

Bezos Day 1 Families Fund

CROSSROADS RHODE ISLAND

Providence, RI—2018 Day 1 Families Fund grantee

Every year throughout Rhode Island, 4,000 individuals, including families with children, experience homelessness. And a great number of families are just an unexpected expense, injury, illness, or loss of employment away from also becoming homeless. As the state's leading provider of housing and support services to families who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless, Crossroads Rhode Island is often the first place people turn to.

At the time of receiving a \$5 million Day 1 Families Fund grant in 2018, Rhode Island's Coordinated Entry System (CES), which serves as the state's front door for homeless families seeking services, was suffering from limited funding and resources and long waitlists for shelter. The Day 1 investment allowed Crossroads to quickly invest in staffing, training, and tools to better engage with new families making contact with the CES and address the backlog of families waiting for assessment and support.

The interventions Crossroads provides help families find and maintain stable housing and achieve financial independence. With the Day 1 Families Fund grant, Crossroads Rhode Island has:

1. Offered families one-time emergency assistance, such as first month's rent, security deposits, moving assistance, utility deposits, and more financial resources that can help divert them from homelessness.
2. Supported family housing rehabilitation projects, including the redevelopment of 30 family apartments in Providence and capital improvements to the organization's Family Center.
3. Hired an Education and Employment Services (EES) Specialist who supports the goals of parents who are in shelter and



KEY STATISTICS



With its Day 1 Families Fund Grant, to date Crossroads Rhode Island has:

- Supported **1,081** families, including **2,468** children and **2,179** adults, through the Housing Problem Solving/Diversion program
- Provided emergency shelter to **457** families, including **984** children and **528** adults
- Supported **2,781** families with critical wrap-around, housing-based supports from the housing navigation team
- Served **1,829** families through Rapid Rehousing programs, including **3,222** children and **2,754** parents/guardians
- Helped **299** families access Education and Employment services
- Placed **457** families in shelters throughout the state

transitioning to housing. The EES program provides resources for transportation, uniform purchases, and child care as well as supports with career exploration, resume and mock interviews, and job retention.

4. Hired a full-time housing navigator who works with landlords, property management companies, and others in the community to identify safe and affordable housing in an extremely tight housing market.
5. Partnered with Providence Public Schools to assess students and their families who are “under-housed” or living “doubled-up” and at risk of becoming homeless. While many may not meet federal requirements for homelessness, flexible Day 1 funding allows Crossroads to work with families to achieve housing stability before their current living situation is in crisis.

In just one year, Crossroads made significant progress toward their goals to address immediate housing needs for families. This included reducing the Rhode Island shelter waitlist by 90 percent, utilizing emergency shelter more effectively and eliminating the need for “overflow shelter,” and using supportive services and housing navigation to increase transitions to permanent housing by 40 percent. All efforts led to a statewide reduction in family homelessness by eight percent over the previous year.

“We were so close to ending family homelessness in Rhode Island in 2019. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed slowed our progress,” said Crossroads CEO Karen Santilli. “Still, in the five years that we’ve had the Day 1 Families Fund grant, we’ve seen success with diverting 1,400 family households out of homelessness and reconnecting more than 1,500 families to permanent housing. We know our model and these resources can get us to functional zero with family homelessness”.

“The Day 1 Families Fund grant provides a level of flexibility and impact that is a rarity for most nonprofit organizations. This has been a transformative opportunity for us to find new and creative ways to deliver our programs and services using our Housing First model. Importantly, we have become even more responsive to the needs of the families we serve as we support them in their journey to secure a stable home.

KAREN SANTILLI
CEO

FAMILY STORY

After a bad fall which left her with a lot of medical bills, a neck injury, a sprained wrist, and in need of a hip replacement, Jeanette found it very difficult to continue her job of cleaning houses. Soon, she lost her job and then her apartment. With no place else to go, Jeanette and her teenage son Sam moved into a broken-down car for several weeks. Desperate and afraid, Jeanette reached out to Crossroads for help. That’s when things took a turn for the better. Despite a very tight rental market, Crossroads helped Jeanette find a suitable apartment, fill out the necessary paperwork, and even find basic furnishings to help their new place feel like home. When the electric company wouldn’t turn the lights on, Jeanette’s case manager even contacted her doctor and helped her file an illness protection plan with the utility. Today, Jeanette and Sam love living in their new apartment and are hopeful for the future.

