



American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009  
(ARRA)

**Concept Paper for the District of Columbia's  
Homelessness Prevention and Rapid-Re-housing Program  
(HPRP)**

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Prepared by the Department of Housing and Community Development and the  
Department of Human Services

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The District of Columbia proposes to administer the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing program (HPRP) to prevent new episodes of homelessness and reduce the length of homelessness for those who have become homeless. The District's approach builds on existing programs to reach a greater number of people in need of prevention and housing resources and fill a current gap where such supports are currently absent.

The purpose of this concept paper is to present the District's approach for HPRP within the context of the District's current system of homeless services, homeless prevention and re-housing programs. The concepts presented in this document provide support for the draft Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated 2009 Action Plan for the HPRP. The responsible government agencies will carefully consider all comments before the Substantial Amendment is finalized for submission to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by the due date of May 18, 2009.

## **I. Brief Overview of Current Homeless System**

The District's 2009 annual homeless enumeration, or point in time count, identified 6,228 literally homeless persons and 3,469 formerly homeless individuals in the District on the night of the count. The 6,228 literally homeless includes: 3,934 unaccompanied, single persons and, 2,294 persons in families, including children.

The District is undertaking a transformation in the delivery of homeless services. Our homeless system has been disproportionately invested in emergency services, without sufficient attention to the services and housing supports that enable individuals and families to move beyond homelessness. Under the leadership of Mayor Adrian Fenty, District agencies have shifted focus toward homelessness prevention and addressing chronic homelessness with permanent supportive housing.

### **A. Family Homelessness**

In the 2009 point in time, there were 683 persons counted in Emergency Shelter for Families. This includes 254 adults and 429 children in 203 families. Seventeen percent of the families in the shelter system are employed. The District has doubled placements in transitional housing programs over the past two years. There are 500 families in transitional housing programs in the District, 25% of families in transitional program are employed. The public and private Emergency Shelter continuum for families includes 75 severe weather units at DC General and 134 units of Temporary shelter for families at privately and publicly-funded sites. The District usually reduces severe weather shelter in the spring. Due to the unyielding demand for family shelter, the District has made a policy decision to keep the severe weather shelter open until we are able to find appropriate placements for all of the families.

Families frequently experience the following risk factors for homelessness<sup>1</sup>:

- Sudden and significant loss of income;
- Sudden and significant increase in utility costs;
- Residing in housing that has been foreclosed upon or is no longer fit for human habitation;
- Mental health and substance abuse issues;
- Domestic Violence;
- Physical disabilities and other chronic health issues, including HIV/AIDS;
- Severe housing cost burden (greater than 50 percent of income for housing costs);
- Young head of household (under 25 with children or pregnant);
- Current or past involvement with child welfare, including foster care;
- Extremely low income (less than 30 percent of AMI);
- Past institutional care (prison, treatment facility, hospital)
- Recent traumatic life event, such as death of spouse or primary care provider or recent health crisis that prevented the household from meeting its financial responsibilities;
- Credit problems that preclude obtaining housing.

With respect to the risk factor related to foreclosure, of note, there has been a significant increase in foreclosures in the District since 2007. In 2008, foreclosures made up a jump of 130 percent over 2007, increasing to 1,133 from 491. The greatest share of foreclosures was in Ward 5, which experienced 24 percent of the citywide foreclosures, or 272 foreclosures. In comparison, Ward 3 experienced 2.0 percent, or 23 foreclosures. While the numbers for Wards 7 and 8 (228 and 102, respectively) were not as high as Ward 5, the number of foreclosures is relevant because of the relatively low homeownership rates in those wards.

The foreclosures in 2008 were primarily focused in a handful of neighborhoods, including Trinidad/Ivy City; Eckington; Petworth; and Columbia Heights. Meanwhile, in 2009, foreclosures remain high in Ward 5. The total number is 305, or about 102 per month, compared to about 94 per month in 2008. In addition, while the concentrations of 2008 remain, Ward 7 foreclosures are now diffuse across the Ward, rather than concentrated in particular communities.

The Virginia Williams Family Resource Center (VWFRC) is the District's central intake facility for homeless families. Based on an assessment, VWFRC provides families that are homeless with appropriate referrals to safe shelters and assists families at risk of becoming homeless to obtain links to programs and resources that prevent homelessness. If a family has temporary sleeping arrangements, they are deterred from entering shelter and their name is placed on a priority list until they have permanent housing or their temporary sleeping arrangements are no longer feasible. In addition to managing the often complex shelter placement process, VWFRC also offers a variety of services

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<sup>1</sup> *American Recover and Reinvestment Act of 2009*: Department of Housing and Urban Development, Notice of Allocations, Applications Procedures for Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program Grantees, 2009, p. 25

including counseling, substance abuse, education, employment and housing placement assistance. Families are also informed at intake of other Continuum of Care options available to them and may be referred to such programs as Emergency Rental Assistance, transitional housing and neighborhood-based Family Support Collaboratives.

