

100-DAY CHALLENGE CASE STUDIES

PALM BEACH, FL: USE OF HOME FUNDS FOR RAPID RE-HOUSING FOR YOUTH

Based on the need to end youth homelessness in their community, system leaders in Palm Beach County Community Services utilized half of the County's FY 2017-2018 HOME funds set aside for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance to provide rapid re-housing assistance for youth experiencing homelessness.

HOW PALM BEACH MADE IT HAPPEN

HOME funds for Palm Beach County are granted to the Palm Beach County Division of Housing and Economic Stability. In FY 17-18, Palm Beach County received \$1,637,604 in HOME funds. Most of the funds are used for development or to provide match for developers and Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs). However, there is a set aside for Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) of \$573,161 which is subcontracted to Palm Beach Community Services Department of Human and Veteran Services.

Palm Beach Community Services Department of Human and Veteran Services has used the TBRA set-aside to provide rapid re-housing assistance to families and adults experiencing homelessness. However, the Department made a conscious decision in 2017 to redirect half of the TBRA set-aside dollars to youth in support of the 100-Day Challenge, recognizing that the longer length of time and flexibility of assistance allowed through HOME TBRA funds were important considerations for serving youth experiencing homelessness. The other half of the TBRA set-aside went to families experiencing homelessness, and tax dollars were used to fill in funding for individuals experiencing homelessness. The community will continue to utilize HOME funds in this manner until they are certified as at Functional Zero for ending youth homelessness.

Key Takeaways:

- HOME funds allow for a longer length of time and more flexible assistance than many other funding sources, which are important considerations in serving youth experiencing homelessness.
- Communities may need to advocate for the use of HOME funds for tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) for this population of focus. Communities can build upon local data and momentum around ending youth homelessness to make their case.
- Communities may need to realign resources to provide case management and other services to serve youth receiving HOME-funded TBRA. Palm Beach utilized case conferencing to help pool and coordinate resources across youth-serving organizations to meet this need.
- Communities should be aware of the requirements and oversight associated with HOME funds.

The maximum amount of time to receive assistance with HOME funds is 24 months. Palm Beach is aiming to provide 12 months of rapid re-housing assistance to youth with a declining subsidy in order to serve all youth in need of housing assistance. The community will collect and analyze data to determine if 12 months is an adequate period of time to meet the needs of all local youth experiencing homelessness.

LESSONS LEARNED

1) Advocate for the Use of HOME Funds to Support Rapid Re-Housing for Youth

Palm Beach found that it requires advocacy to use HOME funds for tenant-based rental assistance with a focus on youth experiencing homelessness. HOME funds are typically used for development subsidies and the construction of new units, and funds from the TBRA set-aside had historically been used to provide rapid re-housing assistance for families and adults experiencing homelessness. The dedication of HOME funds to TBRA in support of rapid re-housing for youth requires local level advocacy and understanding among decision-makers around the issue of youth homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge to End Youth Homelessness in Palm Beach County helped provide the momentum and data to push forward the need for a dedicated funding source to serve youth experiencing homelessness as the County works toward Functional Zero on youth homelessness.

2) Realign Resources to Provide Case Management and Other Services

Youth-serving organizations and service providers in Palm Beach County needed to realign their resources to provide case management and other supportive services for youth receiving rapid re-housing assistance through HOME TBRA funds. Cross-systems partnerships formed during the 100-Day Challenge allowed for the pooling and coordination of resources to meet the service needs of youth experiencing homelessness in rapid re-housing. Partner organizations worked together to identify any time, staff or resources that they could commit to providing case management and supportive services for youth in the rapid re-housing program. Additionally, Palm Beach County has created and implemented a case conferencing process to improve the matching of case management services to youth in need.

3) Be Aware of HOME Funding Oversight and Monitoring Requirement

Communities should be aware of funding oversight and monitoring requirements associated with the HOME program, as these may differ from existing funding sources being used locally to support youth housing assistance. Palm Beach County found that it was important to have a dedicated staff person to handle invoicing for the HOME TBRA rapid re-housing assistance provided to youth experiencing homelessness. Additionally, Palm Beach County emphasized that staying on top of all funding requirements and ensuring that there are no monitoring findings helps demonstrate that HOME funds are being used appropriately and effectively and prevent reallocation to other uses such as developer subsidies.

4) Forge and Maintain Strong Cross-Systems Partnerships

Palm Beach County identified teamwork and cross-systems partnerships as necessary components in establishing a successful rapid re-housing program for youth utilizing HOME funds. Palm Beach County was able to identify this new funding source and program for youth experiencing homelessness through cross-system planning, decision-making, and coordination of resources. The partnerships formed during the 100-Day Challenge have continued beyond the initiative, with team members continuing to work together, including applying for grants and additional funding together, as the County moved towards Functional Zero for youth homelessness.