

# *Leveraging TANF Funds and Strategic Partnerships to Improve Housing Stability and Economic Outcomes for Low-Income Families*

March 20, 2013

### WELCOME

James Butler: Hello, everyone, and welcome again to our Webinar on *"Leveraging TANF Funds and Strategic Partnerships to Improve Housing Stability and Economic Outcomes for Low-Income Families."* Today's Webinar is sponsored by the Office of Family Assistance and has been designed to provide information on how TANF agencies, housing programs, and other community-based organizations can partner to better serve individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

James Butler: The Department of Housing and Urban Development, known as HUD, estimates that there are more than 200,000 persons and families experiencing homelessness in the United States. Just as many other families in poverty, more than 40 percent of homeless families are receiving TANF cash assistance. Many of the individuals who are at a greater risk for experiencing homelessness are likely to face multiple barriers to employment and economic self-sufficiency, similar to others in poverty. Although many of these families and individuals have a documented work history, the lack of housing stability coupled with potential other barriers makes it difficult for individuals to attach or remain attached to the workforce. Studies have shown that linking individuals and families with stable earned income, work support, and other key benefits can prevent and end homelessness and promote personal, financial and family stability. We recognize the importance of addressing homelessness and encourage TANF jurisdictions to continue to consider and implement interventions that connect families to permanent housing with coordinated supportive services to help families improve their lives and avoid future homelessness.

James Butler: The discussion today will focus on strategic partnerships and local models that have emerged from a variety of jurisdictions for individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness. These programs have found strategic ways to utilize TANF funds, other public benefits, and a variety of partners to improve the housing stability and economic outcomes of low income families. Today, you will hear about the role that TANF benefits can play in providing important work and economic support for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, some practical opportunities for leveraging TANF and MOE funds for providing housing stability services to low income individuals, a couple of program models for integrating diverse housing stability, the Workforce Development Transitional Jobs programs and skill building initiatives, and strategies for integrating and selecting programs for partnerships.

James Butler: Presenting to you today are presenters from ACF, the Administration for Children and Families, and HUD, as well as from three different programs. I would also like to let you know that the PowerPoint presentations from today's Webinar will be made available to everyone who registered through the Welfare Peer TA Network within the next few weeks.

James Butler: If you have questions, you may submit them following the last presentation or throughout the Webinar by using the Q&A panel on your WebEx screen. If your question is for a specific speaker or program, please be sure to specify that in your question. Following the presentation, we will ask you to respond to a short evaluation poll which will pop up automatically at the end of today's presentations. And I will give you another reminder about that towards the end of the presentations.

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### **INTRODUCTION: OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

James Butler: Our first speakers for today are Rachel Terry and Rebecca Shwalb, Program Specialists from our TANF Policy Division here in the Office of Family Assistance, who are going to talk to you a little bit about allowable uses of TANF and MOE funds. Rebecca and Rachel, you have the floor.

### **NEW INFORMATION MEMORANDUM**

Rachel Terry: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us today. As you know, on February 20, 2013, the Administration for Children and Families released an Information Memorandum, or IM, describing how TANF funds can serve homeless families and families at risk of experiencing homelessness, providing examples of projects and collaborations already at work on the ground. The TANF funding stream has a good deal of flexibility in how it is used. The goal of this IM was to highlight activities and services allowable under TANF that states can use in addressing this critical issue. My colleague, Rebecca Shwalb, and I will go over some of the IM's key points. Before I begin, we would like to extend many thanks, however, to the staff of the entities mentioned in this IM and others we collaborated with who worked hard to help us in our research and to provide reviews as we moved forward. We will now go to our next slide.

### **ALLOWABLE USES OF TANF AND MOE FUNDS**

Rachel Terry: We are going to discuss allowable uses of TANF and MOE funds. TANF agencies can use Federal TANF funds and State Maintenance of Effort, or MOE, funds to provide a wide range of benefits and services for needy families with a child, or to a pregnant woman. Services include both "assistance" and "non-assistance."

Rachel Terry: Assistance consists of payments to cover basic ongoing needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Non-Assistance examples include supportive services, work subsidies, programs that aim to prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies or encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. We can go to the next slide.

### **ADDRESSING HOUSING NEEDS**

Rachel Terry: Federal TANF and MOE funds can play a key role in addressing the housing-related needs of families who are homeless or precariously housed, consistent with TANF rules on providing benefits and services to needy or eligible families.

Rachel Terry: Along with providing ongoing basic assistance, a TANF program can provide an array of non-recurrent, short-term benefits and services, designed to extend no longer than four months, and they must address a specific crisis situation rather than meet ongoing needs.

Rachel Terry: Examples of non-recurrent, short-term benefits could include services such as moving assistance, security and utility payments, housing search and placement services, hotel and motel vouchers, and financial and credit counseling. Next slide please, and I will pass this time over to Rebecca Shwalb.

### **HOUSING PROGRAMS: EXAMPLES**

Rebecca Shwalb: Thanks, Rachel. Now that Rachel has given you some of the basics of TANF and given you some examples, I will get into some more of the housing program examples. I think Rachel just said some of these, so sorry if it is a little redundant. TANF has very flexible programs, there are a lot of different ways that services can be provided. As you see here, short-term rental or mortgage assistance, and this can be either for a family that is currently experiencing homelessness or is in some way in danger of experiencing it, so it could be a foreclosure prevention or

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eviction prevention. Security deposits and utility payments, hotel/motel vouchers, case management services, financial and legal services, and any of the administrative costs that are associated with any of these can also be covered.

Rebecca Shwalb: TANF funds can be used in coordination with HUD's targeted homeless assistance grants programs such as continuum of care to help maximize resource impact across the different Federal programs. For another example, TANF can be used to pay for rental assistance while HUD's Emergency Solutions Grants program is used to pay for supportive services that will help the family remain housed. Next slide.

### **SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

Rebecca Shwalb: In addition to those programs, Federal TANF and MOE funds can be used for a wide variety of other supportive services. These can include mental health or non-medical substance abuse treatment, child care services that a lot of working families or low income families need because they have young children, and various employment services, which can be critically needed by homeless families in order to get them into a better economic position.

Rebecca Shwalb: The employment services may include education, job training, job placement, and subsidized employment services. TANF agencies might partner with local workforce investment boards or other agencies in order to provide these services.

Rebecca Shwalb: Now, keep in mind, even though TANF is very flexible, there are certain prohibitions. So for Federal TANF funds and commingled funds, which blend Federal TANF and State MOE funds, these cannot be used for medical services whereas segregated and separate MOE funds can. Next slide.

