

RESIDENT SERVICES  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
Major Projects Report-COVID 19  
August 27, 2020

RESIDENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

**COVID 19 Updates:**

The RSD's approach to COVID 19 has been to serve Residents through an interdepartmental approach.

- 1) **Emergency Resident Outreach Log (EROL)**-The EROL targeting all **public housing residents** started at the beginning of the crisis and has evolved with multiple phases.

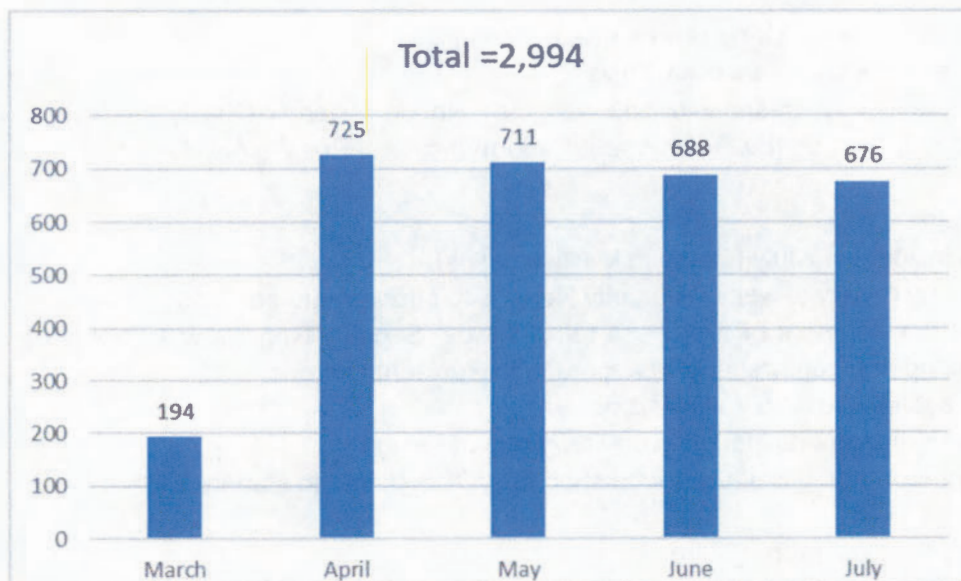
PHASE 6 continuous improvement: The Office of Strategy and Development identified CallMax as the vendor/system to do mass callings to developments on a variety of issues including but not limited to; FM operations information, COVID testing, Food delivery, Providence Public School District (PPSD) deadline reminder for signing up for remote on-line learning, and voter registration reminders.

PHASE 7: Identify and outreach to potential partners to support food delivery and COVID testing.

PHASE 8: Outreach to Youth between the ages of 16-24 for WIOA Workforce program.

Additional Resident Outreach:

- 2) **PHA established its own COVID 19 Hotline:** Through a hotline where Residents can self-report, and the PHU log, the PHA staff can follow up and share or find additional resources to help them keep their quarantine. The information in this document is confidential.
- 3) **Food Task Force and Delivery Service** –This interdepartmental project relied on input and leadership from Facilities Management for production and distribution, Property Management for information on individual cases of need, OSD for funding from Rhode Island Foundation, Finance for procurement and funding management, Resident Services for resident outreach, and distribution.





Development	Total Households	Households that received food during Covid at least once	Percentage of Households who received food at least once
Dominica Manor	202	160	79%
Carroll Tower	194	149	77%
HP Tower	117	99	85%
Parenti Villa	191	131	69%
Kilmartin Plaza	106	95	90%
Dexter Manor	289	241	83%
Sunset Village	25	25	100%
Codding Court	119	103	87%

Other Food Programs:

**Frozen meals from the City of Providence:** PM staff picked up an additional 300 meals to distribute.

**Sodexo:** Tuesdays and Fridays from 11am-2pm at 50/40 Laurel Hill Ave parking lot 2 meals a day for 3 days for children under 18 years old

**Family Service of RI:** Be Safe Plus program delivers boxes of fresh and shelf stable food, and cleaning supplies to elderly Rhode Islanders.

