

## **Overview of NYS Homeless Assistance Programs**

After a long period of stability, homelessness has been increasing during the past two years in New York and across the nation. There are many reasons for homelessness, including substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, inadequate job skills or education, and a lack of affordable housing. The upward trend in the number of homeless coincides with the slow down in the nation's economy that began in 2001. Currently, over 43,000 persons, including 10,000 families and over 10,000 single adults receive emergency shelter and other assistance each night in the State of New York.

State, federal and local authorities share expenses for shelters. TANF funding for families is 50% federal, 25% state and 25% local. The State's Safety Net Assistance Program (SN) for singles and those families not eligible for TANF is 50% state and 50% local funds. State expenditures for singles in New York City are capped at \$96M by the State legislature. In State FY'02-03, New York State expended \$236M to provide shelter to individuals and families. Additional expenditures were made for housing and other programs, some which are described below.

OTDA oversees local district provision of temporary housing assistance to homeless families and single adults. Under State law and OTDA regulations, temporary housing assistance can only be provided to those who have no other housing resources and who meet other eligibility requirements. Local social services districts are required to deny or discontinue shelter to families or individuals that have other housing options including living with relatives or friends.

In New York, homeless shelter programs are operated by 58 local social services districts comprised of New York City and the 57 counties outside of New York City. Local social services districts receive partial reimbursement for shelter expenses incurred for eligible individuals. The local share of expense is approximately 25% for homeless families with children and 50% for singles adults. Funding for the state share of expenses is derived from the TANF (families) or Safety Net Assistance (singles or families ineligible for TANF) programs.

### **State Licensure and Inspection Program**

OTDA licenses certain homeless shelters for families and single adults and annually inspects all licensed facilities. Local districts may place homeless families and individuals in these licensed facilities, or in hotels, rooming houses, temporary apartments or in shelters for which licensure is not required.

OTDA licenses and inspects 116 shelters that provide housing and services to over 8,500 single adults and 3,600 families each night. One hundred of these shelters are in New York City. In addition, OTDA monitors local district operations serving over 6,000 homeless families in hotels and other family shelter arrangements for which licensure is not required.

State-licensed family shelters are required to provide case management, housing search and other services designed to hasten the return of homeless families to permanent housing. When housing becomes available, families are re-housed and transitioned to service programs within the community.

Local districts are not required to provide services in shelters for single adults, but many local districts choose to use special program shelters to address the needs that prevent individuals from living independently. Typically, local systems encompass a combination of general shelters that will accept all clients and special program shelters that will only accept program-ready clients. Service-resistant clients usually reside in general shelters but are periodically reassessed by the local district and/or "recruited" by outreach workers attached to

special program shelters. Special program shelters primarily serve substance abusing individuals or individuals with mental health needs.

## **New York State Programs to Assist the Homeless**

For many years, New York State has operated numerous programs that ensure the safety of adults and families and help them to obtain permanent housing.

### **Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP)**

HHAP was established by Chapter 61 of the Laws of 1983. In June of 1990, a public benefit corporation (HHAC) was established to oversee the program. HHAC is a subsidiary of the New York State Housing Finance Agency (HFA), and is administered by staff of the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). HFA issues bonds to finance the costs of developing projects under HHAP. The Board of Members is made up of the Commissioner of OTDA, the Commissioner of HFA, and a third member designated by the Commissioner of OTDA. Currently, the third Board Member is the Commissioner of the Division of Housing and Community Renewal. The Board has general responsibility for the program, including authorizing the President to execute contracts, notes, mortgages, inter-creditor agreements and other instruments.

HHAP provides capital grants and loans to not-for-profit corporations, charitable and religious organizations and municipalities to acquire, construct or rehabilitate housing for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and are unable to secure adequate housing without special assistance.

Created in 1983 to address homeless issues in various parts of the state, the program funds a broad range of housing options for the very diverse homeless populations in the state's urban, suburban and rural areas. Program funds are awarded through an annual competitive Request for Proposals process. Applicants and awardees generally have experience in either housing development or management or in the provision of social services.

HHAP was the first program in the country to target substantial financial resources for the development of housing for the homeless, and remains one of the few programs nationally to focus not only on the provision of housing itself, but also on the delivery of appropriate support services to tenants.

HHAP is a very flexible program, designed to meet local needs. HHAP funds emergency, transitional and permanent supported housing projects for a variety of homeless and homeless special need populations. Special needs populations that have benefited from HHAP funding include, but are not limited to: families; singles; the elderly; the physically disabled; persons with HIV/AIDS; youth, including pregnant and parenting teenagers and adolescents aging out of foster care; victims of domestic violence; the mentally disabled; ex-offenders; and those with a history of substance abuse and/or chemical dependency.

