

HelpCenter: A Safe Place for Home Help Special Achievement

Home is Worth Keeping

The national foreclosure and unemployment crisis has hit Rhode Islanders particularly hard. Rhode Island's foreclosure rate ranks ninth in the country and the state has the third-highest unemployment rate in the nation. Advocates have seen first-hand how the unemployment and foreclosure crisis have displaced homeowners and exacerbated the barriers low income renters have encountered in their search for safe, quality, affordable housing. Rhode Island Housing's HelpCenter works to ensure that Rhode Island 'at-risk' homeowners and tenants can keep a roof over their head.

The Need

The nation's foreclosure crisis has impacted Rhode Islanders – homeowners and renters alike – who are threatened with the loss of their home and no one to turn to for help. A stagnant economy, lack of affordable housing options, deep cuts to social services and a growing state budget deficit mean that residents are feeling the squeeze from the high cost of living and lack of services available to offset the overwhelming need. Add to this the rising number of foreclosures throughout the state, and the result is more and more families being displaced and losing any sense of permanency in their lives.

While the housing crisis is being felt throughout the country, by the fall of 2007, Rhode Island began to take the lead among New England states in foreclosure initiations and subsequent loss of homes. Homeowners are not the only ones impacted by this crisis. Renters, too, are finding themselves homeless with little notice and even less resources available to them.

Scams that promise to 'rescue' troubled homeowners from foreclosure are popping up at an alarming rate nationwide. Here in Rhode Island, which is currently ranked 9th in the nation for foreclosure activity, distressed homeowners are at particularly high risk of predators.

The Response

In the fall of 2007, Rhode Island Housing opened the doors to its HelpCenter, a comprehensive counseling center dedicated to providing professional support and education that was created as part of our plan to respond to the growing foreclosure crisis and assist people at risk of becoming homeless. At the core of the HelpCenter's mission is the message "We are here to help." To get this message out, Rhode Island Housing developed a strategic, statewide educational campaign to promote the HelpCenter and publicize another key message – the sooner you call, you more options you'll have. The goal is to notify the public about the HelpCenter and, in turn, provide homeowners and tenants with foreclosure prevention advice and education *before* losing their home, as well as helping them make safe, informed decisions for their futures.

In response to the growing number of rescue scams targeting those already at risk of losing their homes, the Rhode Island Housing HelpCenter has also committed itself to educating and offering assistance to homeowners on how to stay safe. We understand how difficult it is to know who to trust and where to turn when in trouble or at risk of losing a home. That's why we opened the Rhode Island Housing HelpCenter in 2007 – a safe place for advice and education when it comes to protecting both homeowners and tenants from foreclosure or coping with the loss of a place to call 'home.'

The Rhode Island Housing HelpCenter's trusted, trained counselors work one on one to assess each individual's situation and provide advice, education or referrals to help.

For homeowners, we work to help them avoid losing a home or cope with the loss of a home; make sense of their existing mortgage; and make safe, informed decisions about finding an affordable rent or mortgage.

For tenants, we offer assistance through our extensive network of service providers; our HomeLocator, which includes thousands of listings for safe, affordable rental homes; and our advocacy efforts to ensure renters are adequately protected from the effects of the foreclosure crisis.

Education and Outreach

Building upon existing relationships, while also forging new ones, Rhode Island Housing and its partners also bring free foreclosure workshops to communities throughout the state. Our HelpCenter's trusted and trained counselors are on hand to provide advice, education, resources and referrals to help avoid the loss of a home or, when necessary, cope with the loss of a home. For those who lose a home, we work closely with our service providers and housing partners to assist families with finding safe options.

