Community LINC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that aims to end homelessness, impact poverty and remove barriers to self-sufficiency for the families we serve. In the past 25-27 years, Community LINC has served 3,791 nearly 4,000 families with 11,320 12,000 individuals, including 8,205 600 children with shelter or programming. The Board of Directors, staff and volunteers all work to change the lives of homeless families in Kansas City.

Community LINC was conceived in May 1986 when a group of citizens from three local churches began meeting to discuss ways to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness. Modeling the organization of a transitional housing program in Liberty, Missouri, their goal was to create independent and self-sufficient families.

In 1987, the first governing body was established and the name LINC (Living In New Community) was adopted. In 1988, LINC was granted a 501(c)(3) status, and the organization was born. The program's first official home was an apartment building at 32nd and Warwick with four units available for homeless families.

In September 1991, HUD approved relocation to three apartment buildings at 4012-14, 4016-18, and 4028-30 Troost for one dollar. In the 1990's, the word “Community” was officially added to the name, becoming “Community LINC.”

Twenty-five years later, Community LINC now owns 6 buildings with 36 units and has an annual budget over $2.2 million. Community LINC has grown from serving approximately 12 families a year to approximately 150 families a year.
Community LINC is a rapid re-housing organization that serves hundreds of approximately 150 families each year in the Kansas City area. We seek work to end homelessness, impact poverty, and remove barriers to self-sufficiency by rehousing, stabilizing, and empowering our program participants.

To truly impact poverty and increase self-sufficiency, it is important for us to identify policies and legislation that we can effectively support or influence. The following report intends to do just that.

We have identified policies that impact our work of ending homelessness at federal, state, and local levels. Regardless of where they originated, most are subject to influence and advocacy at all major levels of government. All issues discussed in this policy guide have broad consequences across multiple realms of social service organizations and the families they serve. Some policies are local and others are national. For simplicity sake, we have categorized our biggest priorities into three categories that align with our mission: rehousing, stabilizing, and empowering.

We encourage you to read through this document and familiarize yourself with policies impacting our work. At the end you will find ways you can get more involved with our advocacy and policy efforts.
Community LINC supports policies that removes barriers to high quality and consistent education for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

1. **Child Care Development Block Grant**

**Policy Position:** Community LINC supports using the Child Care Development Block Grant to provide better access to early education for children experiencing homelessness such as providing flexibility to secure necessary records for enrollment, offering training to LEAs that address the needs of homeless children, and coordination with other providers serving homeless children.

Background: In 2014 President Obama reauthorized the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) for the first time since 1996. Part of the CCDBG includes the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), which is a block grant to states. “The CCDF provides resources to State, Territory, and Tribal grantees to enable low-income parents to work or pursue education and training so that they may better support their families while at the same time promoting the learning and development of their children.”

The Missouri CCDF plan is being developed by The Early Childhood and Prevention Services of Missouri Children’s Division. The state plan will be submitted to the Administration for Families and Children in spring of 2016.

2. **Homeless Children Program Funding**

**Policy position statement:** Community LINC supports full funding levels ($85 million) for The McKinney-Vento Act’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth program (EHCY) for FY 2017 and full funding for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Program (RHYA).

**Background:** The McKinney-Vento Act’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth program (EHCY) and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program (RHYA) are the only two federal programs dedicated specifically to homeless children and youth.

The recently enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) increased the authorized funding level (maximum funding level) for the EHCY program to $85 million, a 21 percent increase over the previous authorized level. ESSA also made numerous amendments to the EHCY program, including new requirements for appropriate capacity for state and local personnel, better identification of homeless children and youth, enhanced school stability, and special protections for preschool children and unaccompanied homeless youth.

Congress determined the RHYA programs to need $165 million in the 2008 authorization. RHYA should be funded at this level for FY 2017. RHYA programs meet immediate needs, provide long-term residential services, and conduct prevention and outreach efforts to move youth out of homelessness. These programs serve homeless, trafficked, and pregnant and parenting youth through outreach, emergency shelter, family reunification work when safe, connection to education, employment and health care, transitional housing, and independent housing options.¹
3. **Early Childhood Education**  
**Policy Position:** Community LINC supports a tax levy increase that will fund universal pre-K education in Kansas City, Missouri.

