

CUMBERLAND COUNTY HOUSING FIRST PHASE 2

January 1, 2018- December 31, 2018

Overview:

Phase Two of the Cumberland County Housing First Collaborative's work to end homelessness in Cumberland County by 2020 will utilize a Rapid Rehousing (RRH) designed to help individuals and families exit homelessness and return to permanent housing as quickly as possible. RRH projects utilize the Housing First philosophy by providing temporary financial assistance combined with housing location and housing stability case management services to help homeless individuals and families obtain permanent housing and achieve stability. The model is consumer-driven and the services and housing options provided must be tailored to household needs and priorities as much as possible. Project participants must be assisted to locate housing of their choice in the private rental market within Cumberland County, NJ. Connecting participants with social supports and mainstream resources for stabilization is a necessary component of any RRH project.

As prior federal and state programs utilizing RRH models have shown, creating permanent, safe, and affordable housing creates a sense of stability and hope for each household involved. Once this core and basic need has been supplied, our case management team can then address additional needs, such as health care, financial literacy training, any mental health needs, substance abuse, etc.

Phase Two will also utilize Progressive Engagement. Progressive Engagement is a nationally recognized best practice in addressing the needs of RRH participants, which provides customized levels of assistance to households and preserves the most extensive interventions for households with the most severe barriers to housing success. In a Progressive Engagement approach, participant needs are met with the appropriate level of services, starting with the least intensive service and increasing service level as needed. For example, the RRH project could provide all households enrolled with a basic level of assistance, such as assistance preparing a housing search plan and list of local landlords. Some households will be successful finding housing with that level of assistance, but for those households who demonstrate that they need more assistance and support to find housing, the supportive services must be increased to meet the level of need. The initial assessment of strengths, needs, and barriers to stable housing should inform the initial level of financial assistance and supportive services to be provided by the RRH project. Participants should then be re-assessed throughout the duration of the program enrollment so that housing stability plans and supportive services can be increased or decreased, as appropriate. This approach ensures that the financial and supportive services provided by RRH projects are effectively targeted and responsive to the diverse needs of households experiencing homelessness.

Target Populations (in order of preference):

- Chronically Homeless (Veteran)/Disabled
- Chronically Homeless/Disabled
- Family Homeless

- Veteran Homeless
- Homeless

Eligibility:

- The household may not exceed 125% poverty level.
- The household must be homeless
- The household must be able to afford rent after 3 months of rental subsidies.
- Must meet the following circumstances:
 - No appropriate subsequent housing options have been identified;
 - The household lacks the financial resources to obtain immediate housing
 - The household lacks support networks needed to obtain immediate housing
 - Client is a “high end user” of the correctional facility and/or hospital system

Financial Assistance:

RRH assistance is not intended to provide long-term support for households, nor will it be able to address all of the financial and supportive services needs of households that affect housing stability. Participants may receive up to 9 monthly rental assistance payments, including rental arrears, as needed to obtain and maintain housing. For all participants, case management may continue for no more than six (6) months after rental assistance has ended and the total number of months of case management assistance received must never exceed 24 months.

Every three (3) months from the date of entry in the program, Agencies must conduct re-evaluations of participants. To continue receiving rental assistance, participants must demonstrate continued need and eligibility.

Eligible costs may include first and last month’s rent; security deposits, rental application fees; moving costs; utility deposits, payments, and arrears; and other costs depending on the needs of the household.

The Collaborative shall work with community partners whenever possible to obtain funding for security deposits and/or first month’s rent (i.e. VOA).

Tenant-based rental assistance can be for individuals and households to help them obtain rental units they select (rapid re-housing). In addition: A written lease must be in place and the program participant must be named on the lease.

Short-term rental assistance – Costs may not exceed rental costs accrued over a period of 1 to 3 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 6 additional months of rental assistance.

Amount of rental assistance – The maximum subsidy is: \$500 (monthly) and \$2500 (annually) toward the FMR. Clients are expected to pay up to 50% of gross income toward rent.