

PROVIDENCE HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESIDENT SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 2021 REPORT

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RESIDENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT:

Program Updates:

- Stephanie Sosa, the new Employment Case Manager started September
- Housing Preservation collaboration with Property Management through RentReliefRI
- RSD grant development for a mental and behavioral health grant for youth through the Rhode Island Foundation
- Lead RSC, Bartola Ovalles, is organizing partners onsite at the high-rise developments; Oak Street had an information table at all High-rise developments in August
- Bartola is organizing BCBS and URI-SNAP information tables for all high-rise developments in August/September. Additionally, a schedule has been developed for flu shot clinics in the Fall at all developments through Lifespan and Walgreens.
- See additional program updates within program categories below

1) **RESIDENT SERVICE COORDINATION:**

- On-site support to Residents by appointments only in August:
 - **Family RSC's have a combined caseload of 134 Residents**
 - **High-Rise RSC's have a combined caseload of 125 Residents**
- Monthly Safe Harbor follow up with 109 Residents across all AMPs. Most Residents are in compliance with the program, for on-time rent payments. Both PM and RSC's enter relevant information into a shared spreadsheet
- RentReliefRI Housing preservation: RSC's will provide follow up assistance to participating residents through assessing resident needs and referring to appropriate supports, to keep them on track with rent payments.
- RIFB Senior box deliveries continued through August, and PHA food boxes available for emergencies. **In August there were 150 RIFB** (35 at Parenti Villa, 59 at Dominica Manor, and 56 at Dexter Manor) Senior boxes, and 0 emergency PHA food boxes delivered. **There are a total of 168 Residents enrolled** (41 at Parenti Villa, 67 at Dominica Manor, and 60 at Dexter Manor), and 11 on the wait list (1 at Parenti Villa, 6 at Dominica Manor, and 4 at Dexter Manor).
- At Parenti Villa 81 Food Pantry boxes were distributed.
- The Manton Heights RSC continues to manage the **food distribution program with the YMCA that started April 12, 2021, in which 18 families 50 children between the ages of 2-18 are provided one hot meal and two cold meals every Monday and Thursday.** This program has remained very strong all 18 families continue to participate and very happy for the support of the YMCA providing these meals to their children through August 20th

- **Harford Park Success story:** RSC received a referral from Commissioner Medina for a resident in need of food support. RSC met with resident and assisted applying for SNAP online. Resident was approved for SNAP within one week. Resident has a planned surgery end of September, having the SNAP benefit will help with the new diet as well as for her family to be able to afford food while she is not working.
- **Parenti Villa Success story:** On August 12, BCBS came to Parenti to do a presentation of fitness/nutrition. They had an instructor conduct a chair yoga class. They also did a nutrition presentation. 15 residents attended. BCBS asked participants if they would like the yoga class to come back, and it was decided that they will have it weekly for the month of September.

YMCA Food Distribution at MH



2) WELLNESS PROGRAMS:

Wellness Coordinator/SOR

- In August, the SOR Coordinator conducted **7 risk assessments to his caseload, 2 new GPRA assessments and 3 follow up assessments.**
- The coordinator received and followed up on 2 referrals from Security in August.
- **Success story for Wellness team approach:** National Prevention Day (Dexter Manor) August 31: PHA observed National Prevention Day by collaborating with CODAC and the Mayor's Behavioral Health Council to provide a health awareness and medication disposal event. **Over 60 residents participated in PHA's National Prevention Day.** Representatives of the Providence Mayor's Behavioral Health Council educated residents about how to properly dispose of prescription medication, while CODAC staff provided blood pressure and blood sugar screening and a peer specialist was available for resident seeking services from CODAC



VOCA Coordinator

- **13 new clients** in August
- **VOCA Coordinators outreached to 54 residents** (52 Security referrals and 2 PM referrals)
- 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, developing a Critical Response Plan for emergency and critical cases as needed.
- A reluctant self-referred Resident agreed to services after meeting with the VOCA Coordinators who were able to assist the Resident with Court processes and creating a safety plan.

