



PHA Profile: Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority Project-based Voucher Supportive Housing Program

Basic PHA Stats

Location: Columbus Ohio
 Housing Choice Vouchers: 12,600 units
 Public Housing Apartments: 2,200 units

Program Description

The Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) utilizes Project-based Vouchers (PBV) to target housing units in the community for supportive housing for people with multiple barriers to housing, including elderly, persons with disabilities, chronically mentally ill, and homeless individuals and families. CMHA currently has 1850 vouchers under contract for this program.

Description	
Percentage of HCVs that can be project-based under Admin Plan	20%
Percentage or number of project-based vouchers that can be dedicated to homeless or special-needs populations.	No fixed percentages – special needs includes elderly
Project-based vouchers currently under contract	1850
Project-based vouchers currently under contract for homeless or special-needs populations	540 – elderly 50 – VASH 70 – family 1190 – disabled/homeless

Motivation

CMHA recognized the importance of serving targeted special needs populations by providing the housing component of a supportive service program in partnership with provider agencies. By coupling project-based vouchers with new construction and development, CMHA is also able to increase the number of hard units dedicated to affordable and special needs housing in the community.

Resources Required

Management of the PBV program has not required any additional resources. There have been definite savings on annual HQS inspections and marginal savings on screening, briefing and processing that result from the cooperation and efforts of our partner agencies. For a PHA not currently using the PBV program, there would be a front-end learning curve on regulations and procedures.

Challenges

CMHA has found that challenges generally revolve around three areas. Following is a description of their key challenges and the ways they have addressed them.

1. Housing feasibility and development timeline– although the PBVs provided support for operating expenses and a limited amount of debt service, it was still necessary to work with agencies that could access capital development funds (LIHTC, HOME, FHLB grants, etc.). In some cases, CMHA provided equity investments in exchange for a long-term ownership position or a developer fee to make the projects feasible. Development lead times can take 2-3 years because of funding cycles related to financing, development design and planning activities, and construction timetables.
2. Provision of supportive services – the challenge here is to secure long-term commitments for the services. CMHA prefers service providers whose income streams are based upon a tax levy or an established track record in securing grants, donations, etc. (YMCA, e.g.). National Church Residences, a Columbus-based national developer for elderly and handicapped affordable housing, has a services organizational component that provides fundraising capacity, managerial skill sets and other resources that it tailors to fit specific PBV development.
3. Voucher availability – this is primarily an administrative and coordination issue for the PHA to make sure that PBVs are available as units come online and that tenant-based vouchers are available if an existing PBV resident elects to move. The challenge for the PHA is to not be over leased under Section 8 program rules while assisting the project in avoiding delays and vacancies.

Rewards

The PBV Program has enabled CMHA to provide the housing component of the supportive service programs with partner agencies serving a wide variety of special needs populations that it would not otherwise be able to reach because of a limited public housing inventory. From a public relations standpoint, it has greatly enhanced the visibility and the reputation of CMHA in the community. From a business standpoint, it has made CMHA a valuable partner and provided opportunities to enter into joint partnership and development agreements that have the potential to generate funds (development fees, operating cash flow, etc.) and to establish long-term equity/ownership positions that support other CMHA housing activities.

Partners

Partner Agency	Description
Columbus Community Shelter Board	A consortium of local agencies, the City and the County that focuses on providing services to homeless families/individuals through a “Rebuilding Lives” initiative.
National Church Residences	Large affordable housing developer based in Columbus focused on the elderly and disabled. Has a supportive services organizational component and has worked with CMHA as a co-developer.
Community Housing Network	The housing component of the local ADAMH Board. Develops housing and provides services to residents. Operating and development support comes from CMHA in the form of PBVs.
Additional Partners have included: Columbus Housing Partnership (serving families); Veterans Administration; YMCA; and other local agencies.	

Documentation Changes Made

Document	Document Changes
Procedure documents	CMHA prepares an RFP tailored to fit specific objectives (target population, desirable location, type of construction, financing considerations and partnerships, etc.) for each project or projects. Selection factors vary with each RFP. Submission and documentation requirements essentially follow the PBV regulations.

Words of Wisdom from Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority

“The PBV program has enabled us to reach and serve several special needs populations that could not be accommodated in public housing because of the lack of PH funding for supportive services and the staffing skills needed to serve them. We have used the PBV program to complete new construction of over 800 hard units of affordable housing, including a suburban 100-unit elderly project in partnership with National Church Residences that includes market rate, LIHTC and PBV units. We intend to continue the mixed income model in future PBV program efforts. Because of the variety of development activities that the vouchers can support, CMHA is encouraging legislation that would raise the cap on PBVs from 20% to 25% of total vouchers. Working with local officials and partners, we see this as an opportunity to support neighborhood revitalization where affordable housing is needed to support mixed-income populations.”

Contact Person for PHAs Interested in Implementing a Similar Program

Name	Title	Phone	Email
Ron Lebsock	VP – Housing Choice Vouchers	614-421-6244	rlebsock@cmhanet.com