



DELAWARE STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY NEWS RELEASE

Anas Ben Addi, Director

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Agencies Join Forces to Help Children Exiting Foster Care Get Housing

Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) Director Anas Ben Addi , along with Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF) Vivian Rapposelli, today announced that DSHA has been awarded fifty (50) Family Unification Housing Vouchers through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development's competitive application process. In addition to helping bring families together, these vouchers can now also be used to provide housing assistance to youth between 18 and 21 years of age who have left foster care and need affordable and decent housing in a safe environment.

The lack of housing and transitional living services for youth who age-out of Delaware's foster care system is one of the most tragic realities of a child's foster care experience. Youth often find themselves discharged from the foster care program with nowhere else to go, and end up having to live on their own. The need for transitional housing is critical to their ability to ultimately function independently. Out of 775 children in foster care, 179 are ages 16 and older. Data reflects that there are 108 youth in Delaware between the ages of 18 and 19 were emancipated before July, 2009. These youth are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. DSHA and DSCYF have been working together to find alternative solutions for housing for this special needs population.

Governor Jack Markell said, "It's great when state agencies are able to pool resources and work together to help our citizens. This program is important in the lives of young adults who have been in foster care. They need a support system that enables them to bridge the gap

between leaving the system and becoming productive adults. The Family Unification housing vouchers will go a long way to fill that gap.”

DSHA Director Anas Ben Addi said, “This is another example of how DSHA is working with other state and local agencies to offer the most comprehensive continuum of services to our constituents. DSHA is committed to working with DFS in assisting these youths in securing affordable housing as they make their way into adulthood. Our hope is that we can work together to expand the program and serve as many families and youth as we are able.”

Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, youth, and Their Families Vivian Rapposelli said, “Often, youth who age out of the foster care system are not fully prepared to be out in the world on their own. There are so many factors that play into this, including education, housing and behavioral and emotional well-being. Anything we, as a community, can do to help make this transition less stressful will go a long way in helping these young men and women continue to grow and become more productive adult Delawareans.”

DSHA is working with the Division of Family Services (DFS) to identify participants who will pay 35% of their income towards rent, with the voucher paying the remainder of the monthly rent. In addition, in an effort to help youth exiting foster care to receive assistance more quickly, DSHA has lowered the age requirement for applying to DSHA’s waiting list for Public Housing and Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to 16. This change will give youth access to the waiting list while still under the care of their foster family.

For more information, please contact 888-363-8808 or visit DSHA’s website at www.DeStateHousing.com.

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