#### B. Homelessness Among Single Adults

There were a total of 2,632 persons counted in the District's public and privately-funded emergency shelters for individuals and 321 persons who were unsheltered on the night of the point in time. Roughly 90 percent of those counted as unsheltered were assessed to be chronically homeless. There were an additional 981 individuals being served by transitional programs in the District. A significant number of individuals in emergency and transitional programs are employed: 19% of those in emergency shelter and 24% of those in transitional programs are employed. Single adults, who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, experience most of the same risk factors that are listed above.

The District currently operates nine emergency shelters for individuals; all but one of these shelters is an overnight (12 hour) low-barrier shelter.<sup>2</sup> There is no central intake for individuals in the District accessing homeless services. Individuals seeking shelter must visit the existing shelters and beds are assigned on a first-come first-served basis. Although all shelters are required to provide case management, the District has received overwhelming feedback that case management in emergency shelters is scarce, and individuals who are homeless must access community based programs for assistance with navigating mainstream services.

#### C. Homeless Youth

Homeless youth are typically defined as unaccompanied youth ages 12 to 24 years old who do not have familial support, and who lack a regular night-time residence.<sup>3</sup> Homeless youth live in shelters, on the streets, in a range of places not meant for human habitation (e.g. cars, abandoned buildings), or in others' homes for short periods of time under circumstances that make the situation highly unstable (so-called "couch surfing" or "highly mobile youth"). Homelessness among youth is commonly caused by family breakdown (severe conflict, abuse, neglect, and abandonment) and system failure (discharges to unstable housing options from foster care, treatment centers, or juvenile justice detention).<sup>4</sup>

Youth frequently experience the following risk factors for homelessness:

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<sup>2</sup> The definition of a low barrier shelter is an overnight housing accommodation for individuals, who are homeless, provided by, or through contract with, or grant from, the District, for the purpose of providing shelter to individuals without imposition of identification, time limits or other program requirements.

The Homeless Services Reform Act, 2001 sec 2, p. 2. Harriett Tubman women's shelter is the only low barrier 24 hour shelter operated by the District at this time.

<sup>3</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness, New Funding for Homeless Youth Services and Housing, [http://www.endhomelessness.gov/content/article/detail/2217\(March 2009\)](http://www.endhomelessness.gov/content/article/detail/2217(March%2009))

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

- Severe housing burden (cost of rent compared to income);
- Mental health or substance abuse issues;
- Homeless in the past 12 months;
- Young parent under age 25;
- Past involvement in child welfare or juvenile delinquency systems;
- Extremely low income;
- High overcrowding in current housing;
- Past institutional care (jail, hospital, or residential treatment);
- Recent traumatic life event;
- No high school diploma or GED;
- History of physical or sexual abuse as a child;
- Family instability
- Lack of rental history; and
- Age discrimination in the housing market.<sup>5</sup>

In fiscal year 2007 (FY 07), the three main organizations that provide shelter to District youth served nearly 1,400 persons between the ages of 12-24 with emergency shelter, transitional housing and independent living programs.<sup>6</sup> Research shows that homeless youth often go uncounted, and make great efforts to remain invisible. Youth are also unlikely to present themselves as homeless, unless they are in very dire need of services.

At least one youth serving organization has reported a 400% increase in applicants for housing programs. This organization attributes this to a number of factors:

**Employment:** Older unemployed adults are now competing for entry level retail, hotel and restaurant work that many youth and young adults had been applying for in the past. A number of youth who are employed carry the burden of working double shifts as their parents are losing their jobs. As a result of this, youth are being forced to either drop out of school or attend school with less than enough rest therefore impairing their learning capabilities.

**Housing:** Older youth are at imminent risk of homelessness as they are sharing rooms, apartments and houses – with minimal security as to how long they can stay. Others are paying rent for a room in a house, but many houses are going into foreclosure as the owners are not able to pay their mortgages.

**Mental Health:** Youth are beginning to see their family members struggle with the current economic troubles. As a result, young people may be carrying much of the weight of the family, which is leading to

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> DC Alliance of Youth Advocates (DCAYA) Recommendations - Data based on informal survey of Sasha Bruce Youthworks, the Latin American Youth Center, and Covenant House Washington administered by a Senior Youth Policy Analyst at the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

stressful, tense situations throughout the family and can cause instances of abuse and domestic violence.

#### D. Need for Discharge Planning: Institutional Setting Exits

A significant number of individuals enter emergency shelter directly from institutional settings. An institutional setting is defined as: foster care, hospital, a hotel or motel, jail or prison, or a psychiatric or substance abuse treatment facility. While the Point in Time survey asks clients if they have ever been in an institutional setting, supplemental data on the Emergency Shelter population has shown that exits from these settings to shelter are on the rise.

**Table 1: HMIS data on Formerly Institutionalized Adults**

| Formerly Institutionalized (Adults) | Unsheltered | ES – Singles | TH – Singles | ES Families | TH - Families |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| % of Persons Counted                | 10.9        | 24.8         | 21.6         | 6.3         | 9.0           |

Through the Interagency Council on Homelessness’s Operations and Logistic Committee, the District has renewed concentration on the need for discharge planning as a way of preventing homelessness. A great deal of focus has been on discharge from corrections facilities.

The Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia (CSOSA) supervises approximately 15,500 parolees, supervised releases and probationers on any given day. Each year, approximately 2,300 men and women return to Washington, D.C. from any one of the federal Bureau of Prison (BOP) facilities throughout the United States. Approximately 50 percent of all offenders returning to D.C. transition through a halfway houses. Another 30 percent enter post-release supervision without a halfway house stay. The remaining 20 percent are released with no supervision obligation.<sup>7</sup> Approximately 18,000 people process through the DC Jail annually, and up to 12% of those individuals do not have an address to return to upon release.<sup>7</sup> The large size of the jails and needs of its population, make it one of the most effective intervention points, amongst all publicly funded institutions in the District, to quickly re-house and stabilize those who are experiencing temporary homelessness.

The DC Department of Corrections (DOC) has dedicated significant resources to coordinating discharge plans for every person who exits the facility. Within the first 48 hours of admission, incarcerated individuals meet with a Discharge Planner to begin the initial steps of connecting with a primary care provider, insurance, and benefits and to obtain information on housing, food and clothing and job training. In addition, a representative from the Income Maintenance Administration meets with individuals to discuss connection with Medicaid and food stamps. For special populations, the DOC is

<sup>7</sup> Lenard A. Sipes, “Returning From Prison to Washington D.C.: We Make Transition Possible” *Journal of Community Corrections, International Community Corrections Association, (Fall 2006) : 1-2*

<sup>7</sup> DC DOC Facts and Figures (January 2009) pp. 10 – 11.

<http://doc.dc.gov/doc/frames.asp?doc=/doc/lib/doc/populationstats/DCDepartmentofCorrectionsFactsnFiguresJan093.pdf>.

collaborating with the Department of Mental Health and a nonprofit disability advocacy organization, University Legal Services, and community based organizations that provide Housing Counseling Services to facilitate continuity of mental health care and wrap around supports for people transitioning back to the community. The jail also houses a Reentry Unit, where representatives from the Department of Employment Services and dozens of community training and service providers meet with individuals prior to release and develop discharge plans.

A number of new initiatives and policies are being developed between the Department of Corrections and its community partners in 2009. The jail provides case conferences for individuals on the substance abuse treatment unit, and is expanding a pilot for its use on the reentry units. The Department of Corrections is also currently pursuing federal funds under the Second Chance Act to strengthen existing discharge coordination by providing women with case management services that would continue through connection with transitional housing support. John Jay College of Criminology is providing research and evaluation of the DOC's discharge policies and protocols under their DOC's Community Oriented Correctional Healthcare model.

HPRP financial assistance and services will leverage the existing discharge coordination within the DOC and will redress the challenge of securing housing stabilization by supporting individuals transitioning into society during the most critical first months of reentry.

## **II. Overview of the District's Current Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Programs**

The District has a number of distinct programs that prevent homelessness and provide housing assistance to those that become homeless. While the programs are widely accessed, there are a number of constituencies who may be excluded from these resources, and whose homelessness may be able to be prevented or shortened with more targeted resources. The following table provides a brief overview of the District's current programs.

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**Table 2: Homelessness Prevention and Re-housing Programs**

| Program  | District Agency  | Community Providers  | Eligibility Criteria  | Type of Assistance  | Annual Allocation<br>FY 2008<br>FY 2009     | Percent Expended<br>FY 2008<br>FY 2009                   |
|--|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)     | Department of Human Services (DHS)                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP)</li> <li>◦ Catholic Charities</li> <li>◦ Salvation Army</li> <li>◦ Housing Counseling Services</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ District of Columbia resident;</li> <li>◦ Household net income may not exceed 125% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL);</li> <li>◦ A household member must be 18 years or younger, 60 years or older, or living with a disability.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Rent Arrearages not to exceed \$4250</li> <li>◦ First month's rent and security deposit, not to exceed \$ 1800.</li> </ul> | FY08<br>\$8,381,500<br>FY09<br>\$8,389,000- | FY08 100%<br>FY09 46% to date; full expenditure expected |
| DC Emergency Food and Shelter Program (DCEFSP) | N/A<br>Emergency Food and Shelter Board                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Change Inc</li> <li>◦ The Salvation Army</li> <li>◦ All Faith Consortium</li> <li>◦ Bread for the City</li> <li>◦ First Seventh Day Adventist Church</li> <li>◦ Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ</li> <li>◦ Refuge of Hope Disciple Center</li> <li>◦ Capitol Hill Group Ministries</li> <li>◦ Father McKenna Center</li> <li>◦ Thrive DC</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Individuals and families in the District of Columbia in need of assistance due to inability to pay rent, mortgage or utilities</li> </ul>  | One month's rent<br>One month's mortgage<br>One month's utility expenses  |   |  |
| Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG)                  | Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP) is the subgrantee for these funds which are used for shelter operations, for selected shelter renovations and to fund ERAP (prevention).</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Shelters receiving ESG funds for operations or renovations must provide emergency shelter for a use period of at least 3 years.</li> <li>◦ For ERAP eligibility, see above.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Emergency shelter</li> <li>◦ ERAP assistance</li> </ul>  | FY08<br>\$819,946<br>FY09<br>\$831,246      | FY08- 100%<br>FY09- 0% to date                           |
| DC Emergency Assistance Fund                   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Change, Inc.</li> <li>◦ Mother Dear's Community</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Individuals and families in the District of Columbia with a</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Rent</li> <li>◦ Mortgage</li> </ul>  |   |  |

