

ALBUQUERQUE, NM, HPRP-FUNDED PREVENTION PROGRAM

The city of Albuquerque's homelessness prevention program, funded by HUD's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program, provided rental assistance, case management, rent negotiation, and job development to 160 households (85 percent of which were families) through September 2010. Households accessed prevention through a single entry point or a domestic services provider, staying in the program for an average 115 days (and a median 119 days). Participants were required to demonstrate or gain employment and to exhibit 1 to 8 of HUD's 18 risk factors to qualify.

Community Description

In 2011, the city of Albuquerque's point-in-time count identified 387 unsheltered homeless people: 658 people in emergency shelter (ES) and 594 in transitional housing (TH), for a total homeless population of 1,639.⁶² The city had 943 permanent supportive housing beds, 367 ES beds, 531 TH beds, and 26 rapid re-housing beds in its inventory.⁶³ Staff within the city of Albuquerque Office of Community Development and Homeless Services, the HPRP grantee, oversaw and coordinated the annual submission of HUD applications. The city contracted most of this work to the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness (NMCEH), the lead agency for the only other Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless service system in New Mexico, the Balance of State (i.e., localities outside Albuquerque).

The Albuquerque CoC, through NMCEH, is currently updating a 5-year plan to end homelessness developed in 2007. NMCEH spearheaded the plan with support from the city Office of Community Development and Homeless Services, the CoC, neighborhood leaders, business leaders, elected officials, policymakers, and members of faith-based communities, although the plan received no direct support from the mayor's office. NMCEH later updated its implementation plan in December 2010, in response to the new mayor's request to create more concrete, actionable steps toward ending homelessness in the city. Out of the action plan, which involved the business community and the mayor's office as well as the CoC, NMCEH created the Albuquerque Heading Home initiative, part of the nationwide 100,000 homes campaign to house the most medically vulnerable homeless individuals.

DESIGN AND SETUP OF HPRP PREVENTION

The city of Albuquerque received \$1,807,256 from HUD for its HPRP program, discussed by NMCEH, community CoC agencies, and representatives from the city and ultimately designed by the central subgrantee, Catholic Charities. Catholic Charities' long-running prevention program contributed to the HPRP design.

Catholic Charities noticed that many clients returned to the program annually to receive funds and were unable to substantially improve their life circumstances. Comparing successful case management in its supportive housing program with the revolving door of clients back to the eviction prevention program, staff believed that clients requiring rental assistance would need more active case management to succeed in HPRP. As a result, Catholic Charities provided most clients with intensive case management to ensure sustainability.

⁶² http://www.hudhre.info/CoC_Reports/2011_nm_500_pops_sub.pdf

⁶³ http://www.hudhre.info/CoC_Reports/2011_nm_500_bed_inventory.pdf

During the first few weeks of the program, Catholic Charities experienced such high volume that they instituted a work requirement for clients to serve those most likely to be sustainable after program exit. They required clients to have worked 3 consecutive months in the past 18. To help clients attain self-sufficiency after program exit, Catholic Charities hired a case manager who worked first as an outreach specialist and later, when outreach was no longer necessary, as a career specialist to help connect clients with job opportunities.

Catholic Charities used most of its money for prevention assistance. The city of Albuquerque also decided to fund an immigrant-focused domestic violence organization, Enlace Comunitario, using HPRP dollars. This organization already provided intensive case management to women at imminent risk of homelessness, and the city of Albuquerque saw HPRP as an opportunity to continue funding Enlace's work after its regular source of city funding was eliminated.

The city of Albuquerque kept some funding for program administration and oversight. Catholic Charities contracted homeless management information system services, technical assistance, and data monitoring and oversight from NMCEH, which also provided HMIS services for both New Mexico CoCs. Catholic Charities received an additional \$931,000 in HPRP funding from the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority in March 2011 to run the same program they were running within the city of Albuquerque. The program did not change in any way as a result of this funding, except to add additional HMIS reporting and accounting requirements.

