



Internal Evaluation of the
Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Rehousing Program
Administered by Our Place Housing Solutions

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Executive Summary

The Program

The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP), created in 2009 as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and administered through the department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), granted 1.5 billion in funds to states and local communities for the creation of a three year program that would provide temporary financial assistance to households experiencing housing crises and facing homelessness. The program was comprised of two interrelated components: Homelessness Prevention helped those in danger of becoming homeless, while Rapid Rehousing assisted those recently homeless and in immediate need of permanent stable housing.

In East Los Angeles County, Our Place Housing Solutions (OPHS), in partnership with People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) and other agencies, took on responsibility for administering the HPRP program for the cities of Bellflower, Lakewood and Paramount. Enrollment began in January of 2010, and from that time until the program's termination in August of 2012, 360 clients and their households were enrolled in the HPRP. Including all household members, 1,056 adults and children were assisted in dealing with their housing crisis in the 30 months that the program was operational.

Evaluation

This evaluation was initiated by OPHS in the final six months of the HPRP grant in order to assess the outcomes of the program. The purpose of this evaluation is to develop a better understanding of the results of the program, how effective OPHS was at administering its HPRP, and its impact on the lives and housing situations of those that participated in the program. This evaluation seeks to answer four broad questions regarding OPHS' implementation of the HPRP program:

- ***How effective was the program in achieving its goal of assisting clients and their households in resolving their housing crises?***
- ***What demographic and programmatic factors influenced the program's rates of success?***
- ***How did this program's structure and policies, both internally and externally applied, affect its outcomes?***
- ***How effective did participating clients feel that the program was in achieving the goal of resolving their housing crises?***

To address these questions, an outside evaluator was employed to conduct this evaluation. Using an explanatory mixed-methods strategy to examine qualitative and quantitative data from a number of different sources including client records, case notes, and interviews, client outcomes are measured against program inputs to examine the program's efficiency and efficacy in achieving its goals; an examination of clients' and case managers' experiences with the program provide a better understanding of the factors contributing to observed outcomes.

Conclusions

Of the 308 clients who had received assistance and subsequently exited the program prior to this evaluation, 256 (83%) were recorded as “stably housed” at the time that they left the program and 201 (65%) had “completed the program, stably housed.” Only 52 (17%) of the households who received assistance were not stably housed by the time they left the program.

The greatest part (84%) of direct assistance funds went to assist clients and their households who were ultimately successful in resolving their housing situation. The 308 clients and households included in this evaluation received almost \$1.4 million in direct financial assistance; of this, clients exiting stably housed received just over \$1.17 million in assistance, while a little over \$225,000 was used to assist clients whose housing crisis had not been resolved at the time their case was closed.

Direct financial assistance and case management resources had a decisive impact on the outcome of housing crises.

Due in part to the nature and formation of the HPRP grant, this program had no preset program objectives for which outcomes could be compared or success could be defined, however summative statistics do indicate success in that that clients enrolling in this program had a high probability of resolving their housing crisis with the vast majority completing the program as well.

Several factors were shown to influence program outcomes. The program demonstrated a strong positive trend toward higher rates of housing stability and program completion throughout the programs progression, despite volatile enrollment rates and a critical midpoint funding crisis. Program outcomes varied significantly between the three cities, however limitations in the way outcomes were recorded prevent strong conclusions

Rapid rehousing clients used 58% less direct financial assistance than prevention clients.

from being drawn. The most significant demographic factor influencing success rates was a household’s income at exit.

Although only 21% of clients were already literally homeless and therefore enrolled in the Rapid Rehousing component of the program (in contrast to the 79% enrolled in the Homelessness

Prevention component) there were no statistically significant differences between these for either client household demographics or program outcomes of housing stability or program completion. Significantly, Rapid Rehousing clients used 58% less direct financial assistance than prevention clients, however caseworkers stated that rapid rehousing clients required more case management resources to find and secure stable housing. The findings of this evaluation suggest that future programs with limited funding may be able to help more clients by focusing more on rapid rehousing than prevention.

Qualitative data, including interviews with former clients, confirmed that recorded outcomes generally reflected clients’ actual housing situations at the time that they left the program. Clients generally expressed satisfaction with the program overall and gratitude for the assistance. Most clients testified that the assistance of

The most significant demographic factor influencing success rates was a household’s income at exit.

the program, both direct financial assistance and case management resources had a decisive impact on the outcome of their housing crisis, however a small minority of clients did not believe they would have actually become homeless if not for the assistance, as required by federal HUD guidelines for the program. Evidence compiled from client interviews and case notes suggest that future homelessness prevention programs using the HPRP model would benefit both from a more holistic understanding of the causes of the housing crises that they are addressing, and a broader response to the barriers that families face in resolution to their housing crisis.

Program Overview

The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP) was created as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act passed by congress in early 2009. The program, administered through the department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), granted 1.5 billion in funds to states and local communities for the creation of a three year program that would provide temporary financial assistance to individuals and families who were experiencing housing crises and facing homelessness.

The purpose of the HPRP was to alleviate the burden of homelessness in communities facing hardship due to the economic downturn of the late 2000s. HUD provided a number of basic eligibility and program requirements but, beyond these, gave state and local grantees the flexibility to tailor the program to target the needs of their communities. Grantees were encouraged to integrate the HPRP within existing housing

and homelessness service systems, and were given considerable leeway to implement the program as they saw most benefit their community's needs.

