

PROVIDENCE HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESIDENT SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE MARCH 2021 REPORT

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RESIDENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT:

COVID 19 Updates:

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

- 1) Emergency Resident Outreach Log (EROL)**-The EROL for all **public housing residents** started at the beginning of the crisis and has evolved with multiple phases including Outreach for the Leased Housing Department. There are 9 RSD staff who work most intensively with the emergency Covid testing and vaccine initiatives, and an additional 5 staff who participate as needed. See current phases below:

PHASE 9: Continued identification and outreach to potential partners to support food delivery

PHASE 10: Covid testing outreach

PHASE 11: Covid vaccination outreach calls to high rise and elderly in family developments

- 2) Additional Resident Outreach:**

PHA continues to up-date the COVID 19 Hotline daily – In February there were 65 COVID follow up calls to residents, 32 calls for vaccination questions and registration, and 3 calls regarding vaccination reactions to the Hotline.

Food Task Force and Delivery Service – RIFB Senior box deliveries continued through February, and **there are PHA food boxes available for emergencies**. In February there were **164 RIFB Senior boxes**, and **2 emergency PHA food boxes** delivered.

Program Updates:

The Resident Services Department is working to create Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to evaluate program flow within the agency, department, and with partners to date. The baseline tracking will continue through March 2021.

	Family RSC's	Highrise RSC's	VOCA	SOR	CHW	ECM	Financial Coach	LICSW	FSS	Wkforce Developer	TOTAL
Referrals to RSD from PM/Other Departments	23	6	27	6	0	0	0	12	12	0	86
Interdepartmental referrals within RSD for services	16	3	6	2	4	6	5	3	0	7	52
External referrals to outside agencies for services	9	6	10	0	0	33	5	2	5	1	71
Number of Residents following up on internal referrals	14	5	6	2	0	5	5	2	0	0	39

1) **WELLNESS PROGRAMS:**

Wellness Coordinator/SOR

- Added **1 additional Resident to his caseload in February and conducted 6 follow up assessments.**
- The Coordinator during February conducted 6 Zoom support meetings, 12 outside meetings with clients, and 10 calls to clients. Coffee and Conversation focused on SUD/OUS issues with a presentation from Project Weber Renew
- Partnership development with **CODAC** to partner with their pop-up van services.

VOCA Coordinator

- **27 new clients** in February, for a total caseload of **129 Victims of Crime clients**
- Interviews for 2nd FTE VOCA Coordinator
- Continuous review of weekly Security Reports and weekly check-ins with the Institute of Nonviolence, Sojourner House, and the PHA Wellness Team.
- Weekly meeting with the Critical Response Team, who develop a Critical Response Plan for emergency and critical cases that require multiple staff for success.
- Partnership development with **Blackstone Advocacy Center**

Community Health Worker

- There were **14 new Residents** who completed a health screening tool with the Community Health Worker.

- o Participated in the weekly Critical Response Team
- o **During February, the CHW has participated in all (10) Covid vaccination events.**

LICSW

- o **15 new clients in February**
- o Continues to supervise an MSW student from RIC, Grace Canton.
- o Developed noise pilot program-under review
- o Participated in the weekly Critical Response Team
- o Partnership development with the **Providence Center**

2) WORKFORCE PROGRAMS:

WIOA

- o **21 youth are enrolled** in the WIOA Program
- o **4 young people are registered to receive an industry recognized credential- (1) EMT, (1) Steel Yard Welding Program and (2) Building Futures**
- o Out of the 5 that ended their internship, **4 were permanently hired**
- o Staff participated in monthly WIOA provider meetings

Workforce Development Coordinator

- o **19 residents received employment counseling**
- o **3 new employer partners established, for a total of 16 YTD**
- o Continuous follow-up with WIOA youth at their worksite and virtual weekly meeting with their worksite supervisors every Friday afternoon
- o **Lifespan partnership is still in development**-final meeting on March 23rd
- o Continues to support JPP participants that are looking for employment