Eligible costs under HHAP include, but are not limited to: architectural/engineering fees, environmental assessments, insurances, taxes, title reports, appraisals, acquisition, construction/rehabilitation, equipment, furniture, professional fees, and reserves.

While HHAP provides the funding necessary to establish a project, it does not provide ongoing operational funding. HHAP grantees must demonstrate the financial feasibility of

a project for the contractually mandated period of time, generally between 25 and 30 years.

Since the inception of the program in 1983, the State has appropriated \$542 million to support the creation of over 10,000 units of housing. In recent years, the annual HHAP appropriation has been \$30 million, with \$5 million set aside for the development of housing for persons with HIV/AIDS.

### **Homelessness Intervention Program (HIP)**

HIP funding opportunities are through Chapter 204 of the Laws of 1998, which are set forth in Title 4 of Article 2-A (Sections 48-52) of the Social Services Law. The legislative purpose provides that state financial assistance should be made available for the purpose of providing supportive services designed to stabilize households and to prevent homelessness; and for those who are currently homeless, to facilitate the transition from homelessness to permanent housing.

Funds are awarded through a Request for Proposal. Eligible services included services to resolve conflicts between landlord and tenant, legal services to prevent eviction, activities which educate households on tenant's rights and responsibilities, advocacy to ensure that households are receiving assistance in securing and maintaining permanent housing. In addition, HIP allows for the provision of referral and support services related to substance abuse, domestic violence, housekeeping, budgeting, education, daycare, employment, parenting and physical and mental health care. The HIP provides services to approximately 3,338 households.

### **Supplemental Homelessness Intervention Program (SHIP)**

Homeless and at-risk families including non-custodial parents whose incomes do not exceed 200% of the Federal poverty level and who are eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

Funding opportunities are available through the Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program under the New York State Aid to Localities Budget.

SHIP provides additional services and expenses related to the Homelessness Intervention (HIP) for families. Comprehensive services are designed to stabilize families and non-custodial parents by helping them to avoid homelessness and for those who are currently homeless by facilitating the transition from homelessness to permanent housing. Approximately 3,890 households will be served this year.

### **Single Room Occupancy Support Services Program (SRO)**

The Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Support Services Program was enacted into law in 1987 pursuant to Chapter 765 of the Laws of 1987, adding a new Title 2 to Article 2A of the Social Services Law. The purpose of the SRO Support Services Program is to assist in preserving existing Single Room Occupancy Dwellings (SRO) and to prevent homelessness and institutionalization of low-income, mentally ill, chemically addicted, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, veterans, elderly, individuals living with HIV/AIDS and/or other single adult populations with special needs. Eligible services under the SRO program include case management, counseling, crisis intervention, information, referral, benefit, and employment assistance, and overall resident service coordination

The SFY 2003-2004 appropriation was \$12.7 million. Forty-four (44) not-for-profits and one (1) municipality were awarded support service contracts commencing on January 1, 2004. The SRO program will serve an estimated 9,978 persons this year.

### **Supported Housing for Families and Young Adults (SHFYA)**

This program was established in the State Fiscal Year 2002-2003 State Operations and Aid to Localities Budget. The purpose of the SHFYA Program is to provide comprehensive support services designed to stabilize, enhance employability, and/or enhance self-sufficiency for those residents (families and young adults between the ages of 18 and 25) of supported housing who are formerly homeless, at-risk of homelessness, and/or at risk of exceeding or have exceeded the TANF time limits.

\$2,000,000 was awarded to 19 not for profit contractors who will serve 604 families and 180 young adults. The contract runs from March 1, 2003 to February 29, 2004.

### **Operational Support for AIDS Housing (OSAH)**

Beginning in SFY 1993-94, the state budget has appropriated funds to provide operational support to projects that have received capital financing through the Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP) to house homeless persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families. The OSAH initiative is intended to provide support to this limited pool of HHAP funded AIDS housing providers to more appropriately meet the support services needs of this particular population.

The SFY 2003-04 allocation was \$1 million. Ten (10) not-for-profits were renewed for contracts commencing on September 1, 2003. An estimated 251 households will be served.

### **Emergency Shelter Grants Program (ESGP)**

This program receives federal funding through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Contracts are awarded through a Statewide competitive bid process bi-annually. Contracts are renewed on the alternate year pending continuance of federal funding and contractor program compliance. Currently there are 39 contractors who support the continuum of care through outreach and assessment, emergency services, transitional and permanent housing. ESGP services provided by contractors are varied and range from soup kitchens to maintenance and operation of shelter facilities. Due to limited funding, contracts for major construction and/or rehabilitation are not awarded.

