

Opening Doors

A HOUSING PUBLICATION FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

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The New Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program

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CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES
(CCD) HOUSING TASK FORCE

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Overview

On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), which includes a new program designed to address the housing needs of families and individuals in crisis. Administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the new Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) represents a unique one-time commitment by the federal government to respond to the inevitable increase in homelessness anticipated as a result of the current economic crisis.

HPRP is designed as a \$1.5 billion, three-year initiative to: (1) assist with the immediate needs of homeless people; and (2) help households at risk of homelessness to stabilize their living situations. In general, HPRP funds can be used to:

- Cover monthly rent costs for up to 18 months;
- Pay rent and utility arrearages for up to 6 months;

- Provide supportive services to stabilize participants in their housing, including case management, credit counseling and mediation; and
- Issue security and utility deposits.

When Congress created HPRP, they made it clear that HPRP funds must be used to assist individuals and families who are homeless or who would become homeless *but for* the HPRP assistance. Consistent with the goals of the entire ARRA economic stimulus package, Congress also stipulated that HPRP funds be spent quickly. States and communities receiving HPRP funds must spend 60 percent of the funds within two years and 100 percent within three years. In addition, Congress specified that grantees must have their HPRP programs ready to go by September 30, 2009 – an incredibly short period of time for a new federal initiative.

Because of their intended impact on the economy and the nation's current housing problems, all of the new programs created through ARRA – including HPRP – will be closely monitored and highly scrutinized by the federal government in terms of the

HUD has established an online resource for HPRP information at www.hudhre.info/HPRP. This website contains key documents, further details about eligible participants and activities, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Opening Doors

A HOUSING PUBLICATION FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

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The Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides state-of-the-art technical assistance and training to housing and human service organizations so that they may achieve positive outcomes in their work on behalf of people who are disadvantaged and/or disabled. For more information, please contact the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc., 31 Saint James Avenue, Suite 710, Boston, Massachusetts 02116. Phone/TTY: (617) 266-5657 or Fax: (617) 266-4343 or Email: info@tacinc.org.



The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is a national coalition of consumer, advocacy, provider, and professional organizations who advocate on behalf of people of all ages with disabilities in their families. CCD has created the CCD Housing Task Force to focus specifically on housing issues that affect people with disabilities.



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outcomes they produce. This level of federal oversight places significant pressure on HPRP grantees and their sub-grantee partners to roll out the program quickly and achieve results. Congress also made it very clear that HPRP is intended to provide temporary – defined as short term or medium term — assistance rather than permanent housing assistance.

Because of these unique features of HPRP, many people working to expand permanent affordable housing opportunities for extremely low-income people with disabilities are struggling with two HPRP-related issues: (1) figuring out exactly how (if at all) HPRP funds could benefit the lowest-income people with disabilities without sacrificing their long-term housing stability; and (2) convincing HPRP grantees to adopt approaches and strategies, which ensure that the lowest income-people with disabilities receive some benefit from the HPRP program.

This issue of *Opening Doors* is designed to help the disability community maximize the benefits that HUD's new HPRP program could offer to the lowest-income people with disabilities, while also keeping in mind the temporary and highly targeted features of the HPRP program. It includes an overview of the HPRP program, including basic homeless prevention and rapid re-housing approaches, and suggests feasible strategies that HPRP grantees could adopt to ensure that a portion of these funds are utilized by people with disabilities.

As will be discussed below, because of the pressure of the federal deadlines associated with HPRP, most states and communities have already made important decisions about the basic design of their HPRP initiatives. However, that does not mean that HPRP grantees are 'locked in' to these decisions for the entire three years of the program. Many grantees may be willing to make modifications to their basic HPRP program design after they have had a few months of program activity, and as they assess what is working and what is not working in terms of meeting federal requirements and spending deadlines.

For these reasons, it's important for the disability community to learn as much as possible about the HPRP program, including feasible strategies that can both help people with disabilities with the lowest incomes benefit from HPRP, and help HPRP grantees achieve the outcomes envisioned by Congress and required by HUD.