### **COORDINATING SERVICES WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

Rebecca Shwalb: I mentioned a little bit about TANF agencies working with other organizations or other Federal agencies at the state level and the local level. TANF agencies, or the community-based organizations they contract with, can offer comprehensive approaches that include multiple programs and supports. So I have already talked a little bit about the different things TANF can do, but also combining with other organizations and agencies can offer multiple supports to one family. So you might combine a housing benefit with transportation, child care, and/or job placement services.

Rebecca Shwalb: TANF agencies can also partner with local homeless providers to coordinate and streamline services that are delivered across the two service systems. So, for instance, you might have caseworkers that are facilitating the integration of both housing and employment services, or you might have staff from a couple of different programs co-located in the same office to help ensure that families are connecting to a full array of services. Thanks, that is it from ACF.

James Butler: Thank you, Rebecca and Rachel.

### **INTRODUCTION: OFFICE OF SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

James Butler: Our next speaker is Marcy Thompson from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, in the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs. Marcy will provide you with an overview of HUD-funded initiatives and activities. Marcy?

### **HUD'S HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

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Marcy Thompson: Hi, and thank you for having me today. I work in the Special Needs Assistance Programs office, or SNAP, at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and this is the office that administers HUD's Homeless Assistance Programs, which are designed to assist sheltered and unsheltered homeless people by providing the housing services needed to help them move into transitional and permanent housing with the goal of long-term stability.

Marcy Thompson: The Continuum of Care (CoC) Homeless Assistance Grants are competitively awarded to private non-profit organizations, States, units of State and local government, and public housing agencies for the provision of permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, transitional housing, and supportive services for individuals and families that are homeless.

Marcy Thompson: The Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program is a formula program where allocations are made to States, metropolitan cities, urban counties and territories for the provision of street outreach, emergency shelter, homelessness prevention, and rapid re-housing for individuals and families that are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Marcy Thompson: These programs promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of any homelessness and promote access to the effective use of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families. They provide funding for efforts for communities to re-house homeless individuals and families, while minimizing trauma and optimizing self-sufficiency.

Marcy Thompson: HUD has recently published new interim regulations for both of these programs. In drafting these regulations, HUD looked to lessons learned from both its legacy programs and, more recently, to the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program, or HPRP, which is a \$1.5 billion, 3-year American Reinvestment and Recovery Act program, which ended on September 30, 2012. Next slide.

### **LESSONS LEARNED FROM HPRP**

Marcy Thompson: HPRP was a once in a lifetime opportunity which provided communities with the resources and flexibility to design homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing programs to meet the needs they saw in their community. By the program's end in September 2012, it had served more than 1.3 million Americans with homelessness prevention or rapid re-housing services. This number far exceeded our expectations. One of the reasons it had such a huge impact was that the program provided communities with the flexibility to figure out what the right amount of intervention was needed for each household. For some it might have been just a few months of rental arrears, and for others it may have been over a year of rental assistance with case management.

Marcy Thompson: We learned that communities made the greatest impact on reducing homelessness in their communities when they spent their HPRP funds on rapid re-housing instead of homelessness prevention. Approximately 90 percent of families who received rapid re-housing assistance exited the program to a permanent housing destination. The cost was on average only \$1,200 per person. Although HPRP has now come to an end, rapid re-housing is an eligible use of funds under both the ESG and the CoC programs. Next slide.

### **COORDINATING TANF WITH HUD'S HOMELESS ASSISTANCE**

Marcy Thompson: With Federal resources becoming more and more limited, it is critical that States and localities plan strategically and look to maximize the effectiveness of all available resources in order to make the biggest impact on ending homelessness. There are many ways that TANF funds can be used in coordination with HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants program that will maximize the impact of both resources. I will discuss a few.

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Marcy Thompson: The first is one that we heard earlier where TANF funds can be used in conjunction with either ESG or CoC program funds to provide rapid re-housing. The example we heard earlier was where TANF funds could be used to pay for rental assistance and the ESG funds could be used to pay for supportive services. But you could also do the reverse of that where TANF funds could pay for supportive services and ESG or CoC program funds could be used to pay for rental assistance to provide rapid re-housing.

Marcy Thompson: Secondly, the CoC program rule requires CoC's to establish and operate a centralized or coordinated assessment system that provides an initial comprehensive assessment of the housing and service needs of homeless persons. Through this process CoC's will be able to ensure that all eligible homeless families are enrolled in TANF at the point of intake.

Marcy Thompson: Lastly, an FAQ was recently published by the Office of Family Assistance that stated that Federal TANF funds can be used to match funding for all of HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants programs. These matching funds must be used in a consistent manner with TANF requirements, as well as the requirements of the homeless programs that they are being used in. It is not permissible, however, for State funds to be used as match to count toward a jurisdiction's MOE requirements. Next slide.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Marcy Thompson: For more information about any of HUD's homeless assistance programs you can visit HUD's Homelessness Resource Exchange at [www.hudhre.info](http://www.hudhre.info). You can also go to the Ask-A-Question virtual help desk at the URL that is currently on the slide, [www.onecpd.info/ask-a-question/](http://www.onecpd.info/ask-a-question/). And you can also e-mail me directly at [Marcy.L.Thompson@hud.gov](mailto:Marcy.L.Thompson@hud.gov). Thank you.

James Butler: Thank you, Marcy.

### INTRODUCTION: MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE & MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

James Butler: Our next speakers are Stephanie Brown and Ita Mullarkey from the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). These two programs have partnered together in an effort to provide services that ensure that homeless families have access to shelter and re-housing services. Stephanie Brown is the Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations at the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance and Ita Mullarkey is the Associate Director of Policy and Special Initiatives for the Division of Housing Stabilization at the Department of Housing and Community Development. They will now share with you an overview of their partnership.

### LEVERAGING TANF AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE HOUSING STABILITY AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Ita Mullarkey: Thank you very much. This is Ita Mullarkey, again, from the Department of Housing and Community Development. I just want to thank you for the opportunity to allow DTA and my agency to talk to everyone today on this Webinar to just give you an overview of what we are doing here in Massachusetts to improve housing stability and economic outcomes for low-income families. I first want to turn this over to my partner, Stephanie, so she can give you an overview of the mission and goals of the Department of Transitional Assistance.

### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE: MISSION AND GOALS

Stephanie Brown: Hi, everyone. This is Stephanie. So the Department of Transitional Assistance, or DTA as we call ourselves because that is way too long of a name – our mission is to assist low-income individuals and families to meet

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their basic needs, increase their incomes, and improve their quality of life. Essentially, our goals are really to ensure that very low income individuals and families have access to basic benefits, and we also want to increase the employment of recipients who are receiving cash assistance from DTA. Go to the next slide.

## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE: DTA SERVES ONE OUT OF EVERY EIGHT PEOPLE IN THE COMMONWEALTH**

Stephanie Brown: To give you some context for DTA and who we serve, we serve one out of every eight people in the Commonwealth, which basically means we have about 500,000 households receiving our benefits, which is really about 900,000 individuals, so we are getting close to about a million individuals that we serve. So we really serve everybody – families, children, elders, and people with disabilities. We do this through 22 local offices, or Transitional Assistance Offices, around the State. So, essentially, people go to those offices or they can apply for benefits online or via the phone, at least to start the process, and then we work with them through our local offices. Next slide.

## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE (DTA) PROGRAMS**

Stephanie Brown: So the programs that DTA provides, our largest program like probably most state agencies now, it is SNAP, formerly Food Stamps. We have almost a half million households receiving SNAP.

Stephanie Brown: We also provide cash assistance to households, about 77,000 in the State in total. TAFDC, Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children, is our TANF program. So that is cash assistance to low-income families. We also have two state-funded programs that are much more limited in scope and the number of people we serve. We have a program for elderly and disabled people, which is EAEDC, and we have an SSP program, or State Supplement Program, which is a small supplement to elders or people with disabilities who receive Social Security Income (SSI). EAEDC and SSP are both purely state funded so we do not fund those through the TANF block grant. I would also mention that we fund out of the TANF block grant our employment services program, so that is about \$7 million and we serve probably about 1,500 households a year in employment services. But DTA does not administer child care or shelter. So speaking of shelter, we will kick it over to Ita.

## **DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DHCD)**

Ita Mullarkey: Thank you, Stephanie. Again, I work for the Department of Housing and Community Development and our acronym is DHCD. Our mission is to strengthen cities, towns, and neighborhoods to enhance the quality of life of Massachusetts residents. We provide leadership, professional assistance, and financial resources to promote safe, decent, affordable housing opportunities, economic vitality of communities, and sound municipal management.

Ita Mullarkey: Within DHCD we have three divisions. The division that deals primarily with shelter and homelessness issues is the Division of Housing Stabilization (DHS). It is charged with the mission of preventing homelessness, sheltering those for whom homelessness is unavoidable, and rapidly re-housing the homeless into stable, permanent housing. I should mention that Massachusetts is a "right to shelter" state and approximately 65-70 percent of the households that we service every year in shelters are TANF recipients.

Ita Mullarkey: The Division of Housing Stabilization's work is guided by the Massachusetts Commission to End Homelessness' Plan to End Homelessness and the Patrick-Murray Administration's Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness. Next slide, please.

## **EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE SYSTEM REFORM 2007-PRESENT**

Ita Mullarkey: I want to talk a little bit about our Emergency Assistance system that we have in Massachusetts, and this is targeted exclusively to homeless families. Basically, up until when the Patrick-Murray Administration came in 2007,



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we had sort of a one-size-fits-all response to helping homeless families who were basically in need of housing, and that basically was the only way you could get any type of housing assistance was to enter into our Emergency Sheltering system. When the new administration came in, it really became apparent that this was sort of a broken system because we only had one response. So Governor Patrick implemented a Commission to End Homelessness, and through this Commission it paved the way for the establishment of the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness, which its acronym is ICHH. The ICHH set up 10 regional statewide networks. Really their mission was to rethink how we can better address the issue of homelessness in Massachusetts. The ICHH fostered relationships between a broad range of stakeholders, including elected officials, private sector entities, housing providers, human service providers and advocates. The overall goal was to bring these stakeholders together to get their buy-in and commitment to systems change.

Ita Mullarkey: A big part of our system change occurred in 2009, when we moved the Emergency Sheltering system that had been in DTA over to DHCD. Really the purpose was to connect homelessness with the entity that had the housing resources. So through 2009 to 2011, DHCD along with the ICHH jointly piloted several initiatives to determine how to better serve homeless families. What we did was we had several different pilots, one being a diversion pilot which basically if a family identified themselves as being in a housing crisis, instead of pushing them into shelter, we provided them with a diversion resource so they could remain in the community. And, typically, that could have been a short-term rental assistance or a small stipend of money basically to keep them housed.

Ita Mullarkey: We also administered several rapid re-housing initiatives using HPRP funds and State resources, including a Flex-Fund program and a program we developed in 2011 called HomeBASE. Again, this was to help families that had to enter shelter that could not be diverted from shelter, to get out as quickly as possible. We also knew that we needed to build out our stabilization function, both to help families who were being diverted from shelter and families who were being rapidly re-housed, because we knew those families still needed some case management support in order to stay connected with resources in their communities. Next slide, please.

### **OVERVIEW OF EXPANDED HOUSING CONTINUUM FOR AT-RISK AND LOW-INCOME FAMILIES**

Ita Mullarkey: So from the lessons learned from the various pilots that we initiated, we took the lessons learned from these pilots to expand our housing continuum for at-risk and homeless families. This year, which is our FY '13 state budget year, we have focused our resources to better target our prevention initiatives to those who are most likely to become homeless. And by being very targeted with our prevention interventions, we were able to actually better target families that actually needed emergency shelter placement. And we were also able to provide a diversion resource to help families not have to go through the process of entering shelter in order to get a financial resource.

Ita Mullarkey: We also implemented a HomeBASE response, which is a state-funded program where we provide a \$4,000 flexible financial assistance to help families who enter shelter to actually use this resource to move out. We also thought it was important to expand our Supportive Housing network, and we did this by using our State subsidies which are called MRVPs, and basically what we did is we committed this year to 150 Supportive Housing units throughout the Commonwealth, which are targeted to the hard-to-house homeless families. We also did a strategic alignment of our Federal CoC resources with our State resources. Next slide, please.

### **ELIGIBILITY FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

Ita Mullarkey: So in overview now, with all these changes, what our Emergency Assistance shelter response looks like in the Commonwealth today. Basically if you are a family experiencing a housing crisis or housing instability, you would go to the local DTA office, which Stephanie mentioned. There are 22 of them. And in those offices, in most of them, DHCD has a Homeless Coordinator, and the Homeless Coordinator's job is basically to determine whether or not a household is going to be eligible for Emergency Shelter.

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Ita Mullarkey: Because we were able to focus our prevention resources on households who are most likely to become homeless, that allowed us again to narrow our shelter eligibility to a few criteria. So people who presented with domestic violence, who are homeless due to fire, flood, or natural disaster, or who are evicted for no fault, or they could be in a doubled up situation where the household is experiencing a substantial health and safety risk, so these households now are the households that actually access Emergency Shelter. So if a Homeless Coordinator is able to determine that you qualify under one of those criteria, the family is told that they are eligible for shelter.

Ita Mullarkey: But the next step is that they see our HomeBASE provider. And as I mentioned, we use HomeBASE both as a diversion tool and as a rapid re-housing tool. The HomeBASE provider typically is located in the local DTA office along with the Homeless Coordinator so for the family it is a one-stop shopping experience. They go from the Homeless Coordinator to the HomeBASE provider. The HomeBASE provider will help to see if the family can use a flexible short-term resource in order to avoid shelter placement. Next slide, please.