| Program                       | District Agency | Community Providers   | Eligibility Criteria  | Type of Assistance   | Annual Allocation<br>FY 2008<br>FY 2009 | Percent Expended<br>FY 2008<br>FY 2009 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| (DCEAF)                       |                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Center</li> <li>◦ Bread for the City</li> <li>◦ Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ</li> <li>◦ Catholic Charities</li> <li>◦ Refuge of Hope Disciple Center</li> <li>◦ Capital Hill Group Ministries</li> <li>◦ Marshall Heights Community Development Organization</li> <li>◦ Salvation Army</li> <li>◦ United Planning Organization</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documented emergency that led to delinquency with rent/mortgage/utility payments</li> <li>◦ Applicants need proof of emergency which caused the delinquency</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Utility Payments</li> <li>◦ Mortgage/Util. Assistance= max. \$2000</li> <li>◦ Rent/Util. Assistance= max. \$1500</li> </ul> <p>Application must go before DCEAF Review Committee for Approval</p> |   |  |
| Housing Assistance Fund (HAF) | DHCD            | N/A   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the HAF is dedicated to assisting low-income households facing emergency relocation</li> <li>◦ Low income is defined as a percentage of HUD's Washington Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area "Low Income" standard , adjusted for household size; for FY2009:<br/> 1 person hh = \$32,000<br/> 2 person hh = \$38,400<br/> 3 person hh, or a 1 or 2 person hh containing a person 62 years of age or older, or who has a disability= \$57,600<br/> 4 person hh = \$64,000<br/> Five person hh = \$70,400<br/> More than five person hh = \$76,800</li> <li>◦ 1/6<sup>th</sup> for HAF is dedicated to Housing Assistance Payment</li> </ul> | <p>Payments for 2 months of storage, security deposit, 1<sup>st</sup> months rent, actual moving expenses, and other items incidental to relocation, as approved by OTA</p>  |   |  |

| Program                                      | District Agency   | Community Providers   | Eligibility Criteria   | Type of Assistance   | Annual Allocation<br>FY 2008<br>FY 2009  | Percent Expended<br>FY 2008<br>FY 2009   |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|
|  |   |   | (HAP) program  |  |  |  |
| <b>Family Re-Unification Program</b>         | Child Family Services Agency (CFSA) in partnership with the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public and private child-serving agencies</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Aging out of foster care</li> <li>Families in need of assistance for reunification or preservation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing subsidy (section 8 voucher)</li> <li>Supportive services, including referrals to community-based resources</li> </ul> | <p>CFSA has 500 FUP vouchers for families (10-15 of which become available annually).</p> <p>DCHA submitted application for additional vouchers in January 2009.</p> | 100%   |
| <b>Rapid Housing</b>                         | CFSA  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP) is the sub-grantee for the funds and administers the program; the Community Collaboratives deliver housing support services to youth and families.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Aging out of foster care</li> <li>Families in need of assistance for reunification or preservation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time-limited financial assistance</li> <li>Supportive services, including referrals to community-based resources</li> </ul>   | <p>Program closed in FY2009 due to lack of funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FY08: \$700k</li> <li>FY09 \$300k</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FY08 100%</li> <li>FY09 100%</li> </ul> |
| Continuum of Care – Rapid Re-Housing Program | DHS   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TCP</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targets families in emergency shelters who need units of 3 bedrooms or more</li> </ul>                              | Case management<br>Supportive services<br>Rental assistance for 12-15 months   | 2009<br>\$1,866,274  |  |

|  |                                   |   |   |   |  |                        |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|------------------------|
| Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) <sup>8</sup> | DOH HIV/AIDS Administration (HAA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ AIDS Network Tri-State Area (West Virginia)</li> <li>◦ Arlington County (Va.) Department of Human Services</li> <li>◦ Building Futures</li> <li>◦ Calvert County (Maryland)</li> <li>◦ Community Family Life</li> <li>◦ Community Family Life Services</li> <li>◦ Damien Ministries</li> <li>◦ DC Care Consortium</li> <li>◦ Different Avenues</li> <li>◦ Efforts, Inc.</li> <li>◦ Extended Care</li> <li>◦ Family &amp; Medical Counseling Services</li> <li>◦ Greater Washington Urban League</li> <li>◦ Hills Community</li> <li>◦ HIV Resources Project (Virginia)</li> <li>◦ Homes for Hope</li> <li>◦ Housing Counseling Services</li> <li>◦ Joseph's House</li> <li>◦ La Clinica del Pueblo</li> <li>◦ Legal Services of Northern Virginia</li> <li>◦ Miracle Hands</li> <li>◦ Miriam's House</li> <li>◦ Northern Virginia AIDS Ministry</li> <li>◦ Northern Virginia Family Service</li> <li>◦ Northern Virginia Regional Commission</li> <li>◦ Northwest Church Family Network</li> <li>◦ Our Place</li> <li>◦ Perry School</li> <li>◦ Prince George's County (Maryland)</li> <li>◦ Prince William (Virginia) County Office of Housing</li> <li>◦ Regional Addiction Prevention</li> <li>◦ RIGHT, Inc.</li> <li>◦ Terrific, Inc</li> <li>◦ Transgender Health Empowerment</li> <li>◦ Wesley Housing Development Corporation</li> <li>◦ Whitman-Walker Clinic</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Person with HIV/AIDS and family.</li> <li>◦ Serve low- and very low-income</li> <li>◦ Income criteria varies among service categories</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Tenant-Based Rental Assistance</li> <li>◦ Project Based Rental Assistance</li> <li>◦ Short-Term Rental, Utility and Mortgage Assistance</li> <li>◦ Supportive Services Housing Information and Referral</li> </ul> | \$11,118,000 (2007-08)<br>\$11,541,000 (2008-09) | 100%<br>100% (Pending) |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|------------------------|