Community Health Worker

- No new activities to report for August. The staff person was promoted to Employment Case Manager and this position needs to be filled.

LICSW

- **13 new clients in August** with total of 24 new client's year to date, **and 63 clients in total for the caseload.**
- Participates in the **bi-weekly Critical Response team meeting**
- Success in assisting an elderly resident improve mood and coping strategies
- Change in funding source for this position from Rhode Island Foundation to CDBG-COVID

3) WORKFORCE PROGRAMS:

WIOA

- WIOA Recruitment continues for out-of-school youth. For the new contract year, the PHA needs to enroll 18 new out-of-school youth. **We are working to recruit an additional 3 to make our program enrollment total for FY21.**
- **New Employment Case Manager, Stephanie Sosa, has been onboarded.**
- **The WIOA contract has been finalized.**
- Staff participates in monthly WIOA provider meetings.

We recently placed an intern at Roger Williams Day Care Center, provided training for her certification. Recently, RWDCC informed PHA that they would bring on the WIOA participant full-time and continue the training while she obtains her GED, as a GED is needed for certification.

Workforce Development Coordinator

- **35 residents (adults and youth) received employment counseling.**
- **2 new employer partners established, for a total of 33 YTD.**
- Established partnerships with local employers for WIOA youth- **Avenue Concept**
- In partnership with the Employment Case Manager facilitated **weekly job readiness workshops.**
- Continued partnership and participation with DCYF Youth Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) Program -Academic and Career Engagement.
- Challenges with adult employment counseling- Many adults seemed not to want services, as they wanted to stay on unemployment until it ends in September. The WDC encourages the resident to start looking for employment sooner to alleviate the wage cliff.

Financial Coach/Homeownership Program

- **Served 4 residents in August**
- The partnership with HarborOne Bank has enabled us to continue financial counseling services
- **Continued facilitating budgeting workshops for the One Providence Summer Youth Program.**

Homeownership Counseling

- **Served 8 new residents in August**
- Attended the HUD Homeownership Virtual Conference (3 days)
- In partnership with Washington Trust, **2 Pre-Purchase Counseling Workshops will be hosted virtually in September.**

FSS

- **\$28,201.39 escrow dollars disbursed in August** and \$214.52 escrow dollars forfeited in August
- FSS staff have been scheduling progress report meetings with FSS participants outside. For the month of August **78 progress report follow up appointments** have been completed
- **53.33% of FSS participants showed an increase in Earned Income** in August (with 46.67% having no increase in earned income) with **an average increase of \$16,160.38**
- There have been 0 extension requests due to Covid in August

Adult Education Programs:

- **Genesis Center**-conducting on-line distance learning for Adult Basic Education classes through the summer and reviewing a hybrid approach for the fall possibly at some on-site locations at PHA . Due to the partnership, PHA residents

do have priority. COVID-19 continues to impact our educational partners' ability to post-test.

- **Progreso Latino**-Continues to serve PHA residents in achieving their Spanish GED through their regular programming sessions.

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.
- **YMCA** -food distribution partnership at Manton Heights through August
- **Urban Greens** – Contracted to provide paid internship experience for WIOA youth
- **CODAC**-Once a month pop-up health services at high-rise developments
- **Lifespan** – MOU 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
- **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
- **New Employer Partners Year-to-Date:** Love Culture Salon, Providence Animal Rescue League, and Roger Williams Day Care Center

RSD Planning Updates:

1. Work with RSD grant writers to identify and secure funding for Resident Services, with a priority on Wellness programs.
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) and alignment to the 5-year Strategic Plan
3. Begin reviewing other Case Management data systems that could better meet PHA and RSD needs
4. FSS Program Coordinating Committee (PCC), MOUs for partner agencies

COVID-19 Activities

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

Federal – OSD consulted with HUD on the potential of excluding income from the City of Providence's Guaranteed Income Pilot from tenant rent. We put together a request for a waiver submitted by the Executive Director on August 18 that would allow the income to be excluded from rent in the Section 8 program, as we have the right to establish an exclusion for the public housing program on our own.