Intent of HPRP

It bears repeating that disability advocates must be clear about the basic purpose of HPRP funds, which is to provide temporary financial and housing assistance, as well as housing relocation and stabilization services. **HPRP is not intended to provide long-term supports, nor is it expected to address all of the financial and supportive services needs of households.** According to statute and newly-issued HUD regulations and policy guidance, this assistance must focus on housing stabilization, linking program participants to community resources and mainstream benefits, and helping these households develop a plan for preventing future housing instability.

In many ways, HPRP mirrors approaches used over the years to assist people with disabilities who are transitioning from institutions or other restrictive settings into the community by providing essential one-time funding for housing-related expenditures typically incurred by someone moving into their own home. Many agencies working on behalf of people with disabilities are familiar with how to cover these 'one-time' or 'time limited' expenses, but ideally as part of a comprehensive housing intervention that includes access to a long-term rental subsidy.

Can HPRP Resources Be Used to Assist Chronically Homeless Individuals?

Yes. HPRP resources can be used to assist chronically homeless individuals – people with disabilities that have been continuously homeless on the street or shelter for the past year or have had 4 episodes of homelessness over the past 3 years.

Since HPRP funding is temporary and time-limited, successful HPRP-funded rapid re-housing programs will need to assess an individual's ability to sustain permanent housing once the HPRP assistance has ended and ensure that there are structured linkages to mainstream permanent affordable housing resources in place before targeting HPRP rental assistance to chronically homeless individuals.

Basic HPRP Program Activities

Essentially, there are two primary homeless-related activities that can be funded with HPRP funds. These are **Homelessness Prevention programs and Rapid Re-Housing programs.**

Homelessness Prevention

Homelessness prevention programs are designed to address the urgent needs of individuals and families at risk of losing their housing through highly targeted temporary assistance that will permit them to remain in stable housing. The HPRP prevention program seeks to address the recent challenges individuals and families may face due to the national economic crisis, such as recent unemployment, health issues, or other personal crisis in their own lives. The expected outcome of HPRP prevention funding is that after providing the temporary assistance (no more than 18 months), individuals and families will remain stably housing.

Rapid Re-Housing

Rapid Re-Housing programs aim to identify homeless individuals and families who, with temporary assistance, can obtain and successfully remain in permanent housing. A core element of the HPRP Rapid Re-Housing program is that homeless individuals and families will be comprehensively assessed to identify any barriers and ensure that these barriers can be overcome with HPRP funds.

HPRP Target Populations, Grantees, and Timelines

HPRP Target Populations

One of the primary target populations for HPRP is individuals and families at risk of homelessness who need temporary assistance to prevent becoming homeless. As documented in *Priced Out in 2008*, published by the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. (TAC) and the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Housing Task Force, there are over four million people with disabilities who, because of their extremely low income from the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, may be living on the edge of homelessness. HPRP provides a valuable opportunity to design programs to prevent people with disabilities with SSI-level incomes from becoming homeless.

The second group of people targeted for HPRP-assistance is those who are already homeless and can successfully utilize temporary assistance in order to obtain housing and achieve housing stability. According to HUD data, on a given night in 2008 there were an estimated 664,000 homeless persons living on the streets, shelters, or in transitional housing. Thirty-six percent of these people suffered from a chronic substance use issue and twenty-six percent had a serious mental illness – including many with multiple co-occurring disabilities. HPRP gives states and localities the opportunity to design new approaches to reduce the number of homeless persons on their streets and in their shelter systems.

For HPRP funded rapid re-housing programs, program participants must be homeless in one of the following situations:

- Sleeping in an emergency shelter;
- Sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation;
- Staying in a publically-funded hospital or institution for **up to 180 days**¹ but was homeless prior to entering that institution;
- Graduating or timing out of transitional housing; or
- Victims of domestic violence.

For HPRP-funded homeless prevention programs, grantees and sub-grantees need to document that participants would essentially be homeless if HPRP funds were not made available to them. This is defined as individuals and families who are about to be evicted or those who do not have stable housing for the next 30 days.

In addition to being homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, for all HPRP participants, grantees must demonstrate that they:

- Have no other housing options, and no financial resources or support networks to obtain or remain in housing;
- Have an income equal to 50 percent or less of area medium income (AMI) – available online at www.huduser.org/datasets/il.html; and
- Agree to an initial consultation to determine appropriate assistance.

