

*In 2009, Congress designated \$1.5 billion for the creation of a Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) as a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This money was allocated to communities across the country to provide temporary financial assistance, housing relocation, and housing stabilization services. Each community is responsible for designing its program based on its distinct needs, and many are taking this unique opportunity to transform their homelessness assistance systems.*

## **HPRP Community Profile: Alameda County**

### **Getting Started**

Improving the effectiveness of its homelessness prevention programs has long been a priority for Alameda County, CA. In 2008, Alameda County conducted a comprehensive review of the existing delivery of homeless prevention assistance in the county. The review found that the existing prevention resources in Alameda County were relatively small (approximately \$1.35 million annually), not targeted to those most likely to become homeless, and not coordinated across programs. The findings from this study indicated the need to create a comprehensive county-wide approach that made more effective use of the existing, but limited, prevention resources. When HPRP funds became available, the County had a foundation to create a system-wide approach that relied on best practices.

### **System Redesign**

Alameda County convened frontline practitioners, HMIS staff, and city and county planners to develop an HPRP plan for the county, which has been named the Priority Home Partnership. Their activities included reviewing existing assessment tools that are in use nationally and working collaboratively to develop a tool that best fits their community's needs. A guiding principle for the Priority Home Partnership is that the resources are fully accessible to those with housing crises.

In the new, emerging system, people with a housing crisis can call one central number (211). They either call on their own or are referred by social service agencies, mainstream resources, legal services, or city/county agencies. From there:

→ 211 operators will perform a preliminary screening to determine a household's need for assistance resources. Eligible households are directed to one of the seven regional Housing Resource Centers (HRCs) depending on the district from which they are calling.

→ At the HRC, the household meets with a case manager who acts as a financial planner to assess the families' housing and financial barriers and strengths using their assessment tool.

→ Each household receives a score indicating the recommended level of assistance. A high score indicates that a family may need only housing relocation assistance without financial assistance; a mid-range score indicates some need of housing location assistance and tailored financial assistance; families with low scores indicating more intensive needs are referred to the shelter program. Case managers have the ability to override the recommended level of assistance.

→ The HRCs can provide, or arrange for, a wide range of services for families because they are co-located in multi-service centers offering a range of supports to families. Services offered directly or through referral may include provision of landlord mediation; housing search assistance or case management services to help access medical and mental health services; childcare; substance abuse

treatment; benefits access; employment services; or other financial assistance based on the specific needs of the household.

### Funding

Largely, the allocated HPRP funds in Alameda County are split, with 50 percent going toward homelessness prevention activities and 50 percent going toward rapid re-housing activities. This funding is used in concert with two other pools of funding: one-time homeless assistance grant funds and new ARRA resources awarded to Alameda under the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund (ECF). The TANF agency in Alameda has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with each of the HRCs that allow them to access and utilize ECF funds to serve families. The HRCs determine if the household is eligible for the homeless assistance grant. HPRP funds are only used when the other resources cannot be used. The three pools of resources combine to fund this initiative at \$12 million. Below are the HPRP eligible activities funded by Alameda County:

HPRP Eligible Activities	Alameda County
<u>Financial Assistance</u>	
Short-term rental assistance (not to exceed 3 months)	X
Medium-term rental assistance (not to exceed 18 months)	X
Rent arrears (not more than 6 months arrearage)	X
Security deposits	X
Utility deposits	X
Utility payments	X
Moving cost assistance	X
Motel and hotel vouchers	X
<u>Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services</u>	
Case management	X
Outreach and engagement	
Housing search and placement	X
Legal services	X
Credit repair	

### Evaluation

Alameda has committed to collecting data and evaluating progress above and beyond what is required by HUD to receive HPRP funds. Below are a few examples:

- 211 calls – To evaluate the program model, data will be collected on people placing calls to 211, regardless of whether they accept, refuse, do not follow through, or do not qualify for housing assistance.
- Assessment tool – It is anticipated that the assessment tool used to evaluate client need will be refined over time. While case managers can override the recommended level of need, the score will be captured for future evaluation. Decisions to override will also be captured for analysis purposes.
- Future tracking - Future housing crises, including shelter entry, will be captured for all households, including those who were not provided assistance, in order to evaluate program performance.
- The Priority Home Partnership Implementation and Learning Community – To assess what is working, and to explore potential system-level refinements, system leaders (such as TANF policy staff, researchers, program administrators), and shelter providers will meet regularly to assess what is working and examine potential refinements.