

# “I felt complete again”

Responsible  
Budget  
Coalition

State-funded supportive housing helped Karen end her homelessness and thrive after overcoming a mental illness



## Meet Karen

Nearly a decade ago, Karen was searching diligently for a job in Aurora, believing that being a Certified Nursing Assistant and her background as a pharmacy tech would help her find a position in health care. But when her living arrangement with a friend unexpectedly fell through, she suddenly found herself without a job or a home.

Thankfully, Karen was able to get state-funded emergency shelter at Hesed House. In addition to providing a place to stay, Hesed House helped her get the support she needed at the time, including mental health services.

Karen believes the stress of losing her housing exacerbated her bi-polar disorder—previously undiagnosed—making it even harder for her to accomplish her goals. After her formal diagnosis, Karen worked with mental health professionals to create a treatment plan she used to stabilize herself.

Karen and Hesed House staff also kept searching for an apartment that Karen could afford and maintain. The severe shortage of affordable housing too often results in a very long search process. Finally, after 999 days of homelessness, Karen was able to move into a home of her own when an apartment in Hesed House’s state-funded supportive housing program became available. **“Finally getting housing after three and a half years was such a relief,”** she remembers. **“Just being able to have privacy doing normal things like sleeping, showering, and using the bathroom was a major improvement. I felt complete again.”**

For the last five years, thanks to Hesed House’s LIGHT-House supportive housing program, Karen has been able to improve her life. Stable housing has allowed Karen to successfully manage her bi-polar disorder and reconnect with her family. When her grandchildren come to visit, they’re able to see her in her own home.

State-funded supportive housing reduces the need for more costly services, such as inpatient mental health care and emergency room visits. However, for almost two years, the state budget impasse has caused state-funded supportive housing programs to experience budget cuts and go long periods with no state funding.

Without a state budget and enough new revenue, success stories like Karen’s will not be possible and, in the long-term, it will cost the people of Illinois more, in both dollars and wasted human potential.

**LIGHT-HOUSE PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**  
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Hesed House's mission is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless and give people the chance to hope again. LIGHT-House (Living Independently Gaining Hope Through Housing) offers long-term permanent supportive housing to individuals and families at multiple locations throughout Aurora.

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**The Responsible Budget Coalition is made up of more than 300 organizations** throughout Illinois representing human services, health care, education, labor unions, civic organizations and faith communities. **Together, we are calling on Governor Rauner and Illinois lawmakers to pass a responsible budget NOW that raises adequate revenue to fully fund vital services, including programs to create affordable housing and end homelessness.**