Local Targeting

HUD has given HPRP grantees the ability to choose to target HPRP resources and activities to specific populations. For example, while the HPRP guidelines require that participants have income of 50 percent of AMI or less, a community can further target its HPRP funds to participants with income of 30 percent of AMI or less. Keep in mind, however, that HPRP is designed to provide temporary assistance and part of the assessment process should include an evaluation of the household's ability to maintain housing after the HPRP assistance is no longer available.

Communities can further target resources to homeless persons with disabilities, such as people with physical disabilities, mental illness or substance abuse issues. Unlike HUD's other homeless programs, HPRP funds can also be used to prevent people who are being discharged from institutions, such as mental health hospitals, from becoming homeless (see box on [page 12](#)).

¹ This limit to an institution stay is substantially longer than the 30-day stay allowed in HUD's McKinney-Vento homeless programs.

HPRP Grantees and Timelines

HUD is responsible for distributing HPRP funds to each state and over 475 localities using a modification of HUD's Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) program formula. States and localities that already participate in the ESG program will be receiving HPRP funds equivalent to 8 times their annual ESG appropriation – a huge increase in funding for homeless-related activities. In addition, over 175 localities slated to receive HPRP funds have never participated in the ESG program – and may face an even greater challenge developing effective program models and efficient systems for the utilization and administration of HPRP funds.

These challenges begin with the HPRP timelines imposed by Congress:

- **March 19, 2009** – HUD notified potential HPRP grantees regarding their allocation and application requirements.
- **May 18, 2009** – Grantees were required to submit their HPRP application packages (known as Substantial Amendments) to HUD.
- **July 9, 2009** – HUD's review of Substantial Amendments completed.
- **September 1, 2009** – HUD obligates all funds to state and local grantees.
- **September 30, 2009** – All grantees must obligate their HPRP funds (i.e., all sub-grantees or project sponsors must be selected and under contract by that date).
- **March 19, 2011** – Grantees must have spent 60% of HPRP funds or risk having funds de-obligated.
- **March 19, 2012** – All HPRP funds must be spent.

HPRP Application/Substantial Amendments

Each grantee was required to submit an application to HUD for HPRP funds by May 18, 2009, including a Substantial Amendment to their Consolidated Plan (see *Opening Doors* Issue #8 – available online at www.tacinc.org – for more information on the Consolidated Plan). Grantees were given two months to submit this Substantial Amendment, including a plan for how they intend to use HPRP resources. As part of the Substantial Amendment, grantees

Example of a Homelessness Prevention Program

The HPRP Homeless Prevention component gives communities flexibility to design programs that respond to local needs and resources. One community that has taken the lead in focusing resources on homelessness prevention prior to HPRP funds being available is Hennepin County, Minnesota. Hennepin County has made it a community-wide strategy to prevent homelessness to achieve both cost effective and quality of life outcomes.

Using TANF block grant funds and state general revenue funds, Hennepin County provides legal services, short and long term case management, landlord and tenant mediation, and short-term financial assistance to individuals and families who could normally afford their own housing but are at risk of losing it due to an unforeseen financial crisis.

Between 2007 and 2008, Hennepin County prevented more than 2100 families and 477 individuals from becoming homeless with the assistance. The average was \$875 per family and \$610 per individuals compared to the average cost of one episode of homelessness, which is estimated to be \$5,000 per family. For more information, visit www.co.hennepin.mn.us/images/HCInternet/YCG/Newsroom/Fact%20Sheets/Housing%20-%20Rapid%20Exit,%20Homeless%20Prevention_2009.pdf.

had to make decisions regarding how much money they planned to spend within each of HUD's four HPRP budget categories (see below) and describe the process it intended to use to select HPRP sub-grantees (such as sole sourcing or a competitive bidding process).

Under HUD rules, the HPRP Application/Substantial Amendment process also included a 12-day public comment period so that community stakeholders could become more informed about proposed HPRP activities and provide feedback regarding the HPRP program design. For some states and localities, especially some of those 175 localities administering HUD homeless funding for the first time,

Continued on pg. 8

How PHAs Can Play a Role in HPRP Activities

As described in this issue of *Opening Doors*, HPRP is a valuable tool for states and localities to address immediate needs of people and prevent homelessness among low-income households. It is also a critical resource for ensuring that homeless individuals and families can quickly exit the shelter system through the delivery of rapid re-housing and wrap-around services.