ESGP receives approximately \$3 million dollars annually through a federal HUD formula grant. Approximately 43,750 individuals receive assistance through ESGP.

### **Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)**

The HOPWA program receives federal funding through HUD. Contracts are awarded through a competitive bid process on a Tri-annual basis. Contracts are renewed on year two and three pending continuance of federal funding and contractor program compliance. Awards are distributed to contractors serving only those areas of New York State that do not receive direct HOPWA dollars. The major portion of funding for this program is awarded to contractors for long-term rental assistance to clients living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

There are currently fifteen contractors providing project and tenant-based long-term rental assistance, short-term rental assistance, support services, technical assistance and resource identification. Annually 975 units receive assistance through this program.

## **New York State TANF Services Block Grant Initiative**

Using TANF dollars, New York State has set up an innovative block grant program that allows local social services districts to operate novel programs designed to reduce family dependence on cash assistance. New York City and 10 districts outside of the City have chosen to allocate TANF Services Block Grant funds to programs that serve the homeless. One such project in New York City funded 38 housing specialists who help homeless families find affordable housing. Other TANF Housing Projects include:

#### Hamilton County – Quality Housing Initiative - \$10,000

DSS to provide initial screening and assessment of family's situation, including but not limited to relocation, education/counseling, and interventions designed to improve longevity of household's new housing situation. DSS will inspect proposed property to ensure health and safety of families.

#### Herkimer County – Quality Housing Initiative/Emergency Housing Coordinator- \$35,000

Contracted agency will provide housing unit inspections and housing counseling assistance to county's homeless or at-risk of homelessness population. The contracted agency will respond to DSS referral within 48 hours and provide initial screening and assessment of the family's situation.

Livingston County – Housing Broker - \$54,116

Full-time staff position within the DSS devoted to housing related issues including referral of target population to appropriate housing, develop housing availability lists by Township, establish working relationships with landlords and code enforcement officials. Develop educational program using resources such as legal assistance and code enforcement, educate on affordability of housing based on relevant costs. Utilize contract with Catholic Charities to provide on-demand emergency housing.

Madison County - TANF Services-CAP - \$120,779

Community Action Program (CAP) of Madison County will use their available transition apartment program to move clients through these available units while looking to secure additional “transitional apartments”. CAP will meet the demand of security deposits, moving expenses and minor rehabilitation of client owned property. CAP will also provide case-management approach to ensure success.

Onondaga County – Dorothy Day Self-Sufficiency Assistance - \$20,000

The Catholic Charities Comprehensive Homeless Service Program provides case-Management services for homeless and at-risk women.

Housing Stabilization Project - \$60,000

The City of Syracuse Office of Code Enforcement will provide two additional code enforcers solely for DSS housing inspections to ensure habitability of apartments and to provide post inspections for damages caused by tenants.

Orange County – Housing Support Project - \$89,588

Youth Advocate Program will provide Case-management services to families so as to acquire stable housing. The case managers will work in concert with other service providers and landlords within the communities.

Otsego County – Housing Search Assistance - \$3,900

Family Service Association provides a location for homeless people to do a housing search. Services include a “Message Board” for incoming messages from potential landlords or employers, tokens to inspect potential apartments, and a children’s corner to keep children of searchers occupied while parents search papers for apartments. Other information and brochures are available as well as a clothing bank and other minor necessities individual may need such as linens, soap and personal hygiene items.

Emergency Housing Assistance – \$33,426

Families are assisted with security deposits, back rent to avoid eviction, emergency rent or other non-recurring costs related to their crisis.

Suffolk County – Homeless Family Self-Sufficiency – Motel Services Project - \$166,000

The Motel Service Project will provide needs assessment, crisis intervention services, information and referral, and access to goods and services such as food, mental health services and medical care. Families will have access to housing listings, local newspapers, Pennysavers, on-line housing listings, telephone, copy machine and fax machine. Case management services are offered to prevent re-occurrence after permanent housing is located.

Permanent Housing Finders Fees - \$120,629

Not-for-profit agencies would receive payment if they demonstrate they have clearly and substantially helped a family overcome a clear and immediate housing crisis. A portion of the fee will go to cover the NFP’s cost in operating the program, the remainder could be put into a fund to support TANF clients realizing their goal and avert emergencies that could put them in emergency housing.

Ulster County – Darmstadt Shelter for the Homeless - \$129,920

The Shelter will provide case management to discover the underlying conditions and issues causing the family or individual's homelessness. A service plan is developed. Staff assist clients in obtaining permanent housing by providing transportation to appointment to see apartments, providing information on utilities, public transportation, and building inspections.

Kings Inn Homeless Project - \$95,080

This is an extension of the Darmstadt Shelter project. Family members address mental health, substance abuse, medical, legal, housing, educational and vocational assistance through the help of staff at the King's Inn.