Marketing efforts relating to the HelpCenter include bus-stop advertising in communities hardest-hit by foreclosures, outreach through our extensive network of nonprofit CDCs, and public workshops in partnership with our Congressional delegation. By promoting these workshops through these leaders, prospective clients trust the information they are receiving is trustworthy. Rhode Island Housing has also undertaken additional outreach through local, large-scale employers, with work-place workshops. We also continue to promote the work of the HelpCenter through our statutory responsibility in the notification of municipal tax liens whereby homeowners who are faced with the loss of their home due to tax liens are provided with our information. Classes in conjunction our housing partners are given in English and Spanish to low-income and minority families. We recently obtained First American Loan Performance data through the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and have designed a targeted coordinated outreach effort with non-profit partners and the faith-based community to reach zip codes identified in the data sets with very high use of subprime ARMs. We are also working closely with neighborhood advocacy groups managing a door-to-door campaign that includes information for tenants as well as homeowners.

Rhode Island Housing has dedicated a section of its website to information on the services we and others provide to help people get out of housing trouble. Information and resources on how to avoid the latest foreclosure scams is prominently displayed on the HelpCenter section of the Rhode Island Housing website. Links from our website to other HUD-approved counseling agencies and the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Unit help those in need find the assistance they require while also alerting them to the risks of new scams. We regularly provide updates and alerts to consumers that they should always proceed with caution when dealing with anyone offering to help modify their mortgage or avoid foreclosure. Our efforts to assist struggling homeowners vulnerable to predatory schemes are some of the many ways we work to help people find and stay in homes.

In response to the newest threat to those at risk – scams – we have implemented an aggressive communications campaign, including a series of public service announcements in partnership with the state Attorney General's office, Department of Business Regulation, our Congressional delegation, the Mayor of Providence, Urban League, NAACP, Money Management International, Housing Action Coalition of Rhode Island, the Housing Network of Rhode Island, and our housing partners around foreclosure-prevention scams. In a state like Rhode Island, which already experienced a high rate of predatory and sub-prime loans at the height of the housing frenzy, it is deeply troubling that so many people who are already experiencing difficulties are now being targeted again by new predators. As predators know that people who fear losing their homes are vulnerable and may be desperate, it is important for homeowners to know who to trust for help and how to protect themselves from those who are looking to take advantage.

The Result

As a result of our extensive educational and outreach campaign, more than 10,794 Rhode Island homeowners seeking assistance have contacted our HelpCenter since mid-November 2007. 5,822 homeowners with a full range of financial challenges have met face-to-face with our counseling staff. 5,205 homeowners have completed the counseling process.

We have also connected the work of our HelpCenter with our Hardest Hit Fund Rhode Island (HHFRI) program, the federally-funded mortgage prevention program and NeighborWorks America's Loan Scam Alert campaign. By reaching people at the first sign of trouble, we can offer them more options and also keep them informed of predatory scams before more damage is done. To date, our efforts have not only kept a majority of homeowners seeking assistance in their homes, we have prevented many more from falling prey to those offering false promises and steep fees for foreclosure assistance. Our efforts continue to help homeowners in trouble arm themselves with the tools and information they need to protect themselves against fraud.

The HelpCenter is an effective work model - counselor/processor and outside partners. Volume in the HelpCenter remains high as more and more people are at risk of homelessness due to the weakening economy. While the first wave of the foreclosure crisis – those homeowners with weak, or subprime credit – has crested, the even larger wave of homeowners who had good credit when they bought their homes continues to increase. As the economy weakens, hard-working Rhode Islanders who have either lost their jobs or cannot keep up with the increasing costs of home-heating fuel, food and gasoline are now becoming the faces of foreclosure. The need for the HelpCenter grows stronger everyday.

How the program responds to the judging criteria:

Innovative: we were ahead of the curve in responding to the emerging crisis when it began in 2007; by responding so quickly, we had resources in place/infrastructure when the greatest need hit

Replicable: outreach, education, partnerships and counseling model can be replicated in other states

Responds to an important state housing need: with foreclosure numbers continuing to climb (and expected to continue), helping people stay in their homes will remain a critical need for our state

Demonstrates measurable benefits to HFA targeted customers: provides prevention and intervention to all segments of population – both homeowners and renters

Has a proven track record of success in the marketplace: already experienced **50% success rate** with modification of loans for both single and multi-family properties; utilizes best practices and available assistance and guidance at local, state and federal levels

Provides benefits that outweigh costs: keeping people in their homes while also keeping communities and neighborhoods intact

Demonstrates effective use of resources: the program utilizes effective use of resources with funding from grants through NeighborWorks and the United Way.