Financial Coach/Homeownership Program

- o **Served 20 residents in February**
- o The partnership with HarborOne Bank has enabled us to continue financial counseling services- **13 Financial Counseling**
- o Residents sent to NeighborWorks for homeownership services- **7 Homeownership Counseling**
- o **3 previous financial counseling clients completed Twin Accounts Loan and are in the process of receiving their matched funds to pay debtors.**

FSS

- o **\$119,659.21 escrow dollars disbursed**, and \$4,867.30 escrow dollars forfeited FYTD
- o FSS staff have been scheduling progress report meetings with FSS participants outside. For the month of February **87 progress report follow up appointments** have been completed

- **59% of FSS participants showed an increase in Earned Income** in February with an average increase of \$19,430.20
- There has been 0 extension requests due to Covid in February
- The quarterly **Program Coordinating Committee (PCC)** meetings for the year were established, and outreach to **over 40 partners** was conducted and tracked on a Partnership Grid. Meetings will start in March.

Adult Education Programs:

- **Genesis Center**-conducting on-line distance learning for Adult Basic Education classes. The ESL and Ged Classes are at capacity, along with a long waitlist. Due to the partnership, PHA residents do have priority.
- **Progreso Latino**-Continues to serve PHA residents in achieving their Spanish GED through their regular programming sessions.
- **iCAP**-the program will resume in the Spring.

3) RESIDENT SERVICE COORDINATION:

- Remote support to caseload clients: **Family RSC's have a combined caseload of 200 Residents, and High-Rise RSC's have a combined caseload of 119 Residents.**
- Monthly Safe Harbor follow up with 109 Residents across all AMPs. Both PM and RSC's enter relevant information into a shared spreadsheet
- Lead RSC is leading the Food Delivery Program to determine emergency need and organize safe delivery for the RIFB Senior boxes at Dominica Manor, Dexter Manor, and Parenti Villa.
- High Rise RSC is leading the Covid Hotline project: (see Covid Section of report) The RSC for the Covid Hotline project also reported that in January, a resident from HT passed away. When he called her daughter for update on her mother's recovery from Covid, she gave him the news, but also thanked the PHA for the help her mother got through the years of living here and offered to donate some of her mother's clothes (new) and some meal replacements for diabetics.

RSD Partnerships:

- **Boys and Girls Club**-The Boys and Girls Club have opened their program at 50 Laurel Hill Ave, and as well as Manton Heights and Chad Brown. They are limiting the children to groups/pods of 20.
- **Children's Friend**- Programming moved to other locations due to enrollment.
- **Urban Greens** – Contracted to provide paid internship experience for WIOA youth.
- **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
- **ONE**-Community Health Workers who are part of the consortium have participated at the PHA Covid Testing sites.

- **RIFB**-Senior Box program at Dexter Manor, Dominica Manor, and Parenti Villa as well as Parenti Villa Food Pantry agreements for 2021
- **HarborOne**-financial coaching partnership.
- **JPP HUD**- these calls will continue quarterly, as HUD has requested continued engagement to build upon the PHA's lessons learned for JPP

RSD Planning Updates:

1. 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) and 5-year strategic goals
2. TAAG data entry protocols
3. FS Program Coordinating Committee (PCC), MOUs for partner agencies
4. Grant writer RFP for RSD –RFP was revamped for two grant writers: one focusing on Mental and Behavioral Health Wellness, and one on Workforce.
5. Interviewed for a 2nd FTE VOCA Coordinator
6. Planning for reestablishing Parenti Villa food pantry in April
7. Food taskforce recognition

OFFICE OF STRATEGY & DEVELOPMENT

COVID-19 Activities

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 federal guidance. OSD participated in a statewide PHA call with the HUD Boston office on March 11.

