

# HUD and TANF

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## HUD and TANF

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development offers many programs that TANF agencies can partner with to assist clients on their paths towards self-sufficiency. Below are overviews of a few of the programs and services offered by HUD.

### **Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Family Self-Sufficiency Program**

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program is an employment and savings incentive program for low-income families who have Section 8 vouchers or live in public housing. It consists of both case management services that help participants pursue employment and other goals, and of escrow accounts into which the public housing agency (PHA) deposits the increased rental charges that a family pays as its earnings rises. Families that complete the program may withdraw funds from these accounts for any purpose after five years. PHAs work with social service agencies, schools, businesses, and other local partners to develop a comprehensive program that gives participating FSS family members the skills and experience to enable them to obtain employment that pays a living wage.

FSS program coordinators insure that FSS program participants are linked to the supportive services they need to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

While the goal of the program is that families will no longer need housing assistance upon completion of the FSS program, some families that complete the program will still need assistance for housing. The law provides that a family may complete its FSS contract and receive its escrow while continuing to receive housing assistance.

#### Services Provided Through FSS Programs:

- Child Care
- Transportation
- Education
- Job Training and Employment Counseling
- Substance/Alcohol Abuse Treatment or Counseling
- Household Skill Training
- Homeownership Counseling

### **Housing Authority of the City of East Orange (HACEO) Family Self-Sufficiency Program**

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The Housing Authority of the City of East Orange (HACEO) Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) is a voluntary Section 8 Housing Program designed to assist families in establishing independence from public assistance, Federal, State, and/or local subsidies. Once a participant is accepted into the FSS Program, s/he must sign a five year Contract of Participation. Each FSS program participant along with the guidance of the FSS Coordinator develops a step by step plan known as the Individual Training and Services Plan (ITSP). The ITSP will become the blueprint for the successful completion of the participant goal(s).

FSS Program Participants achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency through education, job training, supportive services and employment opportunities. It is anticipated that through full-time employment, FSS Participants and their families can become independent of government assistance.

The FSS Program offers: personal counseling; career counseling; educational counseling; and assistance with financial aid applications. It also offers referrals for GED preparation; English as a Second Language; 2 and 4 year colleges; certification and training programs; job training; basic skills literacy; child care; and credit repair.

### **Bernalillo County Housing Department (New Mexico)**

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BCHD has disbursed more than \$248,000 since starting its program in 1994. Many of the graduates of the program have chosen to go into homeownership and have been able to use this money for a down payment on their home.

When one program graduate, Jennifer, received a check in the amount of \$2,754.00, she stated, "I truly thank everyone who has helped me throughout the years. If it had not been for the greatness of your program and all those who make it possible, I wouldn't be able to buy a home-but because of you-I AM!"

Another graduate, Kristine, received a check in the amount of \$10,869.46. Kristine stated, "I owe all that is possible to your employees and this program! I would have NEVER made it this far! I, while raising 4 children alone, made it through college, established a wonderful career and learned so much with the help of your department and will forever remember what was given to me. Yes, I know, I too worked very, very hard for what I have established, but know that I did so because you made it possible for me to work so hard. Again, thank you so very much for what has to have been a golden opportunity to make something of myself for myself and for my children. May all good be with you and those who make such an impact on so many lives!"

Pearl received a check in the amount of \$15,940.53. Pearl stated, "I appreciate the help that the FSS Program has done for me and my family through the Bernalillo County Housing Dept. This program has been beneficial to me and I'm sure also to a lot of families with single working parents. It has helped me to stay focused and look forward to goals and dreams that I would like to accomplish. This program definitely helps individuals to look forward to owning their own home. That is what I am doing with the funds that I have saved through the years. Thank you again for having this program available."

### **Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP)**

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which includes \$1.5 billion for a Homelessness Prevention Fund. State TANF agencies are encouraged to work together with HPRP programs to maximize the benefit and efficiency of both resources to serve families. For example, TANF agencies can extend their impact by referring families that require more than four months of rental assistance to HPRP programs that administer medium-term rental assistance. Also, families that receive TANF rental assistance can be referred to HPRP programs for help with searching for housing, mediation with their landlord, or related case management services.