The HPRP provided funds for two separate but related components. The homelessness prevention component targeted funds to households who were currently renting their housing but facing an imminent threat of homelessness due to a pending eviction, or impending loss of suitable housing. These clients received financial and other assistance in either resolving their rental conflict or relocating to more suitable housing. The rapid rehousing

component, by contrast, targeted individuals and families who had already become homeless (as defined by the McKinney-Vento act of 1987). These families received assistance in rapidly relocating to stable rented housing. For both of these, the goal of the HPRP was to reduce homelessness in targeted areas by providing short term assistance in order to prevent families from becoming or remaining homeless in their community.

HPRP Grant and Sub-grant

In California, HUD and the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) allocated \$189 million in HPRP funds to cities and counties throughout the state for the local administration of the program. People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) teamed up with various grant partners in East Los Angeles County, including Our Place Housing Solutions (OPHS), to administer the program for the cities of Bellflower, Lakewood and Paramount. Upon approval of the sub-grant from the HCD in August of 2009, OPHS took on responsibility for administering the grant, including client screening and enrollment, case management, disbursement of financial assistance, and coordination of client services for these three cities.

In November of 2009 OPHS began hiring and training staff and case managers and in January of 2010, the first clients were enrolled in the program. Between January of 2010 and June of 2012, OPHS enrolled 360 clients and their households in the HPRP. Including all household members, 1,056 adults and children were assisted in dealing with their housing crisis in the 30 months that the program was operational.

Homelessness Prevention

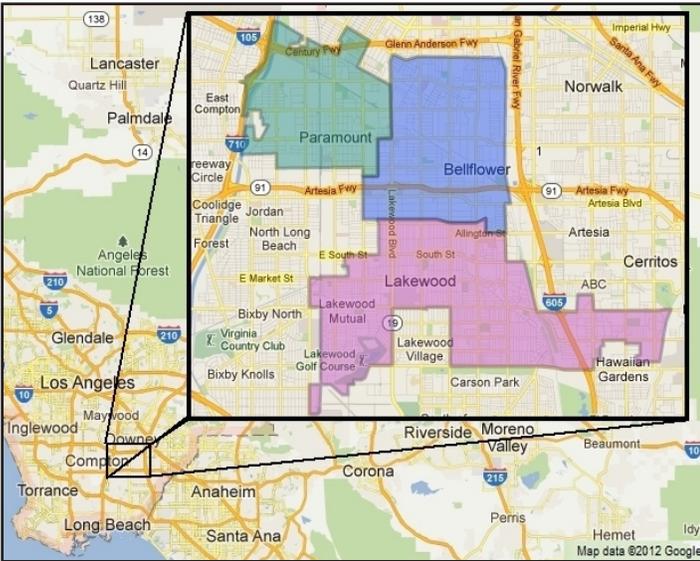
Assisted households in imminent danger of becoming homeless, to return to housing stability

Rapid Rehousing

Assisted individuals and families who were already homeless to regain stable housing

Summative Evaluation

This evaluation was initiated by OPHS in the final six months of the HPRP grant in order to assess the outcomes of the program over the course of its administration of the HPRP. The purpose of this evaluation is to develop a better understanding of the results of the program, how effective OPHS was at administering its HPRP, and its impact on the lives and housing situations of those that participated in the program. It represents an opportunity to provide lessons for the administration of future programs, and to contribute to the broader understanding of the HPRP and its approach to combating homelessness through prevention and rapid rehousing.



With these goals in mind, this evaluation seeks to answer four broad questions regarding OPHS' implementation of the HPRP program:

- **How effective was the program in achieving its goal of assisting clients and their households in resolving their housing crises?**
- **What demographic and programmatic factors influenced the program's rates of success?**
- **How did this program's structure and policies, both internally and externally applied, affect its outcomes?**
- **How effective did participating clients feel that the program was in achieving the goal of resolving their housing crises?**

In order to address these questions, an outside evaluator was employed to design the evaluation, gather and analyze the data, and report the findings. This evaluation uses an explanatory mixed-methods strategy to examine qualitative and quantitative data from a number of different sources including client records, case notes, and interviews. Client outcomes are measured against program inputs to examine the program's efficiency and efficacy in achieving its goals; an examination of clients' and case managers' experiences with the program provide a better understanding of the factors contributing to observed outcomes.

It is hoped that this evaluation will provide a clear description and analysis the HPRP as it was administered in the cities of Bellflower, Lakewood, and Paramount by OPHS and its partners in Eastern Los Angeles County.

The Context: Homelessness, Prevention, and Rehousing

Historically, strategies to address the persistent problem of homelessness in our nation have focused on building a network of shelters and transitional housing with an array of social services designed to provide for the immediate needs of the homeless and move them gradually into stable housing and reintegration. Recently, reliance on this "Continuum of Care" model has come under increasing scrutiny for being unable to address the immediate causes of homelessness. The current focus on "housing first", and prevention based models represent a significant shift in local and national strategies to deal with the problem. Rather than

simply reacting to the needs and problems of the homeless, a focus on prevention more directly addresses the housing crises that precipitate homelessness. (Culhane et al., 2011) Evidence based research has shown that prioritizing stable housing for those who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness can reduce costs to the public and increase effectiveness of services such as healthcare and substance abuse treatment. (Flaming et al. 2009)

The HPRP created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 was the first nationwide implementation of the housing first and prevention strategies of homelessness reduction. At the time of this report, the only evaluation of the program on a nationwide level is the department of Housing and Urban Development's Year 1 Summary of the HPRP. This report estimated that of those that were homeless upon entering the program 64.2% were stably housed at exit; those that were unstably housed or eminently losing their housing at entry exited stably housed at a rate of 52.2%.