HPRP is a time-limited temporary resource and grantees should be careful not to design a program that creates a 'cliff effect' at the 18-month cut off point, resulting in households that are no longer eligible to receive HPRP assistance becoming homeless again. One way to avoid this situation is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of potential HPRP participants to ensure that they have the resources and skills to maintain their housing once the HPRP assistance ends.

Another way to avoid the cliff effect is to develop linkages with the mainstream affordable housing delivery system, most importantly, Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). There are over 3,400 PHAs in the nation that have access to some of the largest federal housing programs, including public housing and the Housing Choice Voucher program (formerly known as Section 8). Most PHAs are experienced rental assistance administrators and are therefore very qualified to administer HPRP-funded short-term and medium-term rental assistance. Many PHAs are also actively involved in their local Continuum of Care and administer HUD McKinney-Vento homeless assistance funding. Grantees should look to PHAs to be an integral player in any HPRP strategy.

Linking HPRP to the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Although Congress and HUD establish the laws and regulations that serve as the framework within which PHAs operate, PHAs are given substantial discretion to design and implement Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program policies that address the unique needs of their community. To avoid the cliff effect referenced above and create residential stability for HPRP households, HPRP grantees could advocate with PHAs to create a systems-level linkage between HPRP-funded rental assistance and Housing Choice vouchers through a waiting list preference.

PHAs have the discretion to establish 'local preferences' in their HCV programs, subject to HUD approval, to reflect the needs of their particular community. HCV applicants who qualify for these preferences may be able to 'move ahead' of other households on the waiting list who do not qualify for any preference. A PHA could choose to establish a local preference for those households receiving HPRP-funded rental assistance.

Adopting a local preference is a significant decision for a PHA does not want to appear to be choosing one group over another. With this in mind, HPRP grantees could advocate that the PHA dedicate a small portion of the vouchers that 'turn over' each year to this local preference category. For example, a PHA administering 1,000 Housing Choice Voucher with an average turnover rate of 5 percent per year (e.g., 50 vouchers) could adopt a

local preference directing 10 of these 50 turnover vouchers to households receiving HPRP rental assistance.

Establishing this type of innovative policy is allowable within HUD regulations, but does require approval from the PHA's Board of Directors (or other governing body) and, depending on local and state laws, may also need approval from the jurisdiction's governing body (e.g., City Council, Board of Supervisors, etc.) In addition, all PHA preferences for the HCV program must be documented in both the HCV Administrative Plan and PHA Plan.

Strategies for Creating Effective HPRP-PHA Partnerships

PHAs with a strong track-record of innovation may be very willing to adopt a local preference for some number of HPRP households to receive HCV after HPRP assistance ends. However, because adopting a new preference does have an effect on other households on the HCV waiting list, most PHAs will need to hear some very convincing arguments before agreeing to change their HCV policies. Some PHAs may be concerned that their Boards of Commissioners will be reluctant to approve a new preference, or be unwilling to open their waiting list for HPRP households, or be concerned that this approach would create too much work for an already overburdened PHA staff.

To address these concerns, it is important that HPRP grantees do their homework and be prepared to respond to these potential objections. Some of

these responses could include:

- **HPRP is a one-time, time-limited opportunity that has the full support of the Obama Administration; HUD officials;** and other federal, state, and local officials. Using the HCV program would be consistent with HUD policies (see HUD Notices PIH 2003-25 and 2006-27: *Homeless Initiative in Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Programs*) and could lead to good press coverage and foster stronger community relationships for the PHA.
- Assisting HPRP households with disabilities to obtain Housing Choice Vouchers will **help the PHA meet its legal obligations to affirmatively further fair housing.**
- **The majority of HPRP households will be able to ‘lease in place’** in their HPRP-assisted units, since

PHAs and Homelessness Prevention

PHAs are also a good source of data on families that are at risk of losing their housing and may be eligible for HPRP. For example, PHAs collect information about evictions from public housing and terminations from the HCV program that may be useful in determining how many households to target as part of a HPRP-funded prevention program.

