

## **DAYTON/MONTGOMERY COUNTY, OH, HPRP-FUNDED PREVENTION PROGRAM**

The Montgomery County Homeless Solutions Policy Board (HSPB) administered the Montgomery County and city of Dayton, Ohio, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) funding. The HPRP program comprised the combined entitlements for the County of Montgomery and the city of Dayton, as well as an award from the state HPRP entitlement. The program covered all of Montgomery County, Ohio. In the first year of the program, the Homeless Solutions Policy Board served almost 800 households with up to \$3,000 of financial assistance per household. Households stayed in the program for an average 48 days (and a median 34 days).

### **Community Description**

Montgomery County is located in southwestern Ohio with an estimated population of 522,457, of which 14.6 percent (47,573) between the ages of 18 and 64 were below the federal poverty level.<sup>70</sup> The Dayton/Kettering/Montgomery County Continuum of Care (CoC) reported 986 individuals experiencing homelessness on the day of the 2011 point-in-time count, including 38 who were unsheltered, 568 in emergency housing, and 380 in transitional housing.<sup>71</sup>

The Dayton/Kettering/Montgomery CoC operates as a committee of the HSPB and covers the entire county, including the cities of Dayton and Kettering.<sup>72</sup> According to the 2011 Housing Inventory Chart, the CoC's 39 programs included 4 emergency shelter programs, 3 programmatic shelter programs, 1 safe haven, 10 transitional housing programs, 1 HPRP Rapid Re-housing program, and 18 permanent supportive housing pilot programs. The CoC had 854 beds of permanent supportive housing available for formerly homeless persons.

The city of Dayton and the local United Way organization adopted the *Homeless Solutions Community 10-Year Plan for Ending Chronic Homelessness and Reducing Overall Homelessness in Dayton and Montgomery County, OH*.<sup>73</sup> One key element of the plan was to develop an early warning system for sustained intervention and prevention of homelessness. A first step of the ten-year plan was to establish the Homeless Solutions Policy Board (HSPB) as a local planning and homeless response entity. HSPB comprised city and county government, community stakeholders, public/private entities (such as hospitals and the University of Dayton), and service providers. HSBP oversees implementation of the ten-year plan, the key principles of which are poverty reduction, prevention, housing, and multisystem response.

### **DESIGN AND SETUP OF HPRP PREVENTION**

The Montgomery County/Dayton HPRP was run as a single program funded through the entitlement awards for Montgomery County (\$759,496), the city of Dayton (\$2,595,505), and additional state HPRP funds (\$648,200), for a total allocation of \$4 million. HSPB was tasked with the design and administration of the program. Because of existing rapid re-housing resources, including a CoC rapid

---

<sup>70</sup> Data retrieved from 2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates via <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.hudhre.info/CoC\\_Reports/2011\\_oh\\_505\\_pops\\_sub.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/CoC_Reports/2011_oh_505_pops_sub.pdf).

<sup>72</sup> [http://www.mcoho.org/services/fcfc/docs/2011\\_Homeless\\_Solutions\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.mcoho.org/services/fcfc/docs/2011_Homeless_Solutions_Report_FINAL.pdf), page 3.

<sup>73</sup> [http://www.mcoho.org/services/fcfc/homeless\\_solutions.html](http://www.mcoho.org/services/fcfc/homeless_solutions.html).

re-housing demonstration project, HSPB committed 70 percent of HPRP funds to prevention. HSPB approached HPRP intending to serve the highest number of households possible while still adhering to HUD's requirements. Four primary staff persons oversaw the program on behalf of HSPB: the community development manager, the HPRP program coordinator, the manager of housing and homeless services, and the specialist for the homeless management information system (HMIS).

Montgomery County employed the full time HPRP program coordinator, the manager of housing and homeless services, and the HMIS specialist, while the City employed the community development manager. The program coordinator position, developed specifically to oversee the single countywide prevention strategy, was funded through the City's and County's HPRP grant. The other three positions existed before HPRP.