### **HOMEBASE HOUSEHOLD ASSISTANCE**

Ita Mullarkey: On the HomeBASE program, the benefit that we offer is called Household Assistance. It is very flexible. Again, it can be used as diversion from shelter or rapid re-housing out of shelter. It allows the family to use this \$4,000 benefit for first, last, and security deposit on a new apartment. It can pay for back utilities. It can pay for child care. If the family decides to move back in with a family member, we can use that money to help pay the host family's rent. You can use it for car repair. And you can also use Household Assistance as a short-term rental stipend that you can stipend over the course of a year. Along with receiving this \$4,000 benefit, families are also provided with 12 months of stabilization and case management services. Next slide, please.

### **WHO DOES THE HOMEBASE PROGRAM ASSIST**

Ita Mullarkey: Actually, I want to skip over that one because that is a little redundant. Next slide.

### **NEW SYSTEM RESPONSE**

Ita Mullarkey: So this is just an overview of what our new response system looks like here in Massachusetts. Again, if you are experiencing a housing crisis, you would go to DTA. You would meet with a Homeless Coordinator. The Homeless Coordinator would determine if really what you needed was prevention assistance, and then you would be referred to a Prevention Provider. And in many offices, a Prevention Provider actually is there also. If the family is determined in need of shelter, the family would be first sent to our HomeBASE Provider, again who is co-located in local DTA offices. If the \$4,000 benefit would work for the family, the HomeBASE Provider would help the family work out a plan to use the money and provide them with case management support for a year. If the family needed Emergency Shelter, the Homeless Coordinator would get them placement into one of our shelters and the household can then access HomeBASE rapid re-housing, again, the \$4,000 flexible benefit to exit shelter. Next slide, please.

### **PREVENTION PROGRAMS IN FY '13**

Ita Mullarkey: (audio drops out)...very low income households, 90 percent of the resources are targeted to families with 30 percent of AMI or below, and 10 percent to families with incomes greater than 30 percent to 50 percent of AMI. And we basically developed a targeting tool based upon empirical national data that has specific indicators that would tell us whether or not a family is more likely to be entering shelter than another family. This year we will spend about \$8.76 million on this program and it is going to assist about 2,000 at-risk families. Next slide.

### **TANF MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT (MOE) CLAIMING**



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Stephanie Brown: This is Stephanie again. So now I am going to talk about DTA's or the State's Maintenance of Effort claiming. So, essentially, the State of Massachusetts receives \$459 million in our TANF block grant every year, so our MOE requirement is \$382 million. We actually claimed – this past Federal fiscal year we claimed \$666 million, so we had excess MOE of almost \$285 million, which helps us reduce our caseload credit, it goes to our caseload reduction credit so that is good for us. But for our MOE claiming, we thought it would be of interest to you all to see how we use the claiming for Maintenance of Effort to support DHCD and the shelter programs. So, essentially, you can probably read the screen and see how we allocate the funding. But most of our Maintenance of Effort funding goes to Emergency Assistance, the shelter, followed by the same families but because we do not have enough shelter space, they are in hotels; then HomeBASE and housing search and stabilization. So we also use it to fund some of the prevention program and our housing subsidy program, the MRVP, and public housing.

### STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Ita Mullarkey: I have about five examples of some strategic partnerships, and I do not know how much time we have left here, so I am just going to talk about from the DHCD side, the Secure Jobs program. This is a great initiative, it is a private/public initiative and the goal is to link housing and homelessness and workforce development fields in order to support families to obtain work, child care, and achieve economic stability. The Secure Jobs Fund is supported by the Fireman Foundation, which is philanthropic organization here in Massachusetts, which is actually putting up a million dollars for this demonstration program. And the goal is to secure employment for at least – I know it says 150 there, but it should be 450 adults who prior to this were homeless but are now receiving HomeBASE household assistance, rental assistance, through DHCD.

Ita Mullarkey: The goal is to see, through these five regional partnerships that are being funded, if we can replicate this model so that it can help us better inform both State and Federal policy people regarding how to better link homeless families with employment. This is a great collaborative because it brings in the Department of Early Education and Care, the DHCD, DTA, and actually the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness. So we have great representation of State agencies here working with a community provider who basically has stepped up to see if we can improve our outcomes for homeless families and work. The pilot just started a few months ago so we have about a year to go before we can tell you how things will work out. Thank you.

Stephanie Brown: This is Stephanie again. I think Ita's point about Secure Jobs being really useful to us and we are very excited about seeing what happens with it. As you all know, sometimes it is very difficult for State agencies to get out of the way of really supporting people in the way they need it. So I think we are going to learn a lot from the Secure Jobs about where bureaucracy has put up barriers that do not necessarily have to be there. We are definitely watching that closely and participating fully in that because we want to figure out how we use what we learn with Secure Jobs to change the way we do the work for some of the other programs that we have existing.

### EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM

Stephanie Brown: So one of those I mentioned earlier that DTA administers from the TANF fund is our Employment Services Program (ESP). We have a number of different programs within our Employment Service line, but we essentially serve TAFDC recipients, so our low income families who are work-required. For those that are not work-required, in DTA we have a lot of exemptions from the work requirement, a lot more than what TANF guidelines spell out. So our welfare law, Chapter 5, in Massachusetts has a lot more exemptions. Folks who are exempt from the work requirement can participate, but we really try to target our efforts to those who are work-required.

Stephanie Brown: We provide education and training, job placement, and support. We have internship opportunities. We do provide transportation – reimburse money for transportation. And all of our families who are participating also receive child care from our Early Education and Care program. Next slide.

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### COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (CIES)

Stephanie Brown: One of the specific programs under our Employment Services umbrella is CIES, Competitive Integrated Employment Services. And this is really an employment service program that is focused on doing a somewhat brief assessment of a family's barriers and what their strengths are, and then putting them into the right model, into the right CIES model. We actually have, well, before we were cut we had four CIES models. Now we have two. But those are for families who have pretty considerable barriers, everything from education, domestic violence, language, learning disabilities, homelessness, things like that. We do an assessment of the families and put them into one of the two models, based on what kind of supports they do need.

Stephanie Brown: We have actually earmarked a number of the slots for our CIES for families who are homeless or are leaving shelter and working with stabilization providers. And I think we have learned a lot from this as well, just about how we really need to get our providers who are on the ground working with the households to get them to work together as well. We have learned a lot from this and we have enrolled over 375 families so far in our CIES slots. And since we have had some budget cuts, we have only done 20 this fiscal year, or 20 specific ones this fiscal year. But all of the homeless or formerly homeless families, if they are receiving TAFDC, are welcome to participate. But we are trying to target some of those and streamline the referral process for the homeless families. Next slide.