State:

We have been in ongoing communication with the Rhode Island Department of Health and continue participating in state-wide coalitions and special committees formed to address critical mission-related work in the state. OSD worked with the Executive Director to draft and distribute a letter from Chairman Retsinas and ED Sanzaro to then Governor Raimondo and current Governor McKee expressing the PHA's interest in working with the state to vaccinate more public housing residents beyond the high-rise initiative. OSD distributed the letter to a range of state level stakeholders and partners.

Partners Locally:

We maintain PHA participation in the Central Providence and West End Health Equity Zone projects and with the current Accessing Home AmeriCorps program cohort of host sites. OSD staff has further extended participation with the 02907 HEZCAT by joining the priority planning subcommittee. This group is assigned to develop a plan of action to address issues/concerns raised from a HEZCAT survey taken by the residents of the community. Among the three main

needs addressed, OSD will be involved in identifying tasks and solutions to improve the social cohesion and wellbeing of the 02907 community.

Homes RI– OSD staff continue to participate in monthly Zoom meeting convened by Homes RI. These meetings highlight issues related to homelessness prevention and affordable housing, as well as developing advocacy strategies and building partnerships.

COVID-19 Funding and Resource Development

Recent funding notifications and updates

FEMA – OSD staff has been in contact with RIEMA concerning PHA seeking additional funding from FEMA to cover Covid-19 expenses not covered by Cares Act Funds and has learned FEMA is continuing to accept applications. OSD is gathering PHA expense records concerning PuroClean's high rises sanitation services, NESS services, and is working with HR to gather documentation of staff costs associated with testing and vaccination programs. Covid testing and vaccinations programs. Testing and vaccination expenses incurred prior to 1/21/21 will be reimbursed at 75%; testing and vaccination expenses incurred after 1/21/21 will be reimbursed at 100%.

City of Providence CDBG - OSD drafted an application for the City's CDBG-Covid Relief RFP seeking \$192,000 to support of testing and vaccination program for public housing and Section 8 families.

State of Rhode Island Community Development Covid Response Block Grants– OSD drafted two grants for submission to the RI Office of Housing and Community Development: \$154,66, for support of the *Workforce Development Coordination Initiative* that will assist public housing residents struggling to find work during the pandemic; and \$128,050 to address needed services for homeless Mainstream Voucher participants to assist them in securing housing and maintaining tenancies. If successful, this funding will be provided over a two-year period.

COVID-19 Communications and Resident Outreach

Covid 19 Testing and Vaccinations

OSD staff developed materials about PHA developments, resources and amenities for use by the RI DOH as PHA works collaboratively to bring testing and vaccination programs onsite to our developments. We also worked cross-departmentally to support messaging regarding vaccinations including announcements, informative handouts (including translations of Pfizer Vaccine fact sheet), call scripting, mass messaging, and then provided event support by taking photographs and filling in as needed.

OSD staff participated in the RI Department of Health's Intensive Covid 19 Community Workshop on 1/15. The workshop provided valuable information concerning various types of Covid-19 testing, types of vaccines and how they work, the State's plans for vaccinating the public, obstacles to engaging residents in testing and vaccination programs, and strategies for improving participation.

All OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other Funding and Resource Development

New and pending applications:

ROSS – The 2020 ROSS application was filed on November 17 and is seeking \$717,750 in funding to continue our family development RSC program for an additional three years. The current grant which funds this program will run out this spring.

United Way of RI – OSD submitted a proposal to the UWRI for its Community Impact Fund grant program. PHA proposed an education and employment support program, *Pathway to Opportunity/Camino a Oportunidad*, focused on reaching the Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color (BIPOC) communities in Providence. If successful, PHA would receive nearly \$150,000 over a two-year period to support a FTE bilingual employment case manager. UWRI is expected to announce funding decisions in early April.

City of Providence Community Development Block Grants- OSD drafted three proposals during February: \$47,500 for education and workforce development support at the Anton Center; \$85,439 to support replacing sliding building entry doors at Carroll Tower and Dominica Manor; and \$25,000 for additional security cameras at Hartford Park, Kilmartin Plaza, and Codding Court.