HSPB administered the HPRP grant through a coordinated, top-down approach. The HPRP program coordinator, community development manager, and manager of housing and homeless services made HPRP policy decisions collaboratively, then communicated information to subgrantees for implementation; the HMIS specialist managed the data and provided training for the HMIS. In addition, the HPRP program coordinator developed all program regulations, forms, and eligibility criteria to ensure consistent program deployment across multiple entry points in the community, trained staff, monitored programs, coordinated monthly meetings with HPRP program and case managers, and trained staff to facilitate landlord negotiations. HSPB chose to go beyond HUD's program requirement of serving people at 50 percent of area median income (AMI) and below, and to focus its HPRP program on people at or below 30 percent of AMI. As of March 2011, this was further amended to target only those at 15 percent of AMI and below. The program coordinator made final decisions regarding exceptions to eligibility requirements.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Eight subgrantees were funded, with six responsible for direct client services and case management, referrals, client prescreening and intake, and HMIS entry. The remaining two were funded for specific roles. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was chosen to be the third-party payment processor for financial assistance because of its existing administrative and financial structure. Miami Valley Housing Opportunities was chosen to conduct the required housing inspections due to its experience managing units that must comply with housing habitability standards, such as lead-free paint.

### **Outreach**

Before program implementation, HSPB held neighborhood meetings to gather input on potential special targeting opportunities. HSPB also analyzed Zip Codes from HMIS to determine areas with higher need prevalence. Information about HPRP was disseminated in multiple ways: The 2-1-1 human services information hotline was informed of the program and which agencies would be providing services, an informational brochure was developed and distributed through social service agencies and schools, a referral and program orientation process was developed in partnership with the job center, HSPB staff made presentations in high-risk neighborhoods, and HSPB generated a series of newspaper articles. HSPB and subgrantees quickly discovered that ongoing outreach and marketing was unnecessary, as word of the program spread quickly.

## Point of Entry

The 2-1-1 system staff disseminated information about the program and contact information for the subgrantees, although they did not provide a formal program referral. Most applicants approached subgrantees directly through phone calls or walk-ins. Subgrantees rarely referred clients to one another, except for logistical reasons (location, transportation difficulties) or conflicts of interest.

## Intake: Eligibility and Assessment

1. *Screening.* Subgrantees performed a quick 5- to 10-minute screening consisting of questions on three topics: resources, income, and presence of an eviction notice. However, HSPB was flexible concerning what constitutes an eviction notice. Official legal documents were preferred, but an applicant in a doubled-up household was allowed to show proof of imminent risk by producing a written statement signed by the lease or mortgage holder indicating he or she could no longer reside in the premises. The answers to the screening questions determined whether the applicant qualified for a full application and assessment. All subgrantees used the same screening tool, designed by HSPB. The eligibility criteria in the last phase of the program were:
  - 15 percent of AMI, no other housing options, no other financial resources, and presence of an eviction notice; or
  - 30 percent of AMI, no other housing options, no other financial resources, and at least one of three risk factors:
    - family has been homeless before;
    - household consists of six or more persons; or
    - family has an eviction notice from subsidized housing (Section 8 or public housing)

While all screened-in applicants had to meet HUD criteria, in rare instances applicants did not fully meet the AMI criteria set forth by HSPB but met additional sustainability criteria and were provided assistance. These rare instances required direct approval from the HSPB grant administrator. Approximately 40 percent of screened callers were determined eligible for the full application and assessment process.

2. *Assessment.* Once deemed eligible via the screening process, applicants met with a case manager to complete a four-part formal application and assessment. The application was used to determine final eligibility for the program and as the basis for a case plan to determine what the client would need to obtain and sustain housing. The four parts of the application included the following:

*Applicant information:* Basic demographic information required for HMIS, including information on household members, connections to HPRP-funded agencies, and prior HPRP assistance.

*Housing and income assessment:* Information used to determine and verify income, assessment information, assessment of current housing situation, and risk factors to housing stability.

