



HALIFAX URBAN MINISTRIES

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HALIFAX

Feed-a-Family Homeless Prevention Program

Bridge of Hope Daily Hot Meal Program

The HUM Family Shelter and Homeless Direct Services

Rapid Rehousing (RRH)



Halifax Urban Ministries (HUM) is a faith-based nonprofit that has been serving the homeless population in Florida's Volusia and Flagler counties since 1981. Its mission is to prevent homelessness through emergency assistance and intervening on behalf of homeless people. The agency does this by providing assistance through four primary programs: Feed-a-Family Homeless Prevention Program, Bridge of Hope Daily Hot Meal Program, The HUM Family Shelter and Homeless Direct Services, and Rapid Rehousing (RRH). HUM administers one Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) RRH for families and one RRH for Independent and Unaccompanied Youth. This case study focuses on the ESG RRH services and success with helping participants find employment.

HUM has become a valued and respected part of the community's effort to end homelessness. The area it serves is home to approximately 800,000 people, including the 68,000 residents of Daytona Beach. The RRH program began in December 2015 upon receipt of federal funding. In 2017, HUM received \$93,744.00 from the HUD through the Daytona Beach, Daytona, Volusia, and Flagler Counties Continuum of Care (CoC) to continue operating its RRH program.



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Program Structure

HUM was started by the United Methodist Conference (UMC) of Florida and managed by an appointed pastor. Now, it is now supported through interfaith efforts and other funding sources. UMC is still involved with HUM and provides some funding, but the relationship is more of a collaborative partnership than a management role. HUM receives strong community support and has numerous volunteers from local UMC congregations, other local churches and synagogues, and other community organizations.

All RRH participants are referred through the CoC Coordinated Entry system at the Volusia/Flagler County Coalition for the Homeless. Once a family is accepted into the RRH program, the housing specialist, who is a former Daytona area realtor, begins immediate discussions with landlords who have worked with HUM clients in the past and are willing to house RRH families before they have employment. Last year more than one-third of participants moved into permanent housing within 30 days. The average length of participation in the HUM RRH program in 2017 for leavers was 357 days.

Client Entry/Assessment

When HUM receives referrals from the CoC, staff brings potential clients in to talk about their life experience, life and employment skills, needs/challenges, last time they were employed, housing needs/desires, and what they can expect from the program. Staff strive to make intake and all services very client-centered and strengths-based by discussing with individuals what they want to do with their lives and what they do best.

Employment rate for all
RRH adult participants ¹

30%

Employment rate for exiting
RRH adult participants ²

65%



Client-Centered Case Management

Staff make use of client-centered case management, an approach in which the client is at the core of the service and takes an active role in his or her recovery from homelessness. Staff believe, “You have to meet clients where they are at . . . you have to be real with them, non-judgmental, and capable of building a trusting relationship in which they tell you what is going on with them.” At the same time, the RRH program embraces a culture that expects clients to contribute to their well-being, take responsibility for earning an income, and use the supports available to them. Clients with a minimum-wage job cannot afford housing for a family, so they work with case managers to get on a pathway that leads to a family-sustaining wage.

Typically, families in the RRH program receive financial assistance and case management for up to a year. When financial assistance stops, participants can continue receiving case management services for up to another 12 months. The case manager helps the adults in the family find employment or a volunteer position. The case manager talks with clients about pay rates they can expect, which impacts the type of housing they will be able to maintain. For clients with criminal justice involvement, HUM has a safe docket program for clearing up criminal records and a list of employers that are willing to hire people with felonies on their record.

Employment Success through HUM and Its Community Partnerships

HUM sees employment as a priority to ensure housing success. All staff, from the executive director to case managers, are on the alert for employment opportunities in the community for HUM clients and maintain a job board in the common area and in the computer room. The message is work and save. “We encourage participants to earn as much as they can, get a better credential if you can’t secure a family-supporting job, and put aside as much money as you can while you are getting rental assistance and case management,” notes staff.

Although the case managers do not have formal employment services training, they are very well-versed in employment and spend extensive time creating collaborative relationships with local employment service providers. Through case managers and their partners’ efforts, adult RRH participants gained or increased their income from start to annual assessment or exit, realizing an average change in earned income of \$1058.06 in 2017 and \$1,745 in 2016.