City of Providence – OSD director Peter Asen is participating as a member of the City's COVID-19 recovery task force, which has been hearing presentations from various city departments on potential means of spending the city's \$160 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan. Affordable Housing is a major focus for the task force, which will continue meeting for the next several months,

Partners Locally:

Health Equity Zones - 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. More recently we have been providing input to the city of Providence on its Guaranteed Income pilot program, in which 110 low-income families in the city will receive \$500 per month for a year, and how the program may impact the rent and housing subsidies of public housing tenants.

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

State of RI Office of Housing and Community Development – We were provided a contract for \$154,655 for workforce development services to support residents who are seeking employment will be awarded from the state of RI with CDBG-COVID funds. The grant is through December of 2022 and may be able to be extended if funds are not fully spent by then.

Nan McKay 2021 Housing Awards – OSD submitted an application to Nan McKay & Associates, for its annual Resident Service Award. This award recognizes leaders in the affordable housing industry whose community outreach and similar efforts improve the future of the families they serve. PHA's application focused on its inter-departmental and inter-agency team approach to the Covid-19 epidemic. The Hartford Park and Carroll Tower Residents' Associations, the RAB, and the City of Providence Office of Healthy Communities provided letters of support for our application. We have been notified that PHA was not selected as the winner; however, we were a finalist. Nan McKay will announce the award winner in an online ceremony at 1:00 p.m. on September 17. As a finalist, PHA will be noted during the ceremony.

COVID-19 Communications and Resident Outreach

Covid 19 Testing and Vaccinations

OSD staff continued to work cross-departmentally to support messaging regarding Covid testing including announcements, informative handouts (including translations of vaccine

fact sheets), call scripting, mass messaging, and then provided event support by taking photographs and filling in as needed.

OSD developed new messaging to remind residents that indoor mask restrictions still apply in PHA public spaces and that the rise of the Delta variant makes adherence to these rules even more important. Updated signage and banners are in place at the developments to ensure that residents and visitors are aware of continued restrictions. OSD staff continued to take photographs at vaccination events.



Dexter

Kilmartin

HUD Covid-19 Webinars

OSD continued to participate in HUD's Covid-19 Best Practices webinars to keep abreast of initiatives being undertaken by PHAs and their partners across the country. PHA's efforts meet or exceed those of peers nationwide.

All OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other Funding and Resource Development

Recent funding notifications and updates

HAI – PHA submitted two grants to the Housing Authority Insurance Group (HAI) for funding to install fire suppression canister device above stoves in all family units (\$30,217) and fire suppression safety burners in all high rise and elderly/disabled units (\$148,460). We were recently notified that these applications were not accepted for funding.

Office of Healthy Aging Security Grant Program- OSD and the Security Department collaborated to develop and file a grant requesting \$28,333 to upgrade security cameras at Dominica Manor. The existing cameras were installed in 2006. PHA has been notified that the application has been approved. The grant funds will be disbursed to PHA over two State fiscal years (7/1/21- 6/30/22 and 7/1/22 – 6/30 23). We expect to begin actual replacement of cameras in Spring 2022 and complete the project by 12/31/22.

United Way of RI Olneyville Fund- OSD Submitted a grant proposal to the United Way's Olneyville Fund for funds that would support the coordination of services and referrals for residents of Hartford Park who are seeking Wellness resources, including access to treatment and recovery services for substance use disorders and mental health needs. We were not selected for this grant.

Youth Police Initiative_ OSD and RSD developed a proposal for a year-long internship in which a 2nd year Masters-level social work student would assist PHA in researching and implementing best practices for strengthening the YPI program and developing a follow-up component. PHA submitted the proposal to Rhode Island College's School of Social Work to secure an intern for the fall 2021 and winter 2022 semesters. This request was not granted, OSD and RSD will continue to seek out social work interns from other institutions with Master- level programs.

