

PASCO COUNTY, FL, HPRP-FUNDED PREVENTION PROGRAM

The Pasco County, Florida, homelessness prevention program, funded by HUD's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP), provided households with rental and utility assistance based on their need and from what agency they received assistance. Pasco County contracted with six subgrantees to provide rental arrears, rental assistance, utility assistance and utility arrears, and case management. Length of stay in the program averaged 35 days, with a median 1 day.

Community Description

Pasco County is located within the Tampa metropolitan statistical area and has a population of almost 450,000. Roughly 12 percent of the general population and 10 percent of the population over age 18 had incomes below the federal poverty level.¹²¹ The county is large at approximately 745 square miles, and is geographically varied. Its coastal region is urban and suburban; travelling east, the region becomes more rural.

The 2010 point-in-time (PIT) count found 4,442 people homeless—living in emergency shelters, transitional housing units, hotels or motels, or places not meant for human habitation. Only 339 of those were living in sheltered locations (270 in emergency shelter and 73 in transitional housing). The Pasco County Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless service system lacks capacity given the size of the county's homeless population. Most of those unsheltered were living in encampments in the woods. Almost 3,000 of the unsheltered PIT population were families.

In 2010, HUD's CoC grant awarded Pasco County \$223,735. The CoC has 394 shelter beds including beds for victims of domestic violence, beds funded by the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program, and beds for veterans. Pasco County has 82 year-round family beds and 79 year-round individual beds, with an additional 60 seasonal beds. The transitional housing stock is also small with no family units and 60 units for individuals (10 for women with substance-use issues and 25 for veterans). There are 138 permanent supportive housing units for families and 34 units for individuals.

DESIGN AND SETUP OF HPRP PREVENTION

The Pasco County Community Development Division (PCCD) was the HPRP grantee and program administrator, managing a total 3-year allocation of \$1,055,241. Pasco County began serving clients with prevention assistance in October 2009, developing the HPRP program staffing structure with PCCD and a few local direct-service providers: Baycare Behavioral Health, the Pasco County Human Services Department (PCHS), Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County/Metropolitan Ministries, Youth and Family Alternatives (YFA), the Housing Authority of Pasco County (PCHA), and the Salvation Army. PCCD selected these providers to be involved in the program design, ultimately choosing them as the six HPRP subgrantees.

Once PCCD determined the subgrantees, the organizations decided to provide rental assistance and arrears, utility assistance and utility arrears, and case management. For other services (credit assistance, legal assistance, moving costs, and hotel or motel stays), they would refer clients to other community organizations. This group also divided services among themselves based on each provider's strengths

¹²¹ Data on poverty were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2005–09).

and capacities. PCCD administered the grant, verified and fulfilled reimbursement requests, monitored grant activity monthly, and worked with the Coalition to End Homelessness administering its homeless management information system (HMIS). Subgrantees could speak directly with the HPRP lead contact about any issues.

Exhibit E.17: Pasco County Grantee and Subgrantees

Organization	Services Provided	Grant/Subgrant Amount
Grantee		
Pasco County Community Development Division		\$1,055,241
Subgrantees		
Baycare Behavioral Health	Financial assistance and case management	\$100,000
Pasco County Human Services	Financial assistance and case management	\$464,387
Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County/Metropolitan Ministries	HMIS	\$25,000
Youth and Family Alternatives	Financial assistance and case management	\$100,000
Housing Authority of Pasco County	Rental assistance beyond 3 months	\$300,000
Salvation Army	Utility assistance	\$50,000

Since 2007, Pasco County prevention assistance came from the county using 30 percent of its Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) to fund rental assistance and utility payments, initially to victims of domestic violence. The program was subsequently expanded to include other families and individuals. Pasco County did not evaluate the program formally but did “monitor” it. Staff used this experience to inform the HPRP design, specifically the appropriate time and dollar limits to assistance.

PCHS had been operating a prevention assistance program since 1987 using both local ESG and State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) dollars.¹²² PCHS assisted with past-due rent, move-in expenses, and hotel or motel vouchers. The department’s best practices and procedures for prevention assistance were applied to HPRP.

PCCD did not specifically allocate HPRP funds to prevention or rapid re-housing. Instead, it distributed funds to subgrantees in a lump sum; each subgrantee was permitted to apply 25 percent to case management. Other than that restriction, each subgrantee could use the funds based on organizational need. PCCD initially aimed to distribute, across the subgrantees, 70 percent of funds toward prevention and 30 percent toward rapid re-housing. However, most subgrantees are closer to 90 percent prevention and 10 percent rapid re-housing.

IMPLEMENTATION

Outreach

PCCD partnered with the Pasco County school system for the Students in Transition program, which helped identify children in families that were homeless or at risk of homelessness. To be linked to HPRP, families had to self-identify at the start of the school year or upon enrollment that they were homeless or living temporarily with another household.