In some communities, the PHA serves as the first stop for families in crisis looking for help and may be a key referral agency in any HPRP-funded assessment process.

all HPRP units must meet HUD Housing Quality Standards and rent reasonableness requirements. Leasing in place allows the PHA to immediately draw HCV program administrative funds for this voucher. To ensure a seamless transition between the two rental subsidy streams, HPRP grantees could require participating landlords to agree to accept a Housing Choice Voucher once it becomes available.

- In accordance with HCV regulations, PHAs with closed **waiting lists would be required to re-open them in order to accept new applicants with HPRP assistance. However, the PHAs outreach activities could be limited to potentially eligible HPRP assisted households.** HPRP grantees could assist the PHAs by offering to conduct this outreach, to complete and submit HCV applications, or to take other steps to minimize the work required by the PHA.
- **HPRP households will have stabilized their housing circumstances and will have also benefited from HPRP case management services.**

Next Steps for Engaging Your PHA

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue of *Opening Doors*, Congress has imposed strict timelines for utilizing HPRP resources. As a result, HPRP grantees are scrambling to design their program models, select HPRP providers, and begin offering HPRP assistance. It is critical that these grantees **ACT NOW** to form partnership with PHAs.

- **Learn about the history of your local or state PHA in assisting special populations,** including initiatives that, for some reason, might not have been successful;

- **Approach the PHA as a partner,** rather than simply as an advocate. Be open to their suggestions and concerns in order to create an HPRP Housing Choice Voucher initiative that works for everyone;

- **Educate the PHA about the HPRP program,** including the HPRP services that will be offered and how they will help to ensure housing stability;

- **Try to obtain ‘buy-in’ from the PHA Executive Director and the Board as soon as possible.** A public hearing may be needed in order to make changes to the HCV Administrative Plan – an event that may be difficult to schedule during the summer vacation months;

- Make sure that your HPRP-HCV initiative includes a **comprehensive system to make quick referrals to available vouchers, provide housing search assistance (if needed), and provide stabilization services and other move-in-related expenses;** and

- **Sustain the dialogue** between the partners over the long term, including scheduling regular updates, monitoring progress, and making any mid-course corrections to improve outcomes.

HPRP is a very new, very flexible, and very important federal program that is breaking new ground in community efforts to address homelessness across the country. While it may take time to fully appreciate and deploy the array of HPRP-funded strategies that could be used to assist vulnerable households, communities with innovative and outcome-driven HPRP programs will stand the best chance of affecting a significant reduction of homelessness during the coming three years.

this expedited timelines presented significant challenges to program design and implementation.

HUD's HPRP guidelines state that HPRP-funded activities can only be carried out by units of local governments or non-profit organizations. Local grantees can administer the funds themselves, contract with an experienced non-profit organization, or contract with a different local governmental entity to directly provide services to HPRP-eligible households. State grantees however, may not administer the HPRP funds directly and must contract with eligible sub-grantees to provide all HPRP activities. State grantees may contract with non-profit organizations or local governments, including localities that already receive a direct allocation of HPRP funds from HUD.

How HPRP Funds Can Be Used To Prevent and End Homelessness

All HPRP activities must be focused on housing, financial assistance to pay for housing or services to

keep people in housing and/or to find housing. Specifically, HPRP-financed Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing initiatives can spend HPRP funds within four explicit budget categories:

1. Financial assistance;
2. Housing relocation and stabilization services;
3. Data collection and evaluation; and
4. Administrative costs.

Financial Assistance

Under the Financial Assistance category, grantees and sub-grantees can use HPRP funds to pay for:

- Short term rental assistance (3 months);
- Medium term rental assistance (4-18 months);
- Rent arrearages (up to 6 months);
- Security deposits;
- Utility deposits and utility payments (up to 18 months, including up to 6 months arrearages);
- Moving cost assistance; and
- Motel and hotel vouchers (up to 30 days) when a permanent housing placement has been identified.

HUD McKinney-Vento SHP Rapid Re-Housing for Families Demonstration Program

In the 2008 Continuum of Care (CoC) Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), HUD made available \$24 million in Supportive Housing Program (SHP) resources to fund a *Rapid Re-Housing for Families Demonstration Program*. This initiative sought to promote the rapid re-housing of homeless households with dependent children.