Homelessness in Los Angeles County

Los Angeles is known to have the largest concentration of homeless residents in the country. At the time the HPRP was created, The 2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority (LAHSA) reported 52,931 homeless individuals in Los Angeles County. The enormity of the problem of homelessness in LA is reflected in public expenditures as well. As the continuum of care for greater Los Angeles, LAHSA reported in that same year that it and its partners managed over \$70 million in public funds to address the problem of homelessness in the area.

The HPRP grant represented a chance for LAHSA and other homelessness service providers to approach the problem of homelessness from a new direction. Funding was disbursed according to the Emergency Shelter Grants formula for calculating local need, accordingly HUD granted almost \$42 million in HPRP funds to the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles county for the program, (compared to the \$44 million granted directly to the State of California through the HCD). Over the three years of the grant, almost a hundred Homelessness Prevention and/or Rapid Rehousing programs operated in Los Angeles County. By the fall of 2011, most of these programs had spent their grant funds and were closed to new enrollments. Only 11 programs (including the three cities administered by OPHS) were still open and accepting new applicants.

The 2011 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count conducted by LAHSA reported 51,340 homeless individuals in Los Angeles County. This figure is down 3% from the figures reported in 2009. Although no research has been published to offer an explanation for the decrease, given the enduring impact of recent economic hardship on the region, it is tantalizing to imagine that HPRP grant programs had some impact in reversing a trend in rising homelessness in the area.

HUD HPRP Guidelines

Federal grants for the HPRP program were administered through the department of Housing and Urban Development. Although grantees had considerable discretion in implementing the program, a number of basic eligibility criteria were imposed by HUD in order to insure that funds were used to assist those most at risk of homelessness. Households applying for HPRP assistance were required to meet with a case manager at least once prior to enrollment to establish eligibility according to these criteria. The combined total income of the household could not exceed 50% of the area's median income (AMI), and the household must have demonstrated that they are either homeless (to receive rapid rehousing funds) or at imminent risk of homelessness (to receive prevention funds). Finally, the household must have demonstrated that they had no subsequent housing options and would have become or remained homeless without the assistance of the program.

Our Place Housing Solutions HPRP

From January of 2010 to June of 2012, 360 clients and their households were enrolled in the HPRP program administered by OPHS for the cities of Bellflower, Lakewood and Paramount. From the total \$3.6 million HPRP grants for these three cities, (of which \$2.9 had been received and spent down as of June 2012), \$1.6 million in direct financial assistance had been spent in efforts to resolve these clients' housing crises. Approximately \$1,380,000 was spent on efforts to prevent 285 households from becoming homeless, while approximately \$224,000 was spent to assist 75 clients and their families in being rehoused from situations of homelessness. Forms of direct assistance included rental arrears and rental subsidies, utility arrears and subsidies, and utility and security deposits for rehousing clients.

The HPRP program as administered by OPHS specifically targeted individuals and families whose housing crises were critical but resolvable, and who had a high probability of quickly returning to financial self-sustainability after receiving the program's assistance. Through this program, eligible families could receive short term assistance with rent, including rental arrears, and/or rehousing costs such as security deposits and utility bills. The program went through a number of early eligibility and assistance policy adjustments, however by the end of the first year, a limit of six months' rental assistance and arrears had been set, which could be waved upon extenuating circumstances.

Households were required to demonstrate they had either the current means to meet their financial obligations, or the potential to be able to do so in the very near future. The temporary assistance of the program was intended to be sufficient to resolve the client's housing crisis and return them to self-sustainability. As part of the prescreen and initial assessment before enrollment, household income was calculated and compared against expenses in order to estimate the likelihood that the household would remain financially stable once their housing crisis was resolved. Applicants were denied assistance if their current or expected household income was not sufficient to meet their financial obligations.

Basic Eligibility Criteria

Total household income must not exceed 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI)

The household must be literally homeless (to receive rapid rehousing assistance) or at imminent risk of homelessness (to receive homelessness prevention assistance)

The household must demonstrate that it would become or remain homeless without the assistance of the program

Households Enrolled

360 Total Enrollment
285 Homelessness Prevention
75 Rapid Rehousing

Financial Assistance

\$1,603,041 Total Assistance
\$1,379,490 Prevention
\$223,550 Rapid Rehousing

During their participation in the program and as a requirement for receiving financial assistance, clients met monthly with their case manager to complete a budget for the coming month, review goals from the previous

Homelessness Prevention

Approximately 80-100 calls received per month
from people requesting housing assistance

More than 530 applicants
denied assistance after screening

360 Clients enrolled and received assistance

month, and discuss the households progress in achieving financial and housing stability. Clients who failed to attend regular case management, or were unable or unwilling to adhere to a budget, were often denied further financial assistance.

