

## **MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FL, HPRP-FUNDED PREVENTION PROGRAM**

In Miami-Dade County, HUD's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing program (HPRP) funded the County of Miami-Dade (through the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust)<sup>95</sup> and the Cities of Miami, Miami Gardens, North Miami, and Hialeah. These five grantees collaborated to implement a countywide homelessness prevention program. The state of Florida also took part in the collaboration, passing through a portion of its HPRP funds. Citrus Health Network (Citrus) was the sole subgrantee and lead of the HPRP program. The program was administered through a network of various public and private partners, referred to as the Housing Assistance Network of Dade (HAND), which represented a range of services. Across the program's grantee, subgrantee, and partner providers, most of the money went toward financial assistance, with some for legal assistance. As of August 2012, the program served 2,974 households. Length of stay in the program averaged 189 days, with a median 168 days.<sup>96</sup>

### **Community Description**

The 2011 point-in-time count identified 3,817 sheltered and unsheltered people across Miami-Dade County. Most (79 percent, or 3,028) were unsheltered, while the remaining (21 percent, or 789) were sheltered. Of the total sheltered, 385 were families. About 13 percent (513) were chronically homeless and 10 percent (393) were veterans.<sup>97</sup>

The five grantees fell under one Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless service system, led by the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust (the Trust). The Trust was charged with siting, constructing, and operating the county's two homeless assistance centers that served as intake centers. The Trust was also responsible for administering the McKinney-Vento homeless assistance funds, administering the local food and beverage tax that was created to fund homeless programs, and maintaining the county's homeless management information system (HMIS).<sup>98</sup> In July 1993, the county's governing body, the Board of County Commissioners, adopted its CoC plan, the Miami-Dade County Community Homeless Plan. The plan outlined a comprehensive strategy for the delivery and coordination of housing and services for homeless people throughout the county, including all its municipalities and five entitlement jurisdictions. That same year the county adopted its ten-year plan outlining goals and strategies to end homelessness. The county plan was updated in 2008.<sup>99</sup>

### **DESIGN AND SETUP OF HPRP PREVENTION**

Before HPRP, the county, a few cities, and a few of the HAND partner providers implemented prevention programs. Some programs were supported with FEMA, HOME, or CDBG funds and others with private discretionary funds. The county, in particular, used tax revenue generated from its local food and

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<sup>95</sup> In 1993, the County of Miami-Dade, through its board of county commissioners, created the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust to administer the county's homelessness programs.

<sup>96</sup> Length of stay numbers are approximate and were calculated using a weighted average over multiple programs.

<sup>97</sup> From "HUD Homelessness Resource Exchange," <http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewResource&resourceID=4568>.

<sup>98</sup> The Trust partnered with the Community Partnership for Homeless (CPH), a local nonprofit, to administer these services.

<sup>99</sup> "Miami-Dade County Community Homeless Plan: Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Miami-Dade County," endorsed by the Homeless Trust and CPH boards, updated December 2008.

beverage tax, which generated nearly \$14 million each year. Originally, these funds were envisioned to support a small-scale homelessness prevention program for households at risk of eviction. In 2005, the Trust awarded funds to Camillus House to implement a prevention program.<sup>100</sup>

The Camillus program began with a homeless helpline clients could call for prevention and other services. To be eligible, clients were required to have a 3-day eviction notice, proof of income, and proof they could pay their rent the following month. The program did not have an income threshold, though staff found from later research that most of its clients were similar to HPRP prevention clients in having incomes below 50 percent of area median income. The program was intended to provide the 1 month of assistance most Camillus clients needed. Camillus House continued to operate the program simultaneous with the HPRP prevention program and was able to creatively leverage funds and resources with the two programs.