Warren County – Emergency Youth Shelter - \$55,000

Services include assessment of needs, advocacy, life skill/training, family support/enrichment, recreation, case management and aftercare services by the Warren/Washington Counties Homeless Youth Coalition. Tutoring and family mediation and/or counseling will be arranged, if appropriate, with the ultimate goal of family reunification.

## **Best Practices in New York State**

New York State maintains an intranet site for local social services districts that provides information on federal and state housing and service programs and best practices around the State. The latest best practice programs include:

Housing Alerts

In Suffolk County, permanent housing initiatives begin with keeping clients focused on housing preservation through responsible behavior and swift actions to avert homelessness. "Housing Alerts" are regularly put in Client Benefits quarterly mailings to all clients warning them of the housing crises in the county and what they should do to avoid homelessness. These housing alerts remind clients of the rules of responsible tenant behavior and what to do if they are threatened with the loss of housing.

Landlord Hotline

The Housing Unit of the Monroe County Department of Social Services operates a Landlord Complaint Hotline. Complaints are channeled directly through the Housing Unit to avoid delays. Complaints are resolved quickly, and in many instances, have prevented evictions. Housing Unit Staff work directly with landlords to resolve agency/landlord disputes, and promptly process claims for damages and/or lost rent in order to encourage landlords to rent to public assistance recipients.

Pro-Active Property Management Project

Staff from the Monroe County Department of Social Services, the City of Rochester, and the Rochester Housing Council operate a project to promote landlord and tenant responsibility and to promote self-sufficiency through the establishment of quality housing in stable and safe communities. There are two major components to this project: a quality housing inspection tied to the issuance of direct rents to property owners and a tenant training for recipients who have poor housing histories.

Tenants targeted for training have a history of moving, multiple claims for damages and involvement in behaviors that are problematic for the neighborhoods. All landlords with properties located in Monroe County must agree to a Quality Housing inspection using HUD quality standards as a requirement to receive direct rent. Properties that fail the inspection do not qualify for direct rent payments. Clients/tenants, who reside in properties that fail the quality standards criteria, but do not contain health and safety code violations, can continue to receive a shelter allowance.

#### Greater Plattsburgh Interfaith Hospitality Network

The Greater Plattsburgh Interfaith Hospitality Network provides temporary housing for homeless families in space provided by participating faith-based organizations. The program began operation in February 2003. TANF funding was used for van expenses and the van driver's salary, the program director's salary and rent and utilities. The National Interfaith Hospitality Network provided technical assistance for this initiative. The National Interfaith Hospitality Network provides assistance to any local hospitality network that includes at least eight faith-based organizations.

At present, eight churches have agreed to participate in the program. Participating churches provide overnight sleeping accommodations on a rotating basis usually for one-week periods. During the day, families are transported to a day center where they can receive social services and case management.

Clinton County officials report that the motivation for the program was to avoid use of expensive scatter-site apartments and hotels considered substandard. County officials hope that the program will generate public support for homeless housing projects and that the faith-based community will use its resources to generate employment, permanent housing, needed daycare and other opportunities for the families they help serve.

#### Living Independently with New Knowledge and Services (L.I.N.K.S.)

Located in Orange County, L.I.N.K.S. is sponsored by Emergency Housing Group, Inc. to provide a variety of services free of charge to Orange County residents 16 years of age and older that are homeless or formerly homeless.

L.I.N.K.S. professional staff provides intensive case management, financial case management, and 24 hour crisis intervention. Program participants also have access to an accredited food pantry, a laundry facility, and a five-day a week drop-in center. L.I.N.K.S. also provides representative payee services to homeless persons or other individuals to ensure that SSI benefits are available for housing needs.

## **New York / New York Housing for Homeless with Mental Health Needs**

In 1990, the State of New York and the City of New York entered a joint initiative, called the New York/New York Agreement. The 1990 agreement assisted approximately 5,700 individuals living in shelters and in the streets to secure appropriate housing and supportive services. To meet the residential needs of this population, OMH developed a total of 2,189 supportive housing units. In 1999, a second New York / New York Agreement was signed. Under this second agreement State and City governments will provide housing and services to more than 1,500 homeless mentally ill individuals.

New York / New York is intended to house homeless mentally ill shelter system users and individuals residing in streets, subways, parks, and other public spaces who do not use the shelter system. In order to be eligible, must meet the program's definition of homeless and must be persistently and seriously mentally ill. The State Office of Mental Health full development costs for supportive units and provides ongoing operational and service funding. In addition to these units, OMH also funds on and off site service costs for 1,426 beds that have been developed by NYC.