¹²² SHIP is a state program that funds local governments to create partnerships that preserve or build affordable housing for moderate-, low-, and very-low-income households.

Point of Entry

Pasco County had five resource centers through which clients could access HPRP along with other services. These resource centers were housed in faith-based organizations (including HPRP subgrantees Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County/Metropolitan Ministries and the Salvation Army) that provide food, clothing, and other basic necessities. In 2009, in anticipation of HPRP, PCCD enlisted five of these organizations to help coordinate requests and provide households with information on services they could use.

While the resource centers were meant to function as multisite coordinated entry mechanisms, only a portion of subgrantees' referrals came from a resource center. A county 211 call center operated by the United Way also referred callers to subgrantee programs.

Intake: Eligibility and Assessment

Pasco County's communitywide HPRP eligibility criteria were not different from those outlined by HUD. To be eligible, a household must have had an income below 50 percent of the area median income and must have been at imminent risk of homelessness. To receive utility assistance, a household must have had a shut-off notice.

Subgrantees' specialization did lead to some inadvertent targeting. For example, Baycare Behavioral Health provides prevention assistance to those with substance use or mental health issues; three-fourths of their HPRP households fit this profile. PCHS, known for serving both families and individuals, served approximately 60 percent families and 40 percent individuals. Staff saw many clients who were also served by veteran services, but the targeting is not deliberate.

Screening was not standardized across the HPRP subgrantees. However, all did some form of eligibility screening prior to the assessment, with the exception of Coalition for the Homeless, which only managed the HMIS. Assessments and meetings with social workers, however, that confirmed and reconfirmed the household's financial situation and need, contributing in part to the eligibility determination.

PCHS, PCHA, and the Salvation Army all used the same initial screening tool developed by PCHS, but not necessarily with the same results. PCHS clients were initially processed by phone to determine income, eligibility, and risk factors. Staff asked client for the following information:

- Source of income
- Client name, Social Security Number, and spouse's name
- Service requested and amount
- Utility company
- Past-due date
- Size of household (number of adults and children)
- Monthly rent
- Last day of employment
- Gross monthly income

- Spouse's last day of employment
- Spouse's gross monthly income
- Department of Children and Families (DCF) sanctions in the last 6 months
- Cash assistance from DCF in the last 6 months
- Date of last DCF check
- Food stamp receipt

After determining eligibility, subgrantees used an assessment tool to collect additional information. The assessment process was not standardized, but most tools collect similar information. During the initial assessment and application meeting, depending on type of assistance sought, clients were required to bring proof of identity, proof or verification of income, proof or verification of change in income if necessary, proof of rental amount, electric or utility bill in the name of someone in the household, lease, and a shut-off notice, an eviction notice, or a notice from the landlord.

When HPRP was first implemented, the prevention program assisted all households needing utility or rent arrearages. But after the first month, the agencies would consider clients imminently homeless only if they had an eviction or shut-off notice. Clients who had an eviction or shut-off notice and made it through the screening would generally receive some services, if they followed through with the required documentation and met with a social worker.

After each appointment, subgrantees enter the information into HMIS and fill out a HPRP program checklist indicating the services provided to each household, information collected to verify need, support services provided (case management and budgeting assistance), and how often a reassessment will be completed. Most subgrantees do a reassessment for households receiving prevention. PCHS does a reassessment every 3 months. YFA does reassessments each month because the rental assistance is provided on a month-to-month basis. Any time a family seeks additional assistance it is reassessed and its needs re-identified. Baycare also conducts reassessments monthly using a pared-down version of the assessment tool.

“But For” and “Sustainability” Rules

Assessment information collected by the subgrantees was not scored to determine whether a client would become homeless “but for” HPRP assistance; if a client qualified based on the screening and followed through with the assessment (and, for PCHS, the meetings with the social worker), that client received some services. Some subgrantees required households have some source of income to receive rental assistance. Most subgrantees used the financial information collected during screening, assessment, and meetings with the social worker determine the amount of financial assistance received by each family and the amount of rent a family was responsible for. Subgrantees did this to varying degrees; some provided the maximum assistance they could. Others estimated the minimum amount required to prevent homelessness for a particular household.

Prevention Activities

Under Pasco County's HPRP prevention program, households with an eviction notice could receive (1) rental assistance and arrears, (2) utility assistance and arrears (with 3-day shut-off notice at YFA and 2 weeks' notice at PCHS and Baycare), and (3) case management. Security deposits and utility arrears were offered by some subgrantees but not others.