RIHousing Bridging the Digital Divide Grant – OSD drafted and applied for just under \$63,000 to provide devices, internet service, digital literacy classes, and tech support to residents in partnership with the Providence Public Library. Generations on Line, a national nonprofit with a focus on digital literacy for seniors, was also incorporated as they are working with us to provide free digital learning applications on every device as well as a special guide that our residents can provide to caregivers and family members who they may rely on for help with their devices.

RI Office of Healthy Aging – OSD drafted a grant seeking funding, in the amount of \$7,083 to support new cameras at Carroll Tower in the following locations: elevators, lobby, building access station at front door, and in the courtyard. PHA was notified on 3/9 that the request was approved at the department level but needs to go through final state contracting. Installation of the cameras will be completed by 6/30/21.

Senate Legislative Grants – OSD applied and submitted on March 9 the FY 2021 Senate Grant proposals for the Carroll Tower Resident Association grant sponsored by Sen. Goodwin (\$3,000) and the Hartford Park Tower Resident Association grant sponsored by Sen. Ciccone (\$2,000). The grants will fund ESL classes, digital literacy courses including related devices (internet-enabled tablets), and activities that will continue to encourage and promote community unity in adherence to the pandemic guidelines.

401 Gives – OSD is preparing the PCOC messaging for 401 Gives, a United Way sponsored day of charitable giving across the Ocean State.

Communications and Resident Outreach

Mass Messaging

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	Sept 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021
Total number of "bulletin" messages sent	4	38*	67*	115*	75*	56	45	43	62	27	9 *as of 3/12

* In part because messages were sent twice in an English and Spanish version or floor by floor notices about COVID testing.

Messages reflected COVID vaccinations, Artist-in-Residence programming at Hartford Park, City vaccination notices for Section 8 residents, Senior Food Box distributions and much more.

PHA's Facebook reach continues to grow as we are now at 1,013 page "Likes" and 1,184 accounts following the PHA on Facebook right now. In the past two months, we also have a following of 158 users on Instagram, which we continue to grow as we build out our work on this platform.

PHA Website

OSD is spearheading a refresh of the PHA's website (www.ProvHousing.org) with vendor EpikSolutions. The refresh will include an updated look and newly organized content once completed.

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 two RAB conference calls (one in English, one in Spanish) each month in the first week of the month and then a full RAB meeting on the third Wednesday of the month. OSD promptly advises Departments of any issues identified in RAB contacts.

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 gathering in lobbies in some developments;
- Residents crowding in elevators; and
- Residents struggling with mental health, especially depression and addiction issues due to the pandemic.

The February RAB meeting on 2/17 featured two PHA staff presentations: a presentation of the 2021 Capital Plan by Allan Pacific; and a presentation by Linda Poole about the PHA's soon-to-be launched online rent payment system.

During the February 17 meeting, Wellness Coordinator Nelson Morales encouraged our RAB members to join the March 18 naloxone training (in our campaign to prevent opioid overdose) presented by Project Weber/Renew. To date, approximately six members have signed up for the training.

For the upcoming March 17 RAB meeting, OSD made the concerted effort to send the RAB members two weeks ahead of the meeting a copy of the FY2021 Annual Plan along with an overview/summary presentation. Both documents were translated into Spanish. Our goal is to give RAB members enough time to review and give feedback on the FY 2021 Annual Plan in time for the RAB meeting.

OSD strives to empower RAB members to participate in our virtual meetings by offering computer tablets on loan. As a result, a number of our members have learned how to use a tablet and to attend zoom meetings.