A review of monthly call logs suggested a rough estimate of approximately 80 - 100 calls to the organization per month by people seeking assistance with their housing crises. Callers were placed on a waiting list and their calls were returned as funding

to enroll new clients became available. A short pre-screening interview was conducted over the phone and, if the caller appeared eligible for the program, an appointment was scheduled for an initial assessment of the household's housing and financial situation. Of those that received a return call, at least 530 were denied assistance (compared to the 360 clients and their families who were enrolled in the program and did receive assistance). Beyond the HUD and HCD mandated guidelines, reasons for denial were most often related to the assessment of the household's ability to sustain itself financially after assistance.

Monthly program enrollment rates varied considerably throughout the span of the program. Although the program averaged 12 new enrollments per month, six different months saw new enrollments drop below six per month, and four months had over 20 new enrollments. Fluctuations in enrollment reflected issues and uncertainties with funding that plagued this organization's program. Unlike other HPRP programs in LA county which received their funding from LAHSA, OPHS along with PATH operated their program through a sub-grant from California's HCD. State funding of the HPRP switched to a reimbursement system in August of 2011, requiring the organization to mobilize cash reserves that it did not have access to at that time. This created a crisis of funding which almost caused the termination of the program, and even after external finances were located, was a source of continued hardship for this and likely other organizations operating HCD sub-grants for HPRP.

Evaluation Methodology

Research, data collection, and analysis for this evaluation were conducted in the final six months of the program's grant. A summative evaluation at the end of the program presents the unique opportunity to examine the evolution of the program and observe trends in the programs outcomes over time. With a sample size approaching the total number of clients enrolled in the program, outcomes more are easily generalizable to the program overall.

Scope of this Evaluation

Between January of 2010 when OPHS began enrolling clients, and June of 2012, when the final data for this evaluation was collected, 308 clients and their households had received assistance and subsequently exited from the program. Not included in this evaluation of outcomes are the 52 clients who were still enrolled and receiving assistance as of June 2012, the six clients who had been enrolled and then exited without receiving financial assistance, or the uncounted but likely modest number of potential clients who were approved for services but, for various reasons, were never enrolled or received financial assistance.

Measurement of Outcomes

Outcomes recorded for each client at the time of their exit included a reason for leaving and an assessment of the household's housing stability at the time their case was closed. Clients who attended monthly case management sessions and achieved their goals of financial and housing stability set during case management were considered to have completed the program. Other reasons recorded for leaving the program include non-compliance with the program, inability of the program to meet the client's needs, and clients no longer qualifying for the program at reevaluation (such as when the household's total income increased to greater than 50% AMI). Clients experiences with the program varied widely from case to case, and the reasons record given for leaving the program attempted to reflect these. For this evaluation, the reasons for leaving the program have been collapsed into "completed the program" and "did not complete the program" in order to measure successful program participation.

Housing stability was recorded by the case manager at the time their case was closed and was based on an assessment of the household's ability to meet their housing needs for the foreseeable future. Housing status for the household was recorded as either "Stably housed" "Unstably housed" or "Imminently losing their housing" at exit. A household's permanent income versus their expenses, and clients' estimations of their ability to meet their rental obligations for the coming months were the two main factors used to assess housing stability. For most of the length of the program, clients were kept on a three month retention period after their last financial assistance in order to monitor their housing stability before their case was closed (the retention period was reduced to one month at the end of 2011). For those cases in which the case manager was unable to get in touch with the client at the end of the retention period, the property owner or manager was contacted to determine the client's current housing status and estimate stability.

For the purpose of this evaluation and especially for the statistical analysis of outcomes, the recorded "reason for leaving the program" and the "housing status at exit" were combined into one outcome measurement with three possible outcomes: "Completed program, stably housed", "Stably housed but did not complete the program," and "Not stably housed at exit." Clients with outcomes in the first category represent successful cases in which clients attended monthly case management and worked toward the goals set down therein,

received financial assistance as well as access to other resources, and ultimately saw their housing crisis resolved by the time they exited the program.

Clients with outcomes of “Not stably housed at exit” include those who received assistance but were unsuccessful in resolving their housing crisis within the timeframe of the program, and were recorded as either being unstably housed or imminently losing their housing at exit. Also included were those clients who “disappeared” and whose housing status was not ascertainable at the time their case was closed.

The remaining category, “Stably housed but did not complete the program”, represents equivocal successes. Many of these clients received financial assistance in either preventing an eviction or relocating to a more stable housing situation, but did not elect to attend further case management or maintain contact with the program or their case manager. Other cases that fall into this category include some clients who were no longer eligible for assistance at the time of the required three month re-evaluation, or who elected to pursue housing options that disqualified them from receiving further assistance.

Reopened Cases

A small minority of clients returned after having their case closed, to request additional assistance with a new or reoccurring housing crisis. These were evaluated on a case by case basis, taking into account their previous participation in the program as well as their current circumstances. Returning clients who were approved for further assistance had their cases reopened. Due to the design of the HMIS software used to record client’s progress in the program, there is no reliable way discern which clients were re-enrolled. For the purposes of this evaluation, these cases are treated as a single period of enrollment and only their final outcomes are counted.

Quantitative Data

HMIS DATA

Demographic and programmatic data for every client was entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as mandated by HUD. Data included comprehensive background information for each client and their household, program inputs such as instances and amounts of financial assistance and case management, and outcomes including goals and housing stability. This data was downloaded, compiled and verified. Quantitative analysis was conducted to uncover any statistically significant trends or correlations between program factors and outcomes.

All clients enrolled in the program were registered in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as required by HUD. Demographic and background information was recorded in the database for each

client and their household at the time of their enrollment. such as financial assistance and case management were recorded and updated during the course of their enrollment in the program and final program outcomes such as housing stability were entered at the time their case was closed.

