



Louisiana Housing Finance Agency

2008 NCSHA Annual Awards for Program Excellence

Entry Description

Program Name: Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative
Category and Subcategory: Special Needs Housing – Housing for Persons with Special Needs
HFA: Louisiana Housing Finance Agency

Following the hurricanes of 2005, the Louisiana Housing Finance Agency was faced with the monumental task of replenishing the state's housing stock. As the work began, it became abundantly clear that the storms had been no respecters of person when it came to its victims. White, black, wealthy, poor, able-bodied, and handicapped all felt Mother Nature's wrath. And the LHFA was determined to include all victims in their rebuilding efforts.

The Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative was born out of the state's desire to make sure that one of the most affected and vulnerable groups, the mentally and/or physically disabled, were well cared for and taken care of. The LHFA teamed with the state's Department of Health and Hospitals, Department of Social Services and the Office of Community Development to devise a holistic plan to address the needs of these individuals.

The supportive housing program is designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities, including mental illness, an assurance of permanent housing and appropriate supportive services. The program is also designed to provide a structure that counteracts the disruptions of both homelessness and disability. Supportive housing combines building features and personal services to enable special needs people to remain living in a community independently. Permanent supportive housing offers stable, long-term housing with services that work for individuals and families who are not only homeless, but who also have serious and persistent issues that includes substance use, mental illness and HIV/AIDS.

There is also a financial aspect to consider with this housing initiative. Recent research suggests that stabilizing individuals in supportive housing can reduce their use of expensive public crisis services programs. Furthermore, it costs essentially the same amount of money to house someone in stable, supportive housing as it does to keep that person homeless and stuck in the revolving door of high cost crisis care and emergency housing.

The LHFA presented its commitment to the Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative via its QAP for the specially appropriated GO Zone Tax Credits initially offered in 2007/2008 Forward Allocation Round. As part of this QAP, a series of incentives were aimed at encouraging developers to include PSH units in their development plans. Special bonus points are awarded to developers that offer between 15% and 50% of a project's units to members of an eligible target population for permanent supportive housing.

Agency staff has also taken the banner of the PSH Initiative to the community in all of their interactions. They have found many partners in the development community and in other community groups, as well as in the associated agencies that have taken up this cause as well.

Louisiana has set as its goal to produce 3,000 PSH units as part of this initiative. As of this date, the development community has stepped up with over 800 pledged PSH units. With the continued cooperation of the LHFA and its partnering agencies and developers, that goal is appears to be well on its way to being reached. And more importantly, more people that need our help will receive it.