Across the five grantees, Citrus was awarded about \$13.5 million to administer and deliver prevention services. Half was provided by the Trust, while the remaining came from the four city agencies and the state.<sup>101</sup> Among the six sources of HPRP funds, the split between prevention and rapid re-housing varied. In Miami-Dade County, the split was 43/57 prevention vs. rapid re-housing; in the city of Miami, the split was 73/27 prevention vs. rapid re-housing; and in the city of North Miami the split was 94/6 prevention vs. rapid re-housing. In the city of Miami Gardens, where there was not much of a street homeless population and no homeless shelter throughout the city, the grantee shifted from a 60/40 prevention/rapid re-housing split, to nearly 100 percent prevention.<sup>102</sup> In the city of Hialeah and the state of Florida, 100 percent of HPRP funds went towards prevention. Funding also came from creative leveraging across the various partners. For example, the program leveraged funds from the county's food and beverage tax, city emergency shelter grants, CDBG and HOME funding, and discretionary funds from United Way, Bank of America, and Miami Coalition for the Homeless.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Among the 29 HAND partner providers, five saw the largest volumes of HPRP prevention clients: Camillus House, Legal Services of Greater Miami, Harvest Fire International, South Florida Urban Ministries (SFUM), and the county Community Action and Human Services Department (CAHSD).<sup>103</sup> The remaining partners only made referrals for prevention services, or were rapid re-housing providers, or were supportive service providers. Citrus also partnered with Our Kids, the nonprofit leading Florida's child welfare system, and CAHSD's Domestic Violence Division to target youth aging out of foster care and domestic violence victims. Citrus placed a full-time employee at each office to assess prospective clients for prevention assistance and services.

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<sup>100</sup> Together, staff from the county and Camillus House visited Hennepin County, Minnesota, to learn how that county was implementing its prevention program.

<sup>101</sup> The city of Miami provided \$3,392,918 million; the City of Miami Gardens provided \$567,612, the city of North Miami provided \$507,641; the city of Hialeah provided \$313,000; and the state of Florida provided \$1,426,290.

<sup>102</sup> The city of Miami Gardens assisted one household with rapid re-housing.

<sup>103</sup> Formerly Community Action Agency.

## **Outreach**

Prospective clients learned about HPRP services through a number of avenues: the central homeless hotline (211), 311, media, flyers (in English, Spanish, and Creole) disseminated throughout the county, outreach teams, provider networks, landlords (knowledgeable about the program), and word of mouth.

## **Point of Entry**

Miami-Dade County had a coordinated point-of-entry system. Clients could access HPRP services from several entry points. Clients could call the central helpline, which in turn triaged them to their designated provider partner, or they could present themselves at any of the partner providers' offices.

## **Intake: Eligibility and Assessment**

Though the application and package were standardized across HPRP partner providers, prescreening varied. For example, case managers at some partners prescreened clients strictly for HPRP prevention services, while others screened for a range of services and assistance that included HPRP prevention. Each provider developed its own prescreening tool used over the phone or at initial visit. The prescreening allowed case managers to sort out which services clients needed and were eligible for.

If case managers determined a client might be eligible for HPRP prevention, they provided the client with information about eligibility guidelines, the terms of assistance, and documents required. No matter where clients entered the program, they completed the same application forms and were required to provide the same verification documents.<sup>104</sup> The HPRP application included a self-assessment section and a landlord section completed by the current (or future) landlord.

Case managers assisted each client with the forms via walk-in or appointment, ensuring the application was complete and correct. Case managers then verified the landlord's ownership of the property by checking the folio code with the county property appraiser, then sending the application to Citrus electronically, by fax, or in person. Citrus staff verified receipt by e-mail. The case manager also completed a recommended case plan with the applicant that shows the level of assistance needed.

The application was then forwarded to one of Citrus's service eligibility coordinators (SECs), groups of five staff members who determined applicants' eligibility and package of assistance. The SEC strategy ensured standardization and allowed for easier quality control. Citrus SECs contacted partner case managers directly about any application pieces that were outstanding or incorrect, the status of the application (whether approved or denied), and the package of assistance (if approved). Once Citrus SECs determined the status of an application, they notified staff at the partner site (who then notified their clients) as well as contracted home inspectors and rent surveyors.

