



# Moving to Work (MTW) Newsletter

*Increasing Cost Efficiency, Self-Sufficiency and Housing Choice*

## Volume 1, Issue 1

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## From the MTW Director's Desk

On behalf of the Moving to Work (MTW) Office, welcome to the first issue of the quarterly MTW Newsletter. Over ten years into the demonstration, many agencies have begun to see the impacts of their MTW initiatives, and this newsletter will serve as a policy forum for agencies to share experiences and lessons learned with one another. This inaugural newsletter includes articles from the Housing Authority of the County of San Mateo (HACSM) on its efforts to reduce homelessness through the Housing Readiness Program (HRP) and from Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA) on its partnership with Project Women, a program designed to provide housing, job training and education to increase single mothers' standard of living and assist them in becoming self-sufficient. Both articles highlight how MTW agencies are engaging in partnerships with local organizations to better serve at-risk populations. These partnerships leverage the expertise of each organization to provide a more comprehensive level of service, with the goal of increasing the success rate for program participants. We appreciate HACSM and LMHA's contributions and look forward to all future MTW agency contributions. Since the articles in this newsletter are written by MTW agencies, HUD welcomes all agencies to submit ideas and articles for future newsletters to [mtw-info@hud.gov](mailto:mtw-info@hud.gov).

Sincerely,

Ivan Pour  
Director, MTW Demonstration Program

## **Housing Authority of the County of San Mateo Focuses on Homelessness**

In 2005, San Mateo County published Housing Our People Effectively (HOPE), a strategic plan, providing recommendations and strategies to end homelessness in the county. One of the key programmatic responses to the needs identified in the HOPE plan is the Housing Readiness Program (HRP) developed by the Housing Authority of the County of San Mateo (HACSM).

HACSM manages the program's rental assistance component, which leverages approximately \$750,000 per year in Section 8 housing subsidies in the form of 60 time-limited (three years) Housing Choice Vouchers to serve up to 60 homeless households. San Mateo County's Center on Homelessness worked with HACSM to identify partnering organizations to provide wraparound support services to program participants.

Case management services are currently being provided by the Mental Health Association of San Mateo County, Shelter Network, Samaritan House, and the San Mateo County Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (both Mental Health and Alcohol and Drug Services). The value of these services is estimated at about \$200,000 per year. Several MTW authorizations have made the HRP program possible, including HACSM's ability to establish portability policies, payment standards, a reasonable policy for determining income and eligibility, waiting list procedures and establishing local self-sufficiency policies.

In November 2009, HACSM was approached by a Mills College graduate student regarding the possibility of a policy-related research project on a current housing program. This solicitation was well received as HACSM had just completed the lease up process for the 60 HRP participants and was preparing to conduct an initial evaluation of the project.

The following findings are related to HRP implementation:

- The selection process ensures that all those who are housed meet eligibility criteria through the use of the Agency Referral form, the selection committee meeting and HACSM eligibility screening.
- As hoped, referral agencies were successful in bringing clients with different experiences of homelessness and underlying reasons for homelessness to the program.
- Lines of communication and support between HACSM and referral agencies are well defined during the selection process. The project design provides clear criteria, useful forms and frequent communication.
- Lines of communication and support between HACSM and referral agencies after clients are housed are not clearly framed. Reporting requirements and timelines for reports are not clearly stated.
- Each referral agency brought programmatic strengths to HRP. Safe Harbor and Shelter Network's self sufficiency and housing case management models suit the program's focus on self sufficiency. The Mental Health Association and Behavioral Health Recovery Services' intensive case management and treatment models enable them to meet monthly in-home case management required for the first twelve months of client tenancy.
- Some challenges in implementation of the program were identified. Lack of specific

funding for HRP clients at Samaritan House's Safe Harbor and Shelter Network resulted in these clients being added to the standard case load of the on-staff case managers, limiting the follow up that could be undertaken for clients. Further, Shelter Network's protocol, which requires clients to come in after being housed to formally sign-up for case management and create a new case plan, resulted in some non-compliance by clients with the case management requirement.

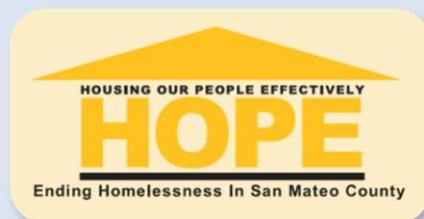
- One client recommended to HRP by BHRS was to be case managed by Shelter Network. This client was not successfully transferred and as a result is not being case managed by either agency.
- Innovations were developed by Samaritan House and BHRS' Alcohol and other Drugs (AOD) division specifically for HRP. Samaritan House's Safe Harbor shelter developed a monthly peer-group meeting specifically for HRP clients. These meetings provide an opportunity for presentations on specific issues, for peer support and for case manager check-ins. BHRS developed HRP specific eligibility screening documents to be used by AOD Treatment Providers and an assessment document to help the agency determine the appropriateness of a client referral.