Fire Safety

OSD has reinstated PHA's fire safety training for residents mandated to attend when a noncompliance has been issued. Due to the pandemic, trainings will be one on one (no classes or group sessions) held via virtual conferencing or by phone. The first training session occurred on November 16 by phone. To date, seven residents have received one-on-one fire safety training. Three residents are scheduled to receive training in the coming weeks of March. OSD staff translated the training manual into Spanish and made the necessary changes to facilitate a one on one phone/virtual communication. OSD continue to monitor fire incident alerts on a weekly basis.

Policy efforts

City and state policy - The City Council gave final approval to an ordinance that bans discrimination against renters based on a lawful source of income, including section 8 vouchers. PHA has provided input to the General Assembly as it considers a similar statewide law. Once it becomes clear whether the statewide legislation will pass this year, OSD plans to conduct outreach to landlords to make sure they are aware of the new requirements and to encourage them to learn more about the Section 8 program.

Monitoring HUD PIH Notices- OSD staff continued to review PIH Notices in February, including notices concerning opportunities to participate in HUD's Expansion of the Moving to Work Demonstration (MTW) Project. Two MTW opportunities exist: Cohort 4 Landlord Incentives and Cohort 3 of Work Requirements.

Strategic Planning and Plan Implementation

– OSD staff compiled Quarters 1 and 2 Department reports into a PHA-wide Strategic Plan status report and provided a presentation to the Board of Commissioners on January 28 that highlighted areas of success and challenges, provided the status of completion of Year 1 strategies and actions, and solicited input from members about the status report format that would be most helpful for the Board to receive.

Collaboration with Security Department

OSD facilitated two ZOOM meetings between the PHA and Worcester Housing Authority Security Departments to explore ways in which the WHA is addressing Covid issues and to learn about their general crime prevention initiatives, systems for tracking and reporting statistical data, use of camera systems, and collaborations with law enforcement. OSD also outreached to the Lowell MA and Hartford CT PHAs to arrange for meeting in March or April.

Other Initiatives

Collaboration with RSD –

- State Opioid Reduction Program – OSD staff continued to serve as the PHA liaison to BHDDH, our funder, and coordinated meetings of PHA/PawtHA partnership, provided statistical data concerning opioid use and overdose rates, and authored monthly reports to BHDDH.
- Jobs Plus – OSD staff continued to participate in quarterly calls with HUD staff concerning the Jobs Plus Program and PHA's experience with the Initiative.

ConnectHome PVD – OSD and Security team staff met with partners at ONE Neighborhood Builders to explore expansion of Olneyville's free Wi-Fi service into Manton Heights and if connections through the OSHEAN network could be made to Hartford Park and Parenti Villa as well. Collaborating on resource development for this project is on-going.

Project Based Vouchers – OSD is working to develop a new potential request for proposals for project-based vouchers to issue in the coming months, incorporating lessons learned from the last RFP that was issued in late 2018.

Landlord Incentives – OSD is working closely with Leased Housing to issue landlord incentives to attract and support our landlords and increase success of hard to house residents in finding housing. As of March 12, we have approved 24 landlord incentives totaling \$13,000 with 22 of them going to new landlords, two receiving incentives for housing a formerly homeless family through the mainstream voucher program, and two incentives for a landlord leasing a new unit in an area of opportunity.

Partnership with the Leased Housing- Services for Residents– OSD staff completed a social service resource directory for use by Leased Housing Program Representatives. The guide includes program descriptions and contact information for key agencies providing services in the areas of adult education, child protection, disability rights and services, discrimination and civil rights, domestic violence, elder issues, employment, ESL, financial counseling, food insecurity, fuel assistance, healthcare services, homelessness, immigration and citizenship, legal services, literacy, overdose prevention, tax preparation (free), veteran's services and victim compensation. In March, OSD anticipates providing training to staff about using the directory and making referrals to organizations. This project is part of a strategy to increasing services to Leased Housing participants.

HUD Repositioning Webinar Series – OSD staff participated in HUD's February 17 *RAD and Section 18 Blend Options* webinar to keep abreast of repositioning tools potentially available to PHA.