

**REPORT TO THE TWENTY-SEVENTH HAWAII STATE
LEGISLATURE 2013**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 346-378,
HAWAII REVISED STATUTES**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
BENEFIT, EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION
NOVEMBER 2012**

FY 2012 Report to the Hawaii State Legislature Status Report on Housing First Programs and Services

Benefit Employment and Support Services Division Department of Human Services

Act 212, SLH 2010 established the Housing First Special Fund and required the implementation of Housing First programs and services, subject to the availability of existing funds or housing first special fund moneys. The act also requires a report to the Legislature on:

- (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.

The State's Housing First initiative was on hold for almost one year pending the release of the \$1,000,000 Legislative appropriation for the program from the State's "Rainy Day Fund" in Act 106, SLH 2012. During that period, DHS' Homeless Programs Office (HPO) met with members of Partners in Care, Honolulu's Continuum of Care, and had numerous discussions about how best the program could meet community needs. Governor Abercrombie released the funding for the program in July 2011; however, major staff changes at the Homeless Programs Office resulted in delays in the procurement of services under the program.

The HPO 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. To date (October, 2012), the providers report that ten chronically homeless individuals have been placed in housing and provided with "wrap around" services. Because funding for the Permanent Supportive Housing program is currently limited to one year, provider agencies have rapidly geared up to implement the program.

The clients served by the Permanent Supportive Housing program are the most chronically and often the most vulnerable of the homeless in our community. These individuals (and some families) have often lived in unsheltered conditions for many years, and many of them have substance abuse or mental health conditions that exacerbate the challenges of maintaining permanent housing. To that end, a wide array of services are provided to the targeted clients, including: aggressive outreach, rent subsidies, access to nutritious food, intensive case management, assistance with application for "mainstream" entitlement benefits, primary health, substance abuse, mental health care, landlord liaison services/support. These services are geared toward constant engagement with what has typically been a very difficult client base. The provider agencies are also conducting assessments to determine appropriate levels of service so that, for example, a client who might not be appropriate for supported housing could be referred instead to a care home for that level of care. The service delivered through this program should result in the sustainability of housing for the client. It is anticipated that once clients achieve some stability (not only in housing, but also in health and mental health status), the level of intervention from the providers will gradually decrease. It is hoped that some of the clients served through this program will eventually be able to achieve a level of self-sufficiency that will allow them to maintain housing without support of this program. .

The Housing First program funding is being used to engage, and house chronically homeless individuals in urban Honolulu. Due in part to the infrastructure that is already available to the contracted agencies, a significant proportion of the funding is allocated for direct

housing costs (vs. personnel costs). Once the client is placed in housing and engaged in services, agencies work to determine the individuals' eligibility for entitlements that can be used to maintain permanent housing beyond the life of this contract. Some of these resources may include Supplemental Security Income (SSI), veterans' benefits, or placement in a HUD funded program such as Shelter Plus Care. At this juncture, as the providers have not yet reached the half-way point in their programs, it is difficult to determine the duration of services that will need to be provided to maintain clients in permanent housing. These figures should be available at this time next year.

In an effort to address the need for data-driven programming, DHS has requested the assistance of the University of Hawaii Center on the Family in exploring a research model based on the strategies employed by the two provider agencies. If appropriate, the Center would conduct statistical analysis of the results of the Permanent Supportive Housing program (as implemented) which would enable our State to contribute to the body of evidence that guides the national Housing First model.

The Housing First program is very much like the Housing and Urban Development Shelter Plus Care Program and the VASH vouchers for veterans. All three of the programs require permanent housing placement and ongoing support services to ensure client success at staying stably housed. Each year, the City and the rural counties apply for increasing numbers of Shelter Plus Care vouchers which provide rent subsidies for the disabled homeless and a requirement of an in kind match of support services. To date, the State of Hawaii has the following inventory of permanent housing placements plus services in force:

Neighbor Islands:	118 - Shelter Plus Care Placements 47 - VASH Vouchers
City and County of Honolulu:	500 - Shelter Plus Care Placements 223 - VASH Vouchers

The program requirements of the Permanent Supportive Housing program very closely resemble the requirements of both Shelter Plus Care and the VASH with regard to providing permanent housing and all of the support services to ensure that the clients stay housed for the long term.