

**2014 Entry Form**  
**(Complete one for each entry.)**

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

**Entry Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**HFA** \_\_\_\_\_

**Submission Contact** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

Qualified Entries must be received by **Tuesday, July 1, 2014.**

For more information about Qualified Entries, [click here to access the 2014 Entry Rules.](#)

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page.

HFA \_\_\_\_\_

Entry Name \_\_\_\_\_

Communications	Homeownership	Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Report <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional Materials and Newsletters <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Empowering New Buyers <input type="checkbox"/> Home Improvement and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Multifamily Management <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation and Rehabilitation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging New Production	<input type="checkbox"/> Combating Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Housing for Persons with Special Needs
Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
<input type="checkbox"/> State Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Operations <input type="checkbox"/> Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Achievement	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

## **Overview**

MaineHousing's Home to Stay (HTS) Program is an innovative shelter initiative that strives to transport the current crisis response system to individuals and families experiencing homelessness into a comprehensive and strategic intervention focusing on rapid-rehousing and housing permanency. HTS does this by directing resources on rapid rehousing and providing a Resource Navigator who gives one-on-one housing-focused supports to individuals and families who enter emergency shelters. The HTS program provides this crucial support for up to a year after the individual or family exits the shelter.

The initiative, which began in earnest in July 2013, is a collaborative effort melding distinct homeless and housing programs to better navigate homeless individuals and families through the complex housing and services system in Maine. This creates system efficiencies that benefit providers and, more importantly, individuals by increasing housing solutions services as well as classes they need to learn the skills they may be lacking. One of the innovative features of this program is that participants are able to receive Home to Stay services and work with a Resource Navigator for up to a year after they leave the shelter so they can maintain housing stability.

Home to Stay is aligned with many of the objectives of the federal HEARTH Act to prevent and end homelessness. Two MaineHousing departments share resources to promote this effort. The agency has linked Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds and Stability through Engagement Funds (STEP) – both managed by the Homeless Initiatives Department – with the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. The addition of these vouchers provides Resource Navigators with more housing options to offer Home to Stay participants and helps to promote housing stability.

Under the program, 16 participating homeless shelters statewide identify individuals who are eligible to participate in the HTS Program and assist them in rebuilding their lives. The Resource Navigator helps each individual or family develop a housing stability plan and outline their goals through counseling that includes housing, health, employment, money management, and other basic needs. Monthly check-ins are required to review progress, ensure housing stability and assess on-going needs. .

This focused one-on-one approach is achieving results. During the first four months of this year (2014), bednights at shelters that offer the Home to Stay Program have declined an average of 6.4% compared to the same period last year, before the program's inception. The range is 1% to 20%.

## **Homelessness in Maine**

In 2013, 7,765 individuals entered Maine homeless shelters. These individuals equate to 358,284 bednights spent at emergency shelters. The number of individuals who were homeless was up less

than 1% compared to the previous year, but the number of bednights rose 10%, thus indicating people were staying longer at shelters. While Maine does not yet have a formal system in place to track recidivism rates among shelter clients, the state is small enough that shelter workers are familiar with the people they once served – and when life events arise, send them back. Recidivism also is perceived to be on the rise.

### **Program Participants**

Since its inception, a total of 507 clients have enrolled in the Home to Stay Program, including 149 households.

At Oxford Street Shelter, the largest shelter in Portland, Maine's largest city, the original "Top 30 long-term stayers" (year 2013) are actively participating in the program. A long-term stayer is defined as someone who has been in a shelter at least 180 days. A total of 18,376 bednights has been eliminated as a result of housing placements. Of the 30, 16 clients have been placed in permanent housing and 14 are actively engaged in services and are working towards housing.

### **Program Process and Expectations**

The 16 homeless shelters currently participating in the Home to Stay Program were selected through a Request for Proposals process that vetted whether the organization was able to provide guidance to assist homeless clients seeking permanent. The program is considered successful if no more than 15% of program participants return to the emergency shelter.

After their selection, MaineHousing provided the shelters with extensive training and continues to regularly meet with shelters to address concerns and celebrate successes. Also, peer-to-peer conference calls take place at least monthly for Resource Navigators to share tips, work through challenges, and offer each other support.

Working with a Resource Navigator, each participant undertakes an assessment of housing barriers, needs, and preferences, and a plan is designed to assist in achieving housing stability, as well as connect with appropriate services and support. .Also among the services provided:

- Housing search including assistance with submitting rental applications, understanding leases and outreach to and negotiation with owners
- Assistance with obtaining utilities and making moving arrangements
- Resource coordination to include developing, securing, and coordinating services and obtaining federal, state, and local benefits
- Information and referrals to other providers
- Mediation between the program participant and the owner or person(s) with whom the program participant is living as is necessary to prevent the program participant from losing permanent housing

- Credit and budget counseling necessary to assist with critical skills related to household budgeting, managing money, accessing a free personal credit report, and resolving personal credit problems
- Renter education program curriculum consisting of: landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities, maintenance and care of a home, standards of cleanliness, and planning a move

### **Program Management**

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is used to monitor a shelter's performance using established performance measures, which are in accordance with the HEARTH Act. They include:

- The length of time individuals and families remain homeless
- The extents to which individuals and families that leave homelessness experience additional spells of homelessness
- The thoroughness of shelters in reaching homeless individuals and families in the geographic area
- Overall reduction in the number of homeless individuals and families
- Jobs and income growth for homeless individuals and families
- Success at reducing the number of individuals and families who become homeless
- Other accomplishments by the shelter related to reducing homelessness.

### **Program Survey**

Between April 24 and May 5, 2014, MaineHousing's Homeless Initiatives and Housing Choice Voucher programs conducted a survey of Home to Stay participants for their anonymous comments on how they believe the program is working thus far. More than half of the 57 respondents said the program has resulted in a reduction in shelter lengths of stay, and approximately 86% said they believe program participants are benefiting from the program

The survey also yielded an unexpected plus – landlords who are appreciative of having a person work as a go-between with renters. “The end result is the Home to Stay client does not feel alone and the landlord also has another resource,” one shelter respondent said. “It’s a win-win situation for all.”

### **Future**

Home to Stay – which shelters have nicknamed H2S – will continue into 2015 because two distinct MaineHousing housing assistance programs and 16 shelters came together to help 507 people thus far find hope and housing. Because of the initial success, MaineHousing is using this program as a springboard for a Shelter System Change Initiative currently being developed to incentivize shelters to create and deliver rapid rehousing programs specific to their client subpopulations and needs.