

Environments, Operations & Programming that Put Children First



Meet the Presenters



National Women's Shelter Network, LLC



Geneva Comeau,
LMHC Program
Director

Lotus House



Gladys Montes
Former Vice
President of Center
for Excellence in
Early Education
United Way



Shana Cox, LCSW,
Psy.D
Deputy Director of
Children's Services
Lotus House



Shakoya Green
Long, MA, MSW
Executive Director
Thomas House
Family Shelter



Saliha Nelson, Ed.D
Chief Executive Officer
Urgent, Inc.



Alexis Steel
President
St. Mary's Center
for Women &
Children

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Deputy Director of Children's Services
Geneva Comeau, LMHC, Program Director
Miami, FL



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UW Center for Excellence
Miami, FL

THOMAS HOUSE
FAMILY SHELTER



Serving Homeless Families with Children
Since 1986

Shakoya Green Long, Executive Director
Garden Grove, CA



Saliha Nelson, Ed.D, Chief Executive Officer
Miami, FL



St. Mary's Center
for Women and Children
Change comes from the Center

Alexis Steel, President
Boston, MA



What makes a child feel welcome, safe and protected?

And what helps them reach their full potential?



Supporting Healthy Development

Well-being from birth to 5 and beyond means development in three areas:

- Social & Emotional Health
- Cognitive Functioning
- Physical Health

All three areas can be addressed in the shelter environment, operations & programming



Trauma Informed Support of Children

Help children who have experienced trauma by nurturing relationships and stability through:

- A supportive & responsive environment
- Supportive & responsive parents
- Predictable & comforting routines and activities
- Fostering post traumatic growth

These supports also act as protective factors to prevent future trauma from occurring



Entry

Creating a safe, comfortable, trauma informed space with children in mind



Welcome video

[Welcome Video For Children](#)

[Entering Lotus House.mov](#)





Assessing Needs and Providing Deep & Protective Supports

Assessment of Needs, Referrals, In House Services



- **Evidence Based Assessments** provide baseline information regarding child's emotional, mental, and behavioral health, parental stress and attitudes, and parent child interaction.
- **Evidence Based Therapies** address needs identified.
- **Triple P Parenting Classes** provide an opportunity for mothers to come together and receive parenting tips while also supporting each other

Comforting Routines and Rituals

Holidays & Celebrations

- Black History Month
- Juneteenth
- Fourth of July
- Christmas, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day
- Quarterly baby showers



Birthdays

Every child is celebrated with cake



Programming

Provides guests with the opportunity to participate in holistic and enriching activities.



Programming Continued



- Holistic healing through Art therapy.
 - Art therapy was mainly used to reduce suffering from mental health symptoms.
- Self- Awareness.
- Accessing different forms of coping skills helps to clear the mind of excess thoughts releasing clutter.
- Programming activities within a shelter setting assist guest to come together providing a respite from the day to day stressors.
- Daily activities allows guest to feel a sense of family; Everyone looks forward to attending/participating within group activities.
- Increased activity is directly related to increased morale and positive shelter environment.

Lotus House: Salon Services



- Each guest receives salon services upon entry.
- Back to school getting all kids ready (braids, washes, and haircuts)
- Salon educational activities regarding beauty, hair, and hygiene
- Pampering



The Farm

Having Healthy & Happy Bodies



Educational Supports

Supporting each child's educational success

- After school programming/tutoring
- Summer camp/summer school
- School uniforms/supplies
- On site United Way Early Head Start



Educational Supports: Collaboration with Federal and Local Organizations to Ensure Early Childhood Education



One Example: Lotus on site United Way Early Head Start

- Essential Elements
 - Comprehensive services to respond to specific needs of family
 - Communication between early childhood provider and shelter staff
- Opportunities for Growth:
 - Encouraging continuity of care
 - Advocating for redefining “continuity of care” within the early head start/head start system
 - Educating staff regarding individual trauma and the reality of living in a shelter
 - Helping families to navigate the requirements of different organization/systems, eg. Department of Children and Families; Early Learning Coalition

Exit



- Mother and Child Safety and Well-being Plan with resources
- If the family is interested in continuing services, therapeutic support extends beyond the family's stay at the shelter
- Programming encourages each child exiting the shelter to choose a toy
- Children are invited to come back for celebrations and activities
- Continued support for families in meeting their needs in the community post-exit

St. Mary's Center for Women and Children

Located in Boston, Massachusetts, St. Mary's Center for Women and Children supports over **500 of Boston's most vulnerable women, children, and families** annually.

St. Mary's Center, a multi-service organization supporting women and families, believes shelter is not enough to erase the devastation of cyclical poverty and homelessness. Grounded in social justice, we empower families to achieve **emotional stability** and **economic independence** through education, workforce development, and permanent housing.



St. Mary's Center
for Women and Children
Change comes from the Center

Welcoming
Families:
Creating safe,
trauma-informed
environments for
families who have
experienced
significant multi-
generational
trauma



St. Mary's Center for Women and Children: Assessing a Child and Family's Individual Needs

Families arriving in shelter have histories of living in communities without access to Social Determinants of Health impacting their physical and mental health and their ability to achieve multi-generational stability for their families.

Providing individualized plans for wrap-around services for a mother and her children.