IMPLEMENTATION

The city of Albuquerque contracted with both Catholic Charities and Enlace Comunitario for case management, but only Catholic Charities provided HPRP financial assistance. Catholic Charities and Enlace Comunitario operated mainly in isolation. Both had different screening processes for HPRP prevention assistance, and the clients Enlace sent to Catholic Charities for HPRP financial assistance rarely qualified because of Catholic Charities' employment requirement. Catholic Charities served a mix of families and singles, though the majority served (71 percent) were families with children. At Catholic Charities, prescreened cases were placed on a waiting list, then scheduled for orientation and later, were scheduled for an intake appointment with a case manager, in the order in which they were prescreened. Clients requiring short-term assistance could skip this process for the 1-month assistance program. Eligibility for both the longer-term and the 1-month assistance programs was determined by case managers according to intake materials. Catholic Charities funded an outreach and career specialist, required all case managers to reach out to landlords, and funded case manager time for some life skills workshops inhouse.

Outreach

When HPRP first began, Catholic Charities hired an outreach specialist/case manager/career specialist who performed social service agency, landlord, and employer outreach. The outreach specialist created flyers that were distributed to all social service agencies and landlords in the city. In addition, the specialist and other case managers spoke with landlords in person about the program. After the initial marketing period, call volume was so high that no additional program outreach was necessary. At this point, the role of the outreach specialist shifted to building relationships with employers and inviting them to two job fairs held specifically for HPRP program participants.

Point of Entry

The city of Albuquerque designed a program for a central HPRP provider and funded an additional organization serving a distinct population. Households could call or walk in to Catholic Charities to apply for HPRP. Similarly, immigrant victims of domestic violence could walk in or call Enlace any time to receive assistance.

Intake: Eligibility and Assessment

Catholic Charities. Case managers and program staff conducted prescreening, and case managers conducted orientation and intake, as follows:

1. *Prescreening.* Clients could walk in or go through prescreening over the phone. The program assistant or case manager would ask questions from the two-page prescreening questionnaire regarding household location, ability to work, income, rent, and eviction status. Catholic Charities required clients to have rent below the fair market rent (FMR) specified by HUD (less than 50 percent of area median income), to live in the city of Albuquerque, for all adult household members to be willing and able to work, to have an eviction notice or a letter of eviction from family and friends, and to have worked for 3 consecutive months in the past 18. Clients with rent slightly above FMR worked with case managers and landlords to negotiate rent below the threshold. Clients receiving disability income or other government benefits and not willing or able to work could not meet the sustainability requirement and were thus referred to the Partners in Housing program. Clients who did meet the prescreening criteria were placed on a wait list for orientation.
2. *Orientation and the 1-month program.* Clients on the wait list were called to attend orientations of about 20 people held once or twice per month. At orientation, clients received an overview of the program, learned about documentation and housing inspection requirements, and got answers to their questions about the program. Attendees then scheduled an intake appointment with a case manager. Clients requiring only 1 or 2 months of rental assistance and arrears could skip orientation and go directly to intake for the 1-month program.
3. *Screening.* Clients were required to provide proof of income, proof of work history, an eviction notice or letter, a state-issued ID, bank account statements, and Social Security cards or birth certificates for adult household members. Clients were also asked to self-report on potential sources of assistance from family and friends, and whether they had any outstanding warrants for arrest. (Catholic Charities required clients to resolve outstanding warrants before they could be accepted into the program.) Case managers determined whether clients met each of HUD's 18 risk factors through a matrix of questions. For each risk factor, the case manager tallied one point. Clients with a score of zero or a score greater than eight did not qualify for the program.
4. *Intake.* Clients were accepted into the program if they scored between one and eight on the matrix and were able to produce all required documentation. On average, anywhere from half to all of the clients who scheduled intake appointments were screened in to the program. Clients qualifying for the 1-month program had to sign an additional document stating they required only 1 to 2 months' assistance to recover from their emergency situation.

5. *Assessment.* The client's matrix score was used as a rough guideline to determine the length of assistance—a score of one to three qualified for short-term assistance (1 to 3 months); three to six, medium-term assistance (4 to 8 months); and six to eight, long-term assistance (9 to 12 months). In practice, many clients initially receiving a short-term score ended up receiving more than 3 months of assistance, after case managers determined at the 3-month reassessment that the client needed additional assistance to become self sufficient. Catholic Charities paid full rent for all clients in 3-month increments, at which point all clients were required to recertify in order to receive additional assistance.

