



Rapid Re-Housing: Successfully Ending Family Homelessness

Across the country, communities are implementing rapid re-housing to respond to family homelessness, and they are demonstrating impressive results. Communities are successfully, and quickly, re-housing families at a minimal cost by providing assistance locating new housing, short-term rental assistance, and follow-up case management focused on employment. In doing so, they are improving the lives of families.

Rapid re-housing is the primary tool that communities need to drive down the number of families experiencing homelessness. But the best resource for funding is running out. The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) funding that communities rely on is ending. Yet the need remains high.

The most recent data show that over 168,000 families experience homelessness over the course of each year. This represents an increase of over 28 percent in a three year period, yet the number of families who are homeless on any given night has remained largely unchanged over that time period. One explanation for this seeming discrepancy is that homeless service systems have become more efficient even as demand has increased. With rapid re-housing, they are helping families move out of homelessness faster and more successfully.

In 2009, Congress reauthorized HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs through the Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, including incentives for communities to adopt rapid re-housing. Congress also included \$1.5 billion for HPRP in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to help prevent large increases in homelessness among families impacted by the recession. For the first time, communities across the country have dedicated resources to rapidly re-house families.

In the first year of HPRP, 110,000 homeless people in families received rapid re-housing assistance, including housing search, short-term rental assistance, and follow-up case management, to move out of homelessness and back into housing. (Many more families received homelessness prevention services through HPRP before they became homeless.) Almost all – 91 percent – of families receiving rapid re-housing exited homelessness for permanent housing. More than half of all households did so with just one month of assistance. The data emerging from local communities on the impact of rapid re-housing is compelling. It shows that rapid re-housing:

- **Reduces family homelessness.** In *Mercer County (Trenton), New Jersey*, the number of families who are served in shelter and transitional housing programs on any given day has declined by nearly one-third over the last two years. Instead of expanding their shelter and transitional housing programs to manage the increased demand for help, with rapid re-housing they are actually seeing a decline in demand for transitional housing. In *Clark County (Las Vegas), Nevada* and in *Kern County, California*, the number of families experiencing homelessness on any given day has decreased by 12 percent over a two year period.
- **Helps families successfully transition out of homelessness.** In *Hamilton County (Cincinnati), Ohio*, fewer than 8 percent of the 219 homeless families rapidly re-housed returned to a homeless service

program within two years of exit. The **State of Michigan** has rapidly re-housed 4,550 homeless persons in families and, as of September 2011, fewer than 5 percent returned to shelter. Over 1,000 persons in families received rapid re-housing to exit homelessness in **Harris County (Houston), Texas**. Only six percent experienced another homeless episode after being re-housed.

- **Reduces the amount of time families remain homeless.** In **Palm Beach County, Florida**, for example, 69 percent of the 154 families they have re-housed were back in housing of their own within 30 days of entering shelter. A small rapid re-housing pilot in **Richmond, Virginia** contributed to system-wide improvements. In just two years, the median length of time families in Richmond remained homeless declined by 50 percent, from 90 to 45 days.
- **Is cost-effective.** In **Alameda County, California**, the cost for each successful exit from homelessness to rapid re-housing is \$2,800. In contrast, the cost is \$25,000 for each successful exit from transitional housing and \$10,714 from emergency shelter. In **the State of Delaware**, the cost of a successful exit to permanent housing with rapid re-housing is \$1,701, compared to \$6,065 for emergency shelter and \$15,460 for transitional housing.
- **Helps communities leverage new partners and resources to end family homelessness.** **Washington County, Oregon's** success in reducing the waiting list for family shelter convinced the Board of County Commissioners to commit an additional \$88,000 in local county general funds to their efforts. In **Mercer County (Trenton), New Jersey**, the leadership of the combined TANF/WIA agency was so impressed with the outcomes of the HUD-funded Rapid Re-Housing for Families Demonstration, that they implemented their own in-house rapid re-housing program using TANF funding. In **Salt Lake City, Utah**, TANF and HPRP resources are blended to extend the community's capacity to provide integrated employment and rapid re-housing services to families.
- **Improves access to emergency shelter and long-term supportive housing programs for those who really need it.** When families remain in emergency shelter or transitional housing programs simply because they lack financial resources to escape homelessness, other families are denied the more intensive help they desperately need from those programs. By helping families who can transition out do so as quickly as possible, rapid re-housing makes it easier for those who are in dire need of emergency shelter and transitional housing programs to access those supports.
- **Allows homeless service systems to serve all kinds of families.** Shelter and transitional housing are often ill-equipped to meet the needs of the full range of families, including two-parent households, single fathers with young children, and multi-generational households. Rapid re-housing provides a new tool to help families in all configurations and helps families avoid making painful choices between family separation and shelter.

To maintain investments in proven, cost-effective strategies that end homelessness like rapid re-housing, the Alliance recommends that Congress provide at least \$2.231 billion for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants Program in FY 2013.