



Entry Form 2017 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

Entry Deadline: Thursday, June 15, 2017, Midnight ET

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email awards@ncsha.org.**

Entry Title: Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

Category:

Subcategory:

Entry Summary: A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

HFA:

HFA Staff Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Visual Aids:

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF? Yes No

Payment:

My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.
My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to awards@ncsha.org.

Overview

Tenants may be placed in jeopardy of losing their rental subsidy and housing for any number of reasons. Recognizing that those who are currently “housed” are more easily assisted while “housed” than when homeless, we developed and launched our **new Housing Stabilization Program** in September 2016.

With this new model in place, we **have already realized amazing results: 51% decrease in lease termination, and administrative savings of approximately \$1,160 per termination, which translates to nearly \$100,000 in less than a year!**

A Changing Landscape

For many years, Rhode Island Housing offered Emergency Housing Assistance to individuals in the community who reached out to us in need of informational materials, contact information and resources to find rental opportunities. On an annual basis, our team responded to thousands of inquiries and offered guidance and resources to link people to rental opportunities in our state. Over the past several years, due to both the expansion of online resources and call centers such as the United Way of RI’s 2-1-1 program, we found that there was a duplication of effort and a **need to re-think our role with an eye toward outcomes and meaningful impact. Despite responding to tens of thousands of inquiries, we had little way of knowing where these individuals ended up, if they found stable housing and what supports they might need over time.**

Additionally, there were **tenants in our own programs who found themselves at risk who could greatly benefit from coordinated efforts to provide stabilization services to them.** One example is our voucher holders. Our data showed that **only 7 out of 10 were utilizing their vouchers, meaning 30% were not using this valuable tool** often because they encountered barriers to lease up. In other situations, families **lost their existing housing due to termination**, and found themselves without housing, **having to begin the process of finding a stable home all over again, with fewer resources.**

Building on our Strengths

Our new program is **designed to strategically allocate resources and increase our capacity to develop and support persons** currently participating in Rhode Island Housing programs who face barriers to housing and/or are at risk of losing their housing. This new approach allows us to capitalize on existing staffing resources, partnerships and our role as program administrator of four federally funded rental assistance programs to help prevent homelessness.

- **Staffing:** We were able to re-assign our existing Emergency Housing Specialist positions to become Housing Stabilization Specialists. Housed in our Division of Leased Housing, these two staff members have considerable experience in federal housing programs and providing supportive services. They can focus 100% of their efforts on assisting Rhode Island Housing-involved tenants who are experiencing issues that threaten their tenancy. Housing Stabilization Specialists intervene in cases where a tenant may be in jeopardy due to situations such as non-compliance, lease violations, etc. Staff provide assertive outreach, follow-up, and support with a focus on creating linkages with community resources and support services. They are available to respond to requests for assistance from tenants or RI Housing staff, identify available resources, coordinate access to those resources, and solve issues to ensure individuals and families who are already housed can remain so. **Action is taken in cases where management efforts have been unsuccessful and tenancy may now be in jeopardy.**

- **Partnerships:** Building on our existing relationships with property managers, service providers, program representatives and community resources, we work as a team to identify issues and appropriate responses and resolutions. Utilizing existing staff resources and the relationships we already have with property managers and case workers, **we fine-tuned our focus** to ensuring that the families we serve can remain stably housed. ***With a shared goal of keeping families housed, we enhanced our collaboration with tenants, voucher holders and community partners to improve the lives of those in our community.***
- **Link to existing programs:** With administration of four federally-funded rental programs – Project Based Vouchers, Housing Choice Vouchers, Project Based Contract Administration, and Continuum of Care (CoC) – we were already responsible for more than 18,000 households who receive rental assistance via these programs. With a **shift in focus to stabilization efforts**, we are able to **ensure that households currently receiving assistance can continue to do so**, in many cases without interruption.

A Renewed Focus

By switching the focus **from a reactive approach of “emergency response” to the proactive approach of “housing stabilizers,”** we **re-positioned ourselves and our role within the state.** This more proactive approach allows us to intervene at the onset of an issue and prevent loss of tenancy from ever happening in the first place. Rather than having families falling in and out of homelessness, we stabilize their housing situation with necessary supports and assistance in maintaining compliance with federal housing requirements. Designed to reduce turnover and homelessness resulting from a breakdown in services or a system that is at times complicated to navigate, to **delivering a meaningful intervention in a timely and assertive manner** we are seeing a real impact that leads to healthier families and communities.