The Rapid Re-housing Demonstration competition resulted in twenty three applicants being selected out of 212 proposals submitted. Grants ranged in scale

from \$78,300 for a project in Overland Park/Shawnee/Johnson Park, Kansas CoC to the maximum allowable grant of \$2 million each in San Francisco and the New Orleans/Jefferson Parish CoCs. The list of Rapid Re-housing Demonstration sites can be found online at www.hud.gov/news/release.cfm?content=pr09-010.cfm#chart.

The Rapid Re-Housing for Families Demonstration program is different from HPRP rapid re-housing initiatives in several ways. First, the Demonstration limits the eligible

population to homeless families with dependent children while HPRP can serve both homeless individuals and homeless families. In addition, the Demonstration program grantees must provide rental assistance for the short term of 3-6 months or medium term 12-15 months. In the HPRP program, grantees can serve homeless persons for any number of months up to a maximum of 18 months. The Demonstration Program also requires a CoC-wide centralized intake process. In HPRP a centralized intake is recommended, but is not required.

Short and Medium Term Rental Assistance

HPRP resources can be used to cover short term rental assistance by paying rent for up to three months. Generally, this option would target persons with few barriers to obtaining and retaining housing. For prevention-focused programs, HPRP grantees can pay rent for the housing unit currently occupied by the individual or family at risk of homelessness or pay rent for a new unit the individual or family identifies and moves into to prevent them from becoming homeless. Obviously, for rapid re-housing programs, HPRP funds can be used to pay rent for a new housing unit for an individual or family who is already homeless.

Recognizing that preventing homelessness and moving people out of homelessness may require more than a three-month commitment of rental assistance, HPRP funds can also be used for rental assistance from 4 to 18 months (referred to as medium-term rental assistance). Grantees must assess HPRP participants receiving medium term rental assistance on a quarterly basis to ensure that they are still eligible to receive HPRP assistance. The 18-month maximum is a firm deadline and cannot be extended, therefore grantees should design their rental assistance approaches to ensure that participants will be able to sustain their housing at the end of the HPRP assistance.

Unlike most other HUD programs, grantees have flexibility to determine their own policy regarding how much HPRP households should contribute towards rent in HPRP rental assistance programs. Grantees can choose to require participants to make rent payments, based on a percentage of income (e.g., 30 % of income); a flat rent (often referred to as a shallow rent subsidy); graduating or declining tenant rent payments over time; or not charge participants any rent at all.

The 18-month limit on HPRP rental assistance poses the greatest challenge in terms of ensuring that people with disabilities with SSI-level incomes benefit from HPRP resources. Grantees may need to identify long-term rental assistance to which HPRP participants can transition after 18 months. States or localities that have already pioneered 'bridge' rental subsidy programs for people with disabilities

For all HPRP financial assistance, only third party payments are allowed. Grantees cannot make direct payments to program participants. In addition, before approving financial assistance, the grantee must ensure that a comprehensive assessment has been completed that demonstrates that the need for assistance is temporary and that the individual or family will be able to sustain their housing once HPRP funds are withdrawn.

may have the greatest chance to benefit from HPRP because the concept (and pitfalls) associated with using temporary rental subsidy approaches to link people with disabilities to permanent housing assistance have already been successfully pioneered. [Page 6](#) provides more information on how mainstream Public Housing Agencies can use Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers for HPRP participants.

Rent Arrearages

Many individuals and families are at risk of losing their housing because they have unpaid rent and are at risk of being evicted. HPRP funds can be used to pay for up to 6 months of rent arrearage. The use of HPRP funds to pay arrearages can be combined with short or medium term rental assistance payments but together these payments cannot exceed 18 months of rental assistance.

For homeless or at-risk households fortunate enough to receive permanent housing rental subsidies, such as a Housing Choice Voucher or Public Housing unit, HPRP funds can be used to pay up to 6 months of rent arrearages for the tenant portion of the rent. For example, according to HUD's HPRP *Frequently Asked Questions* document, if a Housing Choice Voucher tenant lost employment and subsequently did not pay the appropriate tenant rent contribution, HPRP funds can be used to pay up to 6 months of that arrearage.

