Helping Parents Bring their A-Game

Anyone who is a parent can identify with the stresses inherent with the role and that a network of support is essential to ease the intrinsic challenges of raising children. Two programs at Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), Intact Family Services and Intact Family Recovery, provide vital support to parents who have few people to turn to at a crucial time when their children are at risk for abuse or neglect. The voluntary programs are important safety nets for vulnerable families, many grappling with challenges like domestic violence or trauma that are exacerbated by poverty and lack of basic needs, such as food and housing.

Part of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and administered by nonprofits like LSSI, the programs help families reported to DCFS for suspected abuse or neglect. Part of the program’s success hinges on LSSI caseworkers building trust with families. “We strive to provide the same level of service we would want if the client were a member of our own family,” said Intact Senior Supervisor Julie Hanson, LCSW.
Starting a New Life

Formerly incarcerated individuals — returning citizens — often have difficulty finding the simplest forms of security when released from prison. Everyday amenities such as housing, employment, and even toiletries are not readily available for them.

To address these challenges, LSSI’s Prisoner and Family Ministry created the Homeward Bound program in 2011 to help returning citizens find housing and adapt back to life outside of prison.

Spurred by a generous donation, Homeward Bound now owns five homes—two are currently being remodeled—that house nine clients. One of the homes is dedicated especially for veterans, with another house in Cairo slated to serve as a second veteran’s home.

While living in the homes, returning citizens are taught skills to obtain employment through LSSI’s Employment Skills School, attain sustainability and self-sufficiency, and learn the importance of becoming a contributing member of society. Residents are expected to pay rent—roughly a third of their income—and the average stay is approximately one year.

“LSSI gave me a place to live when I had nowhere to go,” said resident Timothy Trandel. “They offered me opportunities to be a better man and father.”

To learn more about Homeward Bound and its expansion, visit LSSI.org.
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LSSI Intact Family Services caseworker Kayla DuBouis exemplifies LSSI’s mission. “It makes a big difference to have a worker who takes the time to get to know and understand our families and treat them with respect instead of judgment,” she shared. “Just on a human level, some of our families don’t have a lot of people in their lives who treat them with kindness and dignity and take the time to really listen to them. That’s a really rewarding part of our job, to show our clients that there are people who are caring and genuinely want to help them.”

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Mark A. Stutrud
Chief Executive Officer

In Faith,

Valuing Kindness and Dignity

Estate Planning Resolutions

People often include creating or updating an estate plan as part of their New Year’s resolutions. A will is an easy and effective way for people, after they are gone, to provide for their family while assuring assets are distributed to charities that are meaningful to them.

For those who wish to make a bequest to LSSI, the following language can help when working with an attorney on a will:

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Intouch Home Care: Since 1981, LSSI has been offering home care services for seniors in need of assistance to help them safely remain in their homes as long as possible.

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Intact Family Services provides parents with needed support while looking out for the safety of children. Parents receive case management services and referrals to a variety of community-based resources, as well as guidance from individual caseworkers, all while keeping the family together, thus minimizing trauma for children. “I tell parents, 'We're going to get you on your A-game,'” said Rebecca Koeppen, MA, LPC, Child Welfare Specialist, Intact Family Services. “Our program helps families to be the best parents they can be.”

Ashley Rule, an Intact client and mom to five, has benefitted from Koeppen’s support. With her husband working full time, Rule acknowledged the stress inherent in parenting. “Parenting is not easy,” she said. “To have the support that Rebecca and Intact provide is amazing.”

Intact Recovery Services provides similar support in households where infants have been exposed to drugs in utero or where abuse/neglect is suspected due to drug use. “I am in awe of things parents are working toward to give their children a better life,” said Kayla DuBois, MSW, Child Welfare Specialist, Intact Recovery. “Some people are breaking generations of dysfunctional behaviors.”