Relevant data was downloaded and aggregated from this database for all clients enrolled in the program between January of 2010 and June of 2012. A sample of the total cases was compared to the case manager’s files in order to verify the accuracy of the data. Due in large part to shortcomings of the software, figures

Data Sources Used in Evaluation

- HMIS client database reports
- Client case files and case notes
- Telephone interviews with former clients
- Focus groups with case managers

for client incomes reported in HMIS were found to be unreliable. Client incomes at enrollment and exit, as well as the total number of case management sessions had to be tallied from the case files in order to obtain reliable figures. Analysis of the quantitative data collected from the HMIS and case files relied on parametric and non-parametric statistical techniques to uncover significant correlations, trends, and differences among programmatic factors and recorded outcomes as described above.

Qualitative Data

CLIENT INTERVIEWS

In order to better understand the clients' experience with the program, a randomized sampling of 67 cases were selected; their files and case notes were reviewed, and multiple attempts were made to contact the client for an interview. Of the 67 clients who were called, 27 clients were contacted, and 26 consented to be interviewed. The interview included twelve open ended questions regarding clients' current housing and financial situations, experiences with the program, and any feedback on what they believed could have been improved. Respondents' answers were recorded manually and later coded for themes and patterns.

CASE NOTES

Case notes for 91 clients were reviewed and analyzed. These included the 67 clients who were randomly selected for telephone interviews, as well as 24 additional clients whose housing stability and reason for leaving the program did not follow typical patterns of client outcomes and so represented a "deviant cases" sampling. Case notes for both the random and deviant case samples were reviewed using methods of content analysis; relevant details for each case were recorded, coded and examined for themes.

CASE MANAGER'S FOCUS GROUP

A two-hour focus group session was held with all available case managers for the HPRP program administered by OPHS. Questions asked of the case managers centered on their interpretation and implementation of the program policies, as well as their perceptions of factors that influenced client outcomes. Participation was voluntary and participants were assured of confidentiality. The focus group session was recorded digitally with the anonymous consent of all participants. Responses informed the qualitative findings and are elaborated below.

Limitations

A number of factors limit this evaluation and the conclusions that can be drawn from it. As a summative evaluation undertaken at the end of the program, the quantitative data available is limited to clients who were actually enrolled in the program; without similar data on comparable households not enrolled in the program, a causal link cannot be formally drawn between program participation and client outcomes. Without assuming that every client truly would have become or remained homeless without assistance (as is the HUD mandated requirement for enrollment), there is no statistically acceptable way to estimate the impact of the program on client's housing as a result of their participation.

Limitations on the measurement of outcomes result more specifically from a lack of program guidelines on what constitutes stable vs. unstably housed and how the "reason for leaving the program" is determined. Without written policies defining these, program outcomes are subject to biases inherent in subjective judgment. Consequently there is no way to objectively gauge the consistency with which outcomes were

determined from case to case and especially between case managers. Future evaluations of this type would greatly benefit greatly from clearly defined outcome measurements built into the program design.

Finally, client interviews are subject to several potential selection biases. Although the random sample was chosen from the total of all clients whose cases were closed at the time the interviews were conducted, former clients who had participated in the program more recently were more likely to be to be able to be contacted than those who had participated earlier on. For obvious reasons, clients whose housing crises were resolved by the end of their participation in the program were also much more likely to be reached by telephone than those who had not.

Results

How effective was the program in achieving its goal of assisting clients and their households in resolving their housing crises?

Due in part to the nature of the HPRP grant and its rapid formation in 2009, this program had no preset program objectives for which outcomes could be compared or success could be defined. Summative statistics do indicate that clients enrolling in this program had a high probability of resolving their housing crisis with the vast majority completing the program as well.

Summation of Program Outcomes

Of the 308 clients who had received assistance and subsequently exited the program prior to this evaluation, 256 (83%) were recorded as stably housed at the time that they left the program and 201 (65%) had completed the program, stably housed. Only 52 (17%) of the households who received assistance were not stably housed by the time they left the program.

