

NCSHA 2015 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

Deadline: Wednesday, June 10, 2015

Visit ncsha.org/awards to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

Instructions: Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact Matt Cunningham at mcunningham@ncsha.org or 202-624-5424.

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

Entry Name: _____

HFA: _____

Submission Contact: (Must be HFA Staff Member) _____ **Email:** _____

Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

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

HFA: _____

Entry Name: _____

Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			

Maryland’s Families First Program for Veterans

Description of the Issue and Background:

In early 2013, DHCD leadership met with a number of shelter providers for homeless veterans, including some of the larger shelters such as Baltimore Station and Maryland Center for Veterans Education & Training. Almost unanimously, these providers told MD DHCD that an emerging trend they were seeing but could not address was an increase in female veterans with children who were homeless. The shelters that serve veterans could not help these female veterans both because of their programs’ structure and costs: (1) the veterans shelters were open areas (similar to military barracks with bunks) and posed security/accountability hazards for children and (2) the U.S. Veterans Affairs (USVA) would pay for the bed for the veteran, but unfortunately could not subsidize the cost of beds for the dependents. Subsequently, the shelters could take in the female veteran, but would have to call social services who would take the children away from their mother. This was a gap in the system that was simply not acceptable, nor was the outcome.

To add to the complexity of serving veteran families in need of help, there are a plethora of assistance programs with specific and sometimes restrictive or time-limited criteria. Navigating this system is arduous and nearly impossible, especially with the post-combat conditions many veterans have to cope with, everything from physical and psychological disabilities to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury and cases of sexual trauma. When MD DHCD examined the system veterans had to navigate to get basic needs that they are entitled to such as medical, training, housing, etc., we found that while there are ample programs, no one is uniquely responsible to make sure veterans actually connect to services to which they have been referred to ensure success. Instead of finding a way back to stability in the “new normal” they are living in, they find frustration in systems that were intended to work for them but instead work against their efforts.

In order to address the immediate need of shelter, MD DHCD followed the Housing First model, by creating a housing voucher program where veterans were required to contribute a percentage of rental assistance. To ensure veterans and their families will connect to services they need, MD DHCD contracted with a service provider – a “service navigator” – that specifically ensures families have made the connections to appropriate government and non-profit providers. To ensure the program was going to be successful, MD DHCD secured funding from the Freddie Mac Foundation to start a pilot program in the most highly veteran-populated county in the state. The goal is to get veteran and their families out of homelessness/imminent homelessness and on the path to self-sustainability and success.

How it Works:

Through the generous support of the Freddie Mac Foundation, MD DHCD secured funding to match state appropriations for a total of over \$800,000 as a pilot program to serve veterans (particularly female veterans) and their families in Prince George’s County, the Maryland county with the largest veteran population. It also is the county that is home to Joint Base Andrews/Andrews Air Force Base, where Air Force One is housed, among other programs.

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
“Maryland’s Families First Program for Veterans”
Special Needs Housing, Combating Homelessness

Funding is used towards subsidizing rent and funding a “service navigator.” The goal of the program is to provide veteran families access to the full spectrum of services they need, when the need them so that they can move to self-sufficiency and stability in a dignified manner.

First, MD DHCD provides temporary rental assistance to participants but mandates they contribute 30% of income towards rent as their investment in their success (that said, if a family is homeless, MD DHCD would subsidize the full rental cost). Families First can cover rental subsidies for us to three years. Since MD DHCD is not a social service organization, MD DHCD contracted with a Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) provider, Friendship Place, to hire a “service navigator” that understands the needs of veterans/veteran eligibilities and is able to tailor the connections and services needed by individual veteran families. The “service navigator” is responsible to ensure support/services are delivered in a timely and coordinated way. Friendship Place and the “service navigator” provide monthly reports on the progress of veteran families in the program to make sure the program is on track. Finally, the program establishes a Contract Agreement with participants that articulates specific outcomes and goals as part of the path to financial independence and long-term stability. (See attachment for diagram/detailed description).