The Homeless Management Information System, as it is being used, does not provide a strong source for reporting or evaluation.

The following recommendations are offered based on the findings in the report:

1. HACSM can address the issue of client non-compliance with case management through four specific actions:
  - Reinforce these requirements directly with clients.
  - Have timely access to data to determine if clients are complying.
  - Include compliance with case management as part of the Recertification process.
  - Have a clear stakeholder-wide understanding of the impact of non-compliance by clients.
2. HACSM can increase communication levels with, and support of, the referral agencies through three specific actions:
  - Develop specific referral agency reporting requirements and timelines.
  - Hold meeting with referral agencies two or three times a year for purpose of sharing client progress.
  - Use meetings as needed to develop processes or emphasize aspects of the program that need referral agency attention.
3. HACSM could modify the Agency Referral in two specific ways:
  - Re-work the service plan portion of the Agency Referral to direct agencies to develop case plans focused on the three required goals for case plans: maintain stable housing, increase income and establish savings.
  - Add specific questions geared to capture additional information related to clients' case plans and goals prior to becoming an HRP client.
4. Additional research in subsequent years of the program is recommended. HACSM can pursue additional evaluation with particular foci on data collection and on process evaluation as the program matures.

*For additional information, contact Cindy Chan at [cchan@smchousing.org](mailto:cchan@smchousing.org)*



## **Louisville Metro Housing Authority Partners with Project Women**

Single heads of low-income households, especially single women with children, often face multiple barriers to furthering their education and obtaining employment that provide their families with adequate income to become self-sufficient. Often the inability to have and maintain household stability derails the family's goal of higher education and results in a college "drop-out" and missed opportunities for the "drop-out" and their families. It is not uncommon for these families to feel defeated or generally lack hope of a better future.

To help families in Louisville pull through these situations, Family Scholar House (FSH), in partnership with Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA), Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) and other community leaders created the Louisville Scholar House (LSH). The campus provides affordable housing for up to 56 low-income families while the parents pursue their college degrees. Through the supportive housing and programs available at the Louisville Scholar House campus student parents can balance school, work and family, and achieve their goal of attaining a college education.

The combination of housing, childcare, and intensive support services and programming makes it possible for student parents to lift themselves and their families out poverty. The assistance provided through LSH not only has an impact on the first generation, but also on future generations. LSH allows children of single parents to have stable school environments while their parents are enrolled in the program. This year 104 children in families residing at Scholar House remained in the same school the entire school year. Success in school for children of low-income families is a key element to ending the cycle of poverty.

Each year LMHA allocates up to 56 Housing Choice Vouchers to participants at LSH for rental assistance. The Moving to Work Demonstration Program has made this initiative possible by authorizing LMHA to create a preference for HCV assistance for families who participate in the Scholar House program. The referral program requires participants to meet criteria established by both the partnering organization and LMHA. The voucher is initially tied to the LSH program, however, once a participant completes the program they can utilize the portability of their voucher to move to a location of their choice, or to enter into the LMHA Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership program. LMHA expects tenant-based assistance will only be needed while the graduate is seeking employment that provides an income-level sufficient to move to market-rate housing.

The best evidence of the benefits of the program comes from graduates and participants who have lived this experience.

From Stephanie (age 42): *"Going to college and earning a degree will change my life. I will be able to live independently and make enough money to support myself and my child. Our lives will be more stable than they have been. None of this would be possible if I had not moved into Louisville Scholar House...Even since I have started college, my opinions have changed...I tend to be less judgmental towards people and I think twice about different circumstances and issues, putting myself in their shoes...My future holds promise and excitement for me, thanks to my college education."*

As one graduate, Elizabeth, age 30, describes:

*"Family Scholar House embraced my family and believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. I earned my associate's degree in May of 2008.*

*With the support of Family Scholar House, I enrolled in the University of Louisville's Kent School of Social Work full-time. Two weeks before Christmas my family received the keys to our first home... In May of 2010 I earned a bachelor's in Social Work with Cum Laude Honors and began graduate school only four days later. Today, I am independent, self-supporting, and free of all government assistance. I no longer have to operate in survival mode; I am living my life to the fullest."*

Elizabeth is one of seven families to date that have been able to purchase homes of their own. Four additional families have also recently entered the Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program after graduating from college and the Louisville Scholar House. In addition, Family Scholar House participants have earned 42 college degrees, 15 of which have been in the two years since the Louisville Scholar House opened. This is particularly powerful since 73% of the student parents in our program are the first in their families to go to college and 40% are the first to graduate from high school.

