



# Collaboration **For Community**





## What is REACH?

The REACH Services and Resource Center is a collaborative hub in Western Wisconsin, bringing together nonprofit service providers to address various community needs. Originally focused on supporting individuals experiencing housing insecurity, the center has expanded its services to provide healthcare, violence prevention, tenant and landlord mediation, and much more. Offering support on a walk-in basis, the REACH Center emphasizes cultural sensitivity and expertise across multiple fields. Co-located agencies benefit from collaborative opportunities and shared overhead costs, allowing more resources to be allocated toward programming, ultimately increasing the capacity to assist more people in need. The center actively seeks partnerships to enhance its community impact, and offers space for workshops, events, job fairs, and more.

“

**“I liked that you always made time for us when we needed something, as well as being on top of apartment availability all the time to help us.”**

**- REACH Center participant**

”

## Filling a Community Need

**Services September 2021 -  
September 2024**



**6,128**

**Total Number of  
Visitors seeking services**



**6,127**

**Total Number of  
Households Served**

# REACH Leadership Team



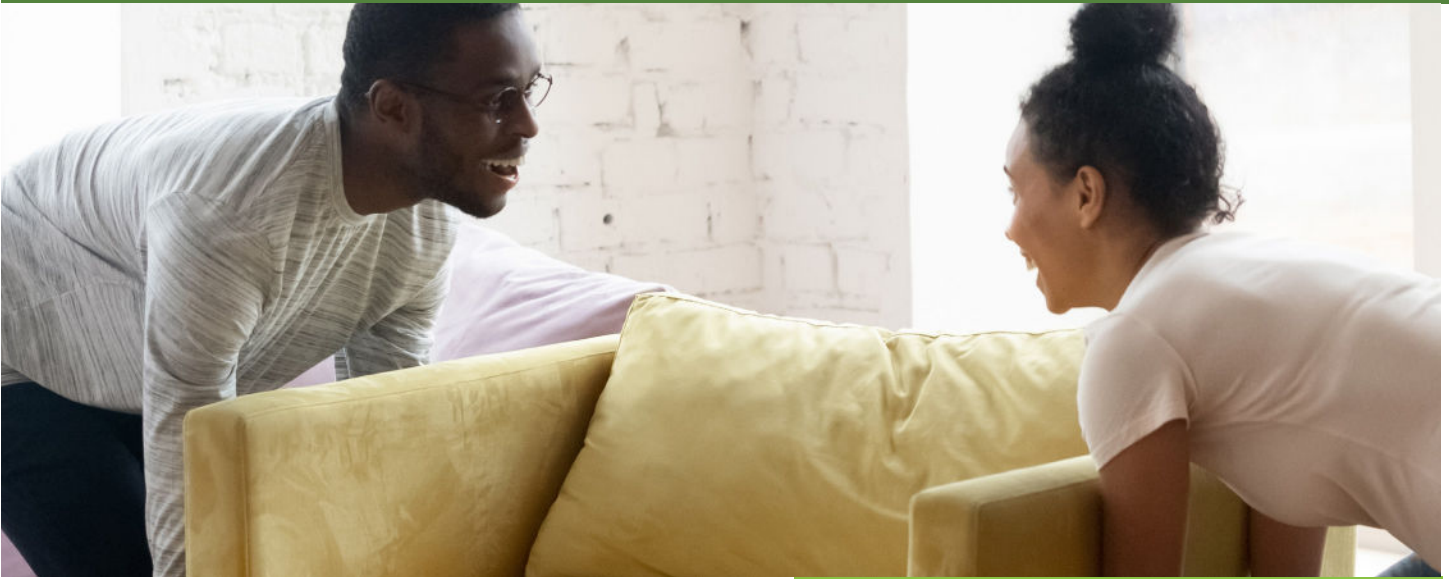
## Partners who have relied on REACH to connect with Community.

