

Transcript: Interview with NHHFA Resident

- [Jie] Yeah, I think I am recording. Okay. So let me start just, uh, do a quick introduction of myself and our TA firm. My name is Jie . I am the director of Community and Social Innovation at BCT Partners. And BCT partners has been a long-term TA provider, technical assistance provider for HUD for over twenty years now. For this specific engagement, HUD has tasked us to bring a spotlight, to bring attention to how public housing authorities across the county are assisting families who meet the target preference criteria in the 2019 mainstream voucher program, NOFA. So when we talk about the NOFA target audience We are talking about those who are homeless, formally homeless or now are participating in the rapid housing or a permanent supportive housing program or transitioning out of a institutional setting or at risk of institutionalization. We want to get a deeper understanding of the experience and perspective from the program beneficiaries As well, get an inside on how PHA's have been administration this voucher program and generating success. So we have a list of questions prepared for you all and just encourage everybody to be honest and candid in sharing your information. We will do all you can to safeguard the information and protect your confidentiality. If you accidentally disclose anything you don't want to make public, we can edit those things out at a later time. So just let us know what you are comfortable with. And then, like I said before, the data that we capture here the information we capture here we're going to produce a spotlight document as well as the video recording. They're all going to be hosted on the HUD exchange website. So more TA firms and other public stakeholders or just private citizens can can access this content via HUD's website. And this whole

- [Ann] Does the homeless have access to this? Yeah anybody, anybody who has internet access can see this video. So we'll make sure once this link is available we'll make sure to send it back out to you all. So you can share that with with folks that you've come in contact. Okay?

- [Jie] Yeah. Yeah, and this whole interview is going to take no more than 60 minutes. We're going to interview Darrell first so that you, you know you can drop off and then we'll talk to Dee and Anne about the administrative side of things. And then I'll pause here. Yeah. I'll pause here to let you all give a brief description or introduction of Of, Of, Of Actually, we'll let Angie, Angela introduce herself. And then we'll pause here to see if you all have any questions and then you all can do a brief introduction before we jump into the, uh, jump into the interview questions. Okay? Angie.

- [Angela] Yes, Hi there. I'm Angela Robinson Spencer. I'm an affordable housing compliance consultant. Actually, right now, I've been operating my firm for about eight years. Prior to that, I had over 30 years of experience in affordable housing on all multiple levels from just starting out as a regular property manager all the way up to being a director of property management with Chinatown CDC in San Francisco. Vice-president with mercy housing, AF Evans various other companies. So it's been a very enjoyable fill that gave me a great deal of breath and depth in

terms of the affordable housing. So it's a real pleasure to be here with you today and to be working with BCT partners as an assistant and consultant.

- [Jie] Thank you, Angela. How about we go to DeeAnn?

- [DeeAnn] High My name is Dee Pouliot. I go by Dee and I put DeeAnn there because I was on video DeeAnn Pouliot. and I am the division director, managing director, at New Hampshire housing. I have been here a little over 35 years. I've had several jobs here at New Hampshire housing. I've been in this division director role for over 20 years and you know we're excited to be invited to participate in this. We worked really hard when we received and worked on the application to receive these vouchers under the mainstream program. And in our first year, we actually almost over leased. We were a little bit too aggressive and had, you know helped us out in the second round. And so we're excited, you know that this program is being spotlighted by HUD and look forward to participating in it.

- [Jie] Thank you. Let's go to Ann.

- [Ann] Hi, my name's Ann. I'm a supervisor here at New Hampshire housing and I've been with New Hampshire housing for a little over 20 years. My team overseas works directly with the clients so we get more hands-on And uhhhh, and get a chance to help them. When they're doing their housing search. We do the day to day work with the clients once they're on the program. So we work more directly with the clients themselves.

- [Jie] Okay. Last but not least. Let's go to Darrell.

- [Darrell] Here. My name is Darrell . I was part of Terrell House. I went to a sober house and that's how I was able to get my housing. And my landlord here actually owns the building that I was in the sober house and upstairs became available. And he was all new to the housing as well. And he actually was able to take me in under the housing program, which was great.

