

MEMORANDUM

TO: Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Housing

FROM: HomeBase

RE: Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)

DATE: November 16, 2009

BACKGROUND

HomeBase's 1991 conference, cosponsored by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, titled "Off the Streets and Out of the Shelters: Homeless People Regain Housing," gathered homeless service providers and advocates to discuss solutions to homelessness, especially ways to quickly connect people experiencing homelessness to housing. The conference focused heavily on what would later become known as Rapid Re-housing – a combination of rental and housing search assistance, relationships with landlords, and comprehensive case management. Following that conference, the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) instigated a piece of California legislation for a statewide prevention program, similar to the program the Department of Veterans Affairs was running at the time. Former Assemblymember Tom Bates sponsored the bill two sessions in a row, but the legislation failed to move.

The RSC continued to study prevention and rapid re-housing in a variety of contexts. In September and November of 2005, the RSC closely examined the characteristics of homeless families, the causes of family homelessness, and some of the most effective ways to address the problem, including rapid re-housing. The July and October 2007 RSC meetings also focused on the issue, presenting the latest research and methods for collaborating across communities.

In April 2008 the RSC discussed Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) after HUD (finally) announced a one-time sum of \$25 million over three years for demonstration projects across the country. Two RSC communities, Contra Costa and San Francisco, successfully secured HPRP grants under that NOFA.

Then, in April and July of 2009, the RSC revisited the topic when HUD released HPRP funding through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). Several RSC communities now receive that funding either by a direct allocation from HUD or via California's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). In October, providers opened their doors to clients. This memo explores what communities have learned thus far, tools that are effective, and what barriers remain ahead.

PROGRAM PARAMETERS

HPRP provides financial assistance and services to either prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless or to help those who are experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed and stabilized. The assistance focuses on housing stabilization, linking program participants to community resources and mainstream benefits, and helping them develop a plan for preventing future housing instability. In all cases, there must be a clear process for determining the type, level, and duration of assistance for each program participant. Under ARRA-HPRP there are four categories of eligible activity, all of which are focused on housing:

- **Financial Assistance**
 - Can be used to allow individuals and families to remain in their existing rental units or to help them obtain and help them remain in rental units that they select.
 - Short-term assistance not to exceed three months, including arrears if needed
 - Medium-term rental assistance not to exceed 4-18 months, including arrears
 - Security and utility deposits
 - Up to 18 months of utility payments, including 6 months of utility payments in arrears
 - Reasonable moving costs, such as truck rental, hiring a moving company, or short-term storage fees
 - Motel and hotel vouchers for up to 30 days

- **Housing Relocation and Stabilization**
 - Case management activities such as arrangement, coordination, monitoring, and delivery of services related to meeting the housing needs of program participants and helping them to obtain housing stability
 - Outreach and engagement activities
 - Services or activities designed to assist individuals or families in locating, obtaining, and retaining suitable housing
 - Legal services to help people stay in their homes
 - Services that assist program participants with skills related to household budgeting, money management, accessing a free credit report, and resolving personal credit issues

- **Data Collection and Evaluation**
 - Reasonable and appropriate costs associated with operating an HMIS for purposes of collecting and reporting data required under HPRP and analyzing patterns of use of HPRP funds are eligible

- **Administrative Costs**

The following costs cannot be funded with ARRA-HPRP funds:

- Activities that can be funded with other ARRA program funds, such as employment training or child care

- Mortgage costs or other expenses needed by homeowners for fees, taxes, or other costs of refinancing a mortgage
- Construction or rehabilitation
- Credit card bills or consumer debt
- Car repair or transportation costs
- Travel costs
- Food
- Medical or dental care or medicines
- Clothing and grooming costs
- Home furnishings
- Pet care
- Entertainment activities
- Work or education-related materials
- Cash assistance to program participants
- Discharge planning initiatives
- Certifications, licenses, and other general training costs not specific to HPRP program operations

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Communities across the nation are using a variety of strategies to let their communities know that HPRP resources are available and to facilitate access these resources. For example, some Bay Area communities are using the United Way's 211 system as a central access point to share information with the public and to refer people into HPRP. Other HPRP collaborations are de-centralized, allowing clients to access resources through all partner agencies, soup kitchens, outreach teams, mainstream benefit offices, family resource centers, multi-service centers, and other less conventional sites. Additionally, many HPRP plans committed most or all of their Rapid Re-Housing funds to housing households already in emergency shelter or graduating from transitional housing.

