



## **CITY INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS**

### **Updated February 19, 2010**

#### Background

The City and County of Honolulu Department of Community Services has been a long standing partner with the State Homeless Services Branch and local homeless service providers in developing plans and implementing strategies to address homelessness. The most recently published plan is the “Plan to End Homelessness in Hawaii” prepared by the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness, revised September 2008 and which was based on the Plan to End Homelessness in Hawaii prepared by the Hawaii Policy Academy on Chronic Homelessness published September 2004.

While larger mainland municipalities provide housing and welfare; operate schools and hospitals; and deliver those services traditionally associated with local government, Hawaii’s highly centralized government assigns those duties to the State government. In addition to needing housing, many people who are homeless are afflicted with mental health issues and drug and alcohol addictions requiring long-term, costly, medical and social services which fall primarily under the purview of the State’s Hawaii Public Housing Authority (Homeless Programs Branch), Department of Human Services (Social Services Division), Department of Health (Adult Mental Health Division and Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division), and the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation (Rental Housing Trust Fund and Low Income Housing Tax Credits).

#### City’s Role

The City’s primary role in addressing homelessness has been to seek resources to facilitate and support the development and maintenance of successful programs which assist individuals in stabilizing their lives and reaching their full potential. Homelessness is a broad and complex social issue. Throughout the Hannemann Administration we have focused primarily on identifying the areas of greatest need or greatest impact where resources exist to address the need, however, we have also looked at the issue comprehensively to take advantage of collaborative partnerships and emerging resources.

### **1. Traditional Services / Continuum of Care & Other HUD Funding**

Historically through HUD’s Emergency Shelter Grant Program and Continuum of Care (CoC) Grant awards (competitive), the City’s Department of Community Services disburses an average of \$7 million each year to homeless service providers. We have worked collaboratively with homeless service providers and the State Homeless Services Branch to improve our application which resulted in an increase from \$5 million to \$7 million in the last fully funded round of awards under the CoC grant program.

- Emergency shelter operations
- Transitional shelter operations
- Rental assistance<sup>1</sup>
- Case management & other supportive services
- Facility repair and maintenance for properties owned by the City

## 2. Housing has always been the primary permanent solution

- Section 8 Housing Program
- City’s Affordable Housing Projects
- City owned properties leased to nonprofit organizations for special needs housing
- Support of new housing developments (during the Hannemann Administration)

<u>Completed</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Funding</u>
Ainahau Vista	106	2,900,000
Palehua Terrace Phase II	64	\$1,360,000
Piikoi Vista	47	\$1,700,000
Salvation Army transitional homes	12 (beds)	\$750,000
Senior Residence at Kapolei	60	\$1,750,000
Villas at Aeloa	<u>72</u>	<u>\$2,832,300</u>
	<b>361 units</b>	<b>\$11,292,300</b>

<u>In development</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Funding</u>
Franciscan Vistas Ewa	149	* \$3,150,000
Habitat for Humanity Kaukamana	25	\$900,000
Hale Mohalu Phase I & II	331	\$2,204,128
Hale Wai Vista	216	\$3,062,000
Hui Kauhale	192	* \$12,026,600
Sea Winds	50	<u>\$6,373,895</u>
Total	<b>1,324 units</b>	<b>\$27,716,623</b>

\* includes Section 8 reserve funds used for land acquisition

## 3. Unique Programs to Address Gaps in Services

- Homeless Resource Centers (one-stop drop-in centers within communities)

DCS worked closely with homeless service providers who offered outreach services to garner support for the development of homeless resource centers in communities which sorely lacked homeless services, yet had a significant homeless population. We solicited their ideas and offered them a model and encouraged them to apply for CDBG funding to establish these centers. Three organizations collaborated and a proposal was

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<sup>1</sup> The City’s Shelter Plus Care program currently provides rent subsidies to 316 persons with disabilities experiencing homelessness. Rental assistance provided through partner agencies Kalihi Palama Health Center, Steadfast Housing Development Corporation and IHS, the Institute for Human Services, is coupled with supportive services required as part of the grant. In addition to S+C, the City’s Section 8 program has a preference for persons experiencing homelessness who are already in a government rent subsidy program and have been stably housed in an eligible unit for a year and will continue to receive supportive services.

submitted and awarded \$150,000 in CDBG funding. The purpose of these “drop-in” centers is to make it easier for people to access services and to implement a model focused on offering a “hand up” as opposed to only a “hand out.” Although not currently being funded through the City, the primary organization continues to operate 3 centers and the City’s workforce development division continues to provide employment resources as requested to these centers.

- Work Readiness Program (thru WorkHawaii-Oahu WorkLinks)

DCS developed a Work Readiness Program for people who are homeless and either lack recent work experience or need training before entering the workforce. Too often, individuals are referred prematurely to job opportunities and experience failure resulting in a negative experience for both the potential employee and the employer. The program is supported through HUD CDBG funding under our workforce development division.

Program services include:

- Outreach
- Supportive Services (including basic life skills support)
- Message Center
- 1-on-1 Counseling
- Access to Training Opportunities
- Employment Information & Services
- On the job training funds for employers

- Bench Warrant Recall Program (Volunteer Legal Services of Hawaii)

With the support of CDBG funding, the City contracted with an organization who uses volunteer attorneys to develop a system to assist individuals who are homeless in resolving outstanding warrants and tickets which were received while sleeping in cars or in the parks. Removal of the bench warrant as well as the underlying pending legal action allowed these individuals to participate in employment preparation programs and to become more marketable to employers. It also reduced the barrier to seeking other services that could lead to greater self sufficiency for fear of getting arrested. Although the CDBG funding ended, the organization now has a system to continue to provide this service as resources permit.

