

# City of Portland/Multnomah County, Oregon

## SELECTED PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES THAT ARE ENDING HOMELESSNESS

---

***Home Again: a 10-year plan to end homelessness in Portland and Multnomah County*** was released in December 2004. First year outcomes have exceeded the original goals of the 10-year plan. In 2005, 660 chronically homeless individuals were housed (the goal: 175) and 407 homeless families with children were housed, of which 208 were high-resource users (the goal: 250 families, including 50 high-resource users.) These outcomes, along with political will from the City and Multnomah County, have resulted in the creation of new funding to fight homelessness. The City dedicated \$1 million dollars in new resources for the Key Not a Card initiative to move chronically homeless people off the street. The County dedicated \$1 million to support “Bridges to Housing,” a regional effort to create permanent supportive housing for homeless families throughout the Portland-Vancouver region. The City also created a \$9 million bond for permanent supportive housing to support plan goals. Many successful programs and initiatives that serve family and adult households are underway. They include:

### ***A Key Not a Card – A key to a home, not just a business card***

Since October 2005, outreach workers from four programs have offered chronically homeless family and adult households more than just their business card. In the first three months, they helped 58 households move into housing and retain that housing. The City of Portland made \$1 million in one-time funding available to A Key Not a Card to further demonstrate the success of the “housing first” model.

### ***Increased supply of permanent supportive housing – Creating housing for chronically homeless people***

Since 2003, the community has established a permanent supportive housing pipeline of 536 units. This is the result of significant changes in the way the City’s Bureau of Housing and Community Development, the County’s Department of County Human Services, the County Housing Office, the Housing Authority of Portland, and the Portland Development Commission do business when it comes to providing housing for homeless people. More coordination has spurred greater effectiveness and an increase in permanent supportive housing units. With the 10-year plan, the City and County have jointly agreed to create 600 units for families and 1,600 for adult households by 2015.

### ***Transitions to Housing – Rent assistance that works***

Since 2001, the Transitions to Housing program has helped 1,749 households avoid homelessness or move into permanent housing with short-term rent subsidies (averaging 4.5 months and \$1,200 per household). The City of Portland provides \$420,000 per year to 10 organizations who focus on seniors, teen parents, people living with HIV/AIDS, families, domestic violence, street outreach, as well as employment agencies, transitional housing and shelter programs, and a corrections/mental health service partnership. Over the course of the program, 12-month housing retention rates are 73 percent.

### ***Bridges to Housing – Housing and services for homeless families using private & public funds***

Bridges to Housing (B2H) will serve high-need homeless families throughout the 4-county, Portland-Vancouver metro area. B2H is leveraging new resources (\$20 million in private funds and \$50 million in public resources) to fund community-based organizations that will provide permanent housing linked to services. The first phase will begin in Spring 2006. B2H, an innovative combination of permanent housing and short-term intensive services, builds on national data. It is being developed by a core group representing local governments and housing authorities from Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties in Oregon, and Clark County in Washington, as well as providers of social services and housing. Expected outcomes include creating 300 units of housing with services over 10 years.

### ***Shelter Wait List Case Manager – Skip shelter and go directly to housing***

In July 2004, the largest shelter provider in Portland, Transition Projects Inc., hired a case manager to work with clients on the wait list for one of their three shelters. In 2005, that case manager, and another hired in July 2005, worked with 309 men and women – successfully placing 65 people (half of whom were chronically homeless) directly into permanent housing, preventing homelessness for 17, and placing 8 in transitional housing.

### ***Housing Connections – Find permanent, affordable housing fast***

Housing Connections ([www.housingconnections.org](http://www.housingconnections.org)) is a web-based housing locator that helps low-income individuals and agency staff locate affordable, accessible and special needs housing. The user-friendly site allows customized search



criteria and detailed unit listings, helping people find housing that meets their needs. More than 56,000 units are listed for the Portland metro area and approximately 3,500 searches are performed each week.