Contractors typically completed a property inspection and survey within 24 to 48 hours. Once properties were verified, Citrus SECs provided the case manager an approval letter, which was in turn provided to the applicant and the landlord for review and signature. Citrus accounting staff then cut a check for the

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<sup>104</sup> There was one exception: city agency partners were not allowed to serve clients who could not provide verification for each household member, while nongovernmental partners required verification only for the employed household member.

determined amount of assistance—whether for rental, utilities, moving and storage, a hotel or motel, or any combination—and sent it directly to each vendor. The city of Miami was the only grantee to issue its own financial assistance directly to vendors.

If a client was denied assistance, the client had the option to appeal its application. If an application was denied, a written denial was provided advising them that they could request an appeal. In some cases, they were able to correct an error or missing documentation and have the case reviewed again. However, if they wanted to request an appeal, they advised the case manager who contacted HAND staff. A face-to-face meeting was scheduled with the applicant, case manager, SEC, program administrator, and Citrus director of housing. The entire process usually took 1 to 2 weeks. In very rare circumstances, when an additional level of appeal was requested, the funder was contacted to meet the client.

Citrus required case managers at partner sites to conduct a 3-month reassessment to ensure that each client was stably housed and provide any needed assistance or referrals. Clients could be provided additional assistance if they demonstrated need. Extremely low income households typically received 6 months of assistance. Case managers across all partner providers found that most clients were stably housed and did not need additional assistance.<sup>105</sup>

### **“But For” and Sustainability Rules**

The test that clients would be homeless “but for” HPRP assistance was largely shaped by the type of eviction notice the clients had and whether they were members of a special target population (i.e., youth aging out of foster care, domestic violence victims, people leaving institutions or transitional housing, and households facing foreclosure). Applicants were also asked if they had any other resources. The sustainability test was somewhat formalized. All case managers had to complete a household budget with the applicant to determine whether the household would be able to afford future rent payments. One provider required case managers to enroll clients in financial literacy training as proof of sustainability. In other cases, sustainability was largely upon case managers’ discretion. A household was deemed eligible if it fell below the income threshold, was at imminent risk of losing housing (demonstrated through an eviction notice),<sup>106</sup> and could avoid homelessness with prevention assistance.<sup>107</sup>

### **Prevention Activities**

Under the prevention program, clients could receive financial assistance for security deposits, rental arrearages, rental payments, utility arrearages, utility deposits, utility payments, moving costs, storage costs, and hotel or motel costs. Clients also had access to a range of other services provided through the various grantee partners, Citrus, and partner providers.

**Financial Assistance.** Citrus provided a declining subsidy for financial assistance. Clients received 3 months of rental assistance unless they met high-risk factors: extremely low income, disability, or unemployment.

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<sup>105</sup> For domestic violence clients, Coordinated Victim Assistance Center (CVAC) case managers, referred to as advocates, also administered their own reassessments for other CVAC services.

<sup>106</sup> A 3-day notice was sufficient at the beginning of the program.

<sup>107</sup> Citrus SECs met weekly to discuss pending cases and cases in the pipeline longer than 10 days. Some were special cases that needed final resolutions.

Those considered high risk could receive up to 6 months of assistance. Those disabled with pending enrollment in a subsidized housing program or homeless and unemployed but enrolled in a job or employment program could receive up to 12 months.

For high-risk clients, Citrus paid 100 percent of rent for the first 2 months. Afterward, the amount of assistance gradually decreased with the expectation that tenants' income, and therefore their share of the rent, would increase. Rent payments decreased from 100 percent of assistance, to 75 percent, to 50 percent, and eventually to 25 percent. Clients receiving the 12 months of assistance were provided a flat rent and were required to contribute 25 percent of their rent each month. There were exceptions to assistance levels for certain circumstances, largely reliant upon case managers' recommendations. There was no set maximum households could receive over the life of the program. These rules applied equally to arrearages and ongoing rental assistance.

Financial assistance also served as a bridge subsidy. For example, if clients had a pending application for benefits from Social Security or the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program, Citrus would grant HPRP assistance until the other assistance came in.

**Supportive Services.** Case managers referred clients to other supportive services such as for legal aid, domestic violence counseling, employment programs, utility and security deposit and payment assistance, food pantries, clothing giveaways, credit counseling, and financial coaching. If clients were eligible for rapid re-housing or other programs, staff referred them to the appropriate partner provider. Citrus devised and distributed referral manuals, which listed all services and programs throughout the HAND network, to all case managers at the partner providers.

