

HPRP IMPACTS: CASE STUDIES IN COMMUNITY CHANGE

A series of brief case studies documenting ways in which the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program is promoting community change and transformation of local homeless assistance systems.

Community Case Studies Overview

Beginning in mid-2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) allocated \$1.5 billion in Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) funding across the country, infusing communities with new resources to prevent and end homelessness. This influx of new funding provided a unique opportunity and a dual challenge to local communities – both how to gear up quickly for effective implementation and how to do so in a way that anticipated continuity at the end of the ARRA funding period. In the process, HPRP motivated many communities to re-assess, re-configure and re-focus their commitment to homeless prevention and re-housing, promoting many levels of change.

This series of brief case studies documents ways in which seven different communities responded to this challenge with innovative strategies, practices and local systems change. Cities and regions profiled in this series include:

- Charlotte, NC
- Dayton/Montgomery County, OH
- State of Rhode Island
- Sacramento County, CA
- Santa Clara, CA
- Worcester County, MA
- Yolo County, CA

Examination of practices adopted by these communities revealed a series of common processes and dynamics in community-wide change. Five of these transformative processes, in particular, are worth highlighting, as they represent key change mechanisms that are consistent with previous research findings on systems change¹:

- **Inclusive Governance Structure and Centralized Program Oversight** - All profiled communities referenced a governance and management structure that incorporates diverse community leadership, invests stakeholders in the change process, and centralizes monitoring functions.
- **Commitment of Cross-Sector and Governmental Leadership to Systems Transformation** – In each community highlighted, there was broad commitment from local government and mainstream systems leaders to using HPRP resources as a means to initiate and/or accelerate transformation of the community’s prevention and housing assistance system.
- **Alignment of Organizational Philosophies: Housing Stabilization and Housing First** - Most of these communities reflected a shared philosophical framework drawing on the “Housing First” approach, and, in turn, emphasized training and development that supported this approach.
- **Innovative Use of Local Impact Data** – Most communities went beyond required reporting, and actively used HMIS and client outcomes data to evaluate and improve system capacities.
- **Service Coordination and Standardization** – In most instances, service delivery innovations and practices were standardized across the community to ensure program efficiencies and impact.

1. *Changing Homeless and Mainstream Service Systems* (National Symposium for Homelessness Research, 2007) <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/symposium07/burt/index.htm>; *Aligning Forces for Quality Healthcare Findings* (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009); *Critical Success in High Performing Rural Communities* (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2010).

Key Change Factors	Examples of Community Activity	Lessons Learned
Inclusive Governance and Centralized Program Oversight	In Worcester (MA), Montgomery County (OH), and Rhode Island, local leadership councils integrated service delivery systems by strategically allocating resources from HPRP, CoC, City, State, and other funding sources. Most communities established a system-level HPRP coordinator position to provide consistent coverage via newly coordinated service partnerships.	<i>Centralized leadership structures are vital in re-orienting system-level planning, allocation, and monitoring, and blending resources for prevention and re-housing assistance. Establishing a systems level coordinator is critical to help regions bridge traditional organizational barriers and boundaries.</i>
Commitment of Cross-Sector and Governmental Leadership to Systems Transformation	In Yolo County (CA), local leaders had established prevention as the centerpiece of their Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, and used HPRP resources to create a regional system of Housing Resource Centers in support of that goal. Leaders in Worcester integrated HPRP resources with all other homelessness system funding to advance commitment to transforming the region's systems for prevention and housing stabilization.	<i>Commitment of local leaders to systems transformation (both at the jurisdictional and institutional levels) is critical to coordinating and streamlining service delivery systems – leading to more efficient and cost-effective deployment of resources across geographic and programmatic boundaries.</i>
Alignment of Organizational Philosophies	In Charlotte (NC), local leaders established an innovative program that targets rapid re-housing services to homeless households with multiple housing barriers, based on a prior City-wide commitment to the “Housing First” approach. Training for front-line staff in Housing First methodology, as well as rapid re-housing and prevention strategies, helped align service system models across multiple communities in a unified approach.	<i>Advancing a housing stabilization system requires incorporation of both prevention and Housing First solutions, predicated on shared “buy-in” by all stakeholders and systems-wide efforts to align all practices with this approach and its intended outcomes.</i>
Innovative Use of Local Impact Data	In Santa Clara (CA) and Montgomery County, communities are using both HMIS and other performance outcomes data to inform leadership of needed adaptations in planning systems re-design.	<i>Early evaluation of HPRP, i.e. assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of new assessment and assistance approaches and networks, is critical in planning for and creating a desired post-HPRP system.</i>
Service Coordination and Standardization	Sacramento (CA) established “2-1-1” as the community's centralized intake provider, created a standardized assessment tool, and coordinated legal services providers to pre-screen all eviction cases for HPRP. Yolo County created an integrated system of service and access points by establishing six new Homeless Resource Centers and using common intake tools to standardize service delivery.	<i>The development of standard processes, staffing roles, training, and assessment tools allows all local system providers to adopt consistent practices in the delivery of prevention and housing assistance services.</i>

COMMUNITY COMMITMENTS TO SYSTEM CHANGE

Each region or community profiled in this series was strategic in its use of HPRP funds to create or redesign a community system to achieve sustainable housing assistance practices. Each of these communities relied on leaders who were committed to doing “whatever it takes” to achieve desired results. All operated with openness to new possibilities through a fundamental re-orientation of practice and priorities, and each approached implementation with an investment in ongoing systems improvement and transformation.