AAUW (American Association of University Women)  
ADRC (Aging and Disability Center)  
Addiction Medical Solutions in Onalaska  
Alliance to Heal  
Anti-human trafficking career planning  
B.L.A.C.K. (Black Leaders Acquiring Collective Knowledge)  
Catholic Charities  
Coulee Tenant's United  
Coulee Region Youth Advisory Board  
Goodwill  
Great Rivers United Way Community Health Workers  
Hunger Task Force of La Crosse  
Job Center of Wisconsin  
La Crosse County  
La Crosse County Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consultant  
La Crosse Lions  
La Crosse Public Health

La Crosse County Veterans Service Office  
League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area  
Legal Action of Wisconsin  
Project Proven  
Remedy Staffing  
RHYMES La Crosse  
Social Responsibility Speaks  
St. Clare's Health Mission  
United Health  
UWL OT Students  
UWL Self Sufficiency Program  
Veteran Service Providers  
Vivent  
YMCA  
Youth Advisory Board  
Workforce Connections  
WTC (Western Technical College)



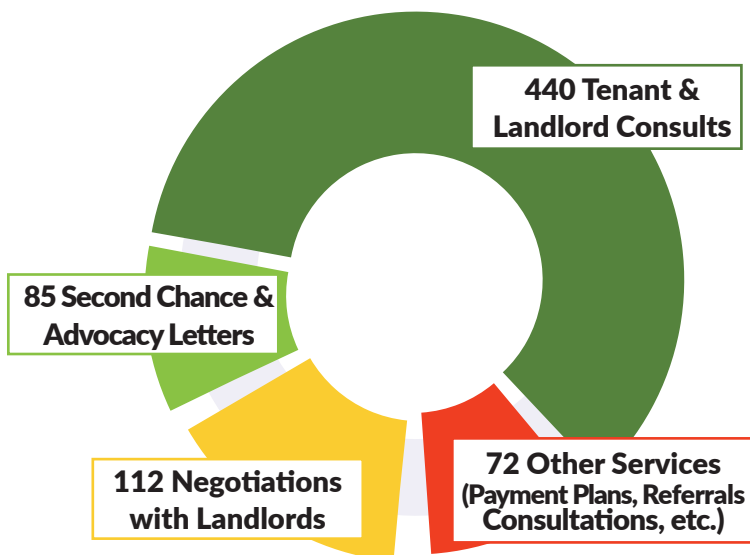
# Tenant and Landlord Resource Office



The Tenant-Landlord Resource Office offers support, education, and mediation to tenants and to landlords. Through a partnership between Couleecap and Legal Action of Wisconsin, this office provides free services and resources to promote housing stability and to build a stronger community.

Services include:

- Assistance completing housing applications and appeals
- Educational resources for tenants and landlords
- 'Second chance' letters and other tools to overcome rental barriers
- Conflict resolution assistance
- Referrals to additional community resources



## Filling a Community Need

Since December 2023



**873**

Households Served



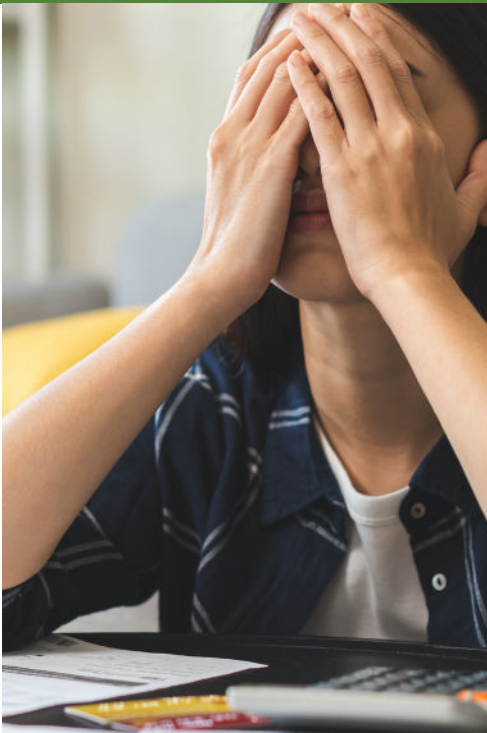
**394**

Referrals from Community



**571**

Households that will maintain their housing



## Meet Rebecca

Rebecca and her mom faced significant challenges in a short period of time – sudden loss of income and rising costs. Nothing seemed to be going right.

“We received an eviction notice shortly before our lease was up”, Rebecca explained. “Our income had been cut in half and we were waiting to hear about other benefits, but we still couldn’t afford many of the two-bedroom units in our area.”

The pair reached out to the REACH Center for support as they worked to overcome these challenges.

“Everyone I worked with or spoke to was very understanding and sympathetic of our situation,” Rebecca shared. “They have respect for the problems people are facing, whether it’s addiction, homelessness, or loss of income. They don’t look down on you and they understand people go through life challenges.”

By working with the Tenant-Landlord Resource Office (TLRO) and Legal Action of Wisconsin, Rebecca and her mom were able to better understand their situation and the legal process. “They were very supportive and helpful,” Rebecca said of the TLRO and Legal Action of Wisconsin. “It was so beneficial just having someone listen to me, even if I was irritated or crying. They had a sympathetic ear to hear me out, instead of judging me.”

With the help of TLRO staff Bill Oldenburg and their Housing Stability Case Manager, Nouchee Lee, Rebecca, and her mom were able to apply for subsidized housing and write a “second chance” letter while working with Legal Action for their court date. A “second chance” letter is an opportunity for a tenant to share their story and to advocate that the landlord look beyond what is written in a background check or rental history. They were ultimately approved for housing and moved into a unit that fits their needs. “Securing housing and getting that call was a load off our minds and shoulders,” Rebecca noted. “My mom and I both cried at that moment. Something went right for us, and we were finally able to go forward instead of backwards.”

**“My mom and I both  
cried at that moment.  
Something went right  
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finally able to go  
forward instead of  
backwards,”**

**- Rebecca  
REACH Center  
Participant**

## Total Navigation Team



The REACH Center is designed to inspire collaboration between organizations in service of a common goal. The Total Navigation Team (TNT) is an example of what has been made possible by the REACH Center.

TNT was formed when multiple service providers came together to connect unsheltered individuals and families to case management, shelter or housing, and other resources tailored to their specific needs. At the time, these agencies often referred clients between each other but as a collaborative team, TNT aligned communication, resources, and other procedures to ensuring clients received guidance necessary to navigate social services to improve their well-being in real time.

TNT began in 2022 with a focus on winter family sheltering. There is a critical lack of shelter for families with children in the Coulee Region, a fact even more evident in the cold winter months. In that first season, TNT was able to place every family who presented at the REACH Center into shelter or alternative housing through the winter. Due to its success, TNT became a permanent service, offered twice weekly to support families and individuals experiencing homelessness.

In 2023, TNT received a \$50,000 grant from the La Crosse Area Community Foundation and Great Rivers United Way. With this funding, TNT has helped stabilize housing for 73 households, and **96% of those households have maintained their housing since receiving assistance.** The funds were used for motel stays, rental arrears, first month's rent and security deposits, utility assistance, and other support like bus passes. The average amount provided to each household to achieve this level of stability was **\$654 per household.**

## Filling a Community Need

### Winter Sheltering 2022-2023

Funding from the State of Wisconsin, La Crosse County, and the La Crosse Area Community Foundation served any family with children who presented at the REACH Center.



86

Total families presented

59

Families were provided emergency shelter through motel vouchers

27

Families were diverted from shelter

0

Families left without shelter

## A Day with the Total Navigation Team

Meet some of the people who recently visited TNT for assistance:

- A veteran fell behind on bills because of a recent hospitalization. A TNT case manager contacts Veteran Services, the landlord, and utility company to negotiate his case.
- A 24-year-old woman with a history of long-term, steady employment is facing eviction. She now has a baby with many health issues that requires around-the-clock care and several doctor's appointments in a week. The woman hasn't been able to work since the baby became ill and needs help from TNT.
- A man has completed a jail sentence and needs housing and a job to be successful. A TNT case manager talks to him about Western Technical College's Project Proven program, which helps those with a criminal record get re-acclimated into society. He is walked over to meet a Project Proven representative who was already at the REACH Center that day, providing information about other programs.
- A victim of domestic violence comes in. A case manager asks if the situation is "prevention or priority?" It is a priority, as the woman fled her home recently and is staying with friends since the abuser knows all of her family. She doesn't have anything – not even a phone. The team begins to connect her with resources, including FoodShare and BadgerCare, and assigns her a regular case manager with expertise in domestic violence.