**Legal Services.** Legal Services of Greater Miami provided legal help either through legal representation or the Renters Education and Advocacy Legal (REAL) hotline. The REAL hotline was staffed by law clerks who provided immediate legal advice and information to clients who had a court-filed eviction, a 3-day notice, or issues with their landlord. Legal representation was provided to those with special cases.

**Other Services.** South Florida Urban Ministries provided credit counseling and financial coaching to HPRP clients in its catchment area and to clients referred from other partner providers.<sup>108</sup> South Florida Urban Ministries required, as a condition of eligibility, that all HPRP clients complete the financial coaching component or develop a financial plan (most families agreed to the financial plan). The Community Action and Human Services Department provided employment services and other financial assistance for rental and utility deposits, water bill payments, and food and clothing vouchers through its United Way, FEMA, HOME, and CDBG resources.

**Reimbursement Process.** Citrus developed a reimbursement process to increase efficiency and control costs from the five HPRP funding streams. Instead of setting up fixed subcontracts with each of its subgrantees, it reimbursed subgrantees based on volume. Essentially, case managers at subgrantees billed Citrus for the number of approved applications they put together.<sup>109</sup> Citrus determined, based on

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<sup>108</sup> These services were not funded by HPRP dollars; they were leveraged from other funding from United Way and Bank of America.

<sup>109</sup> Sites were not reimbursed for denied applications. This was to encourage case managers to thoroughly screen and assess clients for prevention assistance.

provider input, that the average time to complete initial assessments was 3 hours and the average time to complete a 3-month reassessment was an hour and a half. Citrus sent the estimations to HUD, which then approved the fixed price amount of \$50 an hour.<sup>110</sup>

Partner providers submitted monthly invoices that indicated how many approved applications they had completed. For example, a provider completing 10 approved applications would bill Citrus for 45 hours (10 applications x 4.5 hours = 45 hours). Citrus double-checked each invoice to make sure it matched Citrus' database, then reimbursed providers for their services.<sup>111</sup> This process allowed for a wide set of partners at low costs and for maximizing financial assistance while incentivizing consistency.

## **DATA AND MONITORING**

The county's HMIS database, managed by the Trust, was a closed system (confidential between clients and caseworks) but was open to homeless outreach providers. Citrus HMIS staff were responsible for entering all data for HPRP prevention clients and running all HUD-required reports.<sup>112</sup> Citrus felt taking the lead was more efficient for two reasons. First, it avoided having to get licenses and administer trainings for the partners, which would have taken a long time and been costly. Second, it allowed for less chance of errors and duplication.

Citrus only entered clients eligible for HPRP into HMIS,<sup>113</sup> including all the information contained in the application as well as the package of assistance. Data fields included demographic information, assessment status, program funds spent on clients, case management expenses, legal expenses, status of rent reasonableness survey, and status of housing inspection. Case managers could flag records for prevention or rapid re-housing, for the client's referring funder (geo-referenced), and whether the client was unemployed or disabled. If a client was reassessed and approved for additional assistance, Citrus also entered the reassessment and additional financial assistance information.

Citrus also created an internal tracking database containing both eligible and ineligible applicants, based on partner feedback. This database helped manage and improve the program's internal processes (i.e., contacting partners when applications were received, if something was missing, or whether the application was approved or denied). Data included all applications' process and tracking status, dates payments were issued, amounts paid, status of housing inspection, status of rent reasonableness survey, and whether each case was entered into HMIS. Cases taking more than 10 days to process were flagged for resolution.

Citrus staff used the internal database to generate lists of landlords cooperative with HAND. Lists could be mapped by area, so providers could refer clients looking for new housing to a list of convenient properties. Unfortunately, the unique IDs created for this database could not be linked to HMIS, where only eligible applicants' information was entered.

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<sup>110</sup> The market price for case management services, according to Medicaid and similar rates in the area, was \$50 an hour.