**Program Updates:**

1) **WELLNESS PROGRAMS:**

Wellness Coordinator/SOR

- o Current caseload of 20
- o Remote services-including on-line group meetings.
- o Intensive follow up on a weekly basis
- o New data entry responsibilities in the Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI) database KnowMyHealthRI for the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) assessment for BHDDH

VOCA Coordinator

- o 22 new incidents in July (5 high risk active cases).
- o Continuous review of weekly Security Reports to offer remote services
- o Leading development of a process for reviewing Security Reports with Wellness Coordinator for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to Resident Outreach.
- o Intensive follow up on a weekly basis
- o Has encouraged participation in on-line group meetings
- o Development Virtual Self-Care workshop for VOCA clients to start in July

Staff and Program Up-dates for Wellness:

- o In the process of hiring a full time Community Health Worker with funding from ONE /NB



- In the process of hiring a full time Licensed Clinical Social Worker with funding from the Rhode Island Foundation.

## 2) WORKFORCE PROGRAMS:

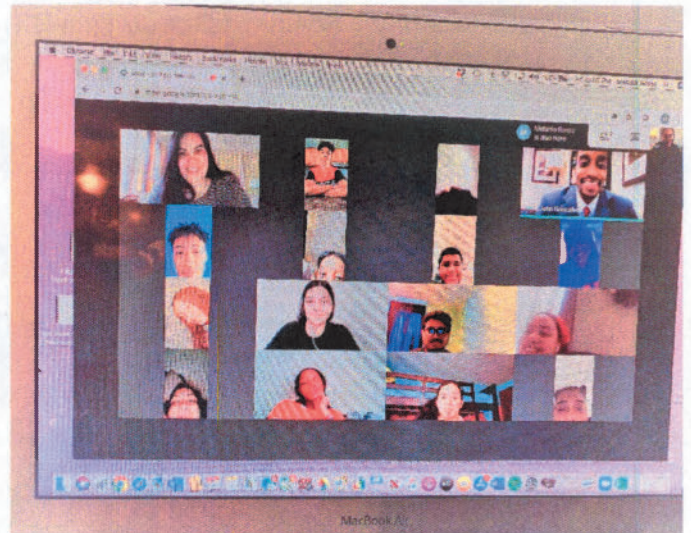
### Jobs Plus Providence (JPP) Program

#### HUD Jobs Plus Intensive Outreach:

- Coordinating program close-out activities (September 30, 2020).
- To date, **367 residents have enrolled** in the JPP program.
- Property Managers in MH and HP are starting their JPP JPEID Interim Interviews. We implemented new strategy to expand our financial coaching services and aid those with a financial hardship. Residents that have a significant increase in their rent due to the end of JPEID will be referred to our Financial Coach (FC). A spreadsheet was created to keep track of referrals and the residents' progress.
- Unemployment Insurance and Benefit Applications

### One Providence Summer Youth Internship

- A total of 15 youth successfully completed the virtual Summer Youth Program. Which translates to 75% completion rate.
- We hosted a virtual graduation on August 14th, where our youth presented their entrepreneurship projects. The projects showcased the different takes each youth has on running their own business, their ideas, creativity while addressing social issues in the community.
- With the assistance of the JPP Employment Case Managers, a total of 3 young people obtained employment in the following places, Dollar Tree, American Eagle, and Ameri Corps position with the Providence Children's Museum. They continue to assist youth with unsubsidized employment.



### Financial Coach/Homeownership Program

- **First Time Homebuyer Fair**-on hold
- Restructuring the FOC program to offer Financial Coaching more broadly to various residents. Pilot project in development to make strategic referrals to the Financial Coach for Residents with a repayment plan resulting from the COVID 19 impact. The FC has received 50 referrals from Property Management and will be scheduling Zoom workshops, one-on-one meetings, reviewing their credit, and establishing a livable/manageable budget.

### FSS

- Remote services, with check in calls every week or every two weeks depending on client need.
- There has been 1 extension request due to COVID

### Staff and Program Up-dates for Workforce

- A new Workforce Development Coordinator was hired in July and started on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020.