- Rent to Work Program (\$1.25 million HUD funding thru WorkHawaii-Oahu WorkLinks)

This is a unique program that took an innovative approach to using HUD’s HOME Investment Partnership Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program. DCS established a program that provides 12 months of rental assistance to people who are homeless who are willing to enter employment or increase income primarily through employment. Participants must develop and follow an individualized employment and training plan to increase income. The Rent To Work program will only take applications from people

who meet homelessness eligibility requirements. \$1.25 million is currently budgeted for this program for the current fiscal year. The program began in August 2009 and to date we have issued 35 vouchers and 25 individuals/families have been able to lease an apartment or house.

- River Street Residence (still in public comment phase)

DCS is proposing to use a City-owned property in downtown Honolulu for permanent rental housing following the “housing first” model. The “Housing First” approach moves homeless individuals or a household immediately from the streets or homeless shelters into their own apartment and is based on the concept that a homeless individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that other factors impacting their homeless status can and should be addressed once housing is obtained.

This is a proven model, nationwide that successfully addresses chronic homelessness.

#### **4. Communication & Collaboration**

- Continuum of Care Grant Proposal
- Participation in Partners In Care
- Homeless Help Cards to HPD & DPR
- Point in Time Count
- Notice to homeless service providers of activities that could impact their clients
- Convening forums to facilitate collaboration

#### **5. Prevention of Homelessness**

The City contracted out \$4 million (over 2 years) in HUD’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) funds to service providers for temporary assistance such as with back rent or short term rent, deposit, utility payments, etc. and case management services to either prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless or to help those who are experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed and stabilized.

##### HPRP

###### **Financial Assistance**

- Catholic Charities
- Helping Hands Hawaii
- Institute for Human Services
- Kalihi-Palama Health Center
- Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center

###### **Case Management**

- Waikiki Health Center

###### **Legal Assistance**

- Legal Aid Society of Hawaii
- Volunteer Legal Services of Hawaii

## Other Prevention Programs

### ○ ***Family Unification Program***

DCS was awarded \$1,085,328 to provide stable housing for young adults, 18 to 22 years of age, who have “aged-out” of the foster care system. The funds were awarded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Family Unification Program and will provide 100 rental assistance vouchers. In addition to the rental assistance vouchers, the youth will receive education and employment training, as well as medical and other support services to help them transition out of the foster care system and into successful, healthy, and productive lives as adults in our community.

This program is a unique partnership between the City and the State’s Department of Human Services and Hale Kipa, a local nonprofit dedicated to servicing Hawaii’s youth and their families.

Often youth in foster care are released into adulthood without sufficient housing, educational, employment, and social support systems in place placing them at risk for becoming homeless.

### ○ ***Young Parents Demonstration Grant***

DCS’ Youth Services Center (YSC) was awarded \$1,000,000 by the U.S. Department of Labor to promote overall self-sufficiency of young and expectant parents, ages 16-24. The Young Parents Demonstration Grant will fund a new program designed to provide educational and occupational training, as well as employment services to teen parents and expectant mothers. These services will be offered in the evenings and weekends as well as online to provide the flexibility needed by pregnant/parenting young people. The program includes follow up and retention services for five years, providing the support and encouragement that high-risk young parents and expectant mothers need as they strive to attain their educational and employment goals and avoid ending up homeless.

### ○ ***Youth Services Center***

The City’s Youth Services Center coordinates and administers services to socially disenfranchised, economically disadvantaged and other alienated, high risk youth and young adults to transition them towards greater self-sufficiency.

- ✓ YouthBuild Honolulu Program
- ✓ Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Program
- ✓ Juvenile Justice Center

### ○ ***Prisoner Re-entry Program***

While only a pilot, WorkHawaii completed its first session at the Federal Detention Center serving female inmates from both the State Department of Public Safety and the

Federal Detention Center. The intent of the program is to provide pre-employment/job readiness skills to facilitate their re-entry into society and the workforce and to provide them with a support system upon exiting the prison system.

## **6. Decriminalization of Homelessness**

- Pre-booking diversion (HPD Initiative)

The Honolulu Police Department has significantly enhanced the training of their police officers to recognize individual behaviors that are indicative of a serious mental illness so that the police psychologist can be notified and can make an assessment as to how to handle the disposition of the individual, i.e., does the person have a mental health case manager, does the person need to be sent to the emergency room for an assessment, is an arrest truly warranted, or should the person be left alone and a referral made to the appropriate service provider.

- Mental health interventions

Often referred to as the “chronically homeless”, DCS has been proactive in looking at long term solutions to provide the needed services to assist people with a mental illness and addictions. We have participated on the Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant committee on Criminal Justice which has focused on reducing the number of persons with mental illness from entering the criminal justice system.

## **7. Support to Nonprofit Organizations/Service Providers**

- Lease of City Properties/Facilities

The City currently leases 56 properties to organizations who operate either emergency shelters (both of IHS’ emergency shelter facilities, one for single men and the other for women and families with children), transitional housing, affordable housing, or special needs housing. Of these, 5 properties are being leased to organizations who provide services to people who are/were experiencing homelessness (460 units) and, 3 properties are leased to organizations who provide supportive housing to people with a mental illness (18 units).

- IHS, The Institute for Human Services

The City provided \$750,000 to IHS over a 2 year period to allow for the renovation of IHS’ facilities and to provide staffing that allowed the accommodation of an additional 65 people.

- Honolulu Community Action Program

The City provided \$250,000 to Honolulu Community Action Program to complete the renovation of transitional housing units at Kalaeloa. These units are available to singles and couples who are homeless.