Background: The importance of children being well equipped for school is extensively documented. Universal access to pre-k education will better prepare more children in low income families (at risk for homelessness) and in families experiencing homelessness.

A group of education and civic leaders are currently working to pass a tax levy increase in 2016 to fund universal pre-k for 5 years. They are modeling this initiative on the work done by other cities like Denver and Tulsa that also have universal pre-k programs.\(^2\)

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Community LINC supports policy initiatives that will help provide and protect affordable housing options for low-income individuals and families in Kansas City, and that will help create sustainable communities.

1. Missouri Housing Trust Fund
Policy Position: Community LINC supports the retention of Missouri’s Housing Trust Fund, as well as creative, evidence-based approaches to additional sources of revenue, and the creation of city and/or local trust funds.

Background: Created by state Legislature in 1994 to help meet the housing needs of very low-income families and individuals. The Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC) administers this Fund, which includes funding for homeless prevention, rehab or new construction of rental properties, rental assistance and home repair. This support is granted to organizations providing housing assistance to Missouri residents.

The Trust Fund is funded by a $3 recording fee on all real estate documents filed in Missouri. The annual funding level depends on the level of real estate activity. It is generally over $3 million.³

Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia have housing trust funds. Some states do not have revenue committee to funds, or are in the process of doing so. Ten states use the real estate recording fee revenue approach, including Missouri. The average of these is $7, ranging from $2 - $22. Various revenue sources are used for trust funds, most of which are flat fee-based approaches.

Housing trust funds are popular because of their flexibility in serving each community. Eight states have more than one. Some state are enabling legislation for local housing trust funds, and 600 city and county are already operating. Some other revenue sources include GO bonds (CT), dormant and unclaimed bank funds (Guam), smokeless tobacco tax (IN), penalties to pay transfer tax and repayments (WA) and many more, including multiple-source revenues.⁴

2. National Housing Trust Fund
Policy Position: Community LINC supports the National Housing Trust Fund as a permanent program with dedicated funding.

Background: HERA requires Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (FM&FM) to transfer a percentage of their new business to finance this before they were then placed in conservatorship. FM&FM began setting aside funds January 1, 2015.⁵

It was introduced as having dedicated funds that were not at risk of appropriations cuts or would not compete with existing HUD programs. Funding would be block grants to states. It is estimated money will be allocated to states in summer 2016 in the amount of $120-200 million. NHTF statute says each state is to receive $3 million. MHDC has been designated as Missouri’s NHTF administrator.⁶

NHTF law requires at least 90 percent of state’s NHTF money to be used to produce, preserve, rehabilitate, or operate rental housing. All money is to benefit very-low or extremely-low income households.
An appropriations bill for HUD passed by the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development in April, 2015 would have eviscerated the NHTF. It would slash funding to existing programs and allocate NHTF monies to replace those cuts. However, states are currently working on allocation plans for this fiscal year.

3. **Maintain, improve or expand the use of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)**

**Policy Position:** Community LINC supports the retention of federal and state LIHTC, as they are a critical tool in providing affordable housing to the families we serve.

**Background:** There are two commonly used tax credits, which are generally safe in year-to-year legislation, but are still critical to providing affordable housing in KC and nation-wide.

The 9% LIHTC is responsible for the creation or rehabilitation of over one million units of rental housing reserved for households with incomes below 60 percent of the AMI. The 4% LIHTC are often used for rehabilitation of older rental homes and the preservation of subsidized rental developments because the 4% LIHTC generates less capital, and those projects have lower development costs than new constructions. The 9% tax credit is considered to be an extremely successful and efficient method for facilitating the production and rehabilitation of affordable housing.⁷

Missouri also has a state LIHTC and may allocate up to 100 percent of the amount allocated to Missouri by the IRS. MHDC administers both the federal and state tax credits. Although some debate is occasionally raised that questions the effectiveness of these tax credits and criticizes their administration.

