



## LEADERSHIP PROFILE



**Executive Director**  
**Covenant House Georgia**  
Atlanta, GA

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*“A place of refuge, a place of growing, and  
a place where people find and fulfill their calling.”*

*--Covenant House Georgia website*

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### THE OPPORTUNITY

[Covenant House Georgia](#) is at an exciting time in its evolution as the premier area nonprofit serving homeless and trafficked youth ages 17-21. By combining crisis care with longer-term support, the organization has had a transformational influence on over 18,000 young people at risk.



Harnessing the energy and commitment of a dedicated staff, passionate stakeholders and an impressive (and growing) cadre of volunteers and supporters, the organization has increased its impact and visibility in multiple ways in recent years. Notably, Covenant House Georgia (“CHGA”) has tripled the number of youth served over the past eight years, more than doubled its funding

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from private sources and completed a \$4.1-million capital campaign that made possible the acquisition and adaptation of the organization's new campus and the expanded services offered there.

CHGA's momentum has strengthened even further the commitment of staff, volunteers and the board of directors to increase the level of service and philanthropy generated through the agency's deliberate, high-touch approach to its mission. This year alone, CHGA will provide a continuum of services for nearly 1500 homeless or trafficked young people.

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*"We love people who've never been loved  
before."*

*--A CHGA manager*

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At the center of the work are Covenant House's residential facilities: a 46-bed crisis shelter on campus and two facilities totaling 32 beds (26 on campus and six apartment-based) supporting youth in transition to independent living. Covenant House is more than a place to stay, however, as it offers an extensive continuum of outreach, counseling, educational and mentoring services to at-risk youth.

Allison Ashe, CHGA's highly regarded Executive Director since 2009, recently alerted the board to her plans to step down at the end of 2017, one of the few times that "to spend more time with my family" is the very real reason for a transition. The search for a compelling successor coincides with a strategic plan that encompasses several specific goals in programming and outreach—among them a \$6-million capital campaign, now in the planning phase, designed to make possible the addition of two new structures (a 32-bed building to house independent-living youth and an 8-bed building for pregnant or parenting teens) as well as enhancements to the organization's operating infrastructure.

## **THE ORGANIZATION**

Covenant House Georgia opened in 2000 to provide shelter and services to Atlanta's homeless, trafficked and runaway youth. Since then, more than 18,000 youth have received support from CHGA, nearly 1400 of them so far in 2017 alone.

In Georgia, Covenant House's range of residential and outreach services are provided by a staff of 70, of whom 30 are full-time employees and the balance

split about equally between per-diem and part-time staff, including a 10-person contingent from AmeriCorps. Collectively, the staff operate under the guiding principle of unconditional love, and the doors are always open.

The work towards lasting change begins on the street with CHGA's outreach vans and continues through crisis care and transitional living programs on site. All services are provided free of charge. No youth who comes to Covenant house Georgia is ever turned away without loving help. Over time, a life characterized by chaos experiences structure and stability, and powerlessness gives way to choice.

Of the nearly 1400 youth served to date this year by Covenant House Georgia,

- 30% had been sexually exploited
- 32% were in the foster care system
- 54% have a history with the criminal justice system.

The 700 or so youth who have received shelter at Covenant House Georgia this year were about equally split between men and women. All receive individualized case management, and with very few exceptions all receive full medical exams. Two-thirds of those in the Rights of Passage program (preparing for independent living) leave Covenant House to move into permanent housing.



The organization is governed by a volunteer board of leaders from an array of corporate, professional and civic engagements, and all are donors and advocates.

Covenant House Georgia is a full partner of [Covenant House International](#) (CHI), the largest privately funded agency in the Americas providing shelter and services to homeless, trafficked and at-risk youth. Founded in New York City in 1972 and still headquartered there, CHI offers services through local affiliates in 30 cities in six countries: the US (24 cities coast to coast), Canada (Toronto and Vancouver), and Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua.

## THE MANDATE

Operationally and financially, CHGA has never been in better shape. Programming is solid, finances are in good order, the staff is motivated, board and volunteers are engaged, and all are united in a commitment to providing a transformative opportunity for some of Atlanta's most vulnerable residents. Covenant House is more impactful than ever, and the rewards of its excellent work are in evidence every day.