<sup>8</sup> HOPWA serves a geographic area larger than the District, which includes the District and inner and outer suburban counties extending from Southern Maryland to West Virginia . Community providers serving clients outside of the District are noted as such.

## A. Gaps in Service for Homeless Prevention and Rapid re-housing

Prevention money expended through the Income Maintenance Administration's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) is the primary source of prevention funding available to District residents at risk of becoming homeless. Expanding prevention grants through HPRP is a proactive diversion strategy that when coupled with ERAP, can divert immediate housing crises by infusing vulnerable households with one time flexible financial assistance. Financial assistance through HPRP will be able to reach households with incomes up to 50% of Area Median Income (AMI).

1. *Income threshold.* ERAP assisted approximately 3,714 households during the 2008 fiscal year. Applications increased from 4,043 in FY 2007 to 5,232 in FY 2008. So far in FY 2009, 2,540 applications have been filed. Households above 125% of the federal poverty level are ineligible for ERAP. For a family of three, those with income above \$22,887 are ineligible for ERAP. ERAP grantees have reported 49 denials due to excess income in reporting thus far for FY 2009. This number is likely significantly lower than the actual number of households in need of rental assistance because ERAP providers usually complete a fairly detailed pre-screening; most clients with income much above the income limit are screened out prior to applying.

One provider reports that applications for ERAP funds have increased by 20 percent compared to this time last year. Additionally, for the same provider, the amount of applications denied because applicants earn more than the ERAP income guidelines has doubled over the last year.<sup>9</sup> The majority of households that are denied ERAP assistance have income that falls just above the poverty guidelines set forth by ERAP. These households' net income exceeds the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) of 125 percent by a very small margin that often equates to 130-160 percent of the FPL.<sup>10</sup> This new group of consumers that are being denied ERAP funds represent a new group of residents who are being adversely affected by difficult economic times.

**Table 3: Difference in income eligibility for ERAP and HPRP**

| Family Size | 125% of FPL<br><i>Current ERAP eligibility</i> | 50% AMI<br><i>Federal HPRP eligibility</i> |
|-------------|--|--|
| 1           | \$13,538                                       | \$35,950                                   |
| 2           | \$18,213                                       | \$41,100                                   |
| 3           | \$22,888                                       | \$46,200                                   |
| 4           | \$27,563                                       | \$51,350                                   |
| 5           | \$25,790                                       | \$55,450                                   |
| 6           | \$36,913                                       | \$59,550                                   |
| 7           | \$41,588                                       | \$63,650                                   |

<sup>9</sup> Analysis was completed on families applying for ERAP assistance at the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center ERAP office

<sup>10</sup> ERAP Income guidelines state that household net income may not exceed 125% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

|   |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|
| 8 | \$46,263 | \$67,800 |
|---|----------|----------|

2. *Unaccompanied Adults between 18 and 60 y.o.* The overwhelming majority of prevention and re-housing programs in the District are targeted for families with minor children, individuals with disabilities and seniors. Adults ages 19 – 59 , who are unaccompanied by a minor child and without a disability are ineligible for the majority of current prevention programs. A large number of individuals in this cohort become homeless when exiting institutions such as corrections facilities. Moreover, without sufficient supports, a large number of individuals in this group rely on the District’s emergency shelter system for housing.

3. *Youth.* *Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)* and organizations serving youth report a lack of sufficient resources targeted for homeless youth and express particular concern for youth aging out of foster care and LGBT youth.

**III. HPRP Program Design**

The purpose of the HPRP is to provide homelessness prevention assistance to households who would otherwise become homeless – many due to the economic crisis, and to provide assistance to rapidly re-house persons who are homeless.<sup>11</sup>

**A. Overview of Eligible Activities**

There are four categories of eligible activities for the HPRP program: (1) financial assistance, (2) housing relocation and stabilization services, (3) data collection and evaluation, and (4) administrative costs.<sup>12</sup> Financial assistance is limited to short-term rental assistance, medium-term rental assistance, security deposits, utility deposits, utility payments, moving cost assistance, and motel and hotel vouchers.

