



**Mission:** Mercy Housing and Shelter Corp., a non-profit organization sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, responds to the needs of those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless by providing them with food, housing, shelter, education and support services in an atmosphere that respects each person. Mercy Housing and Shelter advocates on behalf of individuals while challenging injustice in social systems.

**What We Do:** Mercy provides a continuum of care for homeless people and families to help them become self-supporting, contributing members of the community. Services are available for people with various disabilities including psychiatric and/or substance abuse problems, other special needs, and for offenders and defendants in the criminal justice system. We serve English-speaking and non-English speaking populations. We offer six unique service areas to address different aspects of homelessness. We promote healthy values and a reverence for life through the spirit of justice, compassion and service to others.

**History:** In 1983, the Sisters of Mercy of Connecticut, as a chapter, committed themselves to reaching out to the hungry and homeless of Hartford through their purchase of St. Elizabeth House at 118 Main St. in Hartford. A private, non-profit entity, Mercy Housing and Shelter Corp. (**MHSC**) was formed. Sister Dolores Crowley was appointed its first administrator and was charged with developing a caring program with the mercy mission as its core. MHSC began its work through delivering four programs:

1. Friendship Center Soup Kitchen (later called the Meals Program and today called the Friendship Center),
2. Friendship Center Day shelter,
3. A 24-bed emergency shelter served single homeless men and women (it no longer exists), and
4. A 42-bed transitional living program also serving homeless men and women.

For more information on the history of Mercy Housing and Shelter visit the St. Mary's website ([www.stmarysimsbury.org](http://www.stmarysimsbury.org)) or the Mercy Housing website ([www.mercyhousingct.org](http://www.mercyhousingct.org)).

### Timeline of MHSC:

- In 1990, Mercy opened Mercy House in Hartford, the first 24/7 secure facility in the state devoted to serve single homeless adults who were HIV+ or who had AIDS, plus a mental health and/or a substance abuse disability.
- In 1992, the Mercy Family Center was opened at St. Elizabeth House – providing after- school and before-school activities for area children plus intensive casework services to homeless families.
- In 1998, MHSC combined efforts with three other agencies to provide scattered-site housing with supportive services to homeless families in Greater Hartford through the Family Supportive Housing Collaborative Program. Ten families housed in 10 units are involved in rental assistance and intensive support services.
- In 1999, Sister Patricia McKeon was named executive director of the agency, following Lucy Callahan’s retirement. The administrative offices of the agency were moved from Columbus Boulevard to its present location at 211 Wethersfield Ave., Hartford.
- In 2001, Mercy joined with four other agencies to deliver the PILOTS Permanent Supportive Housing Program serving the Greater Middletown area. This scattered-site supportive housing program serves homeless individuals and families who have a psychiatric or a substance abuse disability, or both. The agency also began its Shelter Initiative Program featuring the work of a full-time case manager working half-time in the St. Elizabeth House residential program and half-time in the Friendship Center meals program and specializing in working with homeless people with mental health and chemical dependency disabilities.
- In 2002 and 2003, four to five months each year, during the severe winter weather, Mercy spearheaded the creation of special “No-Freeze” facilities at St. Elizabeth House offering overnight emergency shelter from the extreme cold, along with food, and case management services for homeless adults in Hartford.
- In 2003, MHSC doubled the capacity of its Mental Health Community Respite Program located at St. Elizabeth House, Hartford and closed its Bethany program. The Hartford Residential Program was changed from two separate programs to one. The resulting program is a 48-bed Transitional Living Program for homeless single adults with each resident having their own private, keyed room.
- In 2004, Mercy Housing opened a new program at a secure facility in West Hartford, The Residence at St. Mary’s. The Residence includes 12 one-bedroom units for single, homeless, adult men/women with chronic mental health disabilities. This 24/7 program provides a full complement of intensive supportive services. MHSC joined forces with St. Patrick/St. Anthony’s Parish to provide a temporary 18-bed emergency “No-Freeze” shelter called Catherine’s Place. Short-term housing, plus food and case management services for adult, single homeless women were provided for four months during the most severe winter weather.
- In 2005, Mercy joined with St. Patrick’s/St. Anthony’s Parish and the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry in providing the services of Catherine’s Place year-round. The short-term residential program has a 14-bed capacity for homeless single adult women and provides a plethora of supportive services. The Jump-Start center, located in St. Elizabeth House, was launched to offer specialized education and employment opportunities to MHSC clients.
- In 2008, MHSC formally announced its first ever **capital campaign** to renovate St. Elizabeth House at 118 Main St., Hartford. The front part of the house, built in 1807, is the birthplace and childhood home of Henry Barnard, the first education commissioner for the United States, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The back of the house was added in 1908 by the Sisters of the Holy Spirit when they ran a home for single women working in Hartford.

If you are interested in providing assistance to Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation directly, please contact Development Director Rochelle Simon at (860)808-2040. Information courtesy of Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation, [www.mercyhousingct.org](http://www.mercyhousingct.org)