

**REPORT TO THE TWENTY-SEVENTH HAWAII STATE
LEGISLATURE 2014**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF
SECTION 346-378, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES ON THE
HOUSING FIRST PROGRAMS**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
Benefit, Employment, and Support Services Division
November 2013**

REPORT ON THE HOUSING FIRST PROGRAMS PURSUANT TO SECTION 346-378, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES

Section 346-378(d), Hawaii Revised Statutes, requires that the Department of Human Services (DHS) shall submit an annual report on the Housing First Programs to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular session, beginning with the regular session of 2011. The annual report is to include:

- (1) Total number of participants in housing first programs;
- (2) Annual costs of the programs;
- (3) Types of support services offered; and
- (4) Duration of services required for each participant.

Housing First is an evidence-based strategy/approach to providing the homeless with housing quickly and then providing support services as needed. An immediate and primary focus on housing is key to this approach which involves helping individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing that is not time limited. The Housing First model suggests a wide variety of support services be delivered primarily following the housing placement in order to promote stability and well-being. Our Hawaii pilot project focused on the chronically homeless who were highly vulnerable and living in urban Honolulu.

The Homeless Programs Office of the DHS completed procurement of the State's Housing First Initiative entitled "Permanent Supportive Housing" in June, 2012. Two agencies, the Institute for Human Services (IHS) and U.S. Vets were selected and awarded funding of \$450,000 and \$550,000 respectively. Both programs were initiated in June, 2012 with total funding of \$1,000,000. Since its inception, the State's "Housing First" program has served a total of 71 people (57 single adults and three families with 14 individuals). Over the course of the one year program, many additional homeless were encountered and offered a variety of appropriate services. Housing First services were geared toward constant engagement with what has typically been a very difficult-to-serve client base. Both service providers effectively leveraged other resources to provide supportive services to the clients while optimizing the use of rental subsidies for housing stability.

The clients served by the Housing First program were some of the most chronic and often the most vulnerable of the homeless in our community. These individuals and families have been living on the streets in unsheltered conditions for a long time and for a variety of reasons. Estrangement from family (lack of positive social support), untreated mental health and/or substance abuse issues are prevalent among the target population. To reach the chronic homeless, agencies employed aggressive outreach focused on housing and stability, intensive case management, application for mainstream entitlements, rent subsidies, primary and mental health services, and landlord liaison services.

The one year nature of the Housing First funding was a big impediment to permanency because housing placements were time and fund-limited based on the program's limitations. Consistent funding would allow the target population to be stabilized in housing, with the expectation that physical and mental health issues will also be addressed, and that levels of intervention will slowly decrease as stability is maintained. Best practice of Housing First programs across the nation suggest that consistent, long-term funding (5 years+) is the only way to preserve the "permanent" nature of the housing for vulnerable clients. Despite the time and funding constraints of the State's pilot program, the two providers attempted swift ramp up and immediate engagement with the target population. Several significant outcomes are noted, including:

- More than 65% of clients applied for and were deemed eligible for what are termed "mainstream" benefits such as SNAP, Medicaid, Social Security, or financial assistance. This in turn helped to generate positive outcomes in clients' cash income, which can aid in long-term sustainability.
- 72% of clients exited laterally into permanent housing.

Many of the clients served by the State's pilot Housing First program will likely require on-going housing assistance and supportive services for quite some time to mitigate years of homelessness and the related physical, mental, and economic consequences. Inasmuch as the State's program was a one year pilot project, further analysis will need to be conducted to determine the longitudinal resources needed for Housing First assistance. The 2013 Homeless Service Utilization Report, an annual analysis conducted by the UH Center on the Family on use of homeless services, is expected to be published in mid-November, 2013. This analysis may provide additional data on the length of time that Housing First consumers may require subsidies.