



Facts About...

Refugees and the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Act (HPRP): A Refugee Advocate's Guide to Navigating the HPRP

Homelessness is a pervasive problem in the United States. The primary cause of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing. Refugees are a particularly vulnerable population now as language differences, cultural differences, adjusting to a new environment, and high unemployment rates create significant financial obstacles that result in homelessness. With such limited affordable housing options, refugee homelessness is a major concern. This fact sheet is intended to familiarize the refugee resettlement community with a new program, the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), created in 2009 to help address the issue of homelessness. The primary goal of this fact sheet is to help inform resettlement agencies and emergency housing organizations about how to collaborate and use the HPRP to prevent homelessness among refugees.

WHAT is the HPRP?

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which included \$1.5 billion for the **Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)**. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will distribute funds to cities and states throughout the country to provide financial assistance and services to prevent individuals from becoming homeless or help those experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed. The funds will provide a variety of assistance including: rental assistance for up to 18 months, housing relocation, and stabilization services. Stabilization services include mediation, security– or utility deposits, utility payments, moving cost assistance and case management.

HOW could this help prevent homelessness among refugees?

Refugees will benefit from new or strengthened relationships between resettlement agencies, Ethnic Community Based Organizations (ECBOs) and local homeless programs. Local homeless programs will be the most likely recipients of the funds; resettlement agencies and ECBOs can work with those programs to ensure that refugees are referred and effectively served. In most cases the funds will be distributed to preexisting homeless programs, however refugee resettlement agencies and similar organizations may apply to receive funds directly.

HPRP Funding Stream



Sample Scenario

Jeanie works at a resettlement agency in New York and is a case worker for Asad, a Somali refugee who has recently lost his job, has been unable to pay rent, and has received an eviction warning from his landlord. Asad calls Jeanie and asks what he should do. Earlier that year Jeanie had called the local Community Development Office and learned that Eviction Intervention Services (EIS), a local agency that provides homelessness prevention services, received HPRP funds. Jeanie's resettlement agency initiated a relationship with EIS so that now, Jeanie can refer Asad to EIS where he receives a rent voucher and is able keep his apartment for three more months instead of becoming homeless.

Action Plan for Resettlement Agencies and ECBOs

► **Identify city and state agencies receiving funding.** These agencies can identify the risk factors they are using to identify families with the greatest need for assistance. They can also identify the local agencies receiving funding and direct you to whom you can refer your clients.

► **Establish local partnerships and referral communication plan with agencies receiving funding.** Many "mainstream" homelessness organizations are not familiar with refugee populations. Be sure to highlight how your organization can assist in meeting the specific needs refugees facing homelessness may have.

► **Educate yourself about the referral process and support refugees through applications and intakes.**

► **Maintain communication with mainstream referral partners.** Close connections will need to be formed with local human service providers to ensure refugees entering HPRP funded programs secure stable living situations in the long run and to help create integrated approaches to prevent and address refugee homelessness.

HOW MUCH funding will my community receive?

You can view your community's allocation at:
www.hud.gov/recovery/homelesspreventrecov.xls.

WHO can receive services through HPRP funding?

Homeless refugees, and refugees at risk of becoming homeless, must meet specific criteria to receive HPRP-funded financial assistance or services. An example of this criteria includes the household lacking the financial resources and support networks needed to obtain immediate housing or remain in its existing housing. Requirements can be found at www.hudhre.info/HPRP.

HUD strongly encourages funds be distributed to qualifying households based on an assessment of Homelessness Risk Factors a household faces, including but not limited to:

- Imminent eviction from a private dwelling
- Sudden and significant loss of income
- Sudden and significant increase in utility costs
- Mental health and/or substance abuse issues
- Physical disabilities or other chronic health issues
- Severe housing cost burden (paying greater than 50% of income for housing costs)
- High overcrowding
- Recent traumatic life event

WHEN will funding be distributed?

On May 18, 2009 communities submitted plans to HUD explaining how they intended to use HPRP funding. HUD will formalize all grant agreements no later than September 1, 2009. State and local governments are required to distribute funds to selected agencies by September 30, 2009.

WHAT agencies in my community are receiving funds? How can I contact them?

The agencies may vary from community to community, but typically your state- and local Housing and Community Development Agency or Department of Human Services will be distributing funds. In cases where these agencies are not responsible for administration of HPRP funds, they can help direct you to the appropriate contact. Typically, Emergency Shelter Grants (ESGs) comprise the majority of funding for homelessness programs. However, more agencies will be receiving HPRP funding than those usually receiving ESGs. You can find out more information and contacts for homelessness service organizations at www.refugeehouse.org/factsheets/emergencyhousing.pfm

WHERE can I go if I have more questions?

- Local contact information for past HPRP fund recipients can be found at www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRPGranteesCDBGContacts.pdf
- You can find your state HUD contact at www.hudhre.info/HPRP/index.cfm?do=viewCoCMapsAndReports

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To learn more about the RHP and to access additional materials, please visit www.refugeehouse.org.

Resources:

- ▶ Explore HUD's HPRP Page:

www.hudhre.info/HPRP

- ▶ Stay updated on policy changes, clarifications and other news regarding HUD's Homelessness Assistance Programs, join the HUD listserv:

www.hud.gov

- ▶ Visit the National Alliance to End Homelessness site for more information on HPRP:

www.endhomelessness.org/section/prevention



Mercy Housing

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If you have questions about the HPRP funding or any other refugee housing issue, please get in touch with the Refugee Housing Program at refugeehouseinfo@mercyhousing.org

www.refugeehouse.org