

NAHRO MONITOR

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Center for Urban and Regional Studies Publishes Report on Moving to Work

The Center for Urban and Regional Studies (Center) has produced a report entitled *Moving to Innovation Second Interim Moving Forward Assessment*. The report is third in a series of interim assessments that the Center has created for the Charlotte Housing Authority (CHA) on its implementation of the Moving to Work (MtW) program entitled Moving Forward (MF). The report both provides an assessment of the program as implemented and offers recommendations.

The report details the success of several MF initiatives including rent reforms, work requirements and supportive services, and other newer initiatives. The report also looks at implementation and outcomes of these programs as well as recommendations for CHA moving forward.

The report found that CHA staff felt that the biggest benefit of MtW participation was the single fund flexibility. This allowed CHA to meet new challenges, pilot new innovative programs, and improve the efficiency of existing programs. The MtW program has allowed the staff to streamline operations and deliver services in cost-effective ways. One of the drawbacks to MtW participation, staff felt, was recently implemented standardized metrics. These are required by HUD to “[report] the effectiveness of [MtW] initiatives.” While staff understood the need for data collection, they questioned the metrics chosen and the gathering of data after the fact.

One of the initiatives that the study looked at were rent reforms implemented by CHA. The study looked at minimum rents, banded rents, incentive accounts, biennial recertification, and hardship policies. The study found that when CHA increased its minimum rents from \$50 to \$75, the staff found that the transition went smoothly. Most tenants felt, by an overwhelming majority of 87 percent, that a \$75 minimum rent was either “about right” or “not high enough.” The study also looked at incentive accounts. Residents whose yearly incomes fall between \$12,500 and \$35,000

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Rep. Maxine Waters to Speak at Conference



Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-Tex.) will speak at the 2015 NAHRO National Conference and Exhibition during the Plenary Session on Friday, October 16, at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Congresswoman Waters serves as the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Financial Services and as a member of the Steering & Policy Committee. She is also a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and

member and past chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

For more information or to register for the conference, please visit: www.nahro.org/2015-national-conference-exhibition. ■

Boehner Resigns; Shutdown Unlikely

House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) announced his resignation from Congress on Friday, September 25, all but ending speculation that the government will shut down on October 1. The Speaker was placed in a difficult position by his own party. Conservative members threatened to challenge his position as Speaker if he moved forward with a spending bill that did not have a provision to remove government funding of Planned Parenthood, but such a bill could not pass the Senate and would not be signed by the President, putting the government at risk of yet another shutdown. Though the situation is still fluid and could change, the Speaker is expected to introduce a “clean” continuing resolution (CR) without the Planned Parenthood policy provision, a bill that will pass the House easily with Democratic support and will pass the Senate, likely averting a shutdown. The CR will fund the government through December 11 and is expected to be approved just days before the new fiscal year. The Speaker’s resignation is effective October 30, 2015.

NAHRO is following the situation and will provide updated coverage as events progress.

Questions or comments? Please contact Tess Hembree at thembree@nahro.org. ■

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Census Bureau Reports: Income and Poverty Rates Remain Unchanged

According to two newly released annual Census Bureau reports, 14.8 percent of Americans, or 46.7 million people, were living in poverty in 2014. Even though the poverty rate is down from its peak of 15.1 percent in 2010, this new figure marks the fourth consecutive year in which the poverty rate has remained unchanged. The Office of Management and Budget defined the poverty threshold level as less than \$24,230 for a family of four in 2014, and less than \$12,071 for an individual. Additionally, last year the real median household income in the United States was \$53,657, making this the third consecutive year in which household incomes have remained stagnant. Furthermore, in a comparison to household income over the last seven years, the Census report finds that the 2014 household income figure is 6.5 percent lower than the 2007, pre-recession figure.

While there has been no significant change in poverty and household income in our nation last year, the Census does report a significant decline in the number of Americans without health insurance coverage. In 2013, there were 41.8 million (13.3 percent) people without health insurance. By 2014, that figure dropped to 33 million (10.4 percent). This change in coverage is the largest percentage point decline of uninsured people in the last seven years, and it is largely attributed to the insurance-related provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

This month, the Census also released its Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) report. This is the first time the Census has released the SPM report alongside the official income and poverty report. The SPM differs from the official poverty measure by accounting for expenditures for basic necessities, geographic differences for housing cost, and receipt of family benefits from public assistance programs. The more complex SPM uses these additional economic indicators to “provide a deeper understanding” of economic well-being. For 2014, the SPM reported 48.4 million people in poverty – higher than the official poverty figure. The SPM also enables researchers to measure how certain government programs may be reducing poverty. For example, by incorporating refundable tax credits (Earned Income Tax Credit, the refundable portion of the child tax credit) into the SPM, the poverty rate for 2014 was 15.3 percent, rather than 18.4 percent, if such federal tax credits were excluded. While the SPM provides a broader understanding of poverty, it will not replace the official poverty measure. Read more about the Census reports online at: www.census.gov.

Questions or comments? Email Jenny Hsu at jhsu@nahro.org. ■



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New Study Released on Work Requirements in Public Housing

The Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill recently released the report *Work Requirements in Public Housing: Impacts on Tenant Employment and Evictions*. The paper evaluates the Charlotte Housing Authority’s (CHA) work requirement policy and compares the employment and eviction rates between those subject to the work requirement and a comparison group not subject to the policy. As a Moving to Work (MtW) agency, the CHA’s work requirement policy differs slightly from those mandated by the 1998 Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA). The CHA policy requires “work-able” households—non-elderly and non-disabled—at five of its 15 public housing developments to work 15 hours a week or face rent sanctions, such as rent increases and eventual eviction. Residents may use “work-related activities” to fulfill the requirