Frequently Asked Questions

LOCATION

Isn't New Beginnings still in Denver?

We started New Beginnings in Denver, CO in 1993. In 2014 we relocated it from Denver to Milwaukee, WI.

Why are you now moving away from Milwaukee?

We are not moving it out of Milwaukee. When we searched for the "perfect" site, we insisted it should remain within the city limits of Milwaukee. We found a great location in the northwest part of the city and are committed to serving the metropolitan Milwaukee area with this ministry.

Why are you moving from the New Beginnings current location?

Presently, we rent a small apartment building from Wisconsin Lutheran College in Wauwatosa, WI. The location has been good for New Beginnings. The problem is that the building size only permits us to serve four mothers and their children at a time. The new building will enable us to serve 10-12 mothers with their children. Additionally, New Beginnings will own the new building.

MINISTRY

What is the difference between New Beginnings and a maternity home?

A maternity home is for housing a pregnant woman until the time she delivers a baby. A typical stay at a maternity home is 3-6 months. New Beginnings is NOT a maternity home. It is also NOT an "extended stay" maternity home (staying for a few months after delivery of a baby). New Beginnings is a home for single mothers. The housing is the "setting" for the far greater mission of New Beginnings: to provide generationally-poor, single mothers with the necessary opportunities and resources to facilitate self-sufficiency. When we started New Beginnings 30 years ago, there were a lot of maternity homes around. There are today as well. What was lacking was a program to help lift a generationally-poor single mother out of poverty and into self-sufficiency. New Beginnings is a program specifically designed to meet that need head-on in helping mothers and children.

There are hundreds of single mothers who need help in the metropolitan Milwaukee area. Serving just 10-12 mothers with their children seems to hardly make a dent in the work that needs to be done. Why so few?

We feel the same way. Since we first opened in October of 1993, we were never able to serve more than eight mothers and their babies at a time. We always saw the need to do more. Thirty years, however, has given us a lot of experience and the opportunity to truly understand what we are dealing with and what it takes to succeed. We believe the New Beginnings ministry should be replicated around the United States. We lack the resources to do that. We do know that lifting a single mother and her child out of generational poverty takes patience, sacrifice,

persistence, and time. We quickly learned that you cannot turn that around in a few months. Even trying to do it in a few years is ambitious, but we have been able to do it in that time.

What exactly is "generational" poverty?

When we think of "poverty" we think about being poor and relying on the assistance of others, be that family, charitable agencies, or government support. There are two kinds of poverty: circumstantial and generational.

Circumstantial poverty is what happens when you lead a life of self-sufficiency (i.e., employed, able to meet expenses from the money you earn, able to make financial commitments by renting or owning a home, and even able to run up and manage some debt). Something unexpectedly happens resulting in a devastating economic blow: you lose a job, you incur overwhelming medical costs, you were struck with a natural disaster, etc. You find yourself in the "circumstance" of being poor, which is unfamiliar territory. You don't know how to make the next rent payment, how to cover fuel costs for the car, or even pay for your next meal. You have financial commitments that you can no longer meet, and you are devastated by this turn of events.

The solutions for rising out of circumstantial poverty are rarely comfortable, but are doable. You find another job. You sell accumulated assets. You call on family and friends to perhaps help you out. You may have a savings or retirement plan that can provide some help. Through your resourcefulness you adjust.

If you live in "generational" poverty, however, things are much different. Generational poverty means that a mother lives under some sort of government or charity support, as did her parents and grandparents – at least three generations. There has been no accumulation of assets. There is no network of family or friends who can help you out for a while. You are not panicked by your poverty because it is all you have ever known. It is all your parents have ever known, and their parents. The tools for survival for the generationally poor are much different than for those who are circumstantially poor. They lack the resources and the opportunities to rise out of generational poverty. New Beginnings recognizes those differences and meets them head on.

What is the "Program" of New Beginnings?

We call the New Beginnings program, "6 Pillars." The *6 Pillars* are program components each built on the three-layer foundation of *reality*, *residency*, and *time*. Let me explain:

Reality: We need to be realistic about the home and the mothers. The home is a program. Like any program it is a process, and it involves a series of graduated steps to achieve success. The mothers are generationally poor. They enter the program indoctrinated with the attitudes, values, and habits of survival of someone who is generationally poor. We are realistic in that not all of those attitudes, values, and habits are conducive to becoming self-sustaining, but we start where they are at when they enter the program and build from there.