Effectively employs partnerships: local partnerships with service providers, congressional delegation, housing partners and statewide advocates for housing and homeless issues have been forged and strengthened

Achieves strategic objectives: our efforts are a key component to keeping people in safe, healthy homes while also aiding neighborhoods from further erosion due to foreclosures



Call us now at 401 457-1130. We can help

Help is available. Contact us at the first sign you might be in financial trouble. The sooner you call, the more options you'll have.

Let us help you understand your options. If we can't help directly, we'll refer you to trusted resources that can. **Call the Rhode Island Housing Help Center at 457-1130.**



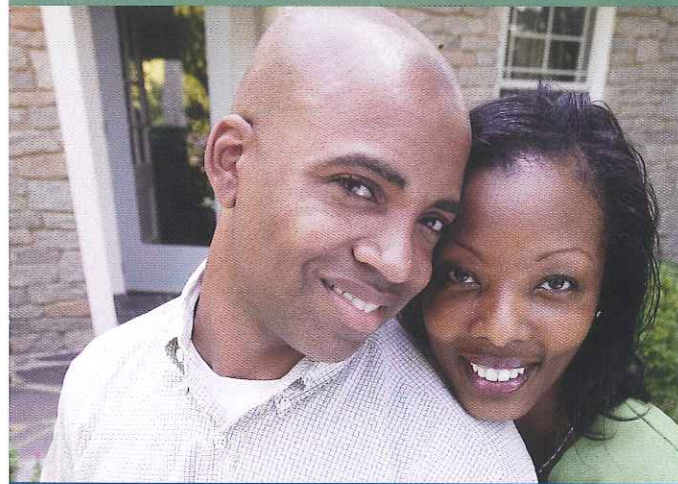
Rhode Island Housing
working together to bring you home



Rhode Island Housing HelpCenter: 44 Washington Street,
Providence, RI 02903-1721 ■ Phone: 401 457-1130

Rhode Island Housing: 44 Washington Street,
Providence, RI 02903-1721 ■ Phone: 401 457-1234
www.rhodeislandhousing.org

The Rhode Island Housing Help Center is an independent, HUD-approved counseling agency.



**We all know HOME
is worth keeping.**

RhodeIslandHousing
 **HelpCenter**

a safe place for home help

If you think you are in financial trouble or at risk of foreclosure on your home, call the **Rhode Island Housing Help Center at 457-1130.**

At Rhode Island Housing, we understand the challenges that come with owning your own home and how the nation's foreclosure crisis has impacted Rhode Islanders. We also know how difficult it is to know who to trust and where to turn when you find yourself in trouble or at risk of losing your home. That's why we opened the **Rhode Island Housing Help Center** – a safe place for advice and education when it comes to protecting yourself from foreclosure or coping with the loss of your home.

**HelpCenter
as of
June 30, 2011**

10,794 Rhode Island homeowners seeking assistance have contacted our HelpCenter since mid-November 2007. Homeowners seeking our assistance receive a financial analysis package. This package allows us to present them with reasonable workout options.

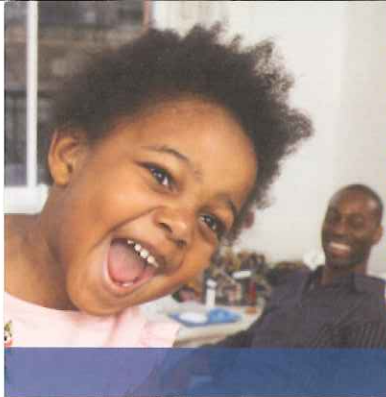
5,822 homeowners with a full range of financial challenges have met face-to-face with our counseling staff. 5,205 homeowners have completed the counseling process and 617 homeowners are being reviewed by servicers.