Of the providers receiving funding directly from HUD, many report overwhelming demand for HPRP resources; however, these same providers say that many people looking for help are ineligible for HPRP. They are trying to refer these ineligible households to other resources where they are available, but many agencies are becoming bogged down in the screening process. HPRP collaborations receiving money via HCD report that they started receiving calls for services over a month ago even though resources only became available in the last week. The question of appropriate marketing and referral systems looms large as providers balance staff capacity, available resources, and demand.

How many people are requesting services? Do most households meet baseline eligibility requirements?

Are you seeing more demand for prevention or for rapid re-housing?

How are you managing demand?

Does it look like you'll have any spend-down problems - either spending too quickly or not spending quickly enough?

SCREENING & ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Many communities have done versions of prevention or rapid re-housing activities in the past; however, few have enough experience to accurately predict who would be homeless *but for* HPRP assistance. Similarly, many providers are struggling to determine how much assistance to provide to keep a household stable while using resources as efficiently as possible. To tackle these barriers, communities are using new tools to help them screen potential participants and assess whether a household will succeed once time-limited resources are exhausted.

In this memo, the term “screening” refers to a process of determining eligibility and priority for services. “Assessment” is a more in-depth evaluation of an individual’s specific strengths and challenges and is used to design an individualized client service plan. Below are the risk factors that HUD identified for screening potential HPRP clients.

1. Eviction within 2 weeks from a private dwelling (including housing provided by family or friends).
2. Discharge within 2 weeks from an institution in which the person has been a resident for more than 180 days (including prisons, mental health institutions, hospitals).
3. Residency in housing that has been condemned by housing officials and is no longer meant for human habitation.
4. Sudden and significant loss of income.
5. Sudden and significant increase in utility costs.
6. Mental health and substance abuse issues.
7. Physical disabilities and other chronic health issues, including HIV/AIDS.
8. Severe housing cost burden (greater than 50% of income for housing costs).
9. Homeless in the last 12 months.
10. Young head of household (under 25 years old with children or pregnant).
11. Current or past involvement with child welfare, including foster care.
12. Pending foreclosure of rental housing.
13. Extremely low income (less than 30% of Area Median Income).
14. High overcrowding (the number of persons exceeds health and/or safety standards for the housing unit size).
15. Past institutional care (prison, treatment facility, hospital).
16. Recent traumatic life event, such as death of a spouse or primary care provider, or

recent health crisis that prevent the household from meeting its financial responsibilities.

17. Credit problems that preclude obtaining of housing.

18. Significant medical debt.

Additionally, HomeBase has collected screening, assessment, and other tools from the Bay Area and other Continuums of Care. A highlight of these tools is included in your meeting packet.

How are you using the HUD Risk Factors in your screening?

What do your assessment/screening tools look like?

How are they working?

Are you seeing distinctions between the prevention side and the rapid re-housing side in terms of overall levels and length of assistance needed?

COORDINATING WITH OTHER PROGRAMS

HUD strongly encourages HPRP grantees and sub-grantees to coordinate with other ARRA resources. The HPRP regulations explicitly state that activities covered under a different ARRA funding stream (such as employment) cannot be billed under HPRP. Additionally, in this year's Continuum of Care application, CoC's had to explain how they were coordinating HPRP, other CoC activities, and other HUD-managed ARRA funding. Below is a list of programs that received additional money through ARRA and that compliment HPRP activities.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program enables local governments to undertake a wide range of activities intended to create suitable living environments, provide decent affordable housing and create economic opportunities, primarily for persons of low and moderate income. Under ARRA, recipients shall give priority to projects that can award contracts based on bids within 120 days of the grant agreement.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