Oleria (age 22), discusses her achievements:

*"The Family Scholar House represents what I believe in and the staff is very committed to each individual and their success. Throughout my participation in the program, I have obtained a Certified Nursing certificate, transferred to the University of Louisville, obtained employment that has taken me out of poverty, and more importantly, I have graduated from college. I am immensely grateful...for the emotional, academic and housing support."*

A second Scholar House campus, Downtown Scholar House, which also has 56 units is nearing completion and will be operating very soon. And a third Scholar House program, Stoddard-Johnson Scholar House, with 57 units is in the works. LMHA has committed to providing voucher assistance to participants at both locations.

It is clear that the collaboration with Louisville Metro Housing Authority makes household stability possible and, that with the intense focus of program activities and requirements, success is attainable for individuals like Elizabeth and Oleria. This is good not only for the participating families but is also a benefit to local employers and our community as a whole.

*For additional information, contact Tim Barry at [Barry@lmha1.org](mailto:Barry@lmha1.org)*



**Louisville Scholar House Ribbon Cutting**

## **MTW Updates**

Attachment B of the Standard MTW Agreement (Form 50900), which contains the reporting requirements for Annual MTW Plans and Reports, is set to expire in December 2011. The need to re-submit Form 50900 for OMB approval presents an opportunity to revise and improve the requirements. The MTW Office sent a revised draft of the Form 50900 to all agencies on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. The MTW Office is now revising the Form 50900 based on suggestions and comments provided by agencies. The revised Form 50900 will be submitted to the Federal Register this spring.

We are pleased to announce the addition of two new MTW agencies as a result of the 2010 MTW Competition: Boulder Housing Partners and the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Housing Authority. Pursuant to the 2010 Competition Notice, these two agencies will be implementing controlled studies to test their alternate rent strategies. Additionally, the three agencies admitted into MTW as a result of the 2009 MTW Competition – Champaign County, Orlando and Tacoma – have all executed the Standard MTW Agreement. We look forward to working with and learning from all of our new agencies!

## **Agency News**

**San Mateo County Receives Star Award** – The Housing Authority of the County of San Mateo received the San Mateo County "Star Award" in the Program Performance category for the agency's MTW Tiered Subsidy Initiative, which revolutionizes how rental subsidies are calculated and demystifies the process for participating families. The goals associated with the Tiered Subsidy Initiative include: reducing the perception of too much "red tape" for landlords and participants in the program, reducing the length of time for perspective participants to complete the eligibility determination process, reducing the average number of days for eligible participants to find a rental unit and move in, and increasing the staff time dedicated to supporting participant self-sufficiency activities.

**Oakland Housing Authority Receives Special Achievement Award** — The Oakland Housing Authority received an award for "Special Achievement in PHA Administration," awarded for the smooth disposition of the agency's scattered sites.

## **MTW Program Background**

The Moving to Work (MTW) demonstration was established to give public housing authorities (PHAs) and HUD flexibility to design and test innovative, locally-designed strategies in pursuit of the national goal of delivering rental assistance more efficiently. MTW PHAs are permitted to seek exemption from many existing public housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program rules found in the United States Housing Act of 1937 in pursuit of the three MTW statutory objectives:

- Reduce cost and achieve greater cost effectiveness in Federal expenditures;
- Give incentives to families with children where the head of household is working, seeking work, or is preparing for work by participating in job training, educational programs, or programs that assist people to obtain employment and become economically self-sufficient; and
- Increase housing choices for low-income families.

MTW serves as a laboratory for efforts to alter or streamline how public housing and HCV rental assistance is distributed nationally, regionally, and locally. MTW agencies are expected to use the opportunities presented by MTW to inform HUD and the housing industry about better ways to address local community needs. MTW was legislated in 1996, implemented in 1999 and the demonstration is set to run until the end of each participating agency's 2018 fiscal year. The 33 current MTW agencies manage over 11% of all public housing units and nearly 13% of all vouchers. Combined, they receive roughly \$2.7 billion in voucher funding, \$730 million in public housing operating funds and \$380 million in capital funds.