



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

OFFICE OF HOMELESS SERVICES
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ELIZABETH G. HERSH
DIRECTOR

City Council Resolution No. 170027 Testimony of the Office of Homeless Services

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before City Council today.

The Office of Homeless Services (OHS) offers homelessness prevention services through our Emergency Assistance unit. The goal is to prevent families or individuals at risk of becoming homeless from losing their night-time residence.

HISTORY

In 2009, The City of Philadelphia received a direct allocation from the federal government under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) activities in the amount of \$21,486,240 over a 3 year period to assist households at risk of becoming homeless or who are currently homeless as defined by the McKinney Vento Act. OHS administrator of the HPRP program, contracted with 11 community based providers to deliver services to eligible households. HPRP services began citywide on 10/1/09 and ended on 8/26/12.

The HPRP Homelessness Prevention program was available to all Philadelphia residents who met the eligibility criteria and had household incomes at or below 30% of the Area Median Income. The HPRP Homelessness Prevention program provided financial assistance, housing stabilization services, and a diversion program services.

HPRP Eligibility:

- City of Philadelphia resident
- Household income at or below 30% AMI
- Eligible households at risk for homelessness due to rental or utility delinquencies, but who were likely to maintain housing with assistance

Financial Assistance:

- Financial Assistance included, but not limited to: security deposit, rental arrearages, rental payments, utility arrearages, utility deposit, utility payments, and/or moving costs.

- On- time financial assistance payment or on-going financial assistance determined by intake assessment. Households receiving more than three months assisted were re-assessed after the third month to determine the need for additional assistance.

Housing stabilization services:

- Services included housing-related counseling, legal services, credit repair, linkages to other social services, and/or relocation with goal to increase household incomes.

Diversion program:

- Targeted households seeking entrance into emergency housing (shelter).
- Households requesting emergency housing services at OSH’s central intake sites were assessed by OHS staff to determine if they could be diverted from entering the shelter system and referred instead to a Prevention Provider.

HPRP Homelessness Prevention accomplishments:

- Served 4,174 households
- Provided \$5.99M in financial assistance
- Low rate of recidivism rate, only 3.5% entered shelter after receiving assistance

CURRENT EFFORTS

OHS administer two Homelessness Prevention programs with two separate funding sources. The first, Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), is dedicated to providing rental assistance and utility assistance, the other, the City’s Housing Trust Fund (HTF), has been dedicated to providing mortgage assistance. Both programs provide one-time financial assistance to pay-off the household rental or mortgage arrears.

CSBG Eligibility (Rental Assistance):

- City of Philadelphia resident
- Shelter resident with outstanding utility debt as housing barrier
- Household income at or below 125% of Federal Poverty Guideline
- Issued court order notice, court ordered eviction, notice to vacate, L&I displacement, domestic violence, or relocation to affordable housing

HTF Eligibility (Mortgage Assistance):

- City of Philadelphia resident
- Household income at or below 250% of Federal Poverty Guideline
- Received foreclosure notice, mortgage delinquency notice, or Common Pleas court docket number

ACCOMPLISHMENTS (SINCE JULY 1, 2014):

CSBG

Served 1,530 households
 Provided \$1.16M in financial assistance

HTF:

Served 608 households
 Provided \$1.2M in financial assistance

Demand for homelessness prevention services vastly outpaces the available resources. IN FY16, 5999 INDIVIDUALS SOUGHT ASSISTANCE. WE WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO 800 OF THEM.

WHY THIS MATTERS

According to data from our Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) individuals and households entering our shelter between 9/1/2016 – 2/28/17 stated “Where they Stayed Last Night”:

Single Men:

Living in a family member’s room, apartment or house: 23%

Place not meant for human habitation: 16%

Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy: 13%

Single Women:

Living in a family member’s room, apartment or house: 30%

Living in a friend’s room, apartment or house: 18%

Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy: 14%

Families:

Living in a family member’s room, apartment or house: 39%

Living in a friend’s room, apartment or house: 21%

Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy: 18%

Additional Homeless Prevention funds will allow OHS to target and provide financial assistance to households living with family members and friends, place’s not meant for human habitation, and those renting units. This targeted assistance would prevent households from entering shelter and allow them to remain in their units or move to a more affordable unit.

We would recommend using the evidence provided through the experience and research of the HOMEBASE Program in New York City. While we do not have the capacity to provide an extensive network of community based programs offering flexible financial assistance, the evidence indicates that we could target our assistance to those who appear to be most at risk of imminent homelessness such as young parents with small children who have a history of homelessness, domestic violence and/or child welfare system involvement.

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Joshua Potts,
Administrator

5252 N. 13th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19141
Information Line:
215.685.9087
Fax:
215.685.9070

Hours of Operation
Monday-Thursday
9:00 am to 3:00 pm



The mission of the Office of Homeless Services is to provide the leadership, coordination, planning and mobilization of resources to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring for the City of Philadelphia.