Summative Program Statistics

83% of clients exited stably housed

65% of clients completed the program stably housed

84% of financial assistance went to clients who became stably housed

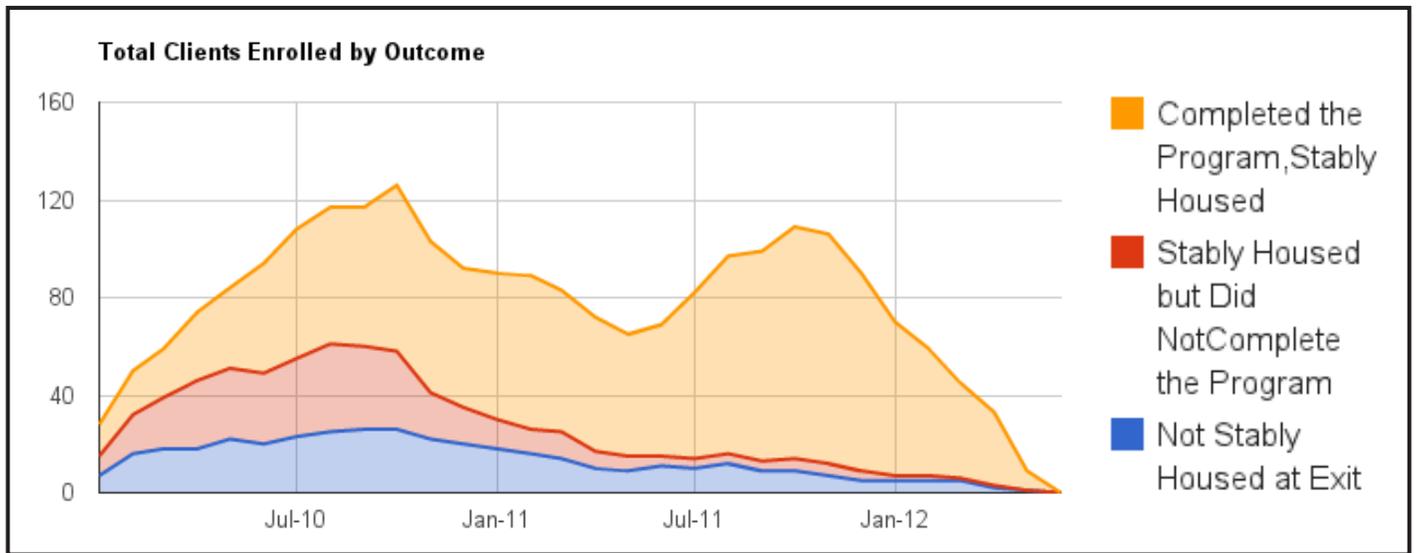
The greatest part (84%) of direct assistance funds went to assist clients and their households who successfully resolved their housing situation. The 308 clients and households included in this evaluation received almost \$1.4 million in direct financial assistance; of this, clients exiting stably housed received just over \$1.17 million in assistance, while a little over \$225,000 was used to assist clients whose housing crisis had not been resolved at the time their case was closed.

Program Outcomes and Enrollment Over Time

Program outcomes improved significantly over the length of the program operation. In the first year of operation, 78% of clients exited stably housed but only 47% of these completed the program, whereas the second year saw 91% stably housed with 85% also completing the program. Outcomes did fluctuate from month to month but with an obvious trend toward higher rates of housing stability and program completion as the program progressed.

When examined in conjunction with enrollment rates, outcomes appear to have been tied to program enrollment in a particular pattern over the course of the program. Client outcomes rose and fell proportionally with the total number of clients enrolled for the first 16 months of the program. During that time, funding uncertainties having to do with a change from a disbursement to a reimbursement system caused a rapid drop in total clients enrolled in the program. The resolution of the grant funding crisis for the program resulted in a resurgence of enrollment in the last half of 2011. During this time the total number of clients who exited the program unstably housed and those who did not complete the program continued to fall, while the proportional number of clients who completed the program, stably housed rose at roughly the same rate as new enrollment. The result, as diagramed below, demonstrates that the program outcome rates were significantly better in the second half of the program's grant period than before. (Differences between total clients enrolled and clients exiting with outcomes show those clients who were still enrolled in the program at the time data for this evaluation was collected.)

What demographic and programmatic factors influenced the program's rates of success?

