

HUD Continuum of Care grants will move Rapid Rehousing forward

The receipt of nearly \$15 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) includes funding that allows the Department of Human Services (DHS) to continue embracing a promising new way of assisting people who are homeless, known as Rapid Rehousing.

While the grants are primarily renewals for an array of more traditional housing supports, they also allow DHS to pursue seven new Rapid Rehousing programs, making a total of nine that the department will be administering once the additional programs get under way in the next few months in the Allegheny County [Continuum of Care](#).

Rapid Rehousing assists individuals and families who have been living in shelters or on the street to quickly acquire stable housing, ideally within 30 days. The approach operates under a “Housing First” philosophy that emphasizes stabilizing individuals and families in housing as the first step in helping them improve their circumstances.

After being moved to a Rapid Rehousing program unit, clients work toward self-sufficiency: Securing a job that pays for permanent housing is a program goal. To that end, Rapid Rehousing participants receive intensive case management and must participate in case reviews every three months to ascertain what else can be done to accomplish self-sufficiency.

Clients are required to find their own apartment and sign a lease in their own name, although the rent is shared by the program and client while they are enrolled. Clients are assessed every three months for continued eligibility and any ongoing need for rental assistance. The hope is that program participants receive rental assistance for a short period of time, ideally six to nine months, and then are able to take over the full rental payments for their apartment when their stay in the program ends.

Rapid Rehousing programs are included in the HUD award along with Transitional Housing programs, which provide housing with financial support for two years; Permanent Supportive Housing for people with disabilities; and Safe Haven housing for people who chronically live on the street.

The HUD grants to DHS are part of applications for 51 Tier 1 housing programs that provide 1,758 beds in 981 units of housing. The new Rapid Rehousing programs will provide 92 units and 129 beds.

The Tier 1 grants also increase funding by about 5 percent to housing support programs that have not had an increase in a while. Those include Permanent Supportive Housing and Transitional Housing programs for which DHS has demonstrated a continuing need even with the emphasis of Rapid Rehousing Programs in the Continuum of Care. The grants also cover administrative and project planning costs relative to housing.

Rob Eamigh, Housing Program Administrator in the Office of Community Services, said the \$1,109,089 allotted for the seven new Rapid Rehousing programs is welcome news that has excited those at DHS who work in housing supports. The county was one of 20 jurisdictions nationwide that piloted a Rapid Rehousing program six years ago. That program continues; another program operated by Mercy Behavioral Health Systems began operating in the fall of 2015.

Another highlight of the grants is continued funding for the department's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the recently established Coordinated Intake system that is carried out by the Allegheny Link under the Office of Community Relations.

DHS administrators are awaiting word on Tier II applications for 26 grants totaling \$4,456, 347, which includes a potential of three brand new bonus projects that could bring additional funds into the Continuum of Care.