### FINANCIAL LITERACY WORKSHOPS

Stephanie Brown: Then we do some financial literacy workshops. I think you can read about this when you get the slides. But we have served about a thousand DTA clients who are receiving cash assistance and financial literacy. We actually have this program through a grant from the Sovereign Bank Foundation, so they are actually doing the financial literacy program. We have worked with DHCD to target this to families who are particularly moving out of shelter, just to help them get a better fix on how to manage the little income they have and how, as their income increases, they may become ineligible for public benefits. So to help them navigate that and mitigate that. Next slide, and this is for Ita.

### EEC AND DHCD CHILD CARE SLOTS

Ita Mullarkey: Hi, thank you. This is the last slide. DHCD has a partnership with Early Education and Care here in Massachusetts, we call it EEC, and they have actually provided 600 child care slots to DHCD to support families who are in shelter and those who are being re-housed from shelter. Our shelter providers and our motel outreach team and our hotels and child care agencies make referrals directly to DHCD for approval. And DHS attempts to prioritize families that do not have access to child care through DTA. These slots are open for a year with an opportunity to renew. Needless to say, these are lifesaving child care slots for our families because it is the tool that actually enables them to get to work and increase their income, so it is a great collaborative between two State agencies. Thank you.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Stephanie Brown: Thank you. Oh, and our contact information is in here if anybody would like to reach us. We would be happy to talk to you.

James Butler: Thank you, Stephanie and Ita.

### INTRODUCTION: MERCER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES & MERCER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY - HOUSING FIRST INITIATIVE

James Butler: Our next presenters for today are from the Mercer County, New Jersey Board of Social Services and Mercer County, New Jersey Housing First Initiative, who have partnered together to improve the economic outcomes

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for TANF eligible families experiencing homelessness. Frank Cirillo, the Director of the Mercer County Board of Social Services, also known as MCBOS, and Herb Levine, who is the Executive Director of the Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness. They will give you an overview of their partnership.

## **LEVERAGING TANF TO END FAMILY HOMELESSNESS**

Frank Cirillo: Good afternoon, everyone. This is Frank Cirillo. I am Director of the Mercer County Board of Social Services in Trenton, New Jersey. Just to give you some perspective, Mercer County is a county of about 350,000 people. TANF in our State is State-directed but county-administered. And there are about 21 counties total in the state of New Jersey. We are a mid-size county and constitutes about five percent of any given caseload that we serve.

Frank Cirillo: Herb is with me today. I will be speaking and Herb will jump in as needed. Herb is Executive Director of the Mercer County Alliance to End Homelessness, which was extremely instrumental in bringing together the government funders and private non-profit groups to address family homelessness. Next slide.

## **OUR STARTING POINT**

Frank Cirillo: At our starting point we asked a couple of questions. How can we best help families when they become homeless? Is what we are doing now providing the right answer? If not, what can we do instead? The biggest question we ask is – are we doing enough? Are we having the impact we want to have? The answers that came back were no, and we decided to move forward. Next slide, please.

## **WHAT WE DECIDED**

Frank Cirillo: What we decided to do is align with emerging national consensus, which is National Alliance to End Homelessness and the strategies they were promoting, and look at a rapid re-housing model, and to stop managing homelessness by shifting people from transitional housing to shelter, but to find solutions to end it. So we shifted our focus to permanent housing and away from shelter and transitional, and we attempted to shorten the length of stay in shelter and transitional. Next slide, please.

## **A MERCER STRATEGY EMERGED**

Frank Cirillo: A strategy emerged. We got the governmental partners together and we agreed to look at the local TANF and state partners. We got a lot of help from the Division of Family Development (DFD) who allowed us to create a pilot program for rapid re-housing in New Jersey. We worked with providers to begin to build a community consensus around the new approach. Now that takes some doing; that was not an easy lift. And as everybody understands the strategy behind rapid re-housing and having a greater emphasis on permanent housing, it is very good to have something like your Alliance To End Homelessness bring those parties together. Next slide, please.

## **FORMER FUNDING MODEL**

Frank Cirillo: In New Jersey, TANF clients who became homeless are eligible for Emergency Assistance. Those are commonly called EA State funds and they can last for up to two years, normally 18 months, and they can have a bit of an extension. The EA/Emergency Assistance in our case includes Temporary Rental Assistance (TRA); it is a very fine tool to have. And the TANF agency has traditionally used EA funds to pay for emergency shelter and transitional housing stays on a per diem basis. There are minimal resources left, however, at the end of those stays to be used for the TRAs. Now, the Temporary Rental Assistance dollars were normally used at a point when somebody was transitioning off of assistance or near the end of their term for assistance. In New Jersey, that is a maximum of 60 months, and it can be intermittent, but 60 months is the max. When you combine that with what Emergency Assistance

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they allowed for, 24 months, you can see how that could run out very quickly and at the end of the day you really have not transitioned to any more of a permanent housing situation than you had at the beginning of the thing. Next slide.

### **NEW FUNDING MODEL (SINCE 2010)**

Frank Cirillo: So we looked to reverse that process, and what we did in a model since 2010 is instead of making the Temporary Rental Assistance a back-end approach, we moved it to the front end, and we can rapidly re-house people at that point. The governmental entity pays for all the rapid re-housing services, and that includes housing location. What has been very successful is a piece where we negotiate with landlords to make their rents even more affordable, and we provide case management to address all the needs in the family. What we did was use our staff that was already being funded by TANF dollars to do that. What anybody who is thinking about doing this has to do is really take a hard look at what constitutes your caseload in dealing with Emergency Assistance and providing those services. What we did was, in taking a hard look, we were able to really get rid of what was a false caseload and focus on the households that really needed those more intensive case services. So we used a pilot to demonstrate the real cost-effectiveness of rapid re-housing versus the continual emergency shelter and transitional housing. Next slide, please.

### **PROPOSED OUTCOMES OF PILOT**

Frank Cirillo: The proposed outcomes of the pilot, what we want to do is demonstrate that rapid re-housing decreased the amount of time that families are homeless. We wanted to demonstrate that rapid re-housing certainly downsizes the emergency and transitional service need. And demonstrate the cost-effectiveness over spending on emergency shelter and transitional housing. Next slide, please.

### **PROJECTED COST SAVINGS**

Frank Cirillo: What we found is this. That shelter, a current cost of about \$3,750 a month, it is \$150 per diem. Transitional housing costs us about \$2,700 a month, or \$77 per diem. The projected costs for rapid re-housing we estimated to be rental assistance at \$600, and rapid case management services in there about \$700, so a total of about \$1,300 per month. That broke down to \$20 and \$23, respectively, for a total of \$43 per diem. Next slide, please.

