



PHA Profile: Housing Authority of the City of Asheville Preference for Homeless Households Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Programs

Basic PHA Stats

Location: Asheville North Carolina
Housing Choice Vouchers: 1,500
Public Housing Apartments: 1,521

Program Description

In 2007, the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville (HACA) established a local preference in their Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs for homeless individuals. Individual must have a commitment of case management support from another agency for at least one year after move-in. Initially, the preference was limited to chronically homeless individuals, but has been expanded recently to those who have been homeless for more than 90 days. Ongoing case management remains the key component. After observing low participation initially, HACA expanded the program in 2010 through monthly collaboration meetings with local homeless services providers and a focus on specific clients they identify for case management support.

Motivation

HACA renovated and opened a successful 19-unit Shelter Plus Care development in 2006 and began looking for ways to expand its work with homeless households. The idea for this collaboration came out of discussions in the Asheville-Buncombe Homeless Initiative Advisory Committee charged with coordinating the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

Resources Required

HACA did not require MTW status to implement this program. Other than meeting and coordination time, this program has required no additional financial resources from the HACA budget. HACA has provided some office space onsite without charge to Homeward Bound, because HACA has found the physical presence of the agency's staff to be helpful. Overall, the program has enhanced HACA's resources by having case managers assigned and on-call to help resolve problems.

Challenges

HACA initially had low response to the preference from the community. In 2010, the Homeless Initiative Advisory Committee established an ongoing subcommittee to facilitate applications, obtain proper releases, and track the progress of individual applicants. Additionally, many of the applicants have extensive criminal records for nuisance crimes related to homelessness, and HACA admissions specialists have had to use their existing discretion to consider the case management support as a mitigating factor in the admission process. Finally, though HACA has not seen any real correlation between prior criminal charges and lease violations, they have had to terminate some leases for non-compliance after repeated warnings from their managers and case managers. That has happened only in about 10% of the cases, and the homeless services agency has assisted those individuals in moving to avoid having an eviction on their records.

Rewards

In the two years since the focused collaboration started, HACA has housed 108 chronically homeless individuals with a 90% success rate. Participants have adjusted quickly and easily to become good neighbors with other residents. HACA has made a substantial contribution to a 75% reduction in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in their community.

Partners

HACA is currently developing written agreements with its service partners. A list of partners and their roles follows.

Partner Name	Type of Organization/ Role in Program
Homeward Bound of Asheville and Buncombe County	Homeward Bound is the primary provider of outreach and case management support for the residents housed under this program. HACA works with any local agency that can provide the support, but Homeward Bound has been the backbone of the program.
City of Asheville, Buncombe County, and the Homeless Initiative Advisory Committee	Both the City and County have provided essential financial resources to Homeward Bound for case management services, along with assistance with strategic planning for implementation of the program.
United Way, Western Highlands Center, Mission Hospitals	All of these agencies have provided funding for case management support through Homeward Bound.

Documentation Changes Made

Document	Document Changes
Annual Plan	<p><i>This is the language from the HACA Annual Plan:</i> Need - Homeless individuals and families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategy: Support the process of achieving “housing first” for chronically homeless people by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishing an admission preference for chronically homeless applicants who are receiving case management assistance ○ Actively participating in initiatives arising out of the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness to assist this population ○ Seeking additional resources to develop more units like the Woodfin Apartments targeting this population ○ Working collaboratively with community partners to fund case management services for disabled formerly homeless individuals in Public Housing and the Housing Choice Voucher Program
ACOP and Admin Plan	<p><i>This is the language of the preference in HACA’s Public Housing ACOP. Section 8 Admin Plan language is being amended to mirror this.</i></p> <p>Homeless Persons with Case Management Support: Consistent with the City of Asheville’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, HACA will give one preference point to families/individuals who are homeless as defined by HUD and have been homeless for the last 90 days or more, and who will be receiving regular on-site case management support from a local homeless services, social services or mental health agency for at least one year after moving into a HACA apartment. Status will be verified through the agency providing case management.</p> <p>Because HACA has a significant waiting list for one-bedroom and efficiency units, the first two preferences above for such units will be applied on an alternating basis. For each preference applicant who is housed in such a unit, at least one non-preference applicant will be housed <i>provided</i> that the non-preference applicant has an earlier date and time of application. Additionally, single individuals with a preference are encouraged to join with other applicants to qualify for a unit with more bedrooms.</p>

Words of Wisdom from Asheville

“The program is working very well. In the last two years, we have housed 108 homeless individuals and only 11 of them have had to be terminated for repeated disturbances or illegal activity. With case management support, 90% have made the adjustment to live quietly, without a problem, in their apartments. We are helping end chronic homelessness, including in some cases people who have been homeless here for a decade or more. We have helped to reduce chronic homelessness by more than 75% since the 10-Year Plan began. Case management resources are critical, and are the only real limiting factor in this program. We regularly advocate for more case management resources in the community. We believe that having the case management provided by an outside agency (or agencies), whose mission is to assist homeless people obtain and retain permanent housing is the best model. It prevents confusion between our role as manager of the housing units and the support role provided by the agency. It also provides an independent sounding board for decisions that need to be made by both agencies.”

Contact Person for PHAs Interested in Implementing a Similar Program

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