



The Inter-Faith Council for Social Service and its Community House Program

What Is the Inter-Faith Council for Social Service? The Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC) is the principal agency in Orange County, NC for addressing homelessness, hunger and economic hardships. The IFC offers basic safety-net services including emergency shelter, transitional housing, free medical and mental health care for residents of IFC housing programs, a community kitchen and food pantry for those who are hungry and crisis intervention (financial assistance) services for vulnerable individuals and families who are at-risk of becoming homeless. The IFC is the sole provider of residential services to homeless men, women and children in Orange County.

The IFC was founded in 1963 when seven local women united their volunteer efforts to address the conditions of poverty in Chapel Hill and Carrboro, NC. The IFC began transitioning to professional staff in the 1980's and hired its first paid Executive Director in 1995. IFC's programs have always been designed in partnership with community volunteers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, congregations, businesses and civic associations. The importance of these donated goods and services (including 40,000 volunteer hours last year alone) is demonstrated by the fact that their valuation exceeds the agency's \$1.6 million annual budget.

When did IFC open Community House? In 1985 the IFC began Community House in partnership with local congregations that took turns housing the homeless. Community House moved into Chapel Hill's Old Municipal Building (OMB) in 1987 when the Town Council approved its temporary use as a shelter until a permanent location could be found. In 1990, after an extensive renovation, IFC's Community Kitchen was co-located with Community House at the OMB. Thus, the OMB has housed, on a temporary basis, both food services and emergency shelter operations for hungry and homeless persons for over a quarter-century.

What about the Robert Nixon Free Clinic for the Homeless? The clinic began providing medical care for Community House resident-clients in 1989 and was later named for Dr. Robert Nixon, one of the first physicians who volunteered at the clinic. The clinic is located at Community House and also operates clinics at HomeStart, IFC's facility for homeless women and children. The clinic provides basic medical care, health assessments, information, mental health counseling, referrals and limited free medications. IFC fills prescriptions at no cost to our resident-clients in partnership with the UNC School of Pharmacy and generous donors.

Why is the Inter-Faith Council @ SECU Community House being built? After 27 years the OMB still continues to be the temporary home for Community House. However, befitting a facility that was never intended to house intensive social services operations, the OMB is barely adequate to serve as a medical clinic, an emergency overnight shelter or a community kitchen. The

OMB was built in 1938. Its wiring, plumbing and roofing are in need of major renovation. The building's condition negatively impacts the men who stay at the shelter. The new Inter-Faith Council @ SECU Community House (IFC @ SECU Community House) will enable IFC to move its current residential facility for homeless men and the Nixon Clinic to a facility in north Chapel Hill designed specifically to provide housing and supportive services for homeless men and medical care for the residents of both IFC housing programs. While we greatly appreciate the Town's generosity in allowing us to use their building all these years, the time has come for us to move on. Additionally, the Town has indicated that it wants the building back.

What is IFC @ SECU Community House's mission? The mission is to promote independence and self-reliance through a housing model that informs, connects and empowers residents in their efforts to renew their lives, develop new skills, access community resources and obtain employment and permanent housing.

What is the IFC @ SECU Community House? The new Community House will provide housing and supportive services for 52 homeless men in a transitional housing program, as well as up to 17 men in an emergency overnight shelter when weather and other conditions warrant its use. The first floor will house staff offices, the Nixon Clinic, and offices for supportive service providers, as well as the emergency shelter beds when needed. The residents' bedrooms and their kitchen and dining facilities will be on the second floor. The Nixon Clinic's services are available to all those who stay at either Community House or HomeStart.

How will the Nixon Clinic be improved by being in the new IFC @ SECU

Community House? The new facility will more than double the size of the Nixon Clinic. Instead of two rooms serving as both exam rooms and office space, the new clinic will include two medical exam rooms, two dental exam rooms, a dental x-ray room, a nurses station (with secure pharmacy storage) and an office for the clinic's Medical Coordinator. At IFC @ SECU Community House the Nixon Clinic will be able to provide basic medical, dental and mental health care and the clinic's Medical Coordinator will refer our resident-patients to other appropriate care providers in the area. All this will lead to better outcomes for the program residents.

In the short-term, at the new facility, staff members will more effectively be able to stabilize the residents' often acute health care needs. Longer transition-focused program residency with robust supportive services will then lead to improved self-care habits, employment readiness, job prospects, and increased capacity for re-entering the workforce and returning to independent living.

What about the emergency shelter at IFC @ SECU Community House? "The Community House emergency shelter will offer homeless men a place to stay temporarily overnight when they have no other housing options. IFC will provide emergency shelter cots to homeless men at the Community House if: temperatures are expected to fall below 40 degrees, a heat warning/advisory is in effect, during and in the aftermath of snowfalls, thunderstorms, tornadoes, ice storms, hurricanes, and community emergencies, if it is requested by law enforcement officers, and if an individual's health conditions necessitate emergency shelter."*

What makes the IFC @ SECU Community House a transitional housing program?

“There are three stages to the transitional housing program. A leadership team composed of Community House staff, experienced program volunteers and senior transitional residents will make decisions about transitional housing promotions, setbacks, discipline, discharges and graduations.”* The intake application and assessment are rigorous processes that occur before a transitional housing bed is assigned.

Stage 1

- Upon intake, residents participate in an orientation period of evaluation and assessment. These actions will help the staff ascertain the individual’s needs and goals.
- Ten bunk beds in 2 rooms are set aside for 20 Stage 1 residents.

Stage 2

- “Residents will be exploring classroom training and vocational rehabilitation opportunities, conducting job searches, filing for social security disability (when appropriate), following through with medical, mental health and substance abuse recovery plans and working with community agencies.”
- Ten bunk beds are set aside in five quad-rooms for 20 Stage 2 residents.

Stage 3

- In Stage 3, residents must have shown that they are “ready to move into permanent housing, are making progress in saving a sufficient amount of income to support a move, are volunteering at IFC or another community agency and are ready to begin the housing search. Stage 3 residents will be working and/or attending classes as well as mentoring Stage 1 and 2 residents. “
- Twelve Stage 3 residents “will share six rooms at Community House. The residents will be provided keys to their own rooms and begin their search for permanent housing.”*

What is the relationship between IFC @ SECU Community House and the Community House Advisory Committee? The purpose of the Community House Advisory Committee (CHAC) is to serve as the liaison between the IFC and our new Community House neighbors as we attempt to integrate the Inter-Faith Council @ SECU Community House into its new surroundings. The IFC will endeavor to make sure that local neighbors and allied social service agencies are well-represented within the committee. The CHAC will be responsible for reporting to both the Chapel Hill Town Council and the IFC Board of Directors on a variety of factors related to the new Community House. For more information, see ifcweb.org/projects/gnp.

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*Excerpts taken directly from the Good Neighbor Plan (pages 6 and 5 respectively)