WELL-BEING

- Behavioral health services
- Build positive family connection

PLAY

- Promote active play
- Outdoor play in playgrounds on site



EDUCATION

- Accessible, affordable onsite childcare
- Mother-child reading

HEALTH

- Nutrition & healthy Meals
- Family medicine & pediatric care

St. Mary's Center for Women and Children: Assessing a Child and Family's Individual Needs

Providing **embedded education programming** within residential programs to **build a center of learning**.



Leading educational workshops and playgroups



Providing a scholarship program providing financial support for residents to attend college courses and certificate programs



Providing access to affordable educational spaces for children to close developmental gaps.



St. Mary's Center for Women and Children: Behavioral Health & Family Medicine

To address health needs, it is important to provide access to for **behavioral health** and **family medicine** for both mother and child, including:



Comprehensive health care services through on-site partners specializing in family homelessness and access to external referrals for specialized needs.



Embedded behavioral health care services across all programs through a full-time clinical team.



THOMAS HOUSE
FAMILY SHELTER

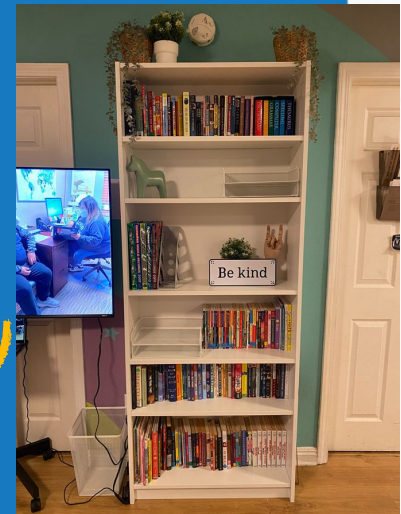


*Serving Homeless Families with Children
Since 1986*



To provide a safe, supportive environment and the resources necessary for homeless and at-risk families with children to remain together while empowering them to become independent and self-sufficient.

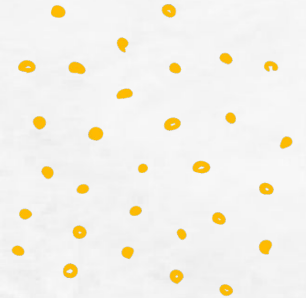
**Shakoya Green Long MA, MSW, ACSW
Chief Executive Officer**



Youth Development Program



Monitoring School Progress & Communicate with Teachers
Academic Tutoring
Enrichment Activities
Fitness
Mental Health Services
Teen Case Management



Youth Development Space



Computer Section



Work Station



Reading Center





Teen Case Management

- ★ Life Skills
- ★ Financial Literacy
- ★ Career Exploration
- ★ Mental Health Services
- ★ Male/Female Groups





LET'S SOAR!

URGENT, Inc. is an award-winning creative youth development organization providing asset-based afterschool and summer camp programming that helps young people uncover and develop their talents and skills through digital media arts education, positive youth development, and STEAM Workforce Development.



STRENGTHS | OPPORTUNITIES | ASPIRATIONS | RESULTS

Presenter: Saliha Nelson, EdD
CEO URGENT, Inc.



- **Dedicated and experienced staff members who are passionate about providing educational support and mentorship to children and learning to improve their practice**
- **Experience in implementing successful after-school programs in other settings**
- **Intentional about adapting and tailoring the program to the needs and interests of the children**



STRENGTHS





OPPORTUNITIES



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE

- Safe and Supportive Space for Diverse Experiences
- Trauma-Informed
- Healing-Centered
- Arts-Based

COLLABORATION

- Requires Flexibility
- Values-Based, ex. Patience, Compassion, Responsibility, etc.
- Fostering Connection and Belonging

COMMUNICATION

- Continuous Communication Between Shelter and Program Staff
- Continuous Communication with Parents and Children





ASPIRATIONS



SOCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY SUPPORTED

- Get to know the children's interests
- Understand their sensitivities

ENGAGED AND MINDFUL

- Foster creativity and curiosity
- Opportunities to practice social and emotional learning

HEARD AND EMPOWERED

- Confident Voice and Action
- Skilled- Look What I Can Do!



RESULTS



LEARNING SHOWCASE

- Shows to shelter staff, parents, children and program staff the result of the partnership
- Increases trust and confidence in the partnership



POSITIVE REACTIONS

- Learning gains in school engagement
- Learning gains in social-emotional learning
- Learning in artistic expression
- Positive reaction to program experience



Thank You

Resource List

Lotus House:

<https://lotushouse.org/>
shana@lotushouse.org

St. Mary's:

CPI Training:
[Search&gad=1](#)

Children's training:

<https://thinkkids.org/>

Thomas House:

[Thomas House Family Shelter, Garden Grove, CA | At Risk Families \(thomashouseshelter.org\)](#)

Urgent Inc.:

www.urgentinc.org

References

US Department of Health and Human Services

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/about/protective-factors-aces/>

Sundari Foundation, Inc. (2017) *Lotus Village Children's Wellness Center Innovation Project*, Miami, FL.

<https://zerotothrive.org/routines-for-kids/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/facts.html>

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/how-states-can-improve-well-being-for-all-children-from-birth-to-age-five>