### **ACTUAL COST SAVINGS**

Frank Cirillo: The actual cost that we realized after running the program for a time was that shelter costs for the homeless were \$125 per diem, transitional about \$84, a little higher than our original estimate, and temporary rental assistance with wraparound services, about \$25 each, for a total of \$50. Next slide.

### **COMPONENTS OF RAPID RE-HOUSING (RRH) MODEL**

Frank Cirillo: We have a centralized screening and that is done by our agency as part of the screening for Emergency Assistance. That includes a tool that we use that helps us identify triggers for barriers to obtaining and retaining housing. It also assists in identifying how best to serve the families and identifying those problems confronting the families.

Herb Levine: And we can get you that screening tool, we can get that to our partner at Health and Human Services (HHS) so they can post it along with our PowerPoint. Next slide, please.

### **SCREENING TOOL**

Frank Cirillo: The screening tool used for both TANF referrals and non-TANF families. What we have is a scoring scale and our criteria are broken out; those scoring 1 on a scale of 1-5 receive one time assistance. And what we found is

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oftentimes upon receiving that one time assistance, they do not return to the agency for any additional assistance. The rapid re-housing candidates score between 2 and 3. And those scoring a 4 are absolutely in crisis, needing immediate attention, for example domestic violence, and we intercede in an appropriate manner there. Those scoring a 5 need a subsidy for permanent supportive housing. Next slide.

### PILOT OUTCOMES

Frank Cirillo: Pilot outcomes, and this is just in terms of the pilot, we had 133 families served, with 176 children who participated in the pilot. What we found was 80 percent exited from case management and TRA. Of these, less than five percent returned, so we had a five percent recidivism rate. Sixty percent of the cost of transitional housing. And the Board of Social Services created its own RAPID EXIT unit as a result of the pilot using TANF-paid social workers, as I said before. We did use a community based group initially in the pilot and we had similar results. So it was not that there were that extreme differences in results, but the fact that you already had TANF dollars in use and we made better use of those workers. It breathed new life into the staff, I can tell you that. They were actually elevated from voucher writers for the transitional shelters to actually doing meaningful case management work, and that was really exciting for them. And, bottom line, there were no new dollars that we added. I could not add any staff. Times are just as tough here in New Jersey as elsewhere in the country, so we are looking to make better use of the dollars we have. Next slide, please.

### INCOME AND LENGTH OF STAY AT EXIT

Frank Cirillo: The income and length of stay at the exit. The income sources, 49 percent had earned income.

Herb Levine: Let me jump in here with you, Frank. If you just see just at 49 percent earned income, and I guess we do not have the comparison with transitional housing on here, but it was three times as many had earned income from rapid re-housing than they did in transitional housing. It is a completely different mindset in the case management program, it takes advantage of the family's assets and motivates them from the start that you are on your way to a rapid exit from homelessness.

Frank Cirillo: The other thing it allowed us to do was to link with our One-Stops in Labor where, with the contract with Labor, I had staff co-located at our One-Stop. So it allowed our case management people who were working with the homeless families and our people co-located at Labor's One-Stops to sit together and to work out a plan where the client was an integral part of working out their plan for the future, and thereby I think create a better situation to move to earned income.

Herb Levine: So you can see here also that the length of stay in emergency and transitional housing decreased by 34 percent and 27 percent, respectively, showing that the whole system was affected by our pivot to rapid re-housing. Next slide, please.

### OUTCOMES VALIDATE MODEL

Frank Cirillo: So what we found was our outcomes validated our model. Certainly being in one's home rather than in a shelter promoted a greater long-term self-sufficiency, and families were enlisted in the solution. They achieved through time-limited rental assistance and case management what had eluded them before, and that is to have a permanent sense of place. Incomes rose and lengths of stay in homelessness shortened. And rapid re-housing certainly meets the goals of HEARTH as we saw it approaching.

Herb Levine: Let me say a word about HEARTH. Our HUD colleague did not use the word HEARTH, but HEARTH stands for Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing, and it is the law of the land since 2009,

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and it has certain mandates to reduce the number of people becoming homeless, and especially to shorten the amount of time that people spend being homeless, and that is what rapid re-housing has really helped us focus on. Next slide.

### **AS A RESULT OF PILOT...**

Frank Cirillo: As a result of pilot, the Board has created its own RAPID EXIT unit, using TANF-paid social workers, again there is no new dollars and we did not have the luxury of adding any staff.

Herb Levine: And as you see, they are working – each case worker works with only 25 homeless families. And we are exiting, I think you will see on the next slide, about 30 families a month. Next slide, please.

### **MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES (MCBOSS) RAPID EXIT PROFILE**

Frank Cirillo: Prevention services were also an integral part of the prevention. You can see we were able to divert families by either pay back rent, utility assistance, or through emergency housing placements; we were able to keep the numbers in motel/hotel down to 92 in motel, 164 in shelter, 52 in transitional. And the average length of stay in emergency placement before being re-housed, 42 days, 51 days, 68 days.

Herb Levine: And I think the important thing here is that in just 7 months, when we made this slide in February, we had served 212 from both programs, both the agency based program and the rapid re-housing program, and the RAPID EXIT program at the Board. People are moving in quickly within less than two months. We would like to get that down to less than 30 days. And, again, with those instances of stability through income, a very crucial piece of this. Next slide.

### **FROM PILOT TO SYSTEM CHANGE**

Frank Cirillo: So moving from pilot to system change, as a result of reviewing the performance data on length of stay, here is what we found. The CoC or Continuum of Care voted to end HUD funding of transitional housing for families. They could not meet the goals of HEARTH. TANF agency could also cut transitional housing. And the TANF agency is crucial in making this transition in the homeless system. We actually really helped form our CoC around the goals of HEARTH and created a whole new dynamic in terms of government relating to our partners in the private non-profit world.

Herb Levine: We are very interested in helping other TANF agencies see themselves as Frank has done, placing themselves at the center of the homelessness system. Every TANF agency in the country should be sitting at the Continuum of Care in its county. And in New Jersey we have these very special resources that the TANF agency has this incredible temporary rental assistance which can last so long, even up to 18 months, but we are only using about five months of that for our families as they exit. Next slide.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Frank Cirillo: That is our contact information. So just to sum up, the governmental entities are sometimes looked at in the community as the impediment to dealing with this type of advocacy. But we found that we can take a lead role in this and really create a systems change, and create a systems change that really benefits the people we serve and contains cost at the same time. Thank you very much.

James Butler: Thank you so much, Frank and Herb.

### **INTRODUCTION: A SAFE HAVEN FOUNDATION**



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James Butler: Our next presenter is Judith Ball, who is the Interim Director for Workforce Development from A Safe Haven Foundation, which was created to empower families and individuals experiencing homelessness or crisis to achieve sustainable self-sufficiency. The programs at A Safe Haven integrate supportive housing, case management, addiction treatment, education, and life skills, with a network of affordable housing, industry training, and job placement. Judith will now share with you some additional information about the Foundation. Judith?