- [Jie] Very good. Very good. I think by just sharing a little bit about that you just jumped right into our questions. So I'd like to ask you, if you don't mind tell us a little bit about yourself. Anything you want to share about your, you know, yourself personally.

- [Darrell] Okay. I've been homeless several times. I have not been, I have not gotten very many breaks in my life. I grew up poor, always moving around in and out of school systems. And when, when they hit my adult life, that was no better. I was in and out of jail due to my alcoholism and my drug addiction. Well, I, my last stunt I did in jail was almost four years ago. And then I was able to come out of jail and I, I fell into drugs, real heavily crystal meth. And then I went from doing crystal meth for quite some time to, I went to rehab in Naples, Florida at a place called The Willows. And I did 30 days down there. And I came home to Manchester, stayed with my daughter for four days and wound up in the Terrell House. And it was the best thing I ever did. I've been sober now for three years off the alcohol and 10 months off of the crystal meth now.

- [Jie] That's an amazing accomplishment. Thank you for sharing that and being vulnerable, you know in sharing that personal detail with us. May I just ask how did you learn about the mainstream voucher program?

- [Darrell] Uh, to tell you the truth. I don't even remember signing up for it. I must have, I had a case worker over there at the Terrell House and her, her name was Amanda and she must have, we must have signed me up for it when I first hit the Terrell House. And I don't even remember it to tell you the truth, Jie.

- [Jie] Okay. Okay. Okay. Now, can you, can you talk about the, the application process a little bit if you remember, you know, how long was the process from when you complete the application or where did the your worker completed the application from that time?

- [Darrell] I think I think my worker did it actually did on her own because we had I got so much paperwork going on at the time. I didn't even know what the hell I was doing.

- [Jie] Okay. Okay. Okay. So you have,

- [Darrell] You know this is the first, this is the first time I've had housing. This is the first time I bought, you know like I said, in the beginning, I didn't catch any breaks too many breaks in my, in my, my 49 years being around here. So, and I'm in a great area of town. I wouldn't leave this, this area for nothing. I don't even have to lock my doors around here. You know what I mean?

- [Jie] That's excellent. That's excellent. So from the time that you were, well, how long were you at Terrell House before you move into your new, uh, new apartment?

- [Darrell] I was at Terrell House for three months. And then I found a sober house , uh, last summer and I stayed downstairs in the sober house for about eight months. I've only been in my new place now for about two months.

- [Jie] Okay. Okay. So this is a recent recent development?

- [Darrell] Yes.

- [Jie] Okay. Okay. So, so besides the Terrell House and the in the sober house you described, what are the other resources, the agencies that supported you throughout this whole process before you got before you got your, you know, apartment

- [Darrell] Manchester Mental Health has supported me.

- [Jie] Okay.

- [Darrell] Umh, My daughter's supported me. My wife's have supported me through all this mess, you know cause like when I was downstairs and I was trying to get into this place, it was like a nail biter. You know, it was like, oh, cause the place was the place where I'm at right now was empty for about three months. And when I started the paperwork, you know my landlord

was getting a little nervous because like I said he's never dealt with housing either. And, but once it all came together, I mean, it was great. You know, this place is, it's a huge one bedroom and then a giant big porch, another little porch off to the side. I got a fenced in backyard. I got a full, I got a spare room. I got a full-size addict upstairs. I got parking for my car. I mean, I can't, I couldn't ask for better of there for this, you know,

- [Jie] That's great. That's great.

- [Darrell] and I'm not paying that much and I'm only paying \$496 a month here because the housing

- [Jie] That's great. That's great to hear. That's great to hear. And, and you did say the New Hampshire Mental Health Services provided you with some resources. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

- [Darrell] Well, I'm a soul. Well, I was tied up with mental health services as soon as I landed in Manchester because I transferred from another mental health facility.