Enlace Comunitario. Clients at Enlace Comunitario experienced a significantly different process than those entering Catholic Charities. Clients could call or walk in to the office for an immediate danger assessment and program orientation, after which they scheduled an appointment with a case manager. At intake, clients provided demographic and household information, income, food security, utilities, and employment information. All clients requesting assistance with domestic violence issues were considered at imminent risk of homelessness—unlike Catholic Charities, Enlace did not make eligibility decisions and did not provide clients with financial assistance. Case managers at Enlace used information collected at the initial danger evaluation and intake, along with knowledge of the client's personal situation, to provide inhouse services and refer the client to other community services, including HPRP and other housing resources at Catholic Charities.

“But For” and “Sustainability” Rules

Catholic Charities screened HPRP applicants using HUD's 18 risk factors to ensure they would be homeless “but for this assistance.” In addition, Catholic Charities tried to ensure clients would be able to sustain housing after graduating from the program using the risk factors and the work requirement. Clients with more than eight risk factors were referred to programs that offered more appropriate assistance, and clients unable to document at least three consecutive months of work experience in the past 18 months were deemed unsustainable and thus ineligible for the program. Almost all of Enlace Comunitario's clients were considered at imminent risk of becoming homeless as a result of their dangerous living situations and immigrant status, as many had few connections to family supports besides their significant other and limited financial resources. Enlace did not require clients to undergo an explicit assessment of sustainability to receive case management and stabilization services.

Prevention Activities

Catholic Charities provided financial assistance and ongoing case management. Case managers negotiated with landlords and conducted life skills classes, and a career specialist reached out to employers to schedule job fairs. Enlace Comunitario provided ongoing case management and counseling services. The city's HPRP prevention program served 418 people (160 households) as of September 30, 2010.

Financial Assistance. Catholic Charities provided ongoing financial assistance based on client need. Its 1-month program made one-time payments of up to 1 month current rent and 1 month rental arrears. All clients received 100 percent of rental payments, but no utility payments or utility arrears—often, case managers attempted to negotiate the utilities as part of the rent. Clients could receive a maximum

of 4 months of arrears and a combined maximum of 12 months of arrears and ongoing assistance (e.g., 4 months of arrears and 8 months ongoing assistance). Catholic Charities also offered a limited number of hotel vouchers. Enlace Comunitario did not provide financial assistance.

Case Management. Only a handful of clients at Catholic Charities received financial assistance alone. Almost all clients received case management, and all clients receiving ongoing assistance were required to meet with a case manager twice per month, apply for 10 jobs per week, apply for a Section 8 voucher, and attend a life skills class. Sometimes, case managers negotiated with landlords to waive fees or lower rent below FMR, and each case manager kept a list of landlords friendly to the program. Case managers worked with clients to develop an individual service plan, set short- and long-term goals, complete a budget, and refer the client to outside services. Case managers also helped clients prepare for job fairs, helping them with resume writing and interview preparation, and arranging referrals to organizations offering free work-appropriate attire. Case managers and the counselor at Enlace Comunitario provided clients with whatever support was necessary, including crisis intervention, safety planning, counseling, support groups, life skills classes, family-strengthening classes, and often referrals to outside programs and services.

Supportive Services. Outside HPRP, Catholic Charities referred clients to financial education programs, mainstream services, local thrift stores, transportation services, legal services, adult education classes, and other service-providing organizations in the city. Catholic Charities also held job development classes, funded through alternative sources, for clients participating in all their programs, which included resume writing, interview skills, mock behavioral interviews, and role playing. Catholic Charities conducted renter's rights and other life skills classes in house as well, which, like the job development classes, were open to clients in all of its programs. Enlace Comunitario provided counseling services in house, and coordinated with local shelters, pro bono attorneys, and the local housing authority to connect clients to housing-related services.

One interesting position within Catholic Charities was the outreach and career specialist, who reached out to and networked with employers to encourage them to hire clients in the HPRP program. The career specialist provided two job fairs throughout the program, networking with 80 local employers to identify jobs that would be good fits for HPRP clients. Grocery stores and home health aid organizations were the majority of employers in attendance. Ultimately, the outreach specialist convinced 13 employers to interview HPRP clients, several whom were hired on the spot. After the successful first job fair, case managers coordinated more one-on-one preparation to ensure clients were hired in the second. Both previous and current HPRP clients were welcome to attend the fairs. HPRP funding covered all costs for both iterations of this event.