Judith Ball: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Judith Ball and I am with A Safe Haven Center for Workforce Development. Here at A Safe Haven, we are an agency that offers multiple layers of services for families, for youth, for interim adults, for reentry populations, and for veterans, focusing now on how we are leveraging TANF to provide services for our families. With our interim housing for families here at our 2750 location on West Roosevelt Road in Chicago, Illinois, the first thing that we usually do is we partner with all the mainstream benefit providers to make sure that TANF-eligible and SNAP-eligible recipients are getting those resources that they need.

Judith Ball: At A Safe Haven, we ask our participants to save about 30 percent of their income, whether that is from TANF, whether that is from employment, transitional jobs, and that way that can lead to greater self-sufficiency later on. TANF funds help us to provide daycare for families that are participating on our training programs. We offer training programs at this location for food service in the food service industry, which results in an industry standard license for food safety and sanitation and for the City of Chicago. We also offer housekeeping and building maintenance job training here. We offer landscaping job training, and we are offering a pest control and customer service job training programs.

Judith Ball: The way TANF helps us provide this for families is we are able to link the family with child care while the person is participating in training. Once they complete the training, we in the Center for Workforce Development work directly with them for pre-employment classes, recovery education classes, GED classes, anything that they may need to overcome their barriers towards employment. Once a person is eligible to participate in the Center for Workforce Development services, we have found that they are much more stable in their employment outcomes. Last year for 2012, we were able to place 456 participants that were homeless into permanent employment positions; 80 percent of those people remained employed for a minimum of 90 days.

Judith Ball: The living wage here in Chicago, as reported by the Labor Market Index, is \$9.29 an hour. However, the current minimum wage in Chicago is \$8.25 per hour. When our family head of household participates in our job training programs we are able to gain them an above-standard living wage at about \$10 per hour. With these certifications, it results in the higher paying jobs.

Judith Ball: Once the person has obtained employment and has remained in that employment for about 90 days, we are then able to transition them to any of our affordable housing opportunities. We have 22 affordable housing opportunities for persons transitioning from our interim or homeless shelter, 22 locations all across the city of Chicago.

Judith Ball: That is really all I had. For more detailed information about A Safe Haven and what we are doing all around the city of Chicago – we are the largest provider of interim housing and homelessness services in the city and we have a web page on Facebook, [www.asafehaven.org](http://www.asafehaven.org), and I would hope everyone would look. I did not have a large amount of time to prepare for this so that is just basically an overview of what we do. Thank you.

James Butler: Thank you so much, Judith. I am going to now turn the presentation over to Damon Waters from ICF International, who will explain again how you can submit questions through the WebEx system, in addition to some additional information. Damon?

## QUESTIONS?

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Damon Waters: Thanks, James. We received quite a few questions through the system, but we still encourage individuals to submit additional questions for our speakers. Unfortunately, due to a scheduling conflict, our HUD representative did have to jump off so we will forward those questions over to Marcy and have those submitted once the PowerPoint slides and everything go out.

Damon Waters: While we continue to go through the questions, we just wanted to let everyone know that we welcome all registrants to register for another upcoming Webinar sponsored by the National Alliance to End Homelessness. The Webinar: *Partnering with TANF Agencies to End Family Homelessness in Idaho*, will happen March 28, 2013, from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. This Webinar will explore partnership between the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and the Charitable Assistance to Community's Homeless, Inc., the CATCH program. The Department of Health and Welfare and the CATCH program will expand rapid re-housing to homeless families in Idaho. Led by the Alliance's Sharon McDonald, speakers will discuss how HUD, TANF and philanthropic funds are used to provide short-term rent assistance, intensive case management, employment services, and housing search assistance to help families rapidly exiting homelessness. Please visit the link on the screen to register for the Webinar or feel free to visit [PeerTA.acf.hhs.gov](http://PeerTA.acf.hhs.gov) to register. This Webinar is free but to attend registration is required. Again, visit the link provided on the screen or visit [PeerTA.acf.hhs.gov](http://PeerTA.acf.hhs.gov).

Damon Waters: We have compiled all the questions that were received, so what we are going to do now is actually turn it back over to James Butler and our colleagues over in the Administration for Children and Families who have the questions that are going to be asked to our presenters and provide the responses. James?

James Butler: Thank you, Damon. Our first question: Does a State need to adapt this option to use TANF funds, or is it available to all local departments now?

Robert Shelbourne: Good afternoon. As we understand that question, essentially a State TANF agency would have to make a decision to provide services to assist homeless families or to prevent homelessness. That basically is a State TANF agency decision so, in essence, a State would have to opt to provide these various services and go from there to implement them at the local level. Forgive me, my name is Robert Shelbourne. I apologize. I am the Director of State TANF Policy in the Office of Family Assistance.

Frank Cirillo: Hi, it is Frank Cirillo from Mercer County. What you need to look at some time is what is available under your current regulations. Often when you look at the regulations you will see that they are written in a manner that allows some flexibility or broader use. So if I look up the regulations for emergency housing, it will delineate a couple of ideas. You can have shelter, transitional housing, and it may be an "etcetera" there or "as example." So what we did was take the opportunity to look at those regulations and say it does not exclude certain strategies, and the State agreed that for the pilot we could extend our "toolbox," as our Governor likes to call it, and kind of expand on those strategies and what tools are available to us to use.

James Butler: Thank you. Our next question is for OFA. Is there a limit to the amount of TANF and MOE that a client may receive?

Robert Shelbourne: Good question. I am pausing for a moment because I do not want to get overly technical. But if we are talking about cash assistance, that is basic assistance that goes to a family each month for their basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter, there is a statutory time limit of 60 months on that type of assistance. Of course, States can extend it beyond that period of time if they so desire. I think, in essence, looking at this question in general, is there a limit? Yes, there is a 60 month limit in terms of Federal assistance, but in terms of other benefits and services it is essentially a State's call. Although each of these things, you know, there are some complications in the program and it depends upon the specific benefit or service that is being proposed. So, in essence, it is almost a case by case situation.

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James Butler: Thank you. A question for A Safe Haven. Judith, did you say 80 percent remained in unemployment?

Judith Ball: No. Remained in employment, over 80 percent remained in employment tracked over 90 days.

James Butler: Thank you. The next question is for Massachusetts. Does each State have a point person and how do we identify such persons to begin discussion?

Stephanie Brown: This is Stephanie. I think Ita's contact information and mine are on the back of the slides. So I think if you are interested in shelter issues and the prevention, you can contact Ita. And for the TANF and TAFDC and employment services, you can contact me. But I would say that I think that is one of the things we are learning from the work participation grants that we have got, the Secure Jobs, is that every State agency does need a point person to sort of troubleshoot issues, not just to answer questions but to troubleshoot issues.