Utility Payments and Utility Arrearages

Similar to payment of rent and rent arrearages, HPRP funds can be used to pay for up to 18 months of a tenant's utilities, including up to 6 months of utility arrearages. Payment must be made directly to the utility company and cannot be paid to the tenant.

Motel and Hotel Vouchers

HPRP resources can be used to pay for reasonable motel and hotel vouchers for up to 30 days once a participant has

been deemed eligible for the program and once a permanent housing unit has been identified. However, vouchers can only be used if the new permanent housing unit is not immediately available and if no appropriate shelter beds are available. For example, a homeless family has been determined eligible for a community's rapid re-housing program and has located a housing unit that will meet program guidelines. However, the housing unit has to be painted and minor repairs corrected before the family can move in. If the community has no available shelter beds for the family, HPRP funds can be used in a hotel or motel for up to 30 days.

Moving Cost Assistance

A community can choose to use its HPRP funds to cover reasonable moving costs to assist homeless individuals and families to move into their new housing unit. Reasonable costs could include the cost of a moving truck rental, moving supplies, security and utility deposit, and first and last month's rent. When security and utility deposits are made, HUD leaves it up to the grantee to decide to whom the deposit gets returned (i.e., to the grantee, sub-grantee, or the participants). If the deposit is returned to the grantee or sub-grantee, the program must treat it as program income.

Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services

In addition to HPRP Financial Assistance activities described above, a grantee can also spend HPRP funds on Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services. Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services are temporary supportive services provided to individuals and families to assist them to obtain and/or retain their housing. Supportive services include case management, outreach and engagement, housing search and placement, legal services and credit repair. HPRP funds can not be used to fund child care, employment training, education, transportation, food, household items, or furniture and appliances.

An HPRP-funded homelessness prevention program may use Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services to pay the salary of an individual who conducts outreach to identify individuals and families at imminent risk of losing their housing and triage their immediate and long-range needs. In addition, a case manager could be hired to meet with the

Example of a Rapid Re-Housing Program

Although HUD HPRP Rapid Re-Housing programs are not yet operational, there are existing models of Rapid Re-Housing programs that can be studied by communities interested in learning more about best practices and strategies to implement effective programs.

In Columbus, Ohio, the Family Housing Collaborative (FHC) is a partnership between the Salvation Army, the YMCA, and the Community Shelter Board (CSB) to assist families staying at the YWCA's Family Center Shelter. The YWCA assesses families and refers those who require short-term transitional support in order to stabilize them after they leave the shelter.

FHC services are initiated while the families are at the shelter and are intended to assist the family to locate permanent affordable housing within three weeks of the referral. FHC case managers assist families with housing searches and link families to CSB resources such as security deposits, first month's rent, and utilities to expedite their access to permanent housing.

Case management services continue until the family is stabilized in their housing with sufficient income and linkages to community based services. In 2008, 247 families were assisted, with 97% achieving a permanent housing outcome. For more information visit www.csb.org.

individual or family to provide links to long-term resources in the community. Legal services might be utilized to address eviction proceedings.

An HPRP-funded rapid re-housing program might use these Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services to pay outreach workers to go into shelters to interview and assess potential program participants. Resources could be used to help eligible participants locate appropriate housing in the community. Credit repair services might include obtaining credit reports and assisting with credit counseling. HPRP funds cannot pay credit card accounts or make loan payments.

[Importance of Assessment and Triage](#)

The success of any HPRP-funded initiative relies heavily on a comprehensive assessment and triage system that can be utilized by all agencies providing HPRP assistance. HUD encourages HPRP grantees to develop and utilize a uniform assessment tool that would:

- Examine current housing condition;
- Explore income and employment status;
- Provide a housing history;
- Determine barriers to housing;
- Assess family support; and
- Determine any mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

To be effective, the assessment method should not only obtain needed documentation to determine HPRP eligibility (income, housing/homeless status), but also offer preliminary case management and referrals to other agencies, and filter in those households in most need of HPRP assistance with the highest possibility of success while filtering out those families who would succeed without HPRP assistance and those that have greater longer-term needs.