### 3) **ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS:**

- **Genesis Center**-conducting on-line distance learning for Adult Basic Education classes and phoneline conferences to work collaboratively on outreach and recruitment for programs.
- **iCAP**

### 4) **RESIDENT SERVICE COORDINATION:**

- Remote support to caseload clients
- Unemployment Application support
- Family RSC's developed Standard Operating Procedures for Outreach and Service Delivery for Participants and Non-participants in the program
- Lead RSC is leading the Food Delivery Program
- High Rise RSC is leading the Covid Hotline project
- **Flu shot schedule** – in development

#### ***RSD Partnerships:***

- **Boys and Girls Club**-The Boys and Girls Club are in the process of developing a plan to comply with State regulations
- **Children's Friend**-Signed a Licensing Agreement, and shared Covid related process changes for program delivery.
- **Family Service of Rhode Island Be Safe Plus program** - a service providing deliveries of fresh foods and cleaning supplies to elderly and disabled residents. Boxes of fresh foods along with safety supplies like masks, hand sanitizer, toilet paper and more delivered to residents who register with The Point.
- **Centro Innovacion Mujer Latina** -food delivery and mental and behavioral health services for elderly Community members.
- **Sojourner House**-development of the partnership to streamline access to shelter services
- **Jobs Plus Partnerships**
  - **Providence Public Library (PPL)** – is supporting on-going computer literacy through on-line teacher guided learning.
  - **Progreso Latino**-is supporting adult HSE learning through on-line teacher guided learning
  - **Young Voices**-is developing a distance learning program for their summer youth leadership

#### ***RSD Planning Updates:***

1. Planning for moving staff back on-site on Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>
2. Re-vamping the MMR data collection from staff to streamline and more accurately reflect outcomes based on function (i.e.: Wellness programs, Workforce programs, Education programs, and Resident Service Coordination.)
3. Interviewing for an FTE Community Health Worker

### **OFFICE OF STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT**

***High-level communications with partners, funders and government*** – OSD is in communication with government partners at all levels.

#### **Federal:**

Participation in calls with HUD and reviewing HUD and other federal guidance. Participation in PHARI/Boston HUD Office update calls. HUD is updating its FAQs regularly and we are reviewing and sharing with the Executive Director and other departments as needed. PHA also may receive special Housing Assistance Payments funding



due to our unusually high voucher costs – we have supported the effort to apply for these funds and are keeping up with HUD communications.

State:  
We have been in ongoing communication with the Rhode Island Department of Health, who in May assigned a new point person to work with Housing Authorities, and are participating in biweekly calls with all members of the Public Housing Association of RI and RIDOH, along with other state officials. OSD staff also participate in a weekly “Community Partners” call that RIDOH has with nonprofit agencies throughout the state, with a substantial focus on addressing health disparities relating to COVID-19.

Partners:  
We continue to participate in calls with housing advocates from around the state that are convened by HomesRI, as well as other calls with property managers from around the state convened by HousingWorks, and including participation and information sharing from Rhode Island Housing.

We maintain PHA participation in the Central Providence and West End Health Equity Zone projects, with the ConnectRI / ConnectProv initiatives for digital equity and access to technology, and with the current Accessing Home AmeriCorps program cohort of host sites. August, we have received 8,500 cloth masks in packages of five and have just completed a mailing of more than 7,000 masks to family development tenants. These masks came through the West Elmwood and Central Providence HEZ at no cost to PHA and we anticipate getting enough masks to distribute a package of 5 to all family public housing tenants.

This month, OSD Director Peter Asen and Pawtucket Housing Authority Director Paula McFarland conducted a joint presentation to the state’s Long Term Care Coordinating Council on the work of the two agencies in supporting our tenants during the pandemic, with a particular focus on elderly and disabled tenants. About 60 participants were at the Zoom meeting.

**Funding and Resource Development-** OSD is coordinating fundraising and grant writing efforts across the agency.

OSD has identified possible sources of funding to support the extension of the PHA’s Emergency Food Box program and will be submitting grant applications in August and September.

Recent funding notifications and updates

**BCBS** – We have begun to utilize our \$50,000 award for work with Leased Housing on setting up a new landlord portal. We also emailed a landlord survey for feedback as to the types of technical assistance and incentives that would be most appealing. We are moving forward with a variety of presentations and mailings in the fall based on those responses.

**African Alliance** – The African Alliance of RI received \$1,000 from the City of Providence Dexter Donation Fund to assist PHA residents with their gardening projects. AARI has worked with PHA on resident garden projects at Chad Brown and Hartford Park for the last several years and OSD collaborated on their application. OSD met with the AARI to discuss a potential new project at Sunset Village and an expanded gardening project at Chad Brown.