## A Cost Effective Program with High Impact

A grant of \$50,000 from the La Crosse Area Community Foundation and Great Rivers United Way supported



**73**

**Households received Stable Housing**

**Of those assisted**

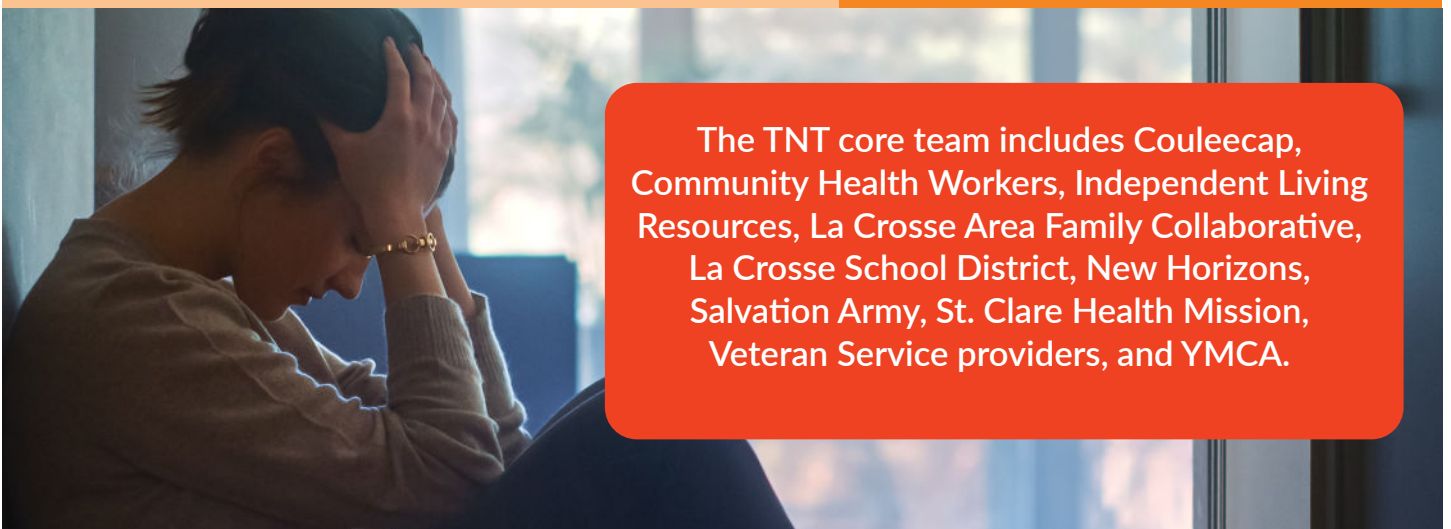
**70**

**Have Maintained Housing**



**\$654**

**Average spent per Household**



The TNT core team includes Couleecap, Community Health Workers, Independent Living Resources, La Crosse Area Family Collaborative, La Crosse School District, New Horizons, Salvation Army, St. Clare Health Mission, Veteran Service providers, and YMCA.

## Housing Stability and Rent Ready



One of the newest programs at the REACH Center is the Housing Stability program. Housing Stability case managers provide services to help people stay in their homes, find suitable housing, and manage issues with current housing. All services are free and open to the public. In January, 2024, Housing Stability case managers started offering Rent Ready workshops at the REACH Center.

Rent Ready workshops help empower tenants through education so they can effectively find housing. Housing Stability case managers are on hand at workshops to help clients fill out and apply for housing, gather any necessary documents and verifications needed for renting, and individually address barriers to housing. All Rent Ready workshops are free and open to the public.

“(...)one of our biggest barriers was the financial lump needed to move into the place.”

- Margaret  
REACH Center Participant

### Filling a Community Need



197

Households Referred for Help



44

Households Attended Program



31

Households have been housed  
or remained housed





## Meet Tara

Tara, a La Crosse County resident, had struggled with homelessness for years. She had been unable to secure stable employment due to a past criminal record and was unable to secure rental opportunities for similar reasons. Therefore, she had been living in a garage for over a year, following eight years of experiencing homelessness on the street and in shelter.

Because of her challenges, Tara found it difficult to connect with landlords who would take her seriously. She also struggled to navigate the complex service system, where she could access support. That is when Tara found the REACH Center and programs to offer her support and services.

“I didn’t know if I was oversharing with landlords or completing the applications correctly,” Tara shared. “Staff kept me on track and guided me forward.”

Tara was referred to the Social Security Outreach Access and Recovery Program (SOAR) and was connected to Tina Tryggestad, the SOAR Case Manager. Tina was able to assist Tara in navigating the complex Social Security system to apply for disability benefits.