Data Collection and Evaluation

Grantees are required to report HPRP activities through HUD's Continuum of Care's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). There are very specific reporting requirements for HPRP funds that can be found online at www.hudhre.info/HPRP. To meet these

requirements, HPRP funds can be used to cover reasonable HMIS costs, such as necessary software and hardware expenses, connectivity costs, training for both HMIS costs, such as administrators, and other items needed to expand HMIS to new users or new sites. HPRP funds cannot be used to plan or develop new HMIS programs nor contract for program evaluation. HUD will initiate its own evaluation of the HPRP program.

Administrative Costs

Grantees can use up to 5 percent of their total HPRP grant to cover administrative costs. Eligible administrative costs include pre-award expenses, such as staff costs, to prepare the substantial amendments and other application documents and expenses related to the public comment period. Other eligible administrative costs include: accounting for the use of the funds (including staff salaries that carry out invoicing, billing, and accounting activities); preparing reports to HUD; the prorated share of program audits; and training for staff on the specifics of the HPRP program. According to HUD's *Frequently Asked Questions* document, grantees can also choose to use their HPRP administrative funds to hire a consultant to assist with aspects of grant administration, including tasks related to the allocation of funds to sub-grantees, system/program design, data collection and reporting, etc., after the HPRP funds have been awarded by HUD.

HPRP administrative costs can not be used to cover staff costs associated with carrying out activities under the Financial Assistance or Housing Relocation and stabilization services components of HPRP, as these salaries would be eligible under those components.

For more information on HPRP visit:

- National Alliance to End Homelessness: www.endhomelessness.org
 - HUD's Homelessness Resource Exchange: www.hudhre.info
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Grantees are expected to share a reasonable and appropriate amount of the administrative fee with sub-grantees. The HPRP guidelines do not stipulate what this share of administrative funds should be, leaving it to the grantee to determine the reasonable and appropriate amount.

Using HPRP to Assist Extremely Low Income People with Disabilities

HPRP grantees across the nation are making plans for this new money right now. It is important to learn more about what is going on in your community and how HPRP resources could be used to meet the needs of people with disabilities. To learn more:

- **Get the right contact information** – find out if your locality got funds directly from HUD by visiting the list of grantees on line at www.hudhre.info/documents/

HPRPGranteesCDBGContacts.pdf. If your city or town is not included on this list, then your area will be served by the state HPRP allocation.

- **Review the important documents** – request a copy of the Substantial Amendment and any related documents – such as a Request for Proposal (RFP) – to learn what the plans are for using the HPRP funds in your community.
- **Get involved** – learn what the timeline and planning process is for allocating funds and ask if you can attend meetings and be put on the mailing list.
- **Make connections** – once the funds are awarded, get a list of the local agencies that will be implementing HPRP-funded prevention and/or rapid re-housing programs. Set up meetings with these agencies to learn more about the services offered and how to access them. Regularly check in with these agencies over the next 3 years to learn if there have been any changes in the design or delivery of these services.

Targeting HPRP to Individuals Leaving Institutions

The State of New Hampshire is making over \$550,000 in HPRP funds available to support a Housing Transition Pilot Program. This pilot program will provide medium-term rental assistance to approximately 26 individuals who have a severe mental illness and are ready for discharge from an institutional setting, but lack any housing options in the community. With the goal of preventing and reducing homelessness for individuals with a severe mental illness in New Hampshire, the State seeks to demonstrate, through clinical and financial measures, that the program

is a cost effective and clinically-effective model of care for homeless individuals with severe mental illness.

The participants will be required to apply for a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, and will be provided rental assistance until such time as they receive a housing subsidy, or some other viable housing option becomes available. The pilot is being funded by both HPRP and state resources. HPRP funds will be used for the initial 18 months of an individual's rental assistance, followed by state funds that will continue to provide

funding until the participant acquires a more permanent rental subsidy.

The program includes funding for a housing coordinator who will assist these individuals in accessing and obtaining housing, assist with moving and settling into housing, and support the individuals in maintaining their housing. In addition, the Pilot Program will be linked with community-based clinical services that will assist individuals in managing their illness and teach skills that will assist them in maintaining their housing.