**RIFoundation** – PHA was awarded \$75,000 in mid-June by the RI Foundation to support the *Building Bridges to Support in the Wake of Covid-19* program to address behavioral health issues tied to the pandemic. The grant will allow PHA to hire a social worker to work with residents and refer them to outside behavioral health providers, and also provide training opportunities for property management, resident services and other PHA staff who interact with tenants. The PHA had requested more than \$87,000 but will be able to maintain most of the planned effort with the award. Resident Services worked with OSD on this proposal. OSD supported RSD by drafting the job description for the new position. PHA has advertised the position and anticipates interviewing candidates in the coming weeks.

New and pending applications:

**VOCA** - OSD worked with RSD to prepare an application for renewal of the PHA’s Victims of Crime Act funding. The state’s total VOCA funding is down to \$5.7 million this year, from \$11 million last year and \$7 million in 2018, when PHA was first funded. While we anticipate PHA’s program will be funded again due to our success in serving many residents, we also expect we may face a reduction from this year’s award of \$141,337. The application was submitted on June 12, with a request of \$159,802. Shortly before this report was completed, the state Public Safety Grants Administration contacted PHA asking to have a phone call to ask questions from the funding committee on the proposal. We anticipate a decision before October 1.

**FSS-** OSD submitted a renewal application to HUD to continue funding of the FSS program at our current funding level of \$219,159 for Calendar year 2021.



**Program Collaboration with RSD**

OSD supported the continuing development of the State Opioid Reduction Grant funded Wellness Resource Center and authored monthly reports to the funder, BHDDH. OSD is OSD also supported the development of youth employment programming and participated in monthly calls with HUD concerning JPP. This month we have requested a no cost extension so that the program funding can be stretched beyond September of 2020.

**Mass Messaging**

OSD continues to spearhead the use of several mass communications tools. We coordinated with several departments across the agency to send mass message calls and text messages through CallMax

	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020
Total number of "bulletin" messages sent	4 messages that included both languages	38*	67**	81**

\* in part because each message was developed and sent twice – one version to English speakers and one in Spanish

\*\* In part because messages were targeted floor by floor or sent twice in an English and Spanish version.

Messages include topics such as delivery of food and other essentials, testing, resident service program participation, partner program options and resources, and operational/policy related messaging.

- Of special note this month, we shared information on behalf of the Providence Public Schools about their Virtual Learning Academy and reopening plans with both Section 8 and Public Housing residents.
- We also piloted messaging to promote our Resident Service Coordinators, as many residents are unaware that we can still assist them even though we are not on-site. Within 2 days, 10 new clients were generated after 1 set of messages was sent to residents in Chad/Ad/Sunset.

Lastly, we sent two landlord emails this month to ask opinions on incentives for our Blue Cross Blue Shield work and the second to share information about the Safe Harbor Program.

Media Coverage and Storytelling:

Shared stories of our FSS success and testing with regional HUD staff to develop new coverage of PHA activities during COVID. A new web post also highlights the start of our work with landlords: [https://provhousing.org/landlord\\_outreach/](https://provhousing.org/landlord_outreach/).

Flyers and Signage:

This month, OSD assisted HR in developing signage and materials ahead of the staggered return to work early in the month. OSD continues to develop and help distribute flyers, banners, and signs at public housing developments and PHA offices, notifying residents of changes to policies and updated protocols. Informational inserts for rent mailers were created highlighting the PHA Covid Hotline, new guidelines for gathering, wearing masks, summer’s common lease violations, and the Census.

Website/Social Media:

We have worked to reiterate these messages through the PHA’s website as well as our social media channels. From July 22- August 18, we have gained 10 new page likes (up to 869 total) on Facebook. We also have 894



followers on our page, who have opted to view our page updates on their timeline. Our posts during that same period reached 2,946 people, with 823 engagements.

OSD continuously maintains the website and posts updates to open meetings, resources, policies, our strategic plan, and job opportunities. All new web content is optimized for search engines so that it appears more readily in online searches. This effort helps drive traffic to our site, where we continue to see high levels of engagement.

#### Resource Guide:

OSD continues to update the resource guide on an as needed basis and share it with staff in the Resident Services, Leased Housing and Property Management Departments, as well as with the public via the PHA website.