Through case management with the Housing Stability program Tara was also able to receive a Section 8 Voucher at the end of 2023, which opened the door to housing opportunities that she had been previously unable to access.

Tara and staff worked together in completing rental applications and advocating with landlords. On New Years Day 2024, Tara was able to move into her new apartment! “I was able to get off the streets after eight years,” Tara shared. “It would not have happened if it wasn’t for Couleecap’s help.”

“This was a great start of the New Year for Tara,” staff reflected. “By securing housing, Tara could now focus on other parts of her life.”

Since getting her apartment, Tara has been able to enroll in the Western Technical College Agriculture Program through Project Proven. She was also able to catch up on her doctor’s appointments to address her health care needs and she continues to work with Tina towards receiving disability benefits.

“It was an adjustment for me living on my own. I had to break some habits I had picked up during the time I spent homeless,” Tara explained. “Having housing allowed me to start school again in agriculture, which I love.”

**“I was able to get  
off the streets  
after eight years,”**

**- Tara  
REACH Center  
Participant**

## Behavioral Health Services



Scenic Bluffs Community Health Centers (SBCHC) is a non-profit healthcare provider caring for patients in western Wisconsin. With a mission to deliver accessible, patient-centered care, Scenic Bluffs works to reduce barriers to healthcare access by addressing social, financial, and geographic challenges that affect patients.

In 2023, Scenic Bluffs began providing behavioral health and substance use disorder services at the REACH Center. These services are available to adults, youth, families, and couples, in both individual and group-based appointments. In the first 12 months, Scenic Bluffs provided care for 146 individuals through 668 therapy visits.

Mental health and substance use disorders need to be tended to as quickly as possible to achieve best outcomes. By offering care at the REACH Center, Scenic Bluffs provides crucial services, streamlining the referral process and allowing patients to receive wrap-around care at one location, during one stop.

At the time of this publication, SBCHC provided more than 100 visits per month at the REACH Center, with plans for future service expansions. SBCHC accepts most private insurance plans, Wisconsin Medicaid, Medicare, and cares for those without insurance. Scenic Bluffs also offers a sliding-fee scale program called the Healthy Neighbor Plan. No one is denied services based on their ability to pay.

### Filling a Community Need



**668**

Therapy Visits



**146**

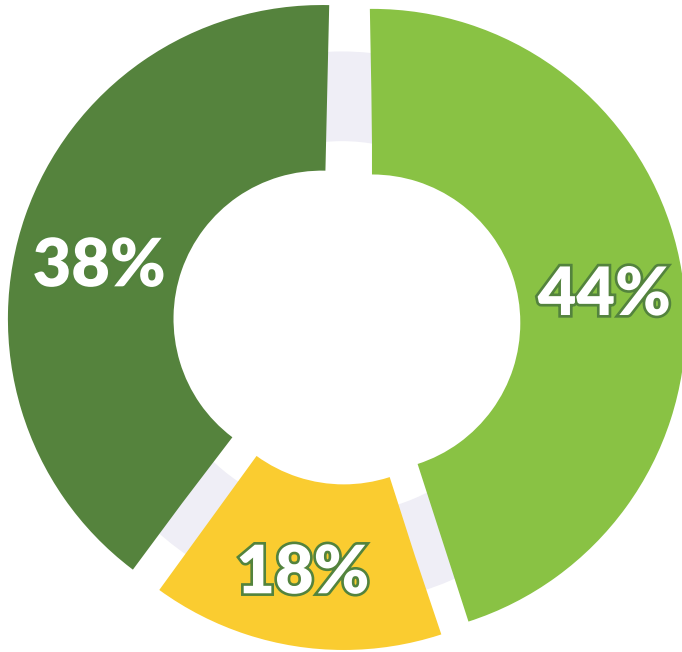
Individuals Served



**23**

16% were children (17 or younger)

## How our Participants Pay for their Services



- 44%** Covered by private/commercial insurance
- 38%** Some form of public insurance
- 18%** Were uninsured

## Filling a Community Need

**45%**

of participants lived below the Federal Poverty Level

The 2024 federal poverty level for a family of four is \$31,200.

**45%**

of participants are considered low income.

A family of four is considered low income if they make less than \$55,500.





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