New and pending applications:

HUD Emergency Health and Safety Grant – Working with the Facilities Management Department, OSD developed and submitted a grant application to HUD, in the amount of \$4

million to address mold issues at units in family units at Hartford Park. This application is still pending.

State of Rhode Island Community Development Covid Response Block Grants- While we did hear back on our other request for workforce development funding as noted above, we were informed that our request for \$128,050 to address needed services for homeless Mainstream Voucher participants to assist them in securing housing and maintaining tenancies is still under consideration.

Communications and Resident Outreach

Mass Messaging

OSD has selected a new vendor, Rave Mobile Safety, for its mass messaging operations. Continuing through Summer, OSD worked with the vendor to migrate PHA information to the new software system and Department staff received training on the use of the system. PHA launched its first mass messaging with Rave on July 1st.

	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	47

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

	Apr 2021	May 2021	June 2021	July 2021	Aug 2021	Sept 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Mar 2021
Total number of "bulletin" messages sent	37 Month ending 4/13	45 Month ending 5/13	25 Month total for June	30 Month Total for July	26 Month Total for August						

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

Messages reflected the following: emergency responses (elevators down at Dexter Manor and cooling centers established in all high-rise buildings due to the heatwave), PCR COVID testing, social gatherings, nomination notices for residents to become a member of the Resident Advisory Board or the Board of Commissioners, Senior Food Box distributions, Representative Smith/Elisha Project food distribution at Hartford Tower and much more.

PHA's Facebook reach continues to grow as we are now at 1,169 page "Likes" and 1,371 accounts following the PHA on Facebook right now- an increase of about 70 followers in a single month. From August 17 to September 13, our posts had a combined reach of 2,332 views.

RAB communications and report

OSD staff members continued to do regular individual check in calls with RAB members to identify resident community concerns and needs and to provide information and updates. Monthly RAB meetings is on hiatus until September 15. OSD continued a series of two RAB monthly group conference calls (one in English, one in Spanish) in August.

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

- Violation of parking policies;
- Understanding the benefits of and how to use the new rent payment system
- Illegal dumping by outsiders;
- Elevator and laundry machine breakdown; and
- Ways to rebuild a sense of community in the midst of the pandemic and in its wake.

RAB Nominations/Elections

In July, OSD notified all public housing households of the opportunity to be nominated to serve as a Resident Advisory Board member and/or have one's name forwarded to the Mayor for consideration to serve as a PHA Resident Commissioner. Notification consisted of contact by mass messaging, a flyer included in the rent mailer, and via posters on display in Management offices and kiosks. Nomination forms were due to OSD by 8/23/21. One development, Dominica Manor had four residents nominated for three slots on the RAB, resulting in an election on September 10. The RAB starting in September will have 16 members from 8 developments, three of whom did not serve on the previous RAB from 2019-21.

Resident Activities Update

Peoples Garden Project - OSD and PM staff and resident volunteers tended vegetable garden plots at Coddling Court and Chad Brown. To encourage healthy eating habits, expose residents to new foods, and show how residents can use fresh produce, PHA staff demonstrated how to make pesto from basil grown in the Coddling Court garden. Currently the gardens at both developments are doing well. Gardeners continue to harvest kale, cucumbers, squash, eggplants, tomatoes and more. Under the NRICD grant, Chad Brown received a much-needed water tank to facilitate and efficiently water their garden.

Chad Brown



Coddling Court



Sunset Village- At Sunset Village, OSD staff and resident volunteers continue to tend flower beds in two areas of this development. Staff and residents will plant fall bulbs in September.

Social Gathering Events at Hartford Park Tower and Chad Brown Apartments - OSD worked to support the annual Hartford Park Community Cookout provided by the Hartford Park Residents Association and the Public Housing Police Unit. The event provided freshly grilled hotdogs, snacks and lemonade. The event was well-attended



At Chad Brown Apartments, OSD staff worked with a donor interested in fostering early childhood literacy in public housing communities. The donor and her family provided a Free Little Library stocked with books appropriate for readers in the pre-kindergarten to elementary school age child. The event featured cold drinks, snacks and the donor's family and OSD staff reading to children. Approximately 20 families attended, and each was provided with books to take home.