DATA AND MONITORING

The city of Albuquerque provided Catholic Charities funding for HMIS services, which they contracted to NMCEH, which monitored data entry and reported to the city and state. Catholic Charities had already been using HMIS because of its existing HUD grants, and NMCEH did not provide training for HPRP HMIS data entry. Enlace Comunitario sent the City its program data and thus received no funding for HMIS-related activities.

In addition to the standard HMIS data elements required by HUD, case managers entered information on specific public benefits received by the client, household employment and education information, and general health information. Case managers entered data into HMIS when a client was screened in to the program and at program exit, but not at reassessment. Catholic Charities also conducted a one-time survey to gauge housing stability for former clients, but were only able to get in touch with a fraction of those who had left the program. Catholic Charities has no plans for further analysis.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The city of Albuquerque plans to provide additional Community Development Block Grant funding to supplement its four health and service centers, which provide one-time rental and utility assistance to clients able to provide an eviction or court notice. HPRP has not influenced the design or structure of this program going forward.

Catholic Charities, with state Tenant-Based Rental Assistance funds (TBRA—\$141,910), city Emergency Solutions Grant funds (ESG—\$89,325), and potentially FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Grant funds (EFSG—~\$15,000), is continuing HPRP through their new rental assistance program (RAP). RAP will provide different levels and types of assistance outside the city as a result of the requirements attached to these different funding sources. For example, TBRA funds can be used for arrears, utilities, security deposits, case management, and ongoing rental assistance outside of Albuquerque (Sandoval County and unincorporated Bernalillo County), while ESG can only be used for arrears in the city.

To serve clients in Sandoval County, a rural area north of the city with few rental options, Catholic Charities plans to eliminate the requirement that clients have worked 3 months in the past 18. In addition, to target a needier client base, RAP will only accept clients earning 30 percent or less of area median income. Outside Albuquerque, quarterly assessments will be required for clients to continue to receive assistance, and clients will have access to case management. All clients will have access to the services and referrals Catholic Charities provides across its programs, such as its computers, job development, and various life skills classes. The intake is very similar to HPRP, with only minor changes. The target population is also similar, save the elimination of the work requirement. Catholic Charities will begin to ramp up the program as HPRP winds down.

After HPRP, Enlace Comunitario strategically reached out to new partners to better connect their clients to the financial resources necessary to bolster their housing stability. The organization found a private foundation that has thus far contributed about \$10,000 in housing-related assistance, allowing Enlace to serve eight people with one-time assistance—rent payment, utilities, and a security deposit. In addition, Enlace has partnered with the Bernalillo Housing Authority to apply for a Department of Justice grant that would provide case managers with technical assistance to help them assess unit quality and develop relationships with more open and lenient landlords. Enlace continues to connect clients to local shelters and transitional housing programs, as they had before HPRP began.

Exhibit E.1: Albuquerque, New Mexico, Prevention Overview, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program

	Persons		Households	
	#	%	#	%
Total served Year 1 ^a	418	100	160	100
Persons in families	356	85	—	—
Adults without children	62	15	—	—
Total served Year 2 ^a	342	100	113	100
Persons in families	307	90	—	—
Adults without children	35	10	—	—
HPRP services				
Rental assistance	—	—	213	100
Case management	—	—	179	84
Security/utility deposits	—	—	0	0
Outreach and engagement	—	—	11	5
Utility payments	—	—	0	0
Housing search/placement	—	—	4	2
Legal services	—	—	0	0
Credit repair	—	—	0	0
Motel and hotel vouchers	—	—	0	0
Moving cost assistance	—	—	0	0
Destination ^b				
Total leavers	610	100	—	—
Homeless	6	1	—	—
Institutional setting	3	<1	—	—
Permanent housing with subsidy	8	1	—	—
Permanent housing without subsidy	516	85	—	—
Family or friends	17	3	—	—

Source: New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness, Annual Performance Report Data, 2009 program start through September 30, 2011.

— not applicable

^a 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.

^b 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.