1. *Rental Assistance.* Short and medium rental assistance is tenant-based rental assistance that can be used to allow tenants to remain in their existing rental units or to help them obtain and remain in rental units they select. Short-term rental assistance may not exceed rental costs accrued over a period of 3 months. Medium-term rental assistance may not exceed actual rental costs accrued over 4 to 18 months. After 3 months, if program participants receiving short-term rental assistance need additional financial assistance to remain housed, they must be evaluated for eligibility to receive up to 15 additional months of medium-term rental assistance, for a total of 18 months. HUD requires that the District and its grantees certify eligibility for the program at least every three months for all program participants receiving medium-term rental assistance. HUD encourages the provision of ongoing case management, as needed, to program participants receiving rental assistance to transition them to independence, including permanent housing arrangements.

<sup>11</sup> *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*: Department of Housing and Urban Development, notice of Allocations, Applications Procedures for Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program Grantees, 2009, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p 12.

Rental assistance may also be used to pay up to 6 months of rental arrears for eligible program participants. Rental arrears may be paid if the payment enables the program participant to remain in the housing unit for which arrears are being paid or move to another units.

*2. Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services.* HPRP funds may be used for services that assist program participants with housing stability and placement. These services are limited to the following eligible activities: case management, outreach and engagement, housing search and placement, legal services, and credit repair.

*3. Ineligible and Prohibited Activities.* The following activities are prohibited with HPRP funds: mortgage and refinancing costs, construction or rehabilitation, credit card bills or other consumer debt, car repair or other transportation costs, travel costs, food, medical or dental care and medicine, clothing or grooming, home furnishings, pet care, entertainment activities, work or education related materials and cash assistance to program participants. HPRP funds may not be used to develop discharge planning programs in mainstream institutions such as hospitals, jails or prisons.

## B. The District's HPRP Program

The District is proposing that the HPRP maximize existing infrastructures and community relationships to enhance the ability of providers in the community to prevent new episodes of homelessness and to appropriately make connections to prevention and re-housing resources.

### 1. Targeting Eligible Populations

HPRP is designed to serve two eligible populations: persons who are still housed but at risk of becoming homeless, and persons who are already homeless. Specific populations who are at risk of homelessness, including youth, persons with severe mental illness, persons living with HIV/AIDS, persons exiting institutions are subgroups of the two eligible populations. The District will appropriately target HPRP to these two populations with particular focus on reaching those populations that have been ineligible for the current array of programs and tailor support to address the specific housing needs of

It is important to note that HPRP does not provide long term or permanent housing supports. Resources will be targeted for those with most at risk of homelessness or with barriers to housing, and who are committed to independently sustaining housing after the subsidy ends.

It is impossible to know whether someone will be able to sustain their rent without support at the conclusion of supports. Guidance will be based on the assumption that most people will make some progress during the course of the intervention and services will be in place to support this progress.

Case management will encourage participants to look at shared housing situations and affordable solutions while seeking new or better jobs.

## 2. Outreach

The District will work through community based organizations and government intake offices to reach out to those at risk of homelessness before they become homeless. Often before people fall behind on their rent and receive an eviction notice, they seek other forms of support such as: applying for income supports, visiting housing resource centers, accessing food banks and feeding programs, or alerting medical or other service providers of their situations. The District will partner with organizations that provide these resources to accept direct referrals for prevention support.

In addition, the District will work with organizations that serve vulnerable populations (i.e. youth, victims of domestic violence, persons living with AIDS) to provide outreach and case management support to assist in accessing HPRP resources.

## 3. Uniform Assessment

The District will use a uniform assessment tool to enable a person-centric approach to service delivery. The assessment tool will be used to understand the range of supports the individual or family is eligible for and will be the basis for referral and connection to an individualized array of mainstream services. The assessment will be the foundation for connection to HPRP or other existing prevention or housing programs and will determine the level at which the individual or family is offered case management to assist with housing stabilization. Applicants exhibiting a large number of risk factors will be targeted with more intensive supports. The District will maximize the opportunity presented by HPRP to offer assessments throughout community based housing counseling and CoC programs to enhance navigation of mainstream resources and target individuals for rapid re-housing.

The District will make assessments widely accessible in a variety of settings to families and individuals. From commencement of the HPRP families will be able to receive assessments at VWRC. In addition, based on proven track records and demonstrated capacity, other family shelter programs may be selected to implement the assessment tool.

Individuals will be able to access assessments and services in a variety of ways. A rotation schedule will be established, for specific intake days, at emergency shelters for a team of social service professionals to administer assessments and make connections to services. In addition, the District will work to identify a central referral system through which individuals may access assessments, HPRP resources and supports.

## 4. Prevention Assistance

Prevention assistance will be targeted for households with incomes at or below 50% of AMI who are housed and would become homeless without this intervention. The District will establish income



guidelines for prevention assistance to reach with very low income, who exhibit risk factors that indicate they would become homeless without this intervention. Those who are at especially high risk of homelessness because of notice of eviction, foreclosures, foster care experience, institutionalizations, new baby, and history of homelessness will be prioritized for assistance.

Prevention assistance will be targeted for those for whom ERAP does not work because they need more support than the program allows, they are not an eligible population (18 – 60 y.o. singles, etc.) and who ERAP is not reaching because they do not connect with the program in time to avoid homelessness (youth, etc.).