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Community Profile State of Rhode Island

Rhode Island is the smallest state in the U.S. Its small size worked as an advantage when HPRP funds were released, allowing state and nonprofit leaders to form a statewide alliance among its three entitlement municipalities -- resulting in unprecedented collaboration. The HPRP Partnership provided a platform to create Rhode Island's new, statewide prevention assistance and rapid re-housing system.

Rhode Island's HPRP Partnership created full statewide coverage as well as consistency in use of prevention resources and client-centered, evidence-based service delivery models. HPRP offered state and local leaders the opportunity to collaborate with diverse government, nonprofit and consumer stakeholders, and prompted the development of a new conceptual model to deliver coordinated housing assistance across the state. With support from its committed and energetic leadership, Rhode Island overcame numerous regulatory and procedural obstacles, and established a foundation for long term success in addressing continuing barriers and challenges.

Local Environment Prior to HPRP

Five years ago, Rhode Island's homeless services leaders established state-level collaboration under its Action Plan to End Homelessness, adopting Housing First as one of their fundamental approaches. This plan's principles were used to guide the coordinated allocation of all state housing resources, as leadership from both CoCs and local Ten Year Plan processes cross-populated all state level leadership and planning committees.

One of the results of Rhode Island's consolidated state level oversight of homelessness resources was the understanding gained by leadership of the difficult barriers to re-aligning and re-allocating resources within a fragmented service system. In this context, the challenge of building a state-wide, client-centered,

and coordinated approach to preventing and ending homelessness was readily apparent. HPRP provided the ideal opportunity to implement broad systems change focused on homelessness prevention.

Integration of HPRP resources enabled state leaders to re-orient many of the key goals and services detailed in the statewide Action Plan and, in turn, focus on new strategies and outcomes. The state's four separate HPRP awardees agreed to consolidate their HPRP allocations, forming an HPRP Partnership to administer a combined \$7 million of new HPRP funding for homeless prevention and rapid re-housing.



Local Systems Transformation Through HPRP

Consolidating State Wide Leadership: Under Rhode Island's consolidated approach, client-centered services were defined and mandated by the statewide Partnership. Twenty agencies were funded across the state, and formal collaboration commitments were signed among all sub-grantees. Reliance on these collaborative agreements helped agencies to overcome some of their oldest challenges, break down barriers and silos, and reduce agency "turf" issues. As a result, new cross-systems partnerships were established and homeless provider agencies were pushed to work and learn together to generate more positive outcomes for HPRP clients.

Partnership with Community Action Agencies: Rhode Island awarded its HPRP prevention dollars primarily to Community Action Program (CAP) agencies. At the same time, rapid re-housing resources were allocated primarily to homeless service nonprofits. This enabled eligible prevention clients to gain immediate access to a wider variety of housing assistance and services through the CAP system. Client-directed coordination between CAP agencies and nonprofit providers is assured by new agreements, the HPRP coordinator and continuing state leadership review.

Single Statewide HPRP Coordinator: The State of Rhode Island Office of Housing and Community Development hired one HPRP Coordinator to manage the new statewide collaboration. This Coordinator ensures a consistent quality of work within each HPRP sub-grantee agency, while also promoting the central goals of housing, re-housing and client-centered services. In addition to holding HPRP agencies accountable for alignment with statewide protocols and policies, and for client and financial reporting, the state Coordinator also actively supports partnerships and local innovation. New ideas are reinforced by follow-up phone support.

Sharing Lessons Learned: Monthly meetings bring all HPRP staff together to share challenges and lessons learned in areas such as eligibility determination, income documentation, service quality, and data-gathering. Periodic visits of the HPRP Coordinator to each participating agency combine monitoring with technical assistance, both facilitating and further encouraging peer-to-peer learning.

Financial Counseling Required and Provided to All: Every household receiving support through Rhode Island's HPRP program is required to participate in financial counseling. Field experience and outcomes suggest that incorporating this educational component along with other forms of support may improve long-

term housing and income stability. Each HPRP agency provides its own direct financial counseling -- covering topics such as budgeting, predatory lending practices, and building skills and earning power. The initial HPRP consumer assessment captures baseline budget and savings information to help guide individualized financial counseling.

Key Features of Systems Change

- **Coordinated, Centralized Leadership:** In the small geographic area of Rhode Island, HPRP resources were consolidated and coordinated to ensure that residents of the entire region have access to consistent, holistic homelessness prevention services.
- **Local Adaptation Support:** A newly established statewide HPRP Coordinator fosters communication and collaboration among disparate agencies via monthly meetings and one-on-one agency supports. At the same time, a centralized leadership structure assures accountability, effectiveness and integration with all local strategic plans for ending homelessness.
- **Active Use of Data to Evaluate Success and Enhance Local Plans:** Rhode Island's HPRP services assisted over 400 households between January and April of 2010, surpassing their projected targets. Commitment to active state-level data analysis will allow programs and agencies to analyze strengths and gaps, improve outcomes, and advocate for prevention and rapid re-housing funding as a priority in continuing local and state service planning.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Consolidating leadership and resources can enhance program effectiveness and impact by facilitating cross-systems collaborations.
- Linking statewide and local systems planning and support often boosts results on both levels.