- [Jie] Okay. I have, I have, I don't know if you've ever heard of the expression, Jie. I have dual diagnosis, you know, you know what that is?

- [Jie] No, I'm not aware.

- [Darrell] I have mental health issues as well as addiction issues.

- [Jie] Okay. Okay.

- [Darrell] So mental health, mental health is dealing with both of those and they gave me a place actually it's just, it just opened up again. It's called the Hope for Recovery in Hampshire up in Manchester here. The hope, the hope was it hasn't been very supportive of me as well. The resources that I- I've actually only been down to the center once because of the COVID but ummm they just kept pushing me. You know what I mean? To go forward and, and keep on the right, the right track. I have two caseworkers right now and it's, it's great, you know?

- [Jie] Okay. Okay.

- [Darrell] I mean, if it wasn't for the Manchester Mental Health and the Terrel House, I wouldn't be sitting here with where I am today.

- [Female In Background] What happened? I don't know.

- [Jie] Well we're, we're glad there were they were very supportive of you. Now, did you receive any assistance in finding this particular apartment unit that meets your needs?

- [Darrell] Well, I had, I had a caseworker from the state trying to help me find the apartments but this place here, I basically did it on my own.

- [Jie] Oh, okay. Yeah. Tell us about that. Tell us about that a little bit.

- [Darrell] I approached my landlord and I said, Hey, you know, you got you've got upstairs available. I have my housing voucher. What do you think? You know, I'm like, he's like, let's try it out. He goes, I'll try it. I don't care. So we fill all the paperwork, sends it in and then I got the inspector up here. The inspector came and passed inspection a couple of weeks later, I moved to, I was able to get in here.

- [Jie] That's great.

- [Darrell] Because of housing.

- [Jie] So that, that was just a serendipitous occurrence.

- [Darrell] Yeah.

- [Jie] We, we love stories like that and Yeah, I think let's, we, we we can advance into the next area of these questions here. So, and you did talk about the length of time that you were in your previous living condition and and you also did touch about the enjoyment of your current living condition. Now let's talk about the impact of having stable housing. How has your current living condition impacted other areas of your life? And we're talking about, you know whether that's employment, education, relationship with others, community involvement or personal interests.

- [Darrell] I, I've been I've been working for the last four months now. I work at McDonald's as a cook.

- [Jie] Okay.

- [Darrell] This is like, I know how Manchester is. I, I, this is my third time living in Manchester. And the first two times I was homeless up here and it was not fun at all. I know I don't, you know I don't recommend being homeless to anybody. I mean, I mean I I've been seeing what the cops are doing lately about shutting down homeless camps and stuff like that. There's one up on my work. They trying to shut down as there's another one over by Firestone they shut down over the weekend or something. And it's, you know, it's pretty scary out there when you're homeless and you don't know you don't have any resources or, you know? This is my safe place. That's what I call it. My safe haven. I'm able to do, go to work, cook my own food ummm, stay sober you know, and you know, if I didn't have the Terrell house and the housing backing me up want to help me with this stuff. I would have never, I wouldn't be where I am today.

- [Jie] In addition to the, the agencies and resources you just listed, you, you've already listed. Are there any other sources of support that you're getting that that's new to you since you got the, since you got the apartment?

- [Darrell] No. No I, I got, well, mental health is still involved. I have two caseworkers. One, one comes down every week just to see how I'm doing and she's working on other stuff with me,

trying to get my Medicaid going and my food stamps going. And another lady that comes from the mental health services is actually trying to help me find another job.

- [Jie] Okay.

- [Darrell] Yeah and like, I'm grateful for all this stuff and I'm glad that something finally worked in my favor, you know after all, you know, I did a little bit of foot work. I did, I had to, you know, I did I struggled a little bit in the beginning and I, I you know, but I kept going and I stayed sober and I guess I don't know, I just kept plugging away at this stuff. And my, my, like I said, my, my voucher fell through and my landlord's happy. I'm happy. And you know, I'm going to stay here as long as I can.