Households targeted for prevention assistance will participate in the uniform assessment. All households will be presented with a comprehensive resource guide that will include a list of services available in the community, a budget calculation resource, information on how to access mainstream city services, and a guide on how to keep utility costs low. Families would not be required to participate in case management, but follow up services will be offered to all households receiving grants.

Due to the need to make HPRP assistance available to District residents as quickly as possible, and ensure coordination with existing programs, the District will work through current contracted ERAP and providers of homeless prevention and re-housing agencies that are able to demonstrate capacity to conduct assessments, make connections to an array of individualized resources, and offer case management to administer the HPRP program. The coordination of information across programs is essential to meeting HPRP program requirements that HPRP assistance in combination with assistance from other programs does not exceed the equivalent of 18 months of rent.

#### 5. Rapid-Re-housing Assistance

Rapid Re-housing assistance is available for people who are homeless according to HUD's definition. Individuals and families are considered homeless if they are:

- a. Sleeping in an emergency shelter;
- b. Sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, abandoned buildings, streets/sidewalks;
- c. Staying in a hospital or other institution for up to 180 days but were sleeping in an emergency shelter or other place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entry into the hospital or institution
- d. In a transitional program; or
- e. Victims of domestic violence.

An effective exit strategy from the homeless system and diversion from the front door is essential for creating capacity in shelters for both families and singles. A number of individuals and families in the homeless services system, and those currently finding themselves in need of housing supports, are working and generally have the means to be self-sufficient with the help of a short-term housing subsidy and adequate case management. Many of these individuals and families have the education and/or job skills to earn the necessary income to support themselves and their families.

It is common for individuals who are working or who have just completed training programs to struggle to live independently because of the immediate influx of expenditures. The stress of managing a household independently coupled with the costs of transportation, childcare, rent and utilities can be overwhelming. Stays in shelter are often lengthened as a result of a family's inability to take on these responsibilities immediately.

Short-term housing subsidies will enable these individuals and families to exit the homeless services system or avoid homelessness by receiving the financial assistance needed to obtain and/or maintain housing. During the period of the subsidy, these individuals and families will be connected to the resources and services needed for them to become self-sufficient by the time their subsidy expires.

Criteria such as: employment status; income level; employment experience; education level; job skills and training experience; and, willingness to address barriers to self-sufficiency will be considered to as factors for targeting those that are likely to be able to sustain housing beyond the timeframe of HPRP supports.

Households will be reassessed at three month intervals for continued need for housing supports. As needed, the program will provide supportive services, connections to employment training and address presenting needs to enable program participants to independently maintain their housing at the conclusion of the assistance period.

While there is a distinct 18 month time limit to HPRP subsidies, jurisdictions have a great deal of flexibility in designing the housing supports. Consistent with other local housing programs where feasible, the District will require participants receiving medium-term subsidies to pay at least 30% of their income toward rent. When appropriate, the District will implement graduated subsidies to assist in transitioning families off of rental supports. The District will strive to provide the smallest subsidy needed, for the shortest essential time period, so that we may assist the greatest number of households possible.

## 6. Case Management Services

The District will provide enhanced case management services, on a voluntary basis, for those households for which the assessment indicated a high level of risk. For example, there are families who have repeatedly applied for rental assistance, or who have experienced evictions and episodes of homelessness in the past. As a further means to prevent future homelessness, case management services are needed to prevent these individuals and families from experiencing crisis in the future. Some of the factors that would make an individual or family high risk include: one or more previous attempts to access prevention services; one or more previous evictions; poor money management and bad credit; unemployment or underemployment; and, disabilities. Some individuals and/or families may experience several of these high risk factors. These services are intended to be brief in nature and provided by qualified social service professionals.

Case management for people exiting institutions will focus on navigating housing location, leveraging tools such as [dchousingsearch.org](http://dchousingsearch.org), in order to make connections with community supports as indicated in the discharge plan, and supporting transitions from institutions into housing in the community.

To control the quality and quantity of case management in the HPRP program, the District proposes to centralize case management services. Agencies providing uniform assessments will refer high risk clients for case management supports. The Department of Human Services will contract for HPRP case management services. These will be performance based contracts, with incentives based on reaching performance targets.

## 7. Program Oversight and Performance Measurement<sup>13</sup>

The District's HPRP prevention, diversion and rapid re-housing efforts will be measured for their effectiveness, considering the varying risk levels of the sub-populations being served. The District's program will strive to provide just enough assistance to prevent homelessness, or to successfully assist households in becoming stably housed. In this way, resources prevent more episodes of homelessness, and assist more households currently experiencing homelessness. The administration of the program will be geared to ensuring that these resources are used efficiently.

*Goal 1: Prevent people from becoming homeless.*

### *Measures*

- Number of households identified as having a housing problem that warrant a referral to a homelessness prevention program
- Number and percentage of people served who are at highest risk of homelessness (stratify by risk factors such as income, housing situation, etc.)
- Number and percentage of highest-risk households served who do not become homeless within 12 months
- Cost per household assisted
- Overall number of people who become homeless in the community

*Goal 2: Divert people who are applying for shelter, when appropriate, into other housing.*

When persons apply for shelter, they will automatically be assessed for the possibility of remaining in their current housing or staying in alternative accommodations, even for a few days or weeks, while more stable housing is identified. Because of the immediacy of the crisis, it is imperative that flexible financial assistance be readily available and that it can be used for a variety of needs until a more permanent housing solution can be secured.