ARRA provides \$1 billion in additional funds to the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program for Federal Fiscal Year 2009. The CSBG program falls under the direction of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). It provides funds to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities by providing a range of services and activities to assist the needs of low-income individuals, including the homeless. Unlike the regularly funded CSBG program, the authority as outlined in ARRA does not allow for State administrative expenditures and statewide discretionary activities. The authorization

does, however, allow for States to reserve one percent of the funds for benefits enrollment coordination activities relating to the identification and enrollment of eligible individuals and families in Federal, State, and local benefit programs.

Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF)

Up to \$5 billion is available to states under ARRA for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Contingency Fund. This money can be used to reimburse states for non-recurrent, short-term benefits. Short-term benefits must be designed to deal with a specific crisis that is unlikely to be recurrent or ongoing and unlikely to last more than four months.

These short-term benefits can be used to help resolve back rental payments to prevent a homeless episode or for security deposit and four months of rent to families who can be expected to pay rent moving forward. States and local jurisdictions have used short-term TANF benefits to address families' housing crises such as paying for utility arrears, back rent, security deposit and first month's rent, emergency shelter, motel vouchers, and short-term rental assistance. Recipients can receive short-term benefits regardless of whether or not they are also receiving ongoing TANF cash assistance.

Coordination between HPRP and TANF allows both resources to be used efficiently. TANF agencies can extend the impact of their efforts by referring families who require more than four months of rental assistance to programs implementing prevention and re-housing programs. In turn, families identified by the HPRP prevention and re-housing programs that will require only minimal rental assistance to sustain or access new housing may be referred to the TANF agency for short-term benefits.

In addition to short-term benefits, the TANF block grant can also be used by states to provide cash assistance and subsidized employment to low-income families. Streamlined access to these resources can be the key to greater housing stability. For families who are receiving rapid re-housing services, expediting benefits can reduce the time before families return to stable housing in the community. Expedited benefits may also prevent some homeless episodes.

Subsidized employment involves providing a wage supplement to employers who employ parents receiving TANF cash assistance. Subsidized employment allows parents who are less marketable in the labor market to gain work experience and build skills on the job. The intent is that parents in subsidized employment will transition into a non-subsidized placement within the same organization. Many of the parents who experience a housing crisis or homeless episode have very limited work skills, as well as other challenges that may make it difficult to sustain employment, and would benefit from participating in transitional jobs tailored to their needs. With the additional supports transitional jobs programs offer, families who previously have been sanctioned may be better positioned to retain TANF cash assistance and enhance their ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)

EFSP is operated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). It distributes federal funds to local communities for homelessness prevention by offering one-time

monetary grants to families whose short-term crisis places them at risk of becoming homeless. The United Way has been administering these funds and in some counties coordinating programming through its 211 resource and referral system.

Neighborhood Stabilization Program 2 (NSP2)

NSP2 provides emergency assistance to state and local governments to acquire and redevelop foreclosed properties that might otherwise become sources of abandonment and blight within their communities. NSP2 funds can be used to establish financing mechanisms for the purpose and redevelopment of foreclosed homes and residential properties and to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned or foreclosed homes and residential properties. Other eligible activities include establishing land banks for foreclosed homes, demolishing blighted structures, and redeveloping demolished or vacant properties. NSP2 funds must be used for activities benefiting households with incomes at or below 120 percent of area median income (AMI). At least 25 percent of the funding must be used to provide housing, including permanent supportive housing, to people below 50 percent of area median income.

Workforce Investment Act Programs

This includes \$500 million for supportive services and needs-related payments for unemployed workers not eligible for unemployment insurance, \$1.2 billion for jobs programs for youth, and \$1.25 billion for jobs programs for “dislocated workers.” This Department of Labor program was designed to help Americans get back to work. The funding under the economic recovery act will be used to increase service levels and address immediate employment needs by targeting significant funding toward low-income, low-skilled Americans, including youth. The fund can also pay for YouthBuild activities and worker training and placement in high growth and emerging industry sectors (including projects that prepare workers for careers in energy efficiency and renewable energy).

