skills classes, laundry facilities, and banking. SEK-CAP will host the Kansas state-wide HCCT initiative with a different name, “Housing Solutions for Whole Family Results.”

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### LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED BY INITIATIVE

Tiny Houses, Big Beginnings, has identified the local needs, using the Community Needs Assessment, updated in 2020, conducted by SEK-CAP. This project integrates services from CSBG, Head Start, and the Continuum of Care to address the need for adequate, affordable housing for homeless families. The Housing Self-Sufficiency Coordinator, funded by CSBG, along



with the Head Start staff, works with the families to develop workforce readiness, increased health, and financial education. A Coordinated Entry VI-SPDAT Assessment is conducted before the families enroll in the project to identify homelessness and vulnerability.

### ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

CSBG provided funding to the following related to the initiative: staffing the “Housing Self-Sufficiency Coordinator” and other allowable use of CSBG funds, such as expenses for utilities/internet, laundry structure and remodel, food/cleaning supplies/ furniture, and the completion of the Community Needs Assessment.

### TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

Tiny Houses, Big Beginnings, addresses community-level needs in preventing and ending homelessness. It addresses family-level needs by assisting individuals and families in becoming self-sufficient. It addresses agency-level needs by incorporating multiple SEK-CAP

Programs to assist the families. It has the following characteristics: decreases the burden on utility service providers to issue shut-off notices, reduces the burden on courts for possible eviction, potentially removes DV victims from a harmful situation, which reduces the burden of many community-wide services.

The goal: Participants will become self-sufficient and afford housing independently by working with the Housing Self-Sufficiency Coordinator. It prevents the homelessness crisis by creating opportunities for stability. The initiative is designed to create measurable community-wide improvement while affecting conditions of poverty within the Southeast Kansas Community Action Program, which is an active participant. The clearly defined measurable goal and strategic activities are achieved through case management coordination, monitoring, follow up, and evaluating identified needs, such as working on a savings account, budgeting, job search, education. The success of participants is measured by completing a needs assessment during enrollment and upon completion of the program.

### EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

Self-Sufficiency Assessment is used at the beginning and throughout the program to measure improvements in food, housing, income, transportation, employment, health care access, adult education, child education, childcare, parenting, support system, relationship safety, substance abuse, physical health, mental health, workplace skills, daily routine activities, money management, household management, criminal justice, civil law. The Customer Satisfaction Survey is conducted by SEK-CAP annually. This data is analyzed by staff to identify needs for program improvement. Case notes are entered for interactions with participants into the Apricot system. Goals also are entered and measured in the Apricot system. The Tiny Houses, Big Beginnings Program is



still in it's pilot year; we anticipate that the impact of this initiative will yield results at the end of 2022, as that is when the participants' term will be completed.

The National Office of Head Start reports, "Children that participate in Head Start programs receive innumerable benefits. These advantages appear immediately, last a lifetime, and even have an effect on other generations. The effects are particularly strong amongst certain subgroups of children, particularly Hispanic and African-American children, dual language learners, children who are homeless or in foster care, those who qualify for free lunch, and those whose mothers didn't graduate high school. When disadvantaged children receive high-quality birth-to-five education, such as Early Head Start plus Head Start, the return on investment can be as high as 13% annually." In addition, case managers work with the participants to set realistic monthly goals around life skills, budgeting, savings, and employment with action steps to achieve those goals and target dates. SEK-CAP, in addition to local partners, provide participants the tools they need to achieve self-sufficiency.

### EQUITY LENS

SEK-CAP collects demographic data by different diverse groups that permit the analysis of the impact. We provide an equal opportunity to people of all races and ethnic backgrounds to access the Tiny Houses, Big Beginnings program. Everyone is treated with the same dignity and respect as valued members of the community. We work to ensure that community partners and clients understand the value of effective support and full inclusion by embracing diversity and upholding fairness and justice in our work to eliminate

inequalities that limit equitable opportunities.

Within the community, we are building rapport and breaking down walls by creating those equitable

opportunities in order to encourage social change. We advocate for our clients within our communities and speak out against unfair practices to challenge biased perspectives. We recognize the value of serving a diverse group of individuals and families which creates meaningful, ongoing opportunities for multiple voices with diverse perspectives to be engaged in the community at all levels.

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This initiative has the potential to specifically advance equity in a number of ways. Priority to participate in the program will be given to single parents of Head Start or Early Head Start eligible children, who in the Pittsburg community where the project is located, represent 38.25% minority participants compared to the 6.5% of the area population. Additionally, according to the American Community Survey (2014-2018), people of color in Kansas endure an income disparity which alludes to a social determinant of health due to lesser access to healthcare services, which are available in the Tiny House program to participants in the whole family through Head Start partnerships. Further, other determinants such as access to the internet, which is proportionally less available to people of color, are included for the family to utilize. Specific resources such as English language learning tools are available as necessary to ensure equitable opportunities for employment and self-sufficiency.

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