Financial Assistance. Pasco County's prevention program provided families and individuals with rental assistance varying based on need and from what agency clients received assistance. Maximum assistance from any program was \$800 per month, with a lifetime maximum of \$8,000. PCHS and YFA provided 1 to 3 months of rental assistance. If rent was higher than the cap, the household paid the difference. If the rent was lower, both PCHS and YFA paid the full rent. Baycare generally served a harder-to-house population and provided between 1 and 6 months of rental assistance. If the caseworker determined at the end of the approved length of assistance the household could not sustain the housing, the case was transferred to PCHA. For clients coming from PCHS or YFA, PCHA provided an additional 1 to 3 months of HPRP assistance (for a total of 4 to 6 months). For clients coming from Baycare, PCHA provided an additional 1 to 6 months' assistance (for a total of 7 to 12 months). The original service provider continued to work with the household while PCHA provided the second interval of financial assistance.

Rental assistance could be a flat amount but more often was a declining subsidy over the course of assistance. No subgrantee identified a clear structure to how assistance was apportioned. However, clients were generally expected to increase their share of the rent over the course of the assistance, based on increased income.

All subgrantees provided utility assistance through HPRP. The Salvation Army was the only subgrantee to focus solely on utility payments. Most cases originating from the resource centers, 211, or PCCD that required only utility assistance were sent directly to Salvation Army.

In the first month of operation, HPRP assisted all households needing utility arrearages. On November 1, 2009, PCCD stopped paying utilities arrearages unless clients had a 3-day shut off notice; other clients were required to pay their own utility deposits. PCCD and the subgrantees worked with the three county utility companies to defer shutting off clients' utilities.

DATA AND MONITORING

PCCD monitored grant activities based on reimbursement requests. All reimbursement requests required a household name, a list of services provided, and the cost of those services. PCCD then checked the request against HMIS records, mostly to ensure each household received the minimum of 1 hour of case management. Pasco County CoC had been using a regional HMIS service (Pathways) and used this system for HPRP as well. Each subgrantee was to enter data into HMIS within 48 hours of a client meeting. PCCD frequently monitored HMIS to ensure subgrantees were keeping up on data entry.

PCCD collected information for HUD's annual and quarterly performance reviews, along with some exit data to see if the program prevented clients from returning to other homeless programs, but did not

work with the data much more than what HUD required. PCCD seemed genuinely interested in collecting and analyzing these data if funds were available to do so, and seemed eager to evaluate Pasco County's prevention program. PCHS conducted its own informal evaluation of the clients served through HPRP. A follow-up survey was developed and was administered 6, 9, or 12 months from exit to determine the client's status. In survey of 368 clients served (19 percent), 34 percent lived at the same address, 25 percent increased their income, 25 percent were "still ok" and maintaining the household expenses, 28 percent needed additional help, 8 percent required referrals to the state's employment office, and 14 percent needed assistance with budgeting.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Pasco County Community Development and Human Services divisions will continue to provide prevention assistance through ESG funds and in coordination with Students in Transition. With the HPRP funds depleted, the other subgrantees will not likely continue prevention activities absent some other source of dedicated funding.

Exhibit E.18: Pasco County, Florida, Prevention Overview, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program

	Persons		Households	
	#	%	#	%
Total served Year 1 ^a	659	100	525	100
Persons in families	630	96	—	—
Adults without children	29	4	—	—
HPRP services				
Rental assistance	—	—	266	51
Case management	—	—	288	55
Security/utility deposits	—	—	107	20
Outreach and engagement	—	—	0	0
Utility payments	—	—	146	28
Housing search/placement	—	—	0	0
Legal services	—	—	0	0
Credit repair	—	—	0	0
Motel and hotel vouchers	—	—	0	0
Moving cost assistance	—	—	2	<1
Destination ^b				
Total leavers	638	100	—	—
Homeless	12	2	—	—
Institutional setting	1	<1	—	—
Permanent housing with subsidy	2	<1	—	—
Permanent housing without subsidy	606	95	—	—
Family or friends	7	1	—	—

Source: Pasco County Community Development Division Annual Performance Report and Quarterly Performance Report Data, 2009 program start through September 30, 2010. Year 2 APR data is not included due to unresolved data inconsistencies and possible reporting errors.

— not applicable

^a Total served numbers may not add to 100 percent because the "children only" and "unknown" categories are not included in this table. Numbers may add to greater than 100 percent due to data reporting errors.

^b Destination numbers may not add to total leavers because the "other," "hotel/motel," "unknown," and "deceased" categories are not included in this table.

"Homeless" includes the following destinations: emergency shelter, TH for homeless persons, staying with friends (temporary tenure), staying with family (temporary tenure), place not meant for human habitation, safe haven, and hotel or motel paid by client.

"Institutional setting" includes foster care, psychiatric facility, substance abuse or detox facility, hospital (non-psychiatric), and jail or prison.

"Permanent housing" with subsidy includes housing owned by client with ongoing subsidy, rental by client with VASH subsidy, rental by client with other ongoing subsidy, and Permanent Supportive Housing for Homeless Persons.

"Permanent housing" without subsidy includes housing owned by client without ongoing subsidy and rental by client with no ongoing subsidy.

"Family or friends" includes living with family, permanent tenure or living with friends, permanent tenure.