



Family Promise shelters homeless children and their parents in local congregations. Guests receive overnight accommodations and meals from congregation members and volunteers. During the day, families go to a day center and work with Family Promise case managers who help families regain their self-sufficiency. Family Promise is proven, cost effective model, already in over 200 communities across the nation, including in Skagit County.

Interfaith Coalition Family Housing and Family Promise

Interfaith Coalition has initiated a partnership with Family Promise to serve children and their parents experiencing homelessness. For over 20 years, Interfaith Coalition has provided shelter and case management support to children and their parents. 85% of families secure stable housing after they leave the program. *But, more needs to be done to end childhood homelessness and break the cycle of poverty.*

The Need for Family Promise in Whatcom County

- Today, 1 in every 5 homeless persons in Whatcom County is a child under the age of 14.
- The 2016 Whatcom County Point-in-Time count identified 89 families that are literally homeless.
- The Whatcom County School District numbers are much higher because the schools also count families that are couch-surfing in unstable environments. The 2015/2016 numbers for K – 12 students that were homeless sometime during the school year is 1,021. Since 40% of homeless children are under age 5, this means **the number of homeless children is over 1,400 in Whatcom County in a year. This is an average of 1 of every 26 students that experience homelessness during all or part of a school year.**

How does Family Promise model work?

Family Promise will provide shelter in 13 host congregations, each for four weeks a year. Guests receive overnight accommodations and meals from congregation and community members and volunteers. Support congregations and community groups who may not have the physical space available to host, but may help by providing volunteers, supplies, and finances.

From 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., families have access to a day center where they may shower, care for preschool children, and seek employment. Family Promise case managers at the center will work with families to help them regain self-sufficiency. Many guests are employed during the day and children go to school. The day center provides guests with a mailing address and a home base from which to conduct their housing search.

Family Promise is a cost efficient way to serve more families because it relies on volunteers and uses existing facilities – congregations – for families to sleep in. It is a proven model that is already in more than 200 communities across the nation, including in Skagit County.

Family Promise allows families to stay together. All family compositions will be served, including fathers and teen boys, who have limited options in Whatcom County and are split from female members of their families in group shelter models.



Family Promise is a super partner for churches who want to connect with the homeless. They provided us with hard won experience and guidelines for helping without hurting. Having a national partner with years of experience is the way to go. Moving back from Minnesota to Washington, I highly recommend them and look forward to seeing a partnership form here in Whatcom County. Bill Gilfillan, Former Senior Pastor Northlake Community Church, Bellingham

“The program has had a profound effect not only on the homeless families we serve, but on the volunteers who have found an opportunity of serving and being in relationship with people in need. Every volunteer you talk to has a story about an interaction with a family. We have received a lot.” Shirley Scott, Family Promise of Skagit Valley Board Member

How Can You Help?

- Encourage your faith community to become a host congregation. Volunteers are available to meet with your members and clergy to answer questions and explain the program.
- Contribute funds to support the program and operating costs.
- Volunteer your time to serve on a leadership team to bring Family Promise to Whatcom County.

Please contact Interfaith Coalition of Whatcom County for more information

910 14th Street, Bellingham, WA 98225. 360-734-3983. Email: laura@interfaith-coalition.org