Residency: New Beginnings came after two years of extensive research examining other established programs. We could not find homes for single mothers, but we did find maternity homes. When asked about their number one challenge, a common theme emerged: mothers needed to escape a bad circumstance, relationship, and even a bad culture. The residency component of New Beginnings is crucial in providing the generationally-poor mother an opportunity to explore new possibilities towards self-sufficiency.

Time: Sometimes we think correcting a problem is as simple as issuing a decree. Simply having a slate of rules does not lift someone out of poverty. The challenges faced by these mothers require training and trust-building. It takes time to gain trust, and it takes time to train. We cannot simply throw money at the problem. We need to give each mother enough time to learn what she needs to know, and to make the changes that she needs to make, to truly have a new beginning.

On that foundation, we work with the mothers on the *6 Pillars*:

Pillar 1: Parental: The birth of a child brings added responsibility. Certainly, there is a thing called "maternal instinct," yet many mothers have also learned some bad and dangerous parenting habits. In this Pillar we work with each resident on what it means to be a mother who cares for a child, a mentor who trains a child, and a model from whom a child learns by example.

Pillar 2: Personal: We learned a long time ago that the way you view yourself directly affects the way you act towards others. Under this Pillar we teach mothers important tips on staying healthy, practicing good hygiene, and knowing happiness. In our values-based program we instill a spirit of loving others above ourselves, and we also engage professional counselors to help mothers sort through some of their intense personal issues.

Pillar 3: Social: There is a way you act around family, maybe a little different way you act around friends, and a different way you act at work. This Pillar addresses skills relating to the way we communicate and the kind of consideration we show to others (even when we are wronged); we also discuss the value of prudence.

Pillar 4: Spiritual: The New Beginnings program is faith-based. There is a higher authority to which we all must answer and who has demonstrated great devotion to us. We provide mothers a "lens" by which to evaluate their own spirituality and the reasons why they think and do what they do. We help them learn to engage with others as they would want God to engage with them. Then we help them elevate their life to a new level that is focused outward and upward rather than just inward.

Pillar 5: Educational: Some mothers come to New Beginnings with substantial learning. Many come with incomplete learning or poor learning backgrounds. Some deal with illiteracy. With the educational Pillar we provide the time, resources, and mentoring they need to catch up and excel in their education. We ask them about their educational aptitude upon their entrance to New Beginnings, aim for realistic education goals, and map out a strategy to achieve them.

Pillar 6: Vocational: To become self-sustaining means securing employment that pays a self-sustaining wage in a manner that does not compromise what has been accomplished in the other five Pillars. We work with mothers to explore vocations that meet this criterion. We help the mother measure her own affinity and compatibility with various career options. We then help her chart a course of training to learn the necessary skills to become sustainably employed in her chosen profession.

Are the mothers required to attend church?

One of the 6 Pillars of the program is spiritual maturity. We are a Christian agency, and church attendance is a requirement and part of that Pillar of the program.

So, how long does this program take?

We talk about New Beginnings as a 6-year program. The mother is invited to live in the building with her child for up to five years. For the sixth, or final year, she is moved into her own place while still being involved in many of the home's activities. It is our way to ease her into that final phase of independence.

Every mother is different, however. While we permit a mother to live at New Beginnings for up to five years, so far no one has, and we expect that few will. Most mothers reach their independence goals sooner (around 2-3 years). We are happy for that, but again, every mother is different, and we want to give each mother a full opportunity to succeed.

Will you be adding more staff after the building is completed?

Two advantages to this plan is that we will be able to use volunteers, like we had done in the past; and by combining the offices of New Beginnings and Christian Life Resources into one building, we will be able to apply efficiency measures through the sharing of personnel and resources. We have projected increased hours for some of the part-time positions. Where that might not be possible, we have considered hiring additional personnel. Our plan is to ease into a full house to assure staff can handle the workload.

Will there be volunteer opportunities to assist at New Beginnings?