*HPRP assistance determination:* Determination of whether the participant will stay in his or her current housing or search for a new unit; need for assistance with housing search, housing

inspection, unit ownership verification, legal services, and mediation services; determination of financial assistance amount, type, and duration, and client's contribution.

*Individual housing and services plan (IHSP):* Goals and strategies the program participant will employ to move toward housing stability, including residential stability (rebuilding housing history; housing search activities such as completing applications and saving for rent; and permanent housing maintenance skills such as paying rent on time, following lease agreements, and staying in the house for a certain number of months), skills and income (obtaining identification documents, acting on referrals to training and employment opportunities, maintaining employment, obtaining or maintaining income supports, developing household budgets, and working with creditors), other areas impacting housing stability (family reunification activities, mental health treatment consistency as applicable, practicing personal safety techniques, and managing chemical dependency treatments as applicable), and documentation of client-identified obstacles to housing stability, client and family strengths, and the participant's housing goals.

### **“But For” and Sustainability Rules**

HSPB was clear that the “but for” standard set forth by HUD was to be interpreted as the applicant being at imminent risk of homelessness “but for this assistance”; the screening criteria were developed specifically to assess this. In addition, the housing and income assessment required case managers to judge applicants' sustainability and eligibility for the program. The application completed during the assessment was used to determine final eligibility for the program and as the basis for a case plan to determine whether the applicant could sustain housing post-HPRP assistance. Because 80 percent of HPRP funds were used for arrearages, participants had to demonstrate that they could afford to pay rent moving forward. To do so, subgrantees worked with clients to create a budget to determine sustainability. The Homeless Solutions Policy Board established an upper limit for rental assistance of 6 months or \$3,000; therefore, subgrantees focused on serving individuals or families that would not require long-term assistance, using the budget to determine this. The program coordinator made final decisions regarding exceptions to this limit.

### **Prevention Activities**

Subgrantees authorized for case management operated the same prevention activities consistently across agencies, including short-term assistance with a small amount of inhouse case management and a large number of case management referrals.

**Financial Assistance.** Allowable financial assistance activities included rent arrearages, rental assistance, utility arrearages, security and utility deposits and payments, and moving costs. An upper limit of 6 months' rental assistance, with a target of 3 months, was set for arrearages or ongoing assistance. All subgrantees adhered to these limits. Although the program did not originally have any cap on assistance, HSPB chose to establish a basic cap with some flexibility; individual or family assistance was capped at \$3,000. The predominate use of funds was for rent arrearages. Utility payments were rare, as non-HPRP funds were available in the community for this purpose.

**Case Management.** Because of the focus on serving as many people as possible, Dayton's HPRP implementation did not emphasize intensive ongoing case management. After the full assessment, case managers created a plan for clients focused on connecting them with other services. HSPB wanted to provide as much financial assistance to clients as possible, as opposed to funding a large number of staff. As a result, subgrantees referred clients to outside services for the majority of non-housing support services, such as employment, mental health, etc. However, once an applicant was determined eligible for HPRP, it was the subgrantee's responsibility to ensure that the participant was connected to the appropriate resources until participant completion in the program. Case managers followed up with clients receiving ongoing assistance, typically through monthly phone calls, home visits, or in the subrecipient's office. Some case managers also provided services in addition to housing assistance, including credit repair, links to mainstream resources, and negotiation with landlords to reduce rent and/or utility arrearages, although this was not a focus of the HPRP program.

## **DATA AND MONITORING**

The Dayton/Montgomery County HMIS covered the complete area of the combined HPRP grant catchment and was administered by the HSPB. The HMIS system was open between HPRP providers so they could see services provided to clients by other HPRP providers. Only one of the subgrantees was using the HMIS system before HPRP. Screening data were not entered into HMIS, but collected in hard copy and provided to the HSPB grant administrator. HSPB required all subgrantees providing case management and financial assistance services to HPRP program participants to enter the data collected on the application or assessment into HMIS regardless of assistance decision. HSPB generated reports from HMIS in addition to the HPRP quarterly progress report and used HMIS data to look at recidivism into shelter and patterns of homelessness. The local reports were intended to identify which, if any, households became homeless either (1) after receiving HPRP assistance or (2) after being determined not eligible for HPRP assistance. HSPB also looked at primary risk factors and whether households appeared in the local HMIS as previously homeless. HSPB was interested in comparing the various groups to fine tune the targeting of HPRP prevention resources.