<sup>111</sup> CAHSD does not invoice Citrus for its case management services; instead, Citrus is reimbursed only for housing assistance to CAHSD clients.

<sup>112</sup> Camillus House was licensed to enter data into HMIS, but only for clients supported through the Trust's funds for Camillus House's prevention program.

<sup>113</sup> Domestic violence clients, referred through CVAC, were entered into HMIS for rapid re-housing rather than prevention.

To reduce fraud and improve inefficiencies, Citrus staff incorporated Lean Six Sigma performance improvement methods, keeping an ongoing scorecard to track processing time for individual cases, staff performance, and the performance of the overall HPRP system.<sup>114</sup> This allowed Citrus to identify major system changes that were needed, as well as simple changes to streamline processing.

## **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

Citrus plans to keep HAND alive with as similar a program as possible. The major difference will be scale. Miami-Dade County has already awarded a portion of its emergency shelter grant and local food and beverage tax revenue to Citrus for HPRP-type activities. Citrus is hoping for emergency shelter grants from the city of Hialeah as well as the city of Miami.<sup>115</sup> Our Kids provided Citrus \$250,000, the amount it was able to save by using HPRP prevention instead of usual services. Citrus is also using a Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Services for Veteran Families grant for future prevention services. Citrus has applied to FEMA, but awards have yet to be determined.

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<sup>114</sup> Six Sigma is a business management strategy originally developed by Motorola.

<sup>115</sup> Miami Gardens does not get emergency shelter grant funds.

**Exhibit E.15: The County of Miami-Dade, the City of Miami, the City of North Miami, the City of Miami Gardens, and the City of Hialeah Prevention Overview, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program**

	Persons		Households	
	#	%	#	%
Total served <sup>a</sup>	8,045	100	2,974	100
Persons in families	6,602	82	—	—
Adults without children	1,555	19	—	—
HPRP services				
Rental assistance	—	—	2,709	91
Case management	—	—	2,902	98
Security/utility deposits	—	—	1,672	56
Outreach and engagement	—	—	1,937	65
Utility payments	—	—	719	24
Housing search/placement	—	—	0	0
Legal services	—	—	112	4
Credit repair	—	—	0	0
Motel and hotel vouchers	—	—	45	2
Moving cost assistance	—	—	77	3
Destination <sup>b</sup>				
Total leavers	7,990	100	—	—
Homeless	18	<1	—	—
Institutional setting	75	1	—	—
Permanent housing w/ subsidy	107	1	—	—
Permanent housing without subsidy	7,762	97	—	—
Family or friends	85	1	—	—

Source: Citrus Health Network, Inc. Annual Performance Report Data, 2009 program start through August 8, 2012.

— not applicable

<sup>a</sup>Total served numbers may not add to 100 percent because the “children only” and “unknown” categories are not included in this table. Numbers may add to greater than 100 percent due to data reporting errors. Data received could not be separated into Year 1 and Year 2 totals.

<sup>b</sup>Destination numbers may not add to total leavers because the “other,” “hotel/motel,” “unknown,” and “deceased” categories are not included in this table.

“Homeless” includes the following destinations: emergency shelter, TH for homeless persons, place not meant for human habitation, safe haven, and hotel or motel paid by client.

“Institutional setting” includes foster care, psychiatric facility, substance abuse or detox facility, hospital (non-psychiatric), and jail or prison.

“Permanent housing” with subsidy includes housing owned by client with ongoing subsidy, rental by client with VASH subsidy, rental by client with other ongoing subsidy, and Permanent Supportive Housing for Homeless Persons.

“Permanent housing” without subsidy includes housing owned by client without ongoing subsidy and rental by client with no ongoing subsidy.

“Family or friends” includes living with family, permanent tenure or living with friends, permanent tenure, staying with friends (temporary tenure), staying with family (temporary tenure).

Note: The destination definitions for this table are from special tabulations from the Citrus Health Network. The categories “staying with friends (temporary tenure)” and “staying with family (temporary tenure)” are included in “Family or friends” and not “Homeless,” and the item “Hotel or motel paid by client” is not included in the “Homeless” definition as they are in the other case study tables.