Even within the small building we occupy now, we have volunteer opportunities. We are planning to greatly expand those opportunities in the new building as well as look for mentors, helpers in the Boutique, help in the reception area, outdoor garden and lawn work, and so forth. As we near the time of occupancy of the building, we will post a listing of volunteer opportunities.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

Can you explain CLR's involvement with New Beginnings?

Christian Life Resources (CLR) is the parent agency and New Beginnings is the daughter ministry. CLR helps people face difficult family and bioethical issues from the perspective of God's Word. It is a purpose of CLR to look for opportunities to help people do what is God-pleasing.

CLR formed New Beginnings to help single mothers live with making right decisions in tough circumstances. New Beginnings provides a "new beginning" for a generationally-poor mother and her child, which includes the prospect of escaping generational poverty.

CLR continues to provide administrative and fundraising assistance for New Beginnings.

Does New Beginnings help the mothers with financial assistance?

As a general rule, no. New Beginnings helps the mothers find the proper resources needed for them to receive financial assistance while they advance in their education or pursue training. There are always exceptions, but we generally do not give money to the mothers.

How do mothers get by financially while at New Beginnings?

When mothers enter the program, they typically received some sort of government assistance. For the first two years of the program, the mother focuses on her academic education: getting caught up with classes and taking vocational courses related to her chosen profession.

From the government assistance they receive, they provide New Beginnings with a "rent payment" ($1) and are required to submit half of the income they receive, which is placed in a savings account for them. When they leave the program they receive their full savings back, minus any outstanding expenses, to either help them with a down payment on their own home, cover a security deposit for a rental unit, or furnish their new home. The other half of their income is used to meet their usual expenses. Other than their $1 rent/month, they do not pay for utilities or other housing costs while at New Beginnings. They also "earn" access to the Boutique which contains an abundance of donated items that a new mother would need.

When her government assistance runs out, she must find part-time employment, preferably along the line of the career she is pursuing. The employment she finds cannot interfere with the trajectory of her work towards becoming independent.

Who watches the children while the mothers are at school or their jobs?

The New Beginnings program helps the mothers learn to become independent. We do not attempt to do everything for them. This applies to childcare. If they did not have New Beginnings in their lives, they would have to find childcare on their own. At New Beginnings the mothers are responsible for finding childcare while they attend classes or work. Often, the school or the employer may offer some sort of childcare. Sometimes, other mothers living at New Beginnings or New Beginnings volunteers provide the childcare. At this point we do not permit staff to provide childcare. That may change in the future depending on challenges we may experience in finding childcare while the mothers progress through the program.

How do the mothers get around?

We have always been located near a bus stop. The new location also has easy access to a bus stop. Some residents may own a car, which is permitted but discouraged for as long as possible. Car ownership involves insurance, maintenance, and gas expenses. As we teach mothers the "art of independence," we teach them to pick and choose the comforts and challenges of life to

make it on their own. The new facility will include garages for those mothers who will have their own car.

Can a mother have more than one child during her stay?

Possibly. This has been an issue we have faced since the very beginning. By creating two-bedroom apartments in the building, we are open to more options. Initially, however, we will stay with the one-child approach and see how things go.

What is the process to enter New Beginnings?

A potential resident will want to contact New Beginnings directly and inquire about availability and ask for an interview. The phone number for New Beginnings is 414-376-0595. The first interview is by phone.

Upon successful completion of the phone interview, the candidate may be invited for an in-person interview. That interview would be conducted on the premises of New Beginnings. In the case of an applicant who lives far away, but is looking to relocate to the Milwaukee area, a video interview may be a consideration.

After the video interview, the applicant's information is discussed by pertinent staff personnel. and it is sent with a summary report from the staff to the Application Committee. The Application Committee makes the final determination on acceptance.

Can a mother at New Beginnings be a minor?

The answer, at least for now, is no. Our primary concern is over any legal ramifications. An emancipated minor is a possibility, but an underaged minor would require us to considerably revamp our program. It may be something we can look at in the future depending on the need.

Are family members allowed to visit the mothers and children?

Family members and friends are permitted to visit mothers and children in the common areas. Non-residents are not permitted in the apartments without approval.

BUILDING

What will be in the new building?