While Covenant House has made great progress in caring for homeless and trafficked youth in the metro Atlanta area, it has been less attentive to its own needs. For example, the number of youth served grew at an average annual rate of 30% over a recent five-year period, but staff headcount grew at less than half that rate, and the operating budget grew by an even smaller percentage. Cost-efficiencies that were once a source of pride now risk constraining the staff's ability to deliver, even as the agency's reputation for care and consistency continues to surge.

Accordingly, the next Executive Director will inherit several overlapping mandates:



1. *Leadership.* As the chief champion and spokesperson for the organization, the Executive Director must continue to build CHGA's services and reputation, fostering (and modeling) the spiritual values central to the mission while providing inspirational leadership internally and externally.
2. *Fundraising.* In addition to ensuring the annual budget of about \$4 million, the Executive Director must be a catalyzing force in the agency's forthcoming \$6-million capital campaign. Covenant House's leader must be adept at relationship-building at both the personal and organizational level—and fully comfortable raising funds and awareness.
3. *Management.* As the organization continues to mature, so must its overall approach to management. Covenant House's operations are complex, and some competencies (facilities management, for example) are not necessarily common among those attracted to working with homeless and runaway youth. Other issues, such as risk management, require more attention than may be usual in nonprofits of similar size. The 24/7/365 nature of the work magnifies the demands on both people and systems.

The basics are certainly in place now—for example, the organization has invested heavily in data and data management—but the next Executive Director must tend to strategy and structure in ways that were simply not necessary even a few years ago.

4. *Advocacy, broadly construed.* Homeless and trafficked youth deserve an advocate, both personally and institutionally. The Executive Director must be comfortable and compelling as an advocate for such youth and for the mission that supports them. The ED should draw satisfaction from carrying the message to all relevant audiences, especially those with the resources—whether financial, organizational, political or reputational—to help ensure a brighter, fuller future for at-risk youth.

## THE RELATIONSHIPS

<b>The Executive Director reports jointly to</b>	President of Covenant House International and Board of Directors, Covenant House Georgia
<b>And manages a staff of ~70 through four direct reports</b>	Chief Operations Officer Director of Development Director of Finance Director of Grants & Quality Assurance
<b>While stewarding other important relationships, such as</b>	Covenant House International senior managers and staff Peers in other CHI affiliates Other youth-serving organizations in metro Atlanta Program partners Stakeholders & donors, current and potential A broad swath of civic & governmental leaders

## THE LOCATION

Since 2012, Covenant House Georgia has been headquartered in its own campus in the west side of Atlanta, a traditionally underserved part of town that is now a focal point for many civic and philanthropic initiatives.

## THE CANDIDATE

The Executive Director of Covenant House Georgia will be a highly motivated and accountable leader with genuine passion for helping at-risk youth realize their full potential. While the search committee is open to a variety of career paths and experiences, the strongest contenders are likely to have honed their management skills in a social service context, be connected in a material way to metro Atlanta's safety net organizations, and enjoy positive relationships with area philanthropists and funders.

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*"I had to learn that a kid crying in the courtyard is more important than the meeting I might be headed to."*

*--A CHGA staffer reflecting on one of her early lessons upon joining the organization*

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### **Competence: We expect to hire...**

- A board-savvy leader with the proven aptitude for strategic thinking and strategic relationships
- A manager who complements a true affinity for fundraising with operational and administrative acumen
- An experienced supervisor able to attract, develop, retain and deploy the staff and financial resources necessary to meet ambitious strategic goals
- A persuasive, articulate champion for the mission, adept with a full variety of audiences and media; an effective advocate who can lead the expansion of CHGA's relationships with local and national corporate, nonprofit and government entities and officials

### **Culture: We expect to attract...**

- An inspiring, visionary Executive Director fully at home in an environment of servant leaders
- A colleague who reflects the welcoming spiritual values and traditions that underpin CHGA's work
- Someone with the heart and proven potential to advocate for homeless and trafficked youth and yet equally adept with data

- A leader with a responsive, motivating management style—“an attitude of gratitude”
- A collaborative manager supportive of strong working relationships with Covenant House International and affiliates and with local entities with allied missions or constituencies
- A magnetic leader who is inspired by CHGA’s impact to date, energized by the collective aspirations for growing that impact, and persuasive in demonstrating how his or her own success record could be leveraged to collective benefit.

**For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email**

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**or call Patti Kish or Sam Pettway at**

**404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392)**