Emergency Assistance & Response Unit (EARU)

EARU provides assistance to families and individuals who are at risk of becoming homeless or facing a housing crisis¹. The crises may include, but are not limited to:

- Housing that has been declared unfit for human habitation or imminently dangerous; properties collapsed due to serious structural defects as declared by License and Inspections (L & I) and cease operations (Must have L & I referral).
- Residences condemned by the City Health Department due to lead poisoning or other chemical contaminations (Must have Health Department referral).
- Homes severely damaged or destroyed by fire or other disasters (Must have Red Cross referral).
- Victims of domestic violence
- Individuals and families not suitable for shelter due to physical, medical, mental illness disabilities (Must have appropriate documentation.)
- Eviction/Notice to Vacate (Must have court eviction notice.)

Documentation

Individuals seeking to apply for assistance² should bring the following documentation to EARU:

1. Picture ID for all adult household members, (**Must Be A Philadelphia Resident**) birth certificates and social security cards for all household members.
2. Proof of income³ dated within the **Last 30 Days** (last 3 or 4 pay stubs, letter from DPA, SSA, SS, SSD, letter of employment, child support, etc.).
3. Court Eviction/Notice To Vacate/Red Cross Referral/L&I Documentation/Medical or Mental Health Documentation (when applicable)
4. Rental License from Landlord
5. W-9 Form to be completed by Landlord (Evictions Only).
6. Rental Suitability Certificate (Security Deposits Only)
7. Lead Safe Certificate (Households with children six years old and younger)
8. Unit must pass Homeless Services inspection, for private market units (Security Deposits Only).
9. Statement of current balance (within the **Last 10 Days** from the landlord/rental office)
10. Copy of signed lease
11. Letter of Approval/Inspection Request indicating move-in⁴ cost, address and landlord's contact information (Security Deposits Only).

¹ All funds are issued on a case by case basis.

² Funds will be issued based on full completion of the application process and **availability of funding**.

³ Documented income must cover all living expenses. Additional documentation may be required.

⁴ All clients are expected to pay a portion of the move-in cost or rental balance.



Office of
Homeless Services

Many Partners, One Goal,
End Homelessness



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Contact
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Inspections

All properties for relocations must be inspected.

The following information must be provided to request an inspection for a particular property:

1. Exact address of the unit (including zip code) with identifiers (2nd floor rear, basement)
2. Full name of the landlord and contact person if different, and appropriate telephone numbers
3. Landlord's full address
4. Name of person who will have the keys to the property (this is the person with whom the inspection will be scheduled and with whom the inspector will meet).
5. Current rental license
6. Rental Suitability Certificate

Housing Inspection Checklist

Properties should be in good condition and meet the following requirements to pass inspection (lists are not exhaustive):

Houses and Two Family Dwellings:

- ✓ One working smoke detector on each floor including the basement. One working carbon monoxide detector in the hallway.
- ✓ Walls, floors, and ceilings in good repair and clean.
- ✓ No leaks in drain pipes or water line.
- ✓ Windows that function properly with no broken glass.
- ✓ Handrails for staircases with three or more steps.
- ✓ Toilets, sinks, and tubs/showers that function properly.
- ✓ Electric outlets and switches that have cover plates and are in good condition.
- ✓ All utilities (water, gas, electric) turned on and operating properly.
- ✓ Hot water tank in good condition with appropriate overflow pipe/extension valve.
- ✓ Stove and refrigerator present in unit and functioning properly.
- ✓ Property is clean inside and out.

Additional Requirements for Buildings with Three or More Units:

- ✓ Automatic fire detection system in basement, hallways and common areas.
- ✓ Electric smoke detectors in units.
- ✓ Fire extinguisher (tagged) in hallways or in each unit.
- ✓ Lighted emergency exit signs and fire towers as required.

2017



Are you at risk of losing your night-time residence and becoming homeless?

The Homeless Prevention program may be able to assist you!

To be **eligible** for assistance, you **must**:

- ✓ Have a household income at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines:

Household Size	1 person	2 persons	3 persons	4 persons	5 persons	6 persons
per year	\$15,075	\$20,300	\$25,525	\$30,750	\$35,975	\$41,200
per month	\$1,256	\$1,691	\$2,127	\$2,562	\$2,997	\$3,433

- ✓ Received a court eviction hearing notice, or court-ordered eviction notice
- ✓ Received a notice to vacate
- ✓ Victim of domestic violence
- ✓ PHA rent delinquency
- ✓ L&I displacement
- ✓ Relocation to affordable housing
- ✓ Have the ability to sustain housing after receiving assistance

For more information contact:

Office of Homeless Services - Emergency Assistance and Response Unit

5252 N 13th Street

Philadelphia Pa 19141

M- Th 9:00 am – 3:00pm

Walks ins only – No Phone Calls

Friday – by appointment only

Information Line- 215-685-9087

Serving residents citywide