PD&R

Evaluation of the Service Coordinator Program

Volume II: Case Studies

Evaluation of the
Service Coordinator Program

Volume II: Case Studies

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foreword

Older residents of federally assisted housing are among those with the fewest resources to age in place successfully. A large and growing number of frail elderly residents are at-risk of premature or unnecessary institutionalization because supportive services may not be available due to problems of coordination and delivery of available services. Supportive services also promote the option of independent living for nonelderly persons with disabilities in federally assisted housing. To enable residents to age in place and live independently, Congress established the Service Coordinator Program (SCP) in 1990.

Through the program, a service coordinator's primary role is to coordinate the provision of supportive services to the elderly and persons with disabilities living in HUD-assisted projects constructed with Section 202, Section 8, Section 221(d), and Section 236 support. This evaluation report describes early implementation experiences of SCPs; ongoing program operations; and resident satisfaction with the program.

Evaluation findings show the program is working effectively in meeting the supportive service needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities. Residents are very satisfied with the program and the service coordinators. Property managers and service coordinators believe that the program has prevented early institutionalization of some residents. The program reduced the involvement of property managers in service coordination, an activity for which they are not qualified and which they lack the resources to perform. Service coordinators who were more effective in coordinating services and bringing them to the housing developments tend to be located in urban areas where services are both plentiful and accessible. For those in more rural and isolated areas, the service coordinators' ability to perform their responsibilities were severely limited. Furthermore, their ability to obtain the required training was hampered by their geographic location.

Although future funding for the Service Coordinator program is uncertain, service coordination is an eligible activity under HUD's reinvented programs. The experiences and findings presented in this evaluation should greatly inform service coordinators, housing managers, and service providers in coordinating assistance for the frail, low-income elderly and persons with disabilities.

Michael A. Stegman
Assistant Secretary for Policy
Development and Research

Table of Contents

Overview of Case Studies

This is the companion report on the evaluation of the Service Coordinator Program (SCP) conducted by KRA Corporation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The reader should refer to the *Evaluation of the Service Coordinator Program; Volume 1: Study Findings* for the analysis of evaluation findings. The case studies simply record the on-site interviews conducted by KRA with service coordinators, property managers, residents, and project managers, if applicable.

The focus of this study was on 18 SCPs. These SCPs were selected from the universe of SCPs funded by HUD in the first three years of the program 1992, 1993, and 1994. Two groups of nine projects were studied. One group of SCPs, funded in 1992, had been in operation for at least 2 years. The other group included projects that were funded in 1993 and 1994 and were, therefore, in the early stages of implementing their SCPs. By studying the two groups, the range of SCP implementation and operational issues are examined.

KRA Corporation staff visited each SCP for 2 days during a 3-month period from May 1995 through July 1995. During each visit, the service coordinator and property manager were interviewed. If the service coordinator was supervised by an individual other than the property manager, that individual was also interviewed, usually by telephone. Focus groups with an average of 12 residents were held at each project. Across projects, a total of 209 residents participated in focus group discussions. Ten randomly selected resident case records were reviewed at each SCP. A total of 178 resident case records were reviewed.

Projects were selected from the universe of 645 funded projects[1], after the projects were sorted into two groups, with the projects receiving funding in 1992 in one group (established SCPs) and projects receiving funding in 1993 or 1994 in another group (new SCPs). Nine projects were selected from each group. Factors that were considered when selecting projects included the size of project, geographic area, affiliation with a national or parent housing management organization, whether the service coordinator served more than one HUD project, and the project type (Section 202 and Section 8).

The 18 SCPs that were visited had the following characteristics:

- Ten projects shared service coordinators with other projects;

- Three projects were affiliated with a national housing management organization;

- Projects were evenly distributed in terms of size, including small projects (less than 50 units), medium projects (50 to 99 units), and large projects (100 units or more);

- Projects were relatively evenly distributed across geographic regions (Northeast, South, Midwest, or West);

- Most projects were Section 202/Section 8 projects; and

- SCPs had been in operation a minimum of 6 months prior to the visit.

---

[1] The study examined 645 SCPs funded during the first three years of the program for which applications were received by KRA from the HUD field offices.

The projects visited as part of this study were located in the following states: California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Nebraska New York, Oklahoma, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Wisconsin.

Because of the small number of respondents at each project and the importance of keeping responses confidential, projects are not identified by name. The first nine case studies presented are established SCPs. They are from the first group of SCPs funded by HUD. Their descriptions are ordered as "A" projects in the pages that will follow.

The second nine project descriptions are new SCPs. These projects received SCP funds in the latter rounds of funding (1993 and 1994). The new SCPs had only been in operation a minimum of 6 months. These projects are ordered as "B" projects in the pages following.

The following are terms that are commonly referred to throughout the case studies. They are briefly defined below for the reader.

> Activities of Daily Living (ADL)---Indicators which help determine an individual's health status and abilities. "Frail" is defined as deficient in at least three of six activities of daily living (ADLs), which include eating, dressing, bathing, grooming, transferring, and home management activities; "at risk" is defined as deficiencies in one or two ADLs.

> Area Agency on Aging (AAA)---the local agency through which State funds for services to the elderly flow. AAAs plan, develop, coordinate, and arrange for services in their designated service areas; therefore, they are valuable resources for obtaining information on what services are available locally. The extent of AAA involvement with the SCPs ranged from referrals only to having a close working relationship with the service coordinator

> Assessment---An assessment can be either a formal ADL assessment or an informal determination of ADLs through casual observation. Service coordinators were more likely to use informal procedures.

> Property Manager---Property managers are responsible for the day-to-day management of the housing development. Management activities include ensuring that apartment vacancies are filled and that units are well-maintained, conducting annual recertifications to determine residents' rents, and determining that residents are able to continue living independently. Given their administrative duties, property managers generally do not have the time or skills to provide case management to residents or to link residents to needed services.

> Service Coordinator---The service coordinator is charged with determining the service needs of eligible residents, identifying appropriate services available in the community, linking residents with the needed services, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the supportive services, and performing other functions to enable frail elderly and persons with disabilities of federally-assisted housing to live with dignity and independence.

> Vial of Life Program---Vial of Life program provides medical and contact information that can be used in the event of an emergency.