

Cumberland Interfaith Hospitality Network, Inc.

...a community response for homeless families

GENERAL: CIHN is a group of Cumberland County churches, synagogues, and social service agencies, joining together to provide overnight lodging, meals, and assistance for homeless families in our community. While in the program all families are preparing for permanent housing.

WHERE: Each church or synagogue, as a host congregation, provides overnight accommodations and meals for three to five homeless families (up to 14 individuals) for one week each, four or five times a year on a rotating schedule. The families sleep on beds provided by the Network or the hosting congregation. The program includes a Day Center where the guests are taken each morning by a van provided by the Network. There, a full-time case worker (also provided by the Network) helps the families to connect with the community and available social services to find permanent housing and/or jobs. Shower facilities and an address are provided at the Day Center.

HOW: Every morning the CIHN van picks up the families for the day activities then returns them to the host congregation in the evening. Volunteer hosts in the congregation prepare and serve an evening meal and are encouraged to offer fellowship and a home-like atmosphere. Two volunteer hosts remain at the facility overnight with the guests. Each morning a light breakfast is provided before the van takes them to the Day Center. Guests do not pay any fees to be in the program.

WHO: Social Service Agencies help screen and refer families to the Network: those with active substance abuse or psychiatric problems are not accepted into the program. A case manager employed by the Network approves the admittance of families into the Network.

HOW LONG: Nationally, the length of stay for guests in such a program is four to six weeks.

WHY: CIHN provides a way to be involved in a hands-on outreach program. Volunteers have an increased awareness of the needs in our communities

HAS THIS BEEN DONE BEFORE: Yes. The first program of this kind was started in 1986 in Summit, New Jersey. Today, based on this model, there are over 80 communities across the nation successfully implementing IHN. See www.nihn.org

**Cumberland Interfaith Hospitality Network website
has a wealth of information on the programs and volunteer opportunities.**

www.CumberlandIHN.org 910-826-2454