Both the Hartford Park and Chad Brown events fostered the OSD's goal of bringing a sense of community and morale boost despite the continued impact caused by the pandemic.

State Representative Anastasia Williams and the Elisha Project partnered together to deliver to the residents at Hartford Park Tower free boxed goods with generous amounts of packaged foods/fresh produce, toiletries, and cleaning supplies. PHA staff also distributed masks and hand sanitizers.



Many thanks for the outstanding work and support from SDO intern and summer youth intern David Montenegro who helped us throughout the summer with creating signage, surveys and assisting staff with the distribution of PPE supplies and gift bags to residents during social gathering events.



Other OSD updates

State Opioid Reduction Grant – OSD staff continued to gather and track program activity outcome data from both Providence and Pawtucket Housing Authorities and author monthly reports to the funder (BHDDH). OSD is working with RSD and Finance to complete a budget revision to fully expend grant funds by 9/30/21. Due to restrictions on gatherings imposed by Covid-19, we have funds remaining in line items for outreach events and training, these funds will be re-programmed to purchase additional Nalox Boxes for installation at PHA sites as a measure to prevent opioid overdoses.

Access to the Internet – OSD staff met with a representative of the Jersey City Housing Authority to learn about the agency's internet infrastructure initiative that is successfully bringing broadband access to public housing residents.

Non-Profit Bootcamp- OSD staff participated in the first of three sessions of the RI Secretary of State's initiative designed to raise awareness of applicable laws and resource available to support the development and maintenance of non-profit organizations. The series concludes in September; the information gleaned from this program will inform efforts to strengthen and/or develop PHA non-profit affiliates.

Collaboration with the Security Department – PHA hosted a summer intern who assisted OSD in converting the 2021 Security and Safety survey into a google survey. Our past successful experience with an online survey for the 2020 ROSS grant survey leads us to believe that having both online and paper versions of the survey will yield substantial response rates. The security survey will be an important tool in identifying place-based strategies for increasing security and safety.

OSD also worked with the Security Department to update the PHA's Security Plan, a document PHA is required to have in place under municipal law.

Strategic Planning and Plan Implementation - OSD provided assistance to Departments in completing 4th Quarter reports, reviewed reports, and compiled results and comments into a performance tracking spreadsheet and drafted the 4th quarter report for the Board of Commissioners. We also have worked with the Executive Department to establish action plans for Year 2 which began in July.

Public Housing Resident Characteristics Report – OSD completed the 2021 Resident Characteristics Report. This publication provides comprehensive demographic information essential for demonstrating the needs of PHA residents and supporting successful grant writing and partnership development efforts.

Project Based Vouchers – PHA received 11 proposals seeking 101 project-based vouchers in response to the June PBV RFP. Six proposals are for existing units and five are for new construction/substantial rehab projects. OSD reviewed all applications to determine which met threshold requirements and requested supplemental information necessary for evaluating and scoring the proposals. OSD delivered a presentation for the RFP Review Committee concerning proposals PHA received when the Committee met on via Zoom on 8/18 to conduct a preliminary review the proposals, identify finalists, develop a timeline for proposer presentations and score applications. OSD coordinated the scheduling of and oral presentations by finalists to the Committee on August 31. OSD developed a scoring sheet for Committee members to use while evaluating the proposals. The Committee will meet on September 29 to score proposals; a recommendation is expected to be delivered at the October Board of Commissioners meeting

Emergency Housing Vouchers – OSD is continuing to work to support the efforts of the Admissions office and Leased Housing program to stand up the new 42-unit Emergency Housing Voucher program. We are developing procedures for the use of EHV service funds including a special EHV landlord incentive program; and developing procedures to support program participants to eliminate barriers to housing by providing security deposit assistance; furniture; assistance in paying debt to utilities; and moving cost assistance. OSD also developed a new chapter for the PHA's Section 8 Administrative Plan to govern the EHV program which is currently out for public comment.