With only one full-time case manager, the HUM RRH program is modest. However, it functions as part of a larger agency team that includes a housing specialist, a Permanent Supportive Housing case manager, shelter staff, a licensed mental health counselor, and the director of operations. The team meets weekly to review client progress, problems, and solutions. The case manager is

¹ Number of adults with earned income at exit/all adults served in RRH including leavers and stayers.

² Number of adults leaving RRH with earned income/all adult leavers.



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flexible, taking a "whatever-it-takes attitude." She brings clients to employment offices, takes them to the college, and help them prepare resumes. She is essentially a broker who builds bridges to community agencies and services.

One particularly robust relationship HUM has is with Daytona State College. The college has many short-term vocational programs, such as a 1-month manufacturing certificate that provides students with a guaranteed job. The college also has a recognized culinary program and has agreed to work with HUM to develop a 6-week kitchen training program onsite that will offer certification and links to employers. In addition, the college has an initiative to help homeless students and is very committed to working with HUM to meet their intertwining goals. By Florida law, a student who is homeless may be exempted from paying tuition and fees at any of the 28 Florida State colleges.

Other community partnerships include Goodwill Industries; Daytona Beach Job Connection Center; and Florida Career Source, the name of the local American Job Center funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Other connections include a hotel cleaning company and other local hospitality businesses, as the tourist industry is booming in the Daytona Beach area and offers many employment opportunities.

Part of HUM's success finding employment for clients comes from focusing on meeting the needs of employers. "We work with partners who directly work with employers. We know what employers want, because our partners tell us . . . if we don't have clients find or improve employment, they will have difficulty keeping housing," said the case manager.

Part of HUM's strategy is to utilize the talents of community partners. Staff agree that there are great employment and education resources in the area, so "we let those who are really good at what they are doing do their job. We don't try to replicate what they do really well, as our goal is it connect clients with the right people in the right area." HUM's main goal to help people find and use existing resources in the community.

Employment Challenges and Solutions

Child care. Because the HUM RRH program is for families, they all have children, and many of those are younger and need child care so the parent(s) can work. HUM immediately provides childcare vouchers to those who are accepted into the program to avoid that barrier. For someone who is still unemployed, the fee is very minimal. This helps clients become employed faster, particularly single mothers who are looking for work.

Transportation. As many clients don't own cars and may not find housing near public transportation, HUM helps with transportation to jobs and often transports groups of clients to job fairs.

Budgeting. Case managers focus on budgeting from the start. On day one, clients are given an envelope in which to put in all receipts, which they bring back to case management meetings for review. As clients begin to understand their financial needs, they start understanding the employment they need to sustain housing. Staff agree that this discussion "leads clients to recognize they need to make changes in their lives. It can create the dissonance between where they are and where they need to be."



Life challenges. Every family is different with unique issues and multiple challenges that can impact employment, which HUM addresses through in-house services and the help of community partners. These challenges include:

- Extensive criminal background
- Multiple evictions
- Poor work history
- Low educational levels; many have no high school diploma or GED
- Mental health disorders
- Active substance use disorders
- Trauma histories
- A history of rejection or being unsuccessful on the job

Best Practices: Motivational Interviewing

One strategy HUM has found very successful is the evidence-based practice of motivational interviewing (MI). MI is a client-centered counseling approach for eliciting behavior change and helping clients resolve ambivalence. HUM staff help clients come up with their own answers, one topic at a time, so that “by the end of the meeting, they have chosen what to do. MI helps clients become reliable members of the workforce,” said staff.



Moving Forward

HUM is now working with Circles USA, an organization in more than 100 communities that strives to engage people and organizations in the community to end poverty.

With the Circle model, the client is the leader of the circle and the other members are community members with a wide array of experience, socioeconomic status, etc. Similar to MI, Circles focuses on the client setting goals and then others helping them get to where they want to be. HUM is in its first year of working with Circles and will implement the model in another year. Staff see it as a continuation of their current work to expand HUM’s reach and they hope to see even more success as they move forward helping families enhance their lives and find stability.