HSPB conducted onsite monitoring twice a year and informally at least quarterly. Additionally, HSPB maintained close communication with the subgrantees, meeting monthly to discuss expenditure progress and any issues encountered, and to share lessons learned.

## **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

HPRP was the first program that brought area providers together. The level of detail and targeted approach HPRP required changed the community's response to homelessness. Some of the subgrantees that had little or no contact with homelessness are using HPRP as a springboard to continue homeless services. With a better understanding of how prevention can work, and with the onset of a new shelter diversion program, the grantees are integrating more prevention efforts into their system. One subgrantee recently started an emergency shelter diversion program for families. Using existing staff, case managers meet with families before they enter shelter to explain what to expect in the shelter system, and then work with the families to prevent homelessness by finding other housing solutions.

According to the subgrantee, this program has helped some families realize that a shelter stay is not the best housing solution. The program is funded through private donations and the Montgomery County Human Services Tax Levy. The subgrantee is also interested in expanding this program for single males. HSPB issued a request for proposals in January 2012, combining funds from 2012–13 Supportive Services, 2012–13 United Way, the 2011–12 Emergency Solutions Grant, and the 2011 HOME Investment Partnership Program to support implementation of HSPB’s ten-year plan, one tenet of which is homelessness prevention.

**Exhibit E.3. Montgomery County and City of Dayton, Ohio, Prevention Overview, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program**

	Persons		Households	
	#	%	#	%
Total served Year 1 <sup>a</sup>	1,920	100	799	100
Persons in families	1,471	77	—	—
Adults without children	420	22	—	—
Total served Year 2 <sup>a</sup>	1,592	100	611	100
Persons in families	1,262	83	—	—
Adults without children	320	22	—	—
<b>HPRP services</b>				
Rental assistance	—	—	1132	88
Case management	—	—	1239	97
Security/utility deposits	—	—	203	16
Outreach and engagement	—	—	1	< 1
Utility payments	—	—	123	10
Housing search/placement	—	—	178	14
Legal services	—	—	1	< 1
Credit repair	—	—	0	0
Motel and hotel vouchers	—	—	0	0
Moving cost assistance	—	—	22	2
<b>Destination<sup>b</sup></b>				
Total leavers	3,112	100	—	—
Homeless	5	< 1	—	—
Institutional setting	1	< 1	—	—
Permanent housing w/ subsidy	369	12	—	—
Permanent housing without subsidy	2,592	83	—	—
Family or friends	13	< 1	—	—

Source: Homeless Solutions Policy Board, Annual Performance Report Data, 2009 program start through September 30, 2011.

— not applicable

<sup>a</sup>Total served numbers may not add to 100 percent because the “children only” and “unknown” categories are not included in this table. Numbers may add to greater than 100 percent due to data reporting errors.

<sup>b</sup>Destination numbers may not add to total leavers because the “other,” “hotel/motel,” “unknown,” and “deceased” categories are not included in this table.

“Homeless” includes the following destinations: emergency shelter, TH for homeless persons, staying with friends (temporary tenure), staying with family (temporary tenure), place not meant for human habitation, safe haven, and hotel or motel paid by client.

“Institutional setting” includes foster care, psychiatric facility, substance abuse or detox facility, hospital (non-psychiatric), and jail or prison.

“Permanent housing” with subsidy includes housing owned by client with ongoing subsidy, rental by client with VASH subsidy, rental by client with other ongoing subsidy, and Permanent Supportive Housing for Homeless Persons.

“Permanent housing” without subsidy includes housing owned by client without ongoing subsidy and rental by client with no ongoing subsidy.

“Family or friends” includes living with family, permanent tenure or living with friends, permanent tenure.