### **Volunteers of America *Home Free DV Program – Housing First & DV***

In 2003, to better serve their clients, VOA closed its 77-year-old domestic violence shelter program to focus on outreach-based services including transitional and emergency housing, home visits, children's services, support groups and individual advocacy. With no additional funding, VOA was able to serve five times as many clients with services and emergency housing and improve the housing stability of the clients they serve. Of the 285 households served with emergency housing, 60% went directly into permanent housing and the other 40% went to longer-term shelter or residential treatment programs. Their new transitional housing program (home services and rent assistance) places 80-100 households per year in a private apartment, with retention rates between 70-80 percent at 6 months.

### **Short-term rent assistance redesign – *Six funding sources and three funders streamlined into one***

During 2005 and following an extensive community process and negotiations between partners, the City of Portland, Multnomah County, and the Housing Authority of Portland streamlined what had been a complex array of short-term rental assistance programs. The new model consolidates six different funding sources and three administrative entities into one. It also changes the rent assistance model previously used into one that supports flexibility, requires success, and makes "housing first" and homelessness prevention a priority. Approximately \$2 million will be available through this streamlined model for agencies and individuals who need rent assistance.

### **JOIN – *Moving people into housing first***

JOIN is a nonprofit agency that uses a "housing first" approach to achieve their goal of rapid re-housing. Their seven outreach workers engage people who are sleeping outside—on the street, camping, or in their car. In 2005, JOIN helped 373 people in 233 households move into permanent housing directly from the street. Overall, JOIN was able to help 151 people in families and 79 kids 17 & under. Outreach workers engaged 894 new people, continued street outreach to many more, and provided ongoing support to those they housed. 12-month housing retention was 76%.

### **Joint Access to Benefits & SB 913 – *Connecting qualified offenders to benefits prior to release***

Joint Access to Benefits (JAB) initiates the Social Security disability application process for incarcerated individuals being released into Multnomah County or who have been released and are homeless. Four months prior to release, JAB staff works with corrections counselors by phone to complete the application. In 2005, 90% of 77 applications were approved. JAB is a collaboration of the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice's Transition Services Unit, the Oregon Departments of Corrections and Human Services, Multnomah County's Sheriff's Office, Department of County Human Services, and the Social Security Administration district office.

In 2005, the Oregon Legislature passed a bill making it possible for the Department of Human Services to make a "presumptive determination" for chronically mentally ill persons to receive medical benefits upon release or to suspend benefits, not terminate them, for less than 12 months incarceration.

### **Fresh Start & Risk Mitigation Pool – *Landlords partner to serve those with housing barriers***

The "Fresh Start" program opens doors to housing for individuals and families with complex needs. Participating landlords and property managers agree to relax screening criteria and rent to people to whom they might not otherwise rent. In return, they receive a commitment from a support agency to assess tenant housing readiness, provide ongoing support, and a landlord guarantee fund if a client leaves without paying rent or significantly damages a unit.

The "Risk Mitigation Pool" is the fund by which the City of Portland provides coverage for landlords and property managers who incur damage or financial loss as a result of renting to homeless or formerly homeless people. Final administration procedures are being established for the pool. It is expected that the \$800,000 fund will be available to approved landlords requesting reimbursement for excessive expenses not covered by their operating budget.

### **Housing Rapid Response: *Police, neighborhood, service-provider house homeless repeat offenders***

Housing Rapid Response (HRR) houses chronically homeless persons who have repeat contact with Portland police or jail. Participants are referred to Central City Concern for housing and treatment via ACCESS, a project within the City of Portland's Office of Neighborhood Involvement. Almost all participants have active chemical addictions or untreated mental illnesses. HRR began in October 2005 and in the first three months: 26 people moved into housing; 62% remained housed; 35% voluntarily entered substance abuse treatment; and experienced a 62% reduction in arrests.

2/17/06