How it Works

To begin the process, partners and internal staff working in HCVP, PBCA, PBV and CoC programs complete and submit a referral form (*see attached*). The form is a quick and easy way for a partner or an internal program representative to identify issues and submit to the Housing Stabilization team for assistance. Upon receipt of the referral, Housing Stabilization staff contact the tenant or voucher holder to offer assistance and understand their barriers. Using a simple database we track referrals, interventions, notes or updates and outcomes. In monthly meetings the team discusses referrals, the program process, trends in barriers encountered, and successful interventions.

Referrals can come from any person or any agency and are most often a result of noncompliance but may be for **any one of the following:**

- Past-due rent
- Utility shut-off
- Unreported income
- Criminal activity on property
- Violation of lease
- Eviction by landlord
- Noncompliance
- Difficulty location unit/imminent HCV expiration

Services Provided

The help our Housing Stabilization Specialists provide includes, but is not limited to: landlord mediation, housing search, referral to support services, assistance completing paperwork, and more.

Impact:

With a focus on mitigating the issues that are deemed a threat to their tenancy, we are connecting families with community resources and providing them with personalized services such as assistance in understanding recertification requirements or completing paperwork.

Significant Decrease in Lease Termination:

Timeframe	# Terminations	% change
2015	106	
First 6 months 2017	26	51% reduction*
Administrative Savings: approximately \$1,160 per termination, which translates to nearly \$100,000 in less than a year.		
Impact on Tenants and Landlords: preventing eviction, minimizing turnover, unit damage, and ensuring rent-paying tenants for our landlord partners.		

**% change determine using 6-month comparison*

Households Helped:

# Households		Assistance Required/Action Taken
110 referrals total	29	households facing eviction, safety issues, and medical problems; troubleshooting issues such as back rent and program compliance that could put their tenancy at risk.
	67	households in finding rental units (new voucher holders), including one gentleman who had been in and out of shelters for five years
	14	Declined assistance/unable to contact
OUTCOMES: preventing eviction, minimizing turnover, unit damage, and ensuring rent-paying tenants for our landlord partners.		

Responsiveness to Judging Criteria

Are innovative: Responding at onset in proactive vs reactive manner to troubleshoot root causes of tenancy loss.

Are replicable: No special tools or systems required; HFAs have experience and expertise from ongoing management of rental assistance programs.

Respond to an important state housing need: Keeps people housed and houses most vulnerable populations in need of supports and intervention. Recognize that helping tenants stay housed is good for families and makes good economic sense.

Demonstrate measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers: Provides support to clients of RI Housing’s programs, improving record of success with rental programs.

Have a proven track record of success in the marketplace: Preserved tenancy and voucher-status for 87% of referrals or 96 households.

Provide benefits that outweigh costs: Only costs are staff time; reallocation of these resources from one effort to this more meaningful/impactful one has achieved greater results with same resources.

Demonstrate effective use of resources: Reallocation of existing staff and staff expertise.

Effectively employ partnerships: Building upon existing relationships with landlords, property managers, service providers/case managers and entities such as United Way 211.

Achieve strategic objectives: Focus on housing stabilization ensures that people who already have apartments receive support to remain in their homes.



Rhode Island Housing

Housing Stabilization Program

NCSHA Annual Awards

Special Needs:

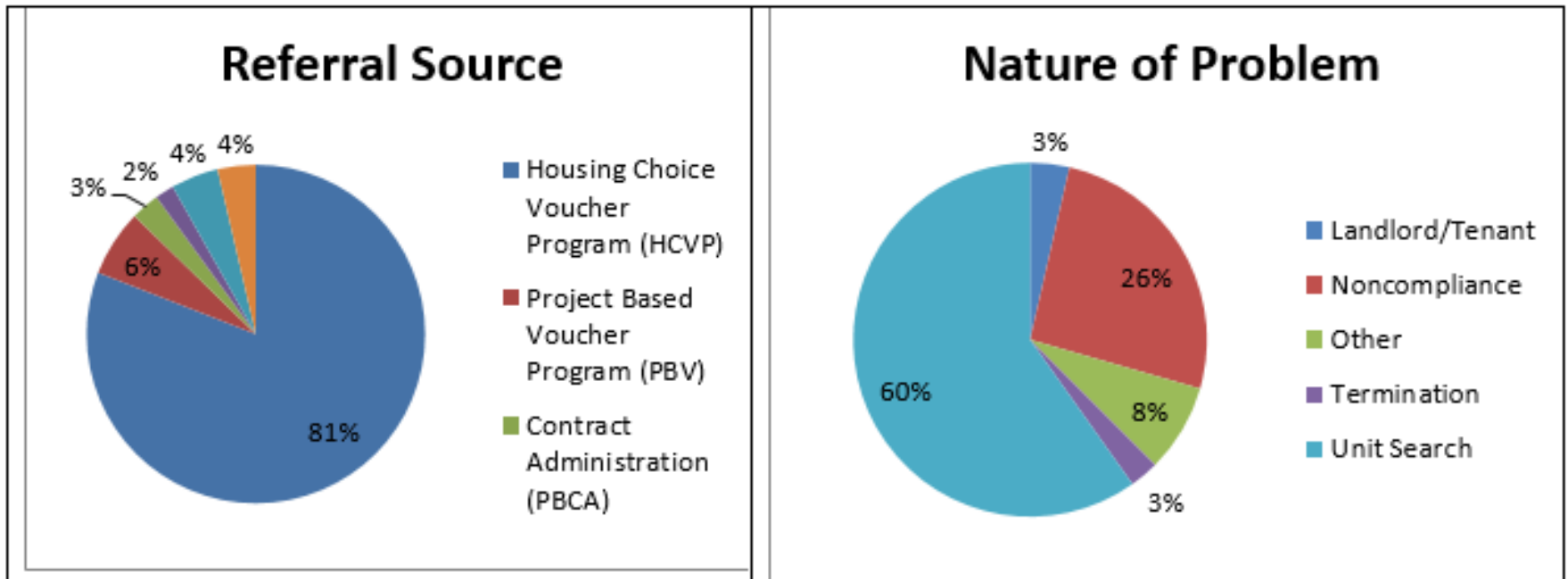
Combating Homelessness



Housing Stabilization Program

Plot Area

Who is using Housing Stabilization Services and why?

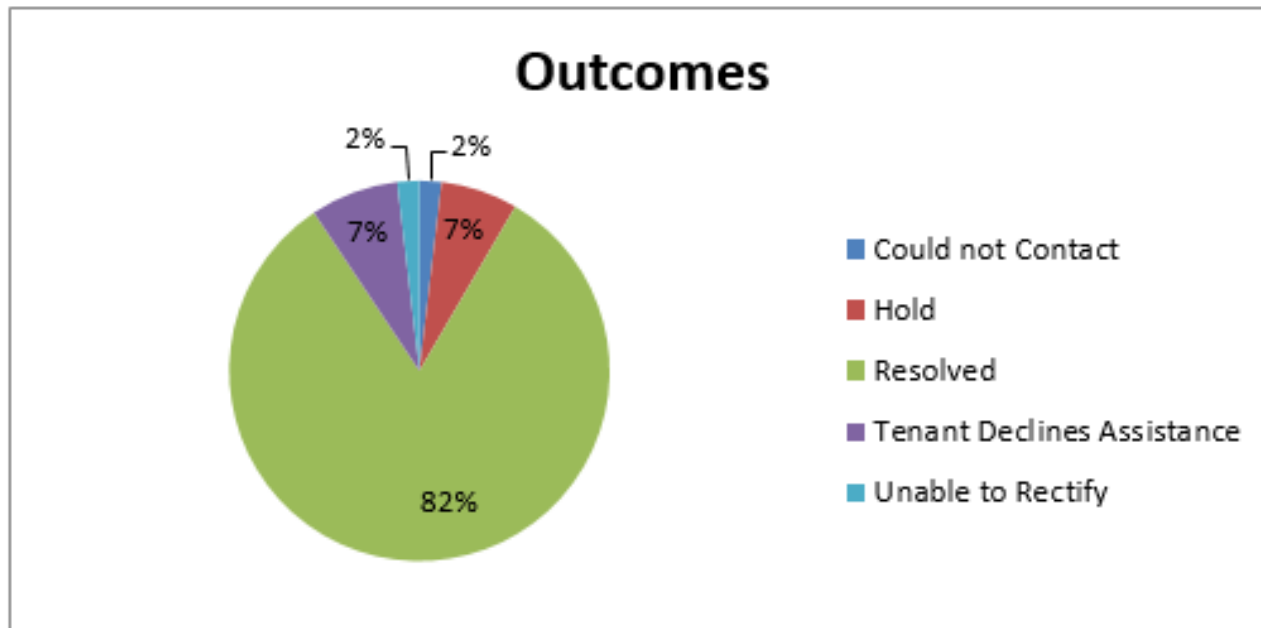


Nearly all referrals came from Housing Choice Voucher Program and request assistance locating a unit.

