

Oneonta Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Supported Housing Program

Agency: Catholic Charities Housing Office

How long has this program been in existence?

The Oneonta SRO program has been in operation since 1985, when the first SRO program at 3 Grand Street opened under OURS Associates, which was later taken over by Catholic Charities of Delaware and Otsego Counties, then by Catholic Charities Housing Office in 2009.

Who is served by this program?

Catholic Charities Housing Office operates as a not for profit transitional Single Room Housing (SRO) Program for single adult males and females who are homeless and very low income individuals. In addition to the issue of poverty and housing instability, this population experiences a much higher rate of under-employment, mental illness, physical disability, substance abuse, domestic violence, involvement with the justice system and need for intervention and/or assistance had an altering life experience and need some support and assistance getting their lives back on track. Catholic Charities operates 3 houses and serves 27 residents in Oneonta. Catholic Charities offers clean safe affordable housing with case support.

How many were served by this program in the 2019-2020 fiscal year?

The 27-unit housing program served 41 formerly homeless individuals during the period of July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020.

What unmet need in the community does this program serve?

Homelessness and Poverty

Homelessness, being the extreme symptom of poverty, is a problem for every community in NYS. Generally speaking, most states have seen a small reduction in homelessness since 2007, however, in NYS, we have seen a 27.4% increase during that same period.

Catholic Charities Housing Office SROs in Oneonta are the only existent supportive housing program for the homeless operating in Otsego County.

In what way does this program assist individuals?

Jo Anne Bragonier, the Oneonta SRO Program Manager, and Cindy Page, the Case Manager, take the time to personally know and understand the lives of the tenants who live in the three houses that comprise the Oneonta SRO program. As a result, the environment they espouse in the program, through their efforts and the compassion for those they serve, truly looks and feels like a home. Folks come into the program from homeless situations, some separated from their children and working toward rebuilding relationships with their families; many navigating the challenges that severe and persistent mental illness have imposed on their lives and many in recovery from substance use, to list some of the reasons. Tenants in the program are to feel comfortable bringing their problems to staff, the offices are made to inspire welcome and filled with artwork commemorating anecdotes and gratitude—a story to go with nearly every treasured object, most connected to residents who have made their homes in the program. Coming to the SRO you will be

told about or discuss the challenges in their lives and needed areas of support, most residents feel as though they are working with and talking to an understanding person. Judgment is cast aside as the residents receive the encouragement they need to persevere through their difficulties and grounded guidance to get the job done when it comes to coordination of health and treatment services, troubleshooting transportation or benefit entitlements, mending important interpersonal relationships, etc. It is important to remember that as individuals stabilize they become more vested in their communities and that means a stronger tax base as they will begin to use merchants and services in the community. As they stabilize they also will have the potential to move to tax based housing and into owner occupied housing.

A great many resources are garnered from the local community in Oneonta which enhance the lives of the residents. From relationships with consignment shops to score furnishings and decoration for tenants' rooms; to local church groups sponsoring transportation needs of tenants, new laundry equipment for the program, even mission trips for a couple of residents whose positive involvement in a local faith community inspired them to give back; free hair and nail services provided by local BOCES students—you name it, staff works with the local community and asks for the support to enhance the lives of their residents in myriad ways.

Not excluding the above-listed enrichments, the program provides housing that is maintained on a tight budget. Appliances, other building equipment, furnishings, kitchen wares, paper and cleaning consumables for three residences are kept on hand and in good running order through the efforts of the small staff, which includes one part-time maintenance assistant. Careful planning for larger-scale maintenance projects season to season, and occasional help from volunteer work forces, including family members of both staff and tenants has ensured the three properties remain in good repair. Frugality and resourcefulness in obtaining replacement furnishings and equipment have helped offset expenses for a program with minimal revenue from income-based tenant rents and a small NYS support services grant. The staff work to ensure the delivery of quality housing and support services... they deliver always with respect for the individuality and humanity of each person who walks through their doors.

What are the current sources of funding for this program?

Primary: NYS Supported Housing Program (OTDA); Secondary: Tenant Rents