- [Jie] We love to hear that. We love to hear that. Have, have you been at talking about this voucher to to others that you come in contact with and with them about your personal success?

- [Darrell] So some of my coworkers, yes. I know a couple of my coworkers were interested in and I said, well, you know, I guess, have been on a mental health or housing and see if can't get on the list. That's how you do it.

- [Jie] Right. Right.

- [Darrell] Because that's what, that's what, cause my understanding of this housing was that it was because I went to treatment at Terrel house, that's why I got my voucher.

- [Jie] Right, right. So you, you, you fall right into the target population that the, you know, the federal housing funding you know, is, is dedicated towards. So I mean, we, we just, we're humbled and honored to, to to hear about your story. Is there anything else that you want to share besides what we just, well, we covered already.

- [Darrell] I mean, the, the, you know I know Manchester and I'm on the west side. I live right down the street from my daughter. Like, it's great. I mean, you know, I'm off the main highway, but I mean the area is pretty quiet. It's clean. And like I said, I don't even have to lock my doors there. That's all, you know? This is basically, is what elderly people live around me. So I don't, I don't worry about nobody around me here.

- [Jie] Okay.

- [Darrell] You know?

- [Jie] Yeah. Yep. I just have one last question. How often do you interface or interact with folks at the housing authority? Like Ann or, or her colleagues?

- [Darrell] I just started speaking to Ann actually.

- [Jie] Okay.

- [Darrell] I have a caseworker, but I think I'm getting a new one. I'm getting a new one because I'm trying to add my fiance to my, my lease here. And they said it was going to take some time for her criminal background check, I guess.

- [Jie] Well, we, we love to hear that because of your stability in housing, you are now adding to your household

- [Darrell] Yeah

- [Jie] Grown that, that, that nucleus. So that's a great story. I'll pause here to see if my colleague Angela has any questions or want to add anything else before we let you go.

- [Jie] I just appreciate the story that he offered and it is just really encouraging and so promising. And I, it was a couple of things there that I was so glad you added about your fiance. Cause that's just like the icing on top of the cake. If you asked me, that's so great that you're able to enjoy that and have this opportunity. And I was a little not clear about exactly when your voucher kicked in, but you that towards the end. So I appreciate your time and telling us your story. Thank you.

- [Darrell] Thank you. Thank you very much.

- [Jie] Darrell, I wish you could see the smiles that are on our face right now from, from your story sharing. It's certainly been a highlight of my day today. So thank you again, you know, like I said before once we make this, you know, publicly assessable, we will we will send out the information to you so that you can share with others.

- [Darrell] Sounds good.

- [Jie] Thank you Darrell

- [Darrell] Really good. Thanks Jie. Thank you Jie.

- All right, we'll talk to you soon.

- [Darrell] Alright. Yup.

- [Angela] Thanks Darrell.

- [Darrell] Goodbye Ann.

- [Ann] Bye Darrell. Thanks.

- [Darrell] All right. You're welcome hun. I hope I hope I did good for you.

- [Jie] You. You did great. Thank you.

- [Darrell] All right. You guys enjoy the rest of your day, huh? All right. Talk to you soon.

- Bye.

- Bye.

- [Jie] That was great. That was excellent. That was excellent. So I think Darrell Darrell kind of set the bar kind of high for us, huh?

- [DeeAnn] He did really well. He, he, he did a nice job. I didn't even, we didn't even know a lot of that with, you know, hope for recovery. There's some things in Manchester I've seen he's in Manchester. So there's a couple things he did. I don't know if you need I've looked up his file while we talk. And he, he applied in May of 2020.

- [Jie] Okay. Okay.

- [DeeAnn] Yeah And then he, yeah, his voucher was issued in October and then he leased up just in January. Is when he, when he went on the program.

- [Jie] So, yeah. So there, there is a sort of a timeline in terms of when when the application goes in and then the the voucher gets issued and then the, the, the you know, identifying the, the possible unit.

- [DeeAnn] Yeah. Finding a place. Right.