Situation Summary:

- 40% of the homeowners counseled are households with annual incomes less than \$40,000, 71% are under \$60,000
- Spanish is the first language for 29% of the homeowners served
- A bulk of the homeowners live in Providence, Cranston, Warwick, Pawtucket and Central Falls; 31% are Providence homeowners

Outcomes of Customers Served: (Of the 5,205 closed cases)

- 91 mortgages were brought current
- 2,038 mortgages were modified, entered into forbearance agreements or received partial claims
- 250 homeowners are actively seeking credit counseling and/or other social services
- 58 mortgages were refinanced
- 172 homeowners sought bankruptcy assistance
- 235 mortgages were foreclosed and/or deed in lieu of foreclosure
- 102 properties are in the process of a short sale
- 64 properties were sold
- 806 homeowners withdrew from counseling
- 294 homeowners were non-responsive after their counseling session
- 1095 workouts have been denied by servicers and are currently working on other action plans
- **617 Client files are currently being reviewed by servicers for workout options.**



Llámenos ahora al 457-1122. Podemos ayudarle.

Un Lugar Seguro Donde Obtener Ayuda para Vivienda

Durante más de 30 años, Rhode Island Housing ha facilitado que los habitantes de Rhode Island tengan viviendas seguras y asequibles, y que las mantengan mientras lo deseen. El Rhode Island Housing HelpCenter (Centro de Asistencia) está dedicado a proporcionar apoyo profesional e información para ayudar a que más habitantes de Rhode Island eviten la pérdida de sus viviendas y tomen decisiones prudentes y sopesadas para su futuro.

Llámenos ahora al 457-1122. Podemos ayudarle.

Los asesores confiables y con experiencia del Rhode Island Housing HelpCenter (Centro de Asistencia) evaluarán su situación y le brindarán recomendaciones e informaciones para ayudarle a:

- Evitar que pierda su vivienda o sobrellevar su pérdida
- Entender su hipoteca actual
- Tomar decisiones seguras y sopesadas sobre cómo encontrar un alquiler o hipoteca asequible
- Prepararse para convertirse en propietario de vivienda

Podemos ayudarle a entender sus opciones, así como proporcionarle recursos y referencias. Estamos conscientes de que cada situación es diferente. Es por esta razón que brindamos un enfoque que se ajusta a las necesidades individuales.

Llame al 457-1122 para hablar con un asesor con experiencia. Mientras más pronto llame más opciones tendrá.

El Rhode Island Housing HelpCenter (Centro de Asistencia) constituye una institución independiente que ofrece asesoría y está aprobada por el Departamento de Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano de los Estados Unidos (HUD, por sus siglas en inglés).

For English 457-1130





Rhode Island Housing
trabajando juntos para llevarlo a casa

Rhode Island Housing se dedica a asegurar que todas las personas que vivan o trabajen en Rhode Island tengan los medios para comprar una casa segura y saludable que satisfaga sus necesidades. Nuestra creencia es que una casa es mucho más que cuatro paredes y un techo.

Una buena casa sienta las bases para que las familias prosperen, los niños aprendan y crezcan, y las comunidades tengan éxito.

Para cumplir nuestra misión, hacemos lo siguiente:

- Ofrecemos programas de préstamo justos, económicos e innovadores.
- Educamos a los compradores de vivienda, los propietarios y las promotoras inmobiliarias.
- Promovemos y financiamos un desarrollo sensato que crea comunidades bien balanceadas y llenas de vida.
- Damos ayuda y subsidios a los habitantes de Rhode Island que más lo necesitan.
- Colaboramos con otros para mejorar todo lo que hacemos.

Somos una agencia pública de sustento autónomo. Todo lo que ganamos se reinvierte para satisfacer las necesidades de vivienda de nuestro estado.



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HelpCenter

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