Initial Accomplishments

Families First officially launched on Veterans Day in November 2014, but participants had been screened during that previous summer. In that short period of time, nine veteran households for a total of 41 people are being served. Of the total, seven are women and 25 are children, who would have otherwise been homeless. Six of the households were less than 30 percent of area median income. Other accomplishments that speak to the restoration and resilience of the participants are as follows:

- One veteran is a store manager and was just switched to a higher volume store due to skills showed at managing others. Another veteran received a raise, which greatly increased her confidence level.
- Another began a full-time federal job last week, which should allow him/his family to exit the program shortly.
- Another veteran will complete classes needed to receive a Masters degree in Public Administration this fall.
- Many of the children who started in the program are now on the honor rolls at school.
- Two veterans are working towards entering Prince George’s Community College this fall.

Merits

Innovative: This is a partnership that recognizes veterans want a hand-up, not a hand-out and have created such a model that maintains the service-member’s dignity. The veteran’s family contributes and signs an agreement with MD DHCD to make full efforts to work with the

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program. In addition, MD DHCD has partnered with the charitable and non-profit communities in our area to address this issue. Through the generosity of the Freddie Mac Foundation and the specialized skill sets of Friendship Place’s “service navigator,” MD DHCD has created a cohesive strategy to fill a gap that existed in housing homeless veterans, particularly female veterans, with children. Since Friendship Place is a SSVF, they understood the USVA funding for SSVF provide rapid rehousing for 90 days, whereas the Families First program’s aim is for more permanent stability for veterans and their children.

Replicable: Families First intentionally started out as a pilot program to ensure it was the proper cohesive strategy for veterans and their families who are living in the “new normal” of post-deployment. Through the contract with the participants and utilizing the expertise of a SSVF, this program can be expanded and repeated throughout the US. In fact, this program model can be utilized for civilian families who face homelessness as well.

Respond to an important state housing need: While shelter providers are not required to keep track of the number of veterans they turn away, as of September 30, 2014 the USVA reported 57,627 veterans in Maryland were women of which the 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress indicates that on average about 10 percent of the homeless veteran population is women. Through its relationships with partner organizations, MD DHCD realized there was a gap in services provided for female veterans and their children that needed to be addressed immediately. In addition, the program recognized that some families and veterans need more time to stabilize, which Families First provides.

Demonstrate measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers: More than two-thirds of the families that have been helped in this short period of time are under 30 percent Area Median Income. By creating a program that can help these families take ownership of their own future by providing services they have earned, it reduces costs needed to rapidly rehouse, shelter costs, emergency room costs and other longer-term associated healthcare and social services costs related to the homelessness of individuals and families.

Demonstrate effective use of resources: The program was able to cut the appropriations request in half by utilizing grant funding.

Effectively employ partnerships: By engaging the Freddie Mac Foundation and Friendship Place, and by utilizing the Housing First model, MD-DHCD was able to cut costs and bring in subject matter expertise that MD-DHCD does not contain in-house (such as social service working).

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Families First Program

Families First is a new pilot program, in Maryland's Prince George's County, designed to support military veterans with families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The program starts by meeting a family's housing needs first. Upon this foundation of a safe and secure home, Families First works to enhance participants' ability to access the full spectrum of services they need, when they need them, and over time, move to self-sufficiency, stability and dignity. With generous support from the Freddie Mac Foundation and with Service Navigation provided by Friendship Place, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development is creating a new framework for the support of military veterans to ensure that those that served are able to receive the support they deserve.

Families First HOW IT WORKS

The Pilot serves veterans with children in Prince George's County that are either homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

FAMILY'S PATH TO...

FAMILIES FIRST SERVICE NAVIGATOR
 Connects The Family With Community Resources

RENTAL HOUSING

SOCIAL/MEDICAL SERVICES

TRAINING/ EDUCATION

FAMILY'S RENTAL CONTRIBUTION **30% OF INCOME**
DHCD WILL PAY THE REMAINDER*

...LONG-TERM STABILITY & FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Families First breaks new ground in people-focused care with an innovative approach that supports participants' move to long-term stability and independence in three ways:

- 1** Temporary rental assistance* from DHCD to ensure that the primary challenge of housing security is resolved.
- 2** A Service Navigator to ensure that veterans are able to access supports and services in a timely and coordinated way.
- 3** A written agreement, signed by participants, that articulates specific outcomes and goals as part of a journey to independence.

*After the family contributes 30% of income towards rent, DHCD will provide rental subsidies to cover the remainder for up to 3 years.

TO LEARN MORE GO TO DHCD.MARYLAND.GOV/FAMILIESFIRST

ATTACHMENT: FAMILIES FIRST FLYER, FRONT

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
“Maryland’s Families First Program for Veterans”
Special Needs Housing, Combating Homelessness

FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAM

WHY DO WE NEED THIS PROGRAM?