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from "Creating a Plan for the Homelessness Prevention Fund" National Alliance to End Homelessness, March 5, 2009.

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2185> Accessed April 20, 2009.

The reward for successful diversion is high. Diversion candidates would almost certainly become homeless without assistance, and avoiding a homeless episode can save significant funds, providing great benefit for the individuals or family.

The safety of a family or individual must be a primary consideration, and there will be times when diversion programs will not be appropriate. People who flee domestic violence or another dangerous situation will not be encouraged to return to the same housing unless the threat has been mitigated. Diversion efforts will not prevent entry into shelter for people who are literally homeless with no other safe options.

#### *Goal 2 Measures*

- Number and percentage of households who apply for shelter or other homeless assistance who are assessed for diversion
- Number and percentage of households who are successfully diverted from homelessness
- Number and percentage of households who are diverted who become homeless within 12 months
- Cost per household assisted

#### *Goal 3: Help people who become homeless to quickly move into permanent housing.*

Most people who become homeless can exit homelessness quickly with assistance. This plan addresses how people will be assessed within a few days of entering shelter for their strengths, resources, and barriers to exiting homelessness, focusing on credit problems, prior evictions, income, and any other factors that are immediate obstacles to renting an apartment or returning to family/friends. The housing search process should begin as soon as possible.

#### *Goal 3 Measures*

- Number and percentage of households who are assessed for their barriers to housing within 7 days of shelter entry
- Average length of time people are homeless (for all homeless people in the system and for just those served by a re-housing program)
- Percentage of households who receive re-housing services who do not become homeless again within 12 months
- Overall number of people in shelter
- Number of landlords and the number of units of housing that participate in the re-housing program

## 8. Reporting and Administration

As with other HUD-funded activities in the District, DHCD is responsible for reporting on the use of funds in a manner consistent with established guidelines. As further information becomes available, DHCD will update its requirements.

### ***HIMIS Technical Standards***

HUD anticipates that the Notice for the proposed revised data standards for HMIS will be published for public comment by April 30, 2009. These standards will include HPRP requirements for HMIS, which will be adhered to for all HPRP activities.

Generally, staff time associated with administering a particular HPRP activity must be charged to that program activity. Staff time for screening clients and processing client applications will be considered case management and is eligible under housing relocation and stabilization services.

### ***Quarterly Progress Reports***

HUD is currently developing the formats and data elements that will be included in the Initial, Quarterly, and Annual Performance Reports referenced in the HPRP Notice. The data elements will be made available for public review and comment (through the OMB Paperwork Reduction Act process) prior to being finalized. HUD anticipates that this process will be completed in Summer 2009. These reports will utilize the same data elements included in HUD's HMIS Data and Technical Standards plus any additional data that is required under the Recovery Act. These reports will not be the same as the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) or the Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) data currently collected in IDIS.

### ***Mandated HMIS***

All HPRP activities will be governed by the HPRP Operating Instructions and further serve to support the forthcoming Grant Agreement, which will include HMIS participation requirements. HUD will monitor HPRP grantees such as the District for compliance with the requirements.

### ***Jobs Created and Retained***

One of the requirements of the Recovery Act of 2009 is that jobs that are created and/or retained through the use of HPRP funds be tracked and reported. For HPRP, this could be jobs created or retained at the grantee or sub-grantee levels. This plan anticipates that the District and its sub-grantees will hire or track the retention of case managers and staff to administer the HPRP Program. These jobs will be reported as "created" or "retained" through the use of HPRP funds.

**Conclusion**

This concept paper was developed jointly by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Department of Human Services (DHS), with input from multiple government offices and agencies, including: HIV/AIDS Administration, Department of Health; Office of Victim Services, Office of the Tenant Advocate, Child and Family Services Agency, Department of Mental Health, and the Office on Aging.

Public input is critical for ensuring that the District's plan for HPRP funds best meets the needs of homeless individuals and families, and those at risk of homelessness. The timeline for doing so is as follows: DHCD released a draft Substantial Amendment detailing proposed HPRP uses on April 22, 2009, that is available at [www.dhcd.dc.gov](http://www.dhcd.dc.gov) as well as at public libraries and at selected community-based organizations. DHCD held a public hearing on April 29, 2009, 6:30-8:30 PM, at the Old Council Chambers at 441 4<sup>th</sup> St., NW to receive public comments. Written statements may be submitted for the record at the hearing or until close of business, Wednesday May 6, 2009. Written statements may be mailed to: Leila Finucane Edmonds, Director, DHCD, Attention: Office of the Director, 1800 MLK Jr. Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20020. Alternately, you may email your statement to [HPRP@dc.gov](mailto:HPRP@dc.gov).

We look forward to your comments and to our future collaboration to serve the needs of homeless individuals and families, and those at risk of homelessness.