A list of HPRP programs by State can be found at: <http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRPContactInfoDec09/pdf>.

HPRP defines homelessness as any individual that lacks a fixed, regular, or adequate night time residence, or an individual whose primary residence is in a homeless shelter (this includes transitional housing for mentally ill), public or private places not meant for human habitation (i.e., sleeping in cars, outside, etc.).

HPRP defines at-risk of homelessness as facing imminent eviction through eviction court, receipt of a notice to vacate property for nonpayment, rental property in/or threat of foreclosure, fleeing domestic violence or elder abuse, sudden loss of income making it impossible to pay housing cost, living in a hotel/motel, completion of a transitional housing program that will not lead to permanent housing, and doubled up.

Suggested State and local strategies could include:<sup>1</sup>

- Coordinated Entry – If possible, create a center where low-income families can have “one stop” access to a range of services. Co-locating services can promote collaboration between TANF and HPRP resources.
- Use of 211 Outreach Phone Line – Many communities have a widely publicized 211 phone line for services. In some communities, this is the first step in referring clients to the services they need. Training the 211 outreach staff on the uses of TANF and HPRP is a good way of providing information about both programs to the public.
- Tailored Services – Agencies that deliver services should have an initial visit with a case manager (this is required for HPRP) to determine that families receive housing assistance at an appropriate level and duration. This can be used as an opportunity to coordinate TANF and HPRP resources in creative ways to help families avoid homelessness.
- Staff Training – Staff delivering services should be trained on TANF and HPRP eligibility requirements and enrollment procedures so they can refer clients to appropriate services and better assist families.

#### **Durham’s Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program**

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In partnership with Housing for New Hope and Urban Ministries of Durham, the Department of Social Services is implementing Durham’s Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP). HPRP is funded with

<sup>1</sup> Nazario, Carmen R. and Mercedes Marquez (July 15, 2010). HUD-HHS Joint TANF ECF, HPRP Guidance Letter. *National Alliance to End Homelessness*. Retrieved on September 12, 2010 from: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/3176>

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding, typically referred to as “federal economic stimulus funds.” The funds are provided to DSS through a contract with the City Department of Community Development.

This is a two-year pilot project that provides financial assistance and case management to both prevent homelessness and to re-house families and individuals who have recently become homeless due to the recession.

The target for this program is a city-wide effort to assist residents of Durham who are at risk of becoming homeless and residents who are experiencing homelessness. Current residents of Urban Ministries of Durham and other homeless services providers are being targeted as well.

### **CT's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (CT HPRP)**

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Funds for CT HPRP are administered through the Department of Social Services (DSS) for six regional programs, and through the city governments of the five entitlement municipalities (Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Waterbury and Bridgeport). In most cases, services will be provided through several nonprofit organizations in a given region or city.

United-Way's 211 will provide eligibility screening and referral to all of CT HPRP's programs. A portion of the DSS HPRP funds have been allocated to United Way to establish a new Homeless/Housing unit at 211. Trained specialists will screen for eligibility, refer those who are not eligible to other services, and connect eligible callers directly to the HPRP program in their area, as well as enter basic information about eligible callers into the CT Homeless Management Information System (CT HMIS). This new effort will create a “universal front door” for individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness to quickly and accurately be assessed for connection to HPRP.

“We can create lasting change by implementing a housing based, not a shelter based, intervention for those facing catastrophic housing and economic crisis in Connecticut.”

CT Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) and CT HPRP CCEH, Connecticut's statewide homeless coalition, is providing training and technical assistance for HPRP providers. As part of the National Alliance to End Homelessness' HPRP Technical Assistance Network, CCEH will have access to tools and best practices from around the country and be part of national workgroups on effective HPRP implementation. CCEH is continuing to develop an HPRP toolkit, which can also be accessed at <http://www.cceh.org/hprp.htm>.