



214 W 10th  
Lawrence, KS 66044

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[www.lawrenceshelter.org](http://www.lawrenceshelter.org)

## Lawrence Community Shelter History

The Lawrence Open Shelter and the Community Drop-In Center merged in 2005 to form the Lawrence Community Shelter to address the needs of the community experiencing homelessness and who are at risk of homelessness. As each non-profit organization continued to grow and expand services, the staff and boards of directors realized that to help facilitate a more effective continuum of care to many of the same people, the merge was the best option. It also allowed both organizations to pool resources, staff, and funding as efficiently and effectively as possible.

### Community Drop-In Center History

The Drop-In Center was established in 1995 as a grassroots organization. Local churches provided day shelter against inclement weather for people experiencing homelessness in the community. The Center took a dramatic step in 2000 when it secured a permanent location at 214 W 10th Street and began offering additional relief-oriented services such as showers, laundry facilities, breakfast, and lockers for personal belongings. As the Center continued to grow and secure additional funding, more and more services were offered. Over the past few years, the focus of the Center continued to evolve toward rehabilitation services as well as general relief services. Guests could receive assistance securing housing, employment, counseling, and educational opportunities. Access to agencies and organizations offering complementary services such as job training, addiction counseling, mental health counseling, and health care were streamlined for guests through a counseling room where area agencies can offer outreach. This service allowed guests to overcome transportation issues and fragmented services that require vulnerable people to maneuver through a labyrinth of services.

In addition to providing services to people experiencing homelessness, the Center also focused on homeless prevention. The Center provided employment and housing services, referrals, transportation assistance, group therapy, fresh fruits and vegetables, a place to socialize, laundry facilities and job training to those at risk of homelessness. Many of the services we provided could be utilized by both those experiencing homelessness, and those at risk of homelessness, but the same resources can mean very different things to people in different situations.

Prior to the merge, Center staff included Executive Director, Tami Clark, and a part-time case manager, Kristin Harms. Several former and current guests of the Center worked on a volunteer basis. Additionally, guests could perform work for Drop-In Dollars, which were spent at the Drop-In Shop for items such as personal care items, clothing, backpacks, batteries, and sleeping bags. A 15-member

Mission Statement: The mission of the Lawrence Community Shelter is to provide safe shelter and comprehensive support services and programs that provide a path to a positive future for people experiencing homelessness and people who are at risk of homelessness.

The Lawrence Community Shelter is a United Way partner agency.



United Way of Douglas County



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Board of Directors offers guidance and assistance to the staff. In 2003, the Center offered assistance to 1,012 individuals, 80% of whom were homeless. The center was open from 8:00 am to noon, Monday through Friday for about half of the year, then was able to increase the hours through generous funding from the City of Lawrence. The Center was funded entirely through fundraisers, donations and grants.

### **Lawrence Open Shelter History**

In the summer of 2001, the Lawrence Coalition for the Homeless Concerns operated an Emergency Shelter in the gymnasium of St. John's elementary school. While volunteering at this shelter, a group of concerned citizens realized that there are some individuals in Lawrence who are not served by any existing shelters. These volunteers founded Lawrence Open Shelter, Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, to address that need.

LOS's first purchase was 50 sleeping mats. In the winter of 2001-2002, the newly incorporated LOS and the LCHC together operated a holiday shelter, again in St. John's donated gymnasium space and with donated food and supplies, but this time with written policies, paid staff, and staff training. The primary aim of the holiday shelter was simply to provide nighttime shelter and evening meals during the coldest part of the year, but it gave LOS an opportunity to refine policies and procedures and work with the city and surrounding neighborhoods.

By Summer 2002, LOS was ready to staff and operate a shelter on its own. From June through August 2002, Lawrence Open Shelter operated the Summer Open Shelter 2002 in the gymnasium of St. John's School. Staffed by five paid employees (including one licensed professional social worker), the shelter was open for 48 nights and served an average of 22 individuals per night. This pilot project demonstrated to the community that Lawrence had a desperate need for an open shelter, and demonstrated that LOS can address that need safely and responsibly.

From Fall 2002 to Fall 2003, LOS board members worked non-stop to make plans, raise awareness, raise funds, and find a permanent home for the shelter. At last, the shelter found a home at 944 Kentucky. The building required extensive renovation, including installation of handicap-accessible showers and entrances. After renovation and review, the facility received its occupancy permit from the City of Lawrence on 7 December 2003.

The shelter opened on 8 December 2003 and has been open every night since.

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