Too often, Military Veterans with families, who are in need of help, fail to receive the support they need and deserve. Critical gaps in care may occur when programs that are designed to meet the needs of individuals do not take into account the full needs of a family. Other problems arise when services and support programs designed to address a particular problem area are undermined by a lack of housing stability, forcing participants to abandon their progress to address immediate and critical needs, such as shelter and food security, for themselves and their families. And a focus by agencies on effective service delivery may not address the complications of hand-off and transition to related or follow-up services, particularly where special needs of Veterans and families make it difficult to maintain continuity of care.

While the focus of this pilot program is Military Veterans with families, it is evident that this model has potential for broader use in serving the needs of other groups with similar needs.

WHAT MAKES FAMILIES FIRST UNIQUE?

Families First is a pilot program, initially available to eligible Veterans in Prince George’s County, Maryland, that focuses on transitioning families to self-sufficiency by providing housing support, helping participants with customized “Service Navigation” and creating a contract agreement between the program and the participants articulating their goals and the program’s objectives and obligations. In contrast with other programs that deliver a single type of support, Families First provides a solid housing foundation for the participant families, as well as expert service navigation that ensures continuity of care, effective handoff between programs, timeliness of services and the integration of multiple supports to address the inherent complexities of each family’s unique situation. Families First does not add to the spectrum of high-quality services currently available to Military Veterans that address specific needs, but instead creates a lattice of opportunity connecting multiple service areas to help each participating family help themselves towards independence and dignity.

WHO IS SUPPORTING FAMILIES FIRST?

Families First is a program provided to eligible Military Veterans by the State of Maryland, through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), with financial support provided by a generous grant from the Freddie Mac Foundation. Since secure housing is at the core of the sustainability and success of Families First, DHCD will pay short-term rental assistance for a period of up to three years. Friendship Place, a non-profit currently working with veterans in Maryland’s Prince George’s County, will provide Service Navigation to the Veteran participants, which will connect participants with community resources such as workforce training, career development, childcare, and transportation.

WHO CAN I TALK TO TO GET MORE INFORMATION?

VENDORS AND OTHER PROGRAM PARTNERS:

Contact Friendship Place:
Emily Bell,
Service Navigator
EMAIL: EBell@friendshipplace.org
PHONE: 202-248-2801

FOUNDATIONS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS:

Contact the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD):
Reginald Stanfield,
Director, Office of Community Programs
EMAIL: Stanfield@dhcd.state.md.us
PHONE: 410-514-7209



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor



Kenneth C. Holt, Secretary



HOUSING IN MARYLAND PLAYLIST



MARYLAND HOUSING

ATTACHMENT: FAMILIES FIRST FLYER, BACK

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
“Maryland’s Families First Program for Veterans”
Special Needs Housing, Combating Homelessness



Martin O'Malley
GOVERNOR
Anthony G. Brown
LT. GOVERNOR
Raymond A. Skinner
SECRETARY
Clarence J. Snuggs
DEPUTY SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 10, 2014

CONTACT: Erlene Wilson, 410-514-7704
Wiley Hall, 410-514-7752
Andy DeVilbiss, 443 852-2913

Pilot Initiative Will Help Homeless Veterans in Prince George’s County find Stable Housing for Their Families

ANNAPOLIS, MD – Lt. Governor Anthony Brown is announcing Families First, an innovative pilot program that will help homeless veterans in Prince George’s County - particularly those with children - find stable housing for their families.

“We can never adequately thank veterans for their service to our country, but we can - and must - do what we can to help make their transition to civilian life easier,” said Lt. Governor Anthony Brown. “If successful, this housing-centered approach could well become a model for the entire country.”

The Families First initiative is designed to knit together the various programs that help veterans adjust to civilian life. But its unique focus on families offers additional support for households that often include single parents.

“Most service members adjust well during their transition to civilian life, however some experience challenges,” said Edward Chow, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs. “We are pleased to know the Families First program is in place to provide the support needed to make this transition. We, as a nation, have an obligation to ensure our veteran families have access to resources. Through efforts such as Families First, they will have access to these services.”

Through the Families First initiative, DHCD will be able to assist eligible veterans and their families by providing a stable living situation through rental supports. A participating family will contribute 30 percent of their income toward rent, and DHCD can pay the remainder for up to three years.

