

SSI Ohio Project Success Story: John and Sarah

When John lost his job at Subway they were forced to seek housing with a relative, an arrangement they believed to be temporary. When family support quickly fell through, any expectations of a temporary struggle were lost to a ten year, cross-country quest for the opportunity to regain stability.

During that time the couple hitchhiked through 49 of the 50 States, picking up work where they could find it and sleeping in ditches, wooded areas, and the backs of semi-trucks. Eventually, they began to stay at homeless shelters. However, many shelters did not allow couples, were unsafe, or had rules that created barriers for John when he had a job. He often had to choose between working or staying at a shelter. Also, John and Sarah were both diagnosed with mental illnesses but would often go without their prescriptions and medical care to avoid expenses and bills they could not afford. Despite their perseverance, they felt shameful of their situation and relied on their sense of humor to get them through the difficult times.

When John and Sarah stopped in Ohio, they were connected with the SSI Ohio Project. They worked with an SSI Specialist and obtained SSI and SSDI benefits, followed by subsidized housing and Medicaid. Ohio is the only state they have stayed in longer than one month because it is the first place they have been able to become stable.

Together John and Sarah endured a decade of hitchhiking, homelessness, and humiliation that spanned the entire country. Because of the existence and effectiveness of the SSI Ohio Project, homelessness for John, Sarah, and so many others has been replaced with housing and hope.