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³ Missouri Housing Development Commission, “Missouri Housing Trust Fund Program Description”, www.mhdc.com/housing_trust_fund/MHTF-info.htm
⁴ Center for Community Change, “State Housing Trust Funds”, www.housingtrustfundproject.org/housing-trust-funds/state-housing-trust-funds/
⁵ National Low Income Housing Coalition, “Policy Issues and Campaigns”, www.nlihc.org/issues
⁷ http://www.mhdc.com/rental_production/low_inc_tax_pgrm.htm
1. Community LINC Earned Income Tax Credit Public Policy Position (EITC)

Policy position: Community LINC supports House Bill 1605 to create a non-refundable EITC for the state of Missouri equal to 20 percent of the federal EITC.

Background: The Federal Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income, working households was made permanent in 2015. It is a remarkably effective anti-poverty program because it targets household income. And it provides an incentive for people to work because it is only offered to working households.

Because of the success of the federal EITC, twenty-six states (including Oklahoma, Kansas, Iowa and Illinois) and the District of Columbia have established their own EITC. There are more than 515,000 low income working Missouri families that could be eligible for the new Missouri EITC.

The EITC is a pro-work tax credit that will reduce or eliminate the income tax liability for low- and moderate-income families each year, including military families, and is an important tool to fight poverty. The IRS estimates that in 2009 the federal EITC lifted nearly 7 million people out of poverty. Only people who are working would be eligible. Taking all of the evidence together, the EITC appears to benefit recipients — and especially their children — substantially.

The EITC can stimulate the local economy: According to the National Conference of State Legislatures in 2013 the federal EITC returned $1.2B to the Missouri economy. A state EITC would give low wage workers the ability to spend their EITC savings in the local economy.

The EITC is a proven way to encourage and reward work and raise living standards for families.

Data demonstrate that children from working families that receive these supplemental tax credits do better in school, are more likely to attend college, have better health, and can be expected to work and earn more as adults. Research demonstrates that for every dollar of income provided in tax, credits, the value of a child's future earnings is increased by more than one dollar.

In addition, the research shows that by boosting the employment of single mothers, the EITC reduces the number of female-headed households receiving cash welfare assistance, especially for child care. As the University of California's Hilary Hoynes writes, the EITC "may ultimately be judged one of the most successful labor market innovations in U.S. history."

"Missourians in the bottom three income quintiles would receive average tax reductions ranging from $54-$289 per year depending on family size and income." The reduction represents lost tax revenue from an unknown percentage of the low to moderate income families receiving the federal EITC. Because the EITC in Missouri would be non-refundable, it would not exceed the income tax paid.

The EITC helps families at virtually every stage of life according to research by the Center on Budget Policies and Priorities.
In addition to the credits’ benefits of encouraging work and reducing poverty, higher tax credits are linked to more prenatal care, less maternal stress, and signs of better infant health. Children who benefit from tax credit expansions have been found to do better throughout childhood and have higher odds of finishing high school and thus going on to college. The education and skill gains associated with the EITC likely keep paying off for many years through higher earnings and employment, researchers say. This growing body of research highlights the positive long-term benefits of the working-family tax credits for millions of families. ¹¹

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If you would like more information about these policies and how you can get involved, check out these resources:

National Alliance to End Homelessness  
www.endhomelessness.org/pages/policy

U.S. Interagency on Homelessness  
www.usich.gov/

National Association Education Homeless Children Youth  
www.naehcy.org/news/sign-up  
www.naehcy.org/legislation-and-policy/legislative-updates

Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness  
www.icphusa.org/

For more information on Community LINC’s policy positions or advocacy work, please contact Joshua Chittum at 816.531.6725 or jchittum@communitylinc.org.

Center for Budget Priorities  
www.cbpp.org/research/housing/policy-basics-federal-rental-assistance  
www.cbpp.org/topics/housing

National Coalition for the Homeless  
www.nationalhomeless.org/taking-action/lobbying/

Missouri Budget Project  
www.mobudget.org/#