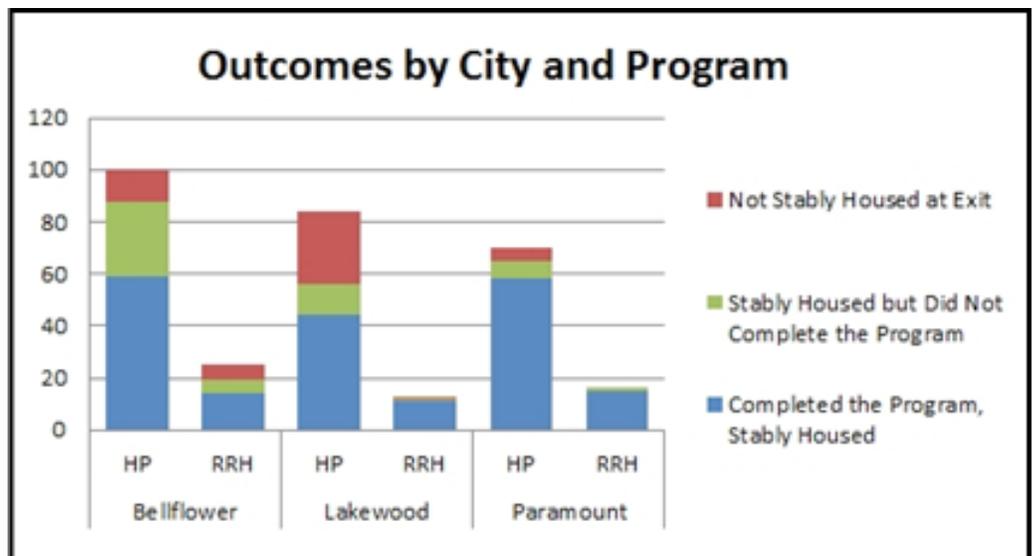


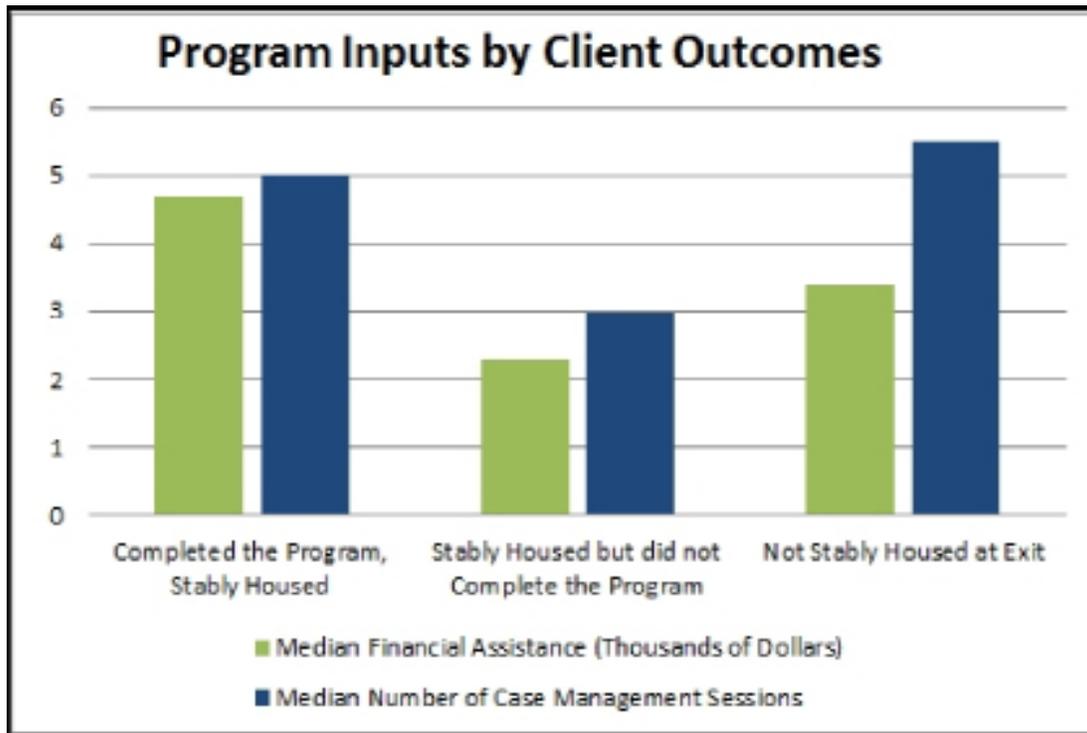
Outcomes by City

Program outcomes varied significantly between the three cities for which OPHS administered the HPRP. Clients enrolled in the Paramount HPRP were more likely to complete the program, and more likely to exit the program stably housed, while clients enrolled in the Lakewood and Bellflower HPRP were less likely to do so. It is difficult however to draw many conclusions from these differences because limitations associated with subjective interpretations of what constitutes housing stability and program completion factor most strongly when comparing outcomes between case managers who were assigned to specific cities.

Program Inputs: Financial Assistance and Case Management

Client outcomes were shown to be tied to the program inputs, however these connections were complex and seemingly counterintuitive. Housing stability at exit was not, by itself, significantly affected by the amount of financial assistance a client received or the number of times that they met with their case manager. When program completion is taken into account however, clients who exited the program stably housed but without completing the program received significantly less financial assistance and met with their case manager significantly fewer times than clients who either completed the program, stably housed, or did not exit stably housed.





Household Demographics and Program Outcomes

Contrary to expectations, no statistically significant connections could be found between a client’s household size and/or makeup and their program outcome. There were no significant differences in program outcomes for single parents, two parent families, households with no children, or single individuals. Even the ratio of minors to adults in a household had no statistically significant effect on their outcome at exit.

Additionally, total household income at enrollment, both in terms of absolute value and adjusted for family size (as a percentage of AMI), was not connected to a household’s outcome. The only household demographic that was shown to directly relate to program outcomes was the household’s total income at exit. Clients with higher household incomes at exit, and clients whose household income was higher upon exiting the program than upon entering, were more likely to complete the program and to exit stably housed. The lack of correlation between a household’s income at entry and their outcome suggests that this was not the indicator of sustainability that it was thought to be.

How did this program’s structure and policies, both internally and externally applied, affect its outcomes?

Prevention versus Rapid Rehousing

Outcomes were proportionally similar for prevention versus rapid rehousing participants. Fully 82% of prevention clients were stably housed at exit, and 63% had also completed the program. By comparison, 87% of rapid rehousing clients were stably housed, while 74% also completed the program. Due to the disproportionately small number of clients receiving RRH assistance, these differences are not great enough to be able to conclude any statistical significance.

No significant demographic differences were found between prevention clients versus rapid rehousing clients. Length of enrollment and number of case management sessions were comparable between the two types of assistance as well.

On the other hand, differences in the amount of assistance rapid rehousing clients received when compared with clients enrolled in homelessness prevention were significant. Rapid rehousing clients received a median total assistance (\$2,344) that was approximately 58% of the median assistance that rapid rehousing clients received (\$4,064).

Case managers stated that rapid rehousing clients required much more effort to assist than prevention clients because of the need to assist with the search for appropriate housing, negotiations with the prospective landlord, and the process of moving-in.

Total Median Financial Assistance per Household	
Prevention \$4,064	Rapid Rehousing \$2,344

How effective did participating clients feel that the program was in achieving the goal of resolving their housing crises?

Confirmation of Outcomes

Case notes reveal that program outcomes reported in HMIS generally matched clients' level of participation in the program and their housing situation at exit as best as could be determined by the case manager at that time. Housing stability was most often determined through direct communication with the client at the time their case was closed, and secondarily through communication with the client's landlord or property manager (if the client could not be contacted.)