The new building will have ten 2-bedroom apartments (approximately 800 square feet each). The apartments will accommodate 10-12 mothers and their children. It will contain a large amount of space dedicated to programming along with a Boutique which serves both the mothers at New Beginnings as well as the in-need members of the community on a monthly basis. The building will contain the administrative offices for the New Beginnings staff. We also have dedicated a portion of the building to be rented out to Christian Life Resources, the parent agency of New Beginnings, for office use. This will provide an added cash stream to support the New Beginnings operations.

Where will the new building be located?

We will be within the city limits of Milwaukee. The new building will be built near the Park Place twin towers, located north of Good Hope Road on 107th Street. It is conveniently located near a bus stop and is situated just east of I-41. The lot was purchased in September 2021, and it measures just under 1.6 acres.

Will the City of Milwaukee accept this kind of building?

Yes. We have completed the approval process with city leaders. We have met the zoning requirements.

Is there room to expand the building to add more apartments?

We doubt we will have the room on our current parcel of land to add another building, and the new building will not be designed to add floors. Nevertheless, we continue to explore options for expanding in the area, elsewhere in the city, and even at other locations around the United States. For now, our primary focus is the building of this new home built, but we always remain interested in looking how we may help more mothers and babies.

Why does it cost $6.7 million?

We are optimistic the actual cost will be less. The estimation was done when building materials were at their highest prices ever. We know what we need to make it work. We are working on shaving off costs where we can.

Doesn't that seem like a lot of money for only 10-12 mothers?

We are constructing a full building, parking lot, and garages. While the office and support space are designed to meet the administrative and program needs, they are genuine needs, and it is how we make the program work. The apartments should serve us well for at least 50 years. We will not have to rent apartment space, and we can best control what happens around the building and to the building when we own it. If our average resident's stay (three years on site) holds up, in 50 years we will have served around 400 mothers and babies, if not more. Imagine the impact of creating a new culture of self-sustainability that touches the lives of others in the years to come!

When do we plan to break ground for the new building?

We want to break ground in September 2027. Our desire is to collect $5 million of the total building cost before we break ground.

How will the new building impact the New Beginnings operating budget?

We have structured New Beginnings operations to continue meeting expenses through the ongoing support of regular donors. We do not rely on large grants to make it work. For that reason, we are careful to control the growth of the ministry, so as not to overextend our ability to sustain it. By sharing office space with the parent agency, Christian Life Resources, New Beginnings will enjoy cost savings through shared resources and staffing. We are projecting to be able to continue meeting budgetary demands when we have our full complement of residents.

What is the Boutique?

In our current home the Boutique operates out of the unfinished basement of the building. When people donate practical items (i.e., diapers, toiletries, baby/toddler clothes, etc.) we use the Boutique to organize, display, and disseminate it. Mothers living at New Beginnings earn "Boutique Bucks" when they meet certain program requirements. Those "Boutique Bucks" grant the mothers access to items within the Boutique. Because the outpouring of practical assistance donations has always been high, we have been able to also use the Boutique to reach poorer families in the neighborhood, and to help them on the path toward a "new beginning" in life.

What happens in the "Education Lab" on the middle floor?

The education lab is just what it implies. It will be the place where residents can access resources to help in the pursuit of a self-sustaining career. Sometimes a mentor will join a mother personally or remotely to tutor her on class work. Sometimes all the mothers can come to this room for group sessions.

Why is there a "Community Room" on the top floor?

One of the most important things we do at New Beginnings is foster a sense of community among the residents. We plan to use the Community Room to bring mothers and children together for joint meals, devotions, and group/project sessions. You might have noticed that there is a movable divider between the Community Room and the Childcare Room. This is intentional. Sometimes, during holidays or special occasions, family members of the residents, along with members of the board, staff, their families, and even donor families join us at New Beginnings for a special meal. We have designed adequate room into the plan for such events.

Do the mothers really need an exercise room?

Simply stated, yes! With all the moving pieces going on in the life of a generationally-poor mother trying to make a new beginning, health concerns often are neglected. We want the mothers to remain physically active while living at New Beginnings. When weather permits, we will want them outside taking walks and playing with their children. This is Wisconsin, however. There are plenty of days when exercise needs to take place indoors.