“With generous support from the Freddie Mac Foundation and with service navigation provided by Friendship Place, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development is creating a new framework for the support of military



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www.mdhousing.org

ATTACHMENT: PRESS RELEASE, NOVEMBER 10, 2014, PAGE ONE

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
“Maryland’s Families First Program for Veterans”
Special Needs Housing, Combating Homelessness



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veterans to ensure that those who served are able to receive the support they deserve,” said Deputy Secretary Clarence J. Snuggs.

Participating veterans will be enrolled in a self-sufficiency program that will connect the veteran with community resources such as workforce training, career development, childcare, and transportation.

“The goal is that upon graduation, the family will be able to afford a fair market rental unit and, therefore, achieve self-sufficiency,” said Kally Canfield, veterans services division director at Friendship Place, a nonprofit organization working to end homelessness in the area.

“If there is any group of individuals that deserve our deepest gratitude, respect, and dedication to their health and well-being – it would be our military veterans,” said Prince George’s County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III. “Prince George’s County is home to more veterans than any other jurisdiction in the national capital region and the State of Maryland. I want to thank the O’Malley/Brown administration, and specifically, Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and Friendship Place for this innovative pilot program that will be essential in improving the lives of veterans and their families here in Prince George’s County.”



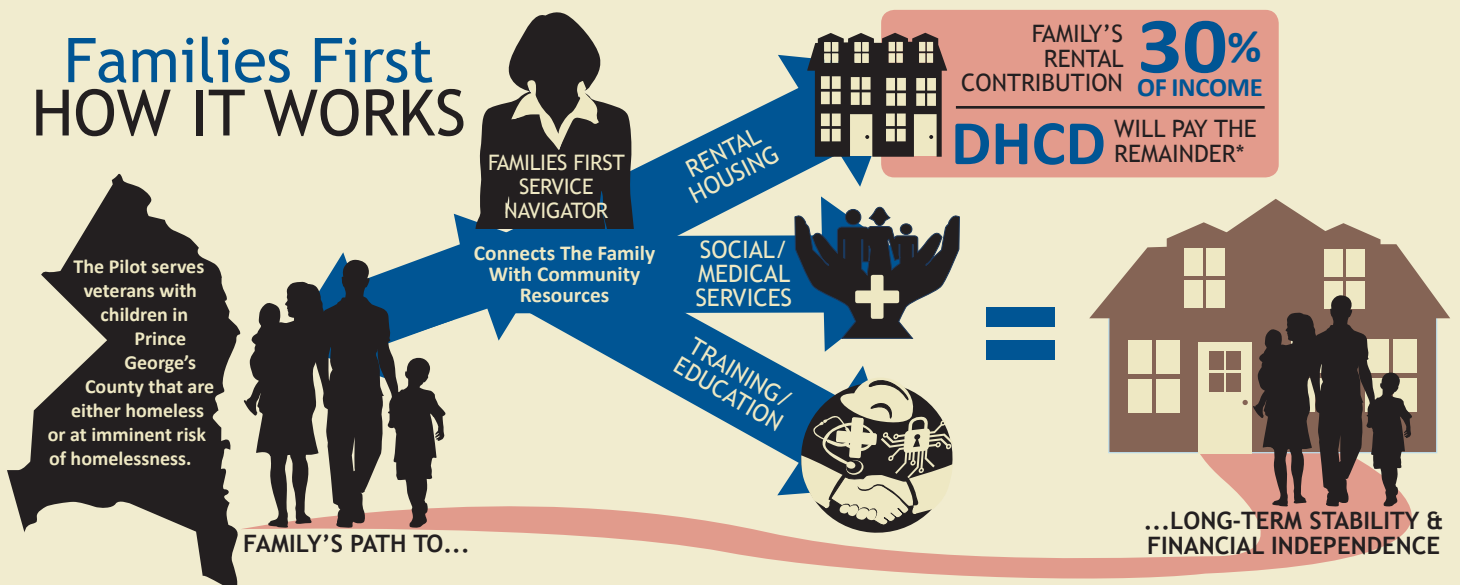
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ATTACHMENT: PRESS RELEASE, PAGE TWO

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Larry Hogan, *Governor*
Boyd K. Rutherford, *Lt. Governor*



Kenneth C. Holt, *Secretary*



HOUSING IN
MARYLAND
PLAYLIST



MARYLAND
HOUSING



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