The majority of clients who participated in the phone interview had been recorded as stably housed and completing the program. Clients generally described their housing situation at the time they exited the program in line with the program outcomes that had been recorded for them. Although several former clients described subsequent instances of housing crises occurring after exiting the program these almost always appeared well after they had ceased contact with their case manager. On the other hand, two interviewees who had been recorded as being unstably housed at exit were still residing in the same place that they had at the time of their participation in the program, though they were still unable to meet their monthly financial obligations.

Of the former clients who were interviewed, those who had exited stably housed overwhelmingly attributed the resolution of their housing crisis in large part to the financial assistance and other resources they received by the program. Most of these stated that they felt they would not have been able to regain or retain stable housing without the assistance that they received from the program. A minority of those interviewed denied that they would in fact have become homeless without the assistance of the program, however when asked what alternative options would have been available many answers would not have been seen as viable alternatives to assistance. Nevertheless, it seems likely that some clients downplayed alternative options to resolving their housing crisis in order to qualify for program assistance.

Client Experience with Case Management

Interviewed former clients overwhelmingly expressed a generally positive experience with the HPRP program, and especially in interactions with their case managers. With few exceptions, clients described their case workers as being compassionate and professional; clients frequently remarked that they were treated with dignity and respect in the course of their case management sessions. Many respondents attributed the successful resolution of their housing crisis to the skilled guidance of their case manager as much as to the financial assistance they received. Help with legal resources, mediation with landlords and property managers, financial counseling and employment skills development were some of the non-financial resources clients cited as valuable to the resolution of their housing crisis and return to financial stability.

Clients' use of non-financial program resources was far from uniform however. Many clients saw case management as simply a program requirement to receive financial assistance, while others found it to be a resource essential to their success. Interviews also revealed that some clients felt that the program focused too heavily on financial aspects of their case without adequately addressing personal, domestic, and health issues that were often barriers to stability or even the original cause of their housing crisis. Access to professional guidance and support, as well as assistance with referrals to a broader range of services were cited by some respondents as ways in which the program could have better addressed their case. Although the HPRP program was designed to provide and require a specific level of client participation and, it appears that some clients would have benefitted from more intensive case management, while others would have preferred more flexibility in this area.

Conclusions

The HPRP program was based on a model that attributes many cases of homelessness to instances of a preventable housing crisis precipitated by temporary issues of financial instability. By addressing short term financial needs, the HPRP was designed to bridge the gap in a household's financial stability in order to prevent or end a situation of homelessness.

This program as it was administered by Our Place Housing Solutions has demonstrated that temporary financial assistance can be effective in assisting households in resolving their housing crisis and returning to stability. Interviews of former clients indicate that most participants feel that the HPRP was instrumental in helping them resolve their housing crisis and avoid eviction and homelessness. Program outcome statistics demonstrate that roughly four out of every five households that participated in the program had resolved their housing crisis by the time that they left the program. Analysis of the outcomes in conjunction with client interviews and case notes can illuminate those aspects of the program that contributed to as well as those that hindered outcomes.

Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing

The two components of the program, homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing, enjoyed similar rates of success, however clients who enrolled in the prevention side of the program required substantially more financial assistance than those who were literally homeless and in need of rapid rehousing. On the other hand, rehousing clients were seen as requiring greater case management resources to locate and secure stable housing for the household. The comparison of outcomes between these two components of the program is somewhat misleading, as prevention implies the abstract notion of the avoidance of a possible future event, while rehousing involves a concrete change in the client's living situation. This problem is highlighted by the responses of former clients in which a significant minority of those enrolled in prevention divulged that they did not believe they would have become homeless "if not for the assistance" as was required by HUD.

Although homelessness prevention may be more effective in avoiding the personal and social trauma of a household becoming homeless, the implications of this evaluation are that future programs modeled on the HPRP and operating with limited funding may be able to help more clients and achieve more concrete results fighting homelessness by prioritizing rapid rehousing over prevention strategies.

The HPRP Approach to Homelessness

This evaluation has demonstrated that the HPRP program administered by Our Place Housing Solutions enjoyed a fairly impressive success rate, given the limitations and funding uncertainties placed on it. There are indications, however, that the program's success rate was also limited by its focus on the financial causes of homelessness. Although nearly every client's housing crisis was precipitated to some extent by a crisis in financial resources that were insufficient to retain housing, case notes and interviews revealed that the origins of many clients' housing crisis were not purely financial. Likewise, many of the barriers to financial and housing stability that postponed or prevented clients' housing stability were not merely financial in nature. Legal issues, health crises, bureaucratic delays, and family conflicts are only some of the barriers that clients faced, both precipitating their housing crisis and arising during the course of their participation in the program.

The HPRP was designed to be able to integrate housing assistance with other existing social services, however it did not provide for the development of other non-financial support where none existed before. At the time

that OPHS took on responsibility for the administration of the HPRP, it had not yet developed the capacity or resources to address many of the non-financial barriers to stability that clients faced. Although grant partners such as the Legal Aid Foundation provided some key non-financial resources to clients, others who were in danger of becoming homeless were not assisted or were unable to resolve their housing crisis with the resources provided.

The evidence from this three year program indicates that future homelessness prevention programs using the HPRP model would benefit both from a more holistic understanding of the causes of the housing crises that they are addressing, and a broader response to the barriers that families face in resolution to their housing crisis.

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