

# City of Salem Strategic Plan Homeless Rental Assistance Program Action Update

## ***Department Director Sponsor***

---

Andy Wilch, Salem Housing Authority Administrator

## ***Staff Lead***

---

Kellie Battaglia, Salem Housing Authority Client Services Manager

## ***Purpose and Scope of Initiative***

---

Salem Housing Authority (SHA) was awarded \$1.4 million in the FY18 budget for the Homeless Rental Assistance Program (HRAP). This Housing First program is designed to house and provide supportive services to the top 100 hardest-to-house, chronically homeless individuals in Salem with 12 months of rental assistance; funding for security deposits, utilities, basic personal care items and medical needs to remove initial barriers to housing; and life-skills training along with intensive housing case management.

The goal of the program is to implement a Housing First strategy to provide housing security for Salem residents. The program is one of the actions identified by Council to achieve their Affordable Housing, Social Services and Homelessness goals in the Strategic Plan.

## ***Subject Experts, Business Leads, Community Partners***

---

- *Referrals to Housing.* The team is led by Salem Housing Authority staff and the program relies on a unique partnership with ARCHES. Through ARCHES, chronically homeless persons are identified, assessed and referred to the Homeless Rental Assistance Program. These processes of coordinated entry and service prioritization are fundamentally important to assure that HRAP is providing services to the clientele most in need and with the greatest degree of vulnerability.
- *Food Security.* Additionally, Marion Polk Food Share has also been supportive of HRAP clients by providing emergency food boxes and pantry starter kits. This assures that all clients will have basic food security as soon as they are placed into housing. Additional food items are donated weekly by the Interfaith Hospitality Network, which delivers large amounts for bread, pastries, bagels and buns to SHA for distribution to seniors in SHA housing and to the HRAP households. These partnerships address the need for assuring food security.
- *Furnishings.* SHA and Union Gospel Mission have entered into an agreement to furnish each HRAP apartment with basic essential furniture such as couches, tables and chairs, lamps, dressers, etc. Coordination with UGM warehouse staff, transportation and movers makes it possible for HRAP to house a new client on very short notice. This partnership is essential to maximize the use of vital barrier funds for other key aspects of housing stability, such as medical needs, resolution of legal issues, utilities and basic needs.

- *Coordination with Other Services.* Salem Health has demonstrated tremendous support of HRAP from the very beginning by agreeing to make all relevant aggregate data available regarding the utilization of high end emergency services by HRAP clients, both before and after being housed. This complex data analysis will be our first opportunity to quantify the cost savings achieved by housing the hardest to house chronically homeless persons in Salem. Other key partners include Bridgeway, Northwest Seniors with Disabilities, Marion County Health Department, Northwest Human Services, Behavioral Care Network (BCN), Salem Police Department and Salem Courts.

### ***Milestones, Scope, Schedule and Budget***

---

#### **When did this effort get underway?**

The HRAP program began July 1, 2017.

#### **What milestones were achieved this quarter?**

To-date, 58 clients have been referred by ARCHES to the program.

- Enrollees: 38 individuals. Of those enrolled in the program, 21 have permanent housing and 17 are awaiting housing placement.
- Not yet enrolled, ineligible or unable to locate: 20 individuals. Of those referred but not currently enrolled in the program, eight have moved away or have made no contact within 60 days. Five others are ineligible for the program, two are since deceased, one is in foster care, and three are in the process of becoming enrolled.

All of the individuals enrolled in the program are receiving intensive housing case management services by SHA staff while they are waiting for housing placement. Many are also actively engaged in receiving mental health, medical and addiction services. In fact, 21 of the 38 clients enrolled in HRAP are receiving voluntary drug treatment through Bridgeway or Marion County Health Department.

#### **Are there any changes needed to our approach, the scope, schedule, or budget? Why?**

The number of referrals from ARCHES is on track. The number of individuals enrolled in the program is slightly behind but staff anticipates meeting the goal of enrolling 100 individuals this fiscal year. The pace of permanently housing individuals is behind schedule due to a significant lack of available affordable housing units, difficulty enrollees have had in passing the criminal history screening criteria of many property management companies and relatively slow landlord buy-in.

To address these challenges, SHA continues to look for opportunities to acquire properties, is pursuing development of Yaquina Hall, and is in negotiations for a 17 unit property that could be converted to 34 one bedroom units. SHA also continues to provide landlord engagement and regularly attends the Salem Rental Association monthly meetings. All HRAP clients attend SHA's Ready to Rent class to learn how to be good tenants, which has also been a selling feature for landlords.

Since the program began, SHA has built up staffing capacity to manage the caseload. National best practices has shown that a successful Housing First program requires a client-to-staffing ratio of 15 clients for every one full-time case manager. SHA is actively seeking grant funding to fund staffing as the program grows. Recently, SHA was awarded \$150,000 for two year (\$75K per year) from the Meyer Memorial Trust Foundation for another case manager and ARCHES has loaned a full-time staff person to provide case management support. With the additional staffing, SHA anticipates having 100 clients enrolled in the program and receiving case management services by June 2018.

The number of individuals housed by the end of the fiscal year will be dependent upon the availability of units and local landlords' willingness to rent to this population as well as having adequate staffing to manage the caseload. SHA staff continue to actively provide outreach to landlords as well as put measures in place to mitigate their risk with the hope of increasing landlord buy-in and unit availability. At this time, SHA is not recommending revising the goal of housing 100 individuals during this program year. The goal should be re-evaluated at the end of the third quarter so the impact of adequate staffing may be evaluated.

As anticipated, the expenditures are lower than a proration of the annual budget. Additionally, SHA has been able to house five (5) clients in subsidized units at \$0/monthly rent, which is a cost savings to the overall program. As more clients are housed, expenditures will increase.

SHA hopes to enroll 30 more individuals in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. If we achieve this goal, the number of individuals enrolled in the program and receiving intensive case management services would be 68 individuals. Moreover, SHA anticipates housing at least 25-35 individuals during the next three months.

**Is there any community outreach or Council engagement expected?**

SHA staff regularly attend the Salem Rental Association monthly meetings to provide landlord outreach and education. Additionally, SHA is inviting landlords to attend the Emergency Housing Network meeting in January to learn about the homeless brain. SHA staff have participated in radio interviews and will continue to do so to educate and update the community on the program's progress.

**Are there other Strategic Plan initiatives expected to follow this work?**

As part of the Affordable Housing, Social Services and Homelessness Priority Area, the goal of "Creating a sustainable, substantive funding stream for the development of affordable housing" is directly related to the short- and long-term success of reducing homelessness in Salem. Additionally, the goal of "Partnering to establish a sobering and recovery center" is critical to provide a more comprehensive continuum, of homeless services in the community.