Housing Stabilization Program

Chart Area

How well do Housing Stabilization Services work?



Nearly all referrals...those HCV holders looking for a home, have been successfully resolved.

Housing Stabilization Program

From the eyes of a Housing Stabilization Specialist:

I was first introduced to MA* (*real name not used*) at the end of September 2016. MA was a new admission to the program, **chosen from the February 2014 wait list opening for homeless households.**

At the time of receiving his voucher, MA, a **50+ year old man of color**, originally from the Newport/Middletown area, had been **experiencing chronic homelessness for over 5 years**. Prior to entering the homeless services system, MA struggled with substance abuse for much of his adult life until he found himself without a job, a family or a home. Adding to his struggle was his short-term memory loss, which was a result of a workplace injury and was exacerbated by years of substance abuse.

MA initially **received his voucher in April 2016** and was given the **extended 90-day search period offered to homeless waiting list admissions**. By the time I received a referral to provide assistance, MA had already submitted numerous RFTAs (“move packets”) for units, none of which turned out to be appropriate for a variety of reasons (illegal unit(s), owner does not accept HCV, unit outside of RI Housing jurisdiction, etc.).

Within two days of receiving the referral in September, I was informed that his case manager had located a unit and would be submitting another RFTA, so I closed the referral.

On November 16, 2016, as a **result of our newly launched Housing Stabilization Program**, I received a second referral for MA. At this point, his voucher had expired, but because RI Housing had just reopened our HCVP wait list, the likelihood of MA arriving to the top of the list again soon was high, so I was instructed to **help locate a unit so that MA could utilize his voucher.**

Housing Stabilization Program

By 11/22, MA had met with a landlord who accepts HCV and completed an RFTA for an appropriate unit within RI Housing jurisdiction. MA was elated and expressed that moving into his own apartment before the holidays would be the best present that he could have ever asked for. While we did not promise, we assured him that we would do our best to make it happen, as all that was left was for the unit to pass inspection.

As a new admission to the HCVP, tenants do not have to wait until the 1st of the following month to move into their unit. Unfortunately, due to scheduling limitations, we were unable to utilize our regular inspection company. After some discussion and realizing the importance of this experience for MA, we were able to **schedule a special inspection that was completed by internal staff, and MA was able to move into his apartment before Christmas.**

While MA is just one person with his own individual experience, his story encompasses so many of the challenges that many Rhode Islanders face. While having a home does not fix all of life's problems, it can truly change the way we look at those problems, and how we respond to challenges. For MA, it gave him a second chance at so many things; most importantly it gave him a second chance to reconnect with his family, to rebuild his relationship with his children and grandchildren, in a place he can call his own.

Referral Form:



Housing Stabilization Referral Form

Date: Referring Program: HCVP PBCA 811 CoC Other:

RIH Program Representative: Extension:

Tenant Name: ID (if known) #: Unit Size:

Address: Phone:

Landlord/Property Manager: Contact #:

Nature of problem:

- Past due rent
- Utility shut-off
- Unreported income
- Criminal activity on property
 - Was criminal act committed by HH or other adult on lease? Yes No
- Violation of lease (other):
- Eviction by landlord
- Noncompliance (explain):
- Difficulty locating unit/imminent HCV expiration
- Other (explain):

Steps taken to address issue (by tenant, landlord, or RIH staff) / Additional information:

<input type="text"/>
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Official deadline before eviction/termination or next steps:

From 2016 Annual Report:



New focus on housing stabilization

Finding and maintaining stable housing is critical to both family well-being and a landlord's bottom line. RIHousing implemented its Housing Stabilization program in September 2016 to provide support to clients of RIHousing's programs. This focus on housing stabilization ensures that people who already have apartments receive support to remain in their homes.

In 2016, 70 households – facing a wide range of issues that put their tenancy at risk – were helped through this program. We recognize that helping tenants stay housed is good for families and makes good economic sense.