#### Mail:

Two mail pieces went out since our last report. One was a postcard to residents and participants encouraging them to participate in the 2020 Census. The other accompanied mass messaging to our high rises about limiting visitors and our enforcement of parking policy. We continue to produce mail inserts for the rent mailers with vital messaging to residents and to update Food Box inserts so they include important updates for our high rise residents.

**RAB communications and report-** OSD staff members continued to do regular Zoom check in calls with RAB members to identify resident community concerns and needs and to provide information and updates. OSD continued a series of three RAB conference calls per week with groups of 4-6 residents at a time, including one weekly call held entirely in Spanish. In addition, staff make one individual outreach call each week to RAB members and one community contact at Coddington Court. OSD promptly advises Departments of any issues identified in RAB contact so that they can be addressed and authors a weekly report that summarizes issues; the report is disseminated to all PHA Departments.

We have worked to address issues identified by RAB members on an ongoing basis, such as:

- Concerns about residents and visitors not taking mask wearing seriously;
- Concerns about residents in family developments not taking seriously social distancing requirements by hosting gatherings in excess of state limitation;
- Concerns about residents improperly disposing of trash and illegal dumping by outside persons at family developments;
- Ways to make Covid-19 testing available to residents in elder/handicapped developments;
- Residents struggling with mental health and addiction issues; and
- Fireworks and parties.

RAB meetings via Zoom continued in July and August to gather the group. The August meeting provided presentations PHA's Resident Services Department and Caption Call. Caption Call is an organization that provides not cost access to phones with screens that provides transcription of spoken words. OSD staff is working with Caption Call and a RAB member to bring the service to her home phone so that she can actively participate in meetings.

OSD is preparing certificates of appreciation to RAB members to recognize their outstanding commitment to PHA and their fellow residents by their participation in weekly calls and contact with PHA throughout the pandemic.

An OSD staff member is serving as a volunteer trainer for a 16-hour *Alternatives to Violence Project or AVP* training in which three RAB members are participating. AVP is an international program, founded in 1975, that seeks to build communication, diversity appreciation, and conflict resolution skills as means to prevent violence. The all volunteer program has chapters in many states, and a chapter is being formed in Rhode Island. The training sessions, conducted during the evening, is being held via Zoom and is the first remote AVP training in the U.S.

#### Strategic Planning

As we maintain our focus on COVID-19, we are also seeking to continue work to carry out the Strategic Plan. In May we finalized the strategic plan document content and design. We also summarized and presented the document to the Board of Commissioners at the May meeting for adoption. In May and June, OSD identified draft Year 1 strategies and actions, making certain to align actions departments must undertake during the COVID emergency with overall strategic plan goals. OSD met with all other departments to review Year 1 strategies and actions in light of new capacity considerations and new opportunities as a result of COVID-19 operations in early to mid-July, with adoption and metrics expected to be in place by late August to cover the PHA's 2021 fiscal year.



### 2020 Census Outreach

OSD developed and sent another Census reminder the mail this month to encourage Census. We invited the Census to incorporate enumerators teams into our food distribution events. This effort has been positive and each event has at least 15 new surveys being completed. Over 250 have self-reported that they completed their Census at one of our food events or otherwise. As we near September 30<sup>th</sup> deadline, we are coordinating with Census team to conduct final outreach to all those yet been counted with a focus on our high-rise



postcard in participation. from their response to resulted in residents 2020 forms the the regional who had not communities Sunset Village



### Beautification Project

OSD staff worked with the development's RAB representative and a team of resident volunteers to design and plant two flower beds at the development. The beds were planted on June 16 and residents relate that continuing to tend the gardens in July and August provided an opportunity to experience community in the midst of social distancing and a decreased sense of isolation. OSD presented the gardening team with certificates of appreciation in a socially distanced outdoor event on July 29.

### Manton Heights

OSD staff are working with Manton Heights RAB member Lonzie Doggett to design a beautification project as a first step in re-engaging residents in an effort to re-establish an active Resident Association at the development.

### Tropical Storm Isaias Response

OSD staff worked with PM, FM and the Hartford Park Resident Association to outreach to residents impacted by Tropical Storm Isaias on August 4. We worked with HPRAs President and Commissioner Vivian Medina to help tenants who needed to apply for SNAP benefits that replace food they lost when power was out over a two day period.