Transitional Housing Assistance Grants

This Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) program provides Transitional Housing Assistance Grants to help victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking who are in need of transitional housing, short-term housing assistance, and related support services.

Department of Education McKinney-Vento Funds

ARRA provides \$70 million in fiscal year (FY) 2009 funds under the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program. The McKinney-Vento ARRA funds are a one-time source of funds that supplement the McKinney-Vento funds made available under the regular FY 2009 appropriation. These additional resources will assist States and local educational agencies in addressing the educational and related needs of homeless children. The funds may support:

- (1) Supplemental educational services, such as tutoring and other academic enrichment programs;
- (2) Expedited evaluations for various educational services;
- (3) Professional development activities for educators and pupil services personnel working with homeless students;

- (4) Health referral services;
- (5) Defraying the excess cost of transportation in order to enable students to attend the school of origin;
- (6) Early childhood education programs for pre-school-aged homeless children;
- (7) Services and assistance to attract, engage, and retain homeless children and youth and unaccompanied youth in public school programs;
- (8) Before- and after-school, mentoring, and summer programs with educational activities;
- (9) Payment of fees and costs associated with tracking, obtaining, and transferring records of homeless children and youth;
- (10) Education and training for parents of homeless children and youth about rights and resources;
- (11) Development of coordination between schools and agencies providing services;
- (12) Provision of pupil services (including violence prevention counseling) and referrals for such services;
- (13) Activities to address needs that may arise from domestic violence;
- (14) Adaptation of space and purchase of supplies for non-school facilities to provide services listed above;
- (15) Provision of school supplies, including those to be distributed at shelters or other appropriate locations; and
- (16) Other extraordinary or emergency assistance needed to enable homeless students to attend school.

How did you engage other ARRA program players? What came of those discussions? What improvements have been made? Barriers?

Is this turning into an opportunity for greater systems change around mainstream benefits? If so, how?

DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING

ARRA specifically requires HPRP grantees to report client-level data, such as demographic characteristics, in a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or comparable client-level database. In July 2009, HUD published its Revised HMIS Data and Technical Standards to outline the required data elements for HPRP. On September 30, 2009, HUD published further guidance on HPRP definitions, general reporting requirements, and filing requirements for the Initial Performance Report (IPR) and Quarterly Performance Reports (QPR). In that publication, HUD stipulated the following:

- Grantees will report to HUD via *esnaps*, HUD's grants management system.
- An ***Initial Performance Report (IPR)*** covers the period between the grant agreement execution date and September 30, 2009. The IPR includes information

for the first Quarterly Performance Report as well as one-time, supplemental information regarding grantee use of HPRP funds and implementation plans. Every grantee must complete this report even if no HPRP funds have been expended and/or no program participants have been served. All programs have now submitted an IPR.

- Ongoing **Quarterly Performance Reports (QPRs)**, are due within 10 days of the end of each quarter for the period of program operations.
- An **Annual Performance Report (APR)** is due within 60 days of the end of each federal fiscal year.
- HPRP grantees must report an unduplicated count of persons and households served with grantee HPRP funds.
- **Pro-Ration-** Grantees may only provide duplicated program performance data (i.e., where a person/household is served by more than one sub-grantee) when sub-grantees or organizations receiving HPRP funds use different data systems. For example, this may occur when programs funded with HPRP operate in two or more Continuums of Care with distinct HMIS systems. In this case, the grantee is permitted to provide pro-rated program performance data for their QPR based on the portion of the HPRP funds represented by the sub-grant. Pro-rating program performance data is only permitted when separate tracking of person/household data by grantee source is not possible or feasible.

How was the first reporting cycle and do you feel ready to submit the first QPR?

Are you encountering any issues with HMIS?

Does your HMIS have any customized or specialized features that are particularly useful?

Are you or your providers needing to pro-rate?

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