James Butler: Thank you. This may be redundant but a question for Massachusetts again. It oftentimes takes much longer than the rental assistance period to stabilize families to a level where they can pay rent on their own. So can you elaborate on that one a little bit further?

Ita Mullarkey: Well, for families that are coming out of our sheltering system, we provide them with 18 months of stabilization support. Most of our families are in shelter for about 7.8 months, so we know our families pretty well so we start working with them as soon as they get into shelter. And the goal really is to always keep them moving toward the permanent housing option. So once we have put them out into housing, we really think the 18 months – that is not to say that all families are okay after 18 months, but we have had a lot of time to work with them, so we do think that 18 months is workable.

Herb Levine: This is Herb Levine from Mercer County. I would like to jump in on that. One thing I want to say about the transition to rapid re-housing – rapid re-housing is permanent housing so it is in the client's own name, the lease is, as opposed to transitional housing. So from the day they move in, the stabilization process begins and is enhanced by the fact that they are in their own home. The more robust the job placement, job coaching element of the rapid re-housing service is, the sooner they will come to be able to pay rent on their own. We had no idea – the first year we did this it was averaging about 12 months, but we are now averaging about 5 months, just 2 ½ years later. So the families could stay on this rental assistance for up to 18 months and, as Frank said, even get extensions to 24 months. So you would think, hey, a poor family, I am going to stay on this as long as I can. But that is not what we are finding. The whole motivational structure of rapid re-housing is the key to the program. From day one, you shake hands and say we are helping you get off of assistance from the time you meet us. What can we do to move you forward? And families rise to the level of the expectations that you have for them.

Frank Cirillo: And part of the problem – this is Frank Cirillo from Mercer also – part of the problem we had was continually routing people through the employment door when they were not permanently housed or they did not have that stability. They were more likely to get sanctioned and, therefore, come revolving back through the door and to have a longer stay on EA but intermittent benefits. And it did not make much sense to do it that way.

Stephanie Brown: This is Stephanie from DTA. I completely agree with that. I think in trying to connect homeless families with DTA's Employment Service slots we have definitely seen that it is better to wait until after the family has moved into stable permanent housing to really start that process with them. I mean there are things you can do certainly to work with them while they are in shelter, but there is too much moving around and too much instability, and it is too hard for them. It is not a fair expectation.

James Butler: Thank you. Our next question is for any representative from New Jersey. Are you following a Housing First model for your PSH project? If so, was this a shift from standard practice and how was it received by the homeless service providers?

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Herb Levine: This is Herb trying the first pass at this question. We have been doing a Permanent Supportive Housing model, or a Housing First model, since 2008. And we started that again also as a pilot, we started it for the chronically homeless. But in 2010, we started it for those whose homelessness is determined by economic downturn, more like at least 80 percent of the families fall into that category. And we think that Housing First and Rapid Re-housing are essentially the same thing. They are the same philosophy with two different names. Housing First is a term for the chronically homeless, and rapid re-housing is the term we are using for shorter term homeless, people whose homelessness can be curtailed. The difference, of course, is that the support does not need to be permanent. With people who have a serious and persistent mental illness, the support is ongoing and you cannot cut it off. Even in that program we have seen many people re-emerge and start volunteering in the community and start part-time work in the community and so forth. But for this population that we are talking about, which is primarily a family population, there are very few that need permanent supportive housing. We did save some slots in Housing First for that group and we have another few slots that we are going to use for that population that still is in transitional housing at the time of our closing that down at the end of 2013.

James Butler: Thanks. Our next question is for Massachusetts, and anyone else who is presenting can also respond after that. In your rapid re-housing, how are you able to get around the regulations regarding poor credit, unpaid utilities, broken leases, owing public housing money? And the second part to that question is – does the State plan need to be modified if they presently do not use TA funds for housing, per se?

Ita Mullarkey: We do not have any regulations around the first part of that, around families who have bad housing histories or even criminal records. We do have a lot of families in those circumstances who are in shelters, but we actually have a very robust housing search component in shelter so we work – our providers actually work with landlords in the community. And one of the key things we find for trying to house some of the more hard-to-house families with those barriers is the fact that we do provide the case management support to landlords. So it takes some work, but we typically do get them out, but it is a lot of extra work for our housing search providers. But they, over the years, have developed relationships with a lot of landlords too, so they really just have to really sell the family's assets as opposed to their negatives there. But again, it is not in any kind of regulation; we just basically work with what we have with each of the families to try to get them rehoused.

Frank Cirillo: Frank Cirillo from New Jersey. I want to echo that. We do the same thing. It is part of that case management piece that we develop where the social workers will actually go with the client, establish that relationship with landlords. Once they know you are going to support and have their back in terms of that, for us that temporary rental assistance, and they develop this relationship with the client and the case manager, it becomes a much better relationship between landlord and client.

James Butler: Okay. Our next question is for presenters from New Jersey. How have you managed to place families with high barriers into housing rapidly? We find some of the landlords often screen people out because of the barriers, even though they have incentives like double security deposits and ongoing case management and so on.

Frank Cirillo: The answer is pretty much the same as the last one. You really need to establish that relationship with the landlord. Now, early on in our first iteration of the pilot we had a private company, a realty company do the search for the housing out there. Later on, we developed that ourselves and we found that landlords were willing to come to us and offer their places up for rental, and that allowed for a whole other line of communication and dynamic between, again, the landlord, the client and ourselves, so we go hand in hand. And it is much the same, it is that relationship that you absolutely need to develop and that trust.

James Butler: Thank you. This will be our final question for this afternoon, or this morning, depending on where you are, and it is for Massachusetts. What does it mean that Massachusetts is a "right to shelter" State?

# *Leveraging TANF Funds and Strategic Partnerships to Improve Housing Stability and Economic Outcomes for Low-Income Families*

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Ita Mullarkey: Basically there is a statute in Massachusetts which basically says that if a family is in a housing crisis and has no place to sleep that night, the Commonwealth is mandated by statute to provide emergency shelter for that household for as long as they need it. And we do have eligibility criteria for shelter so they also have to meet that.

James Butler: Thank you. Again, this ends our session for Q&A, so what I would like to do now is just close out by thanking all of those who joined us today. A special thanks to all of the speakers for sharing the great information on homelessness and housing stability. We hope that you heard something today during this Webinar that will be beneficial to you as you continue to serve in your communities, and as you begin to think about some possible next steps. Again, as a reminder, a transcript and audio recording will be made available for everyone within the coming weeks. Please be sure to fill out the evaluation poll that will pop-up automatically as you exit the Webinar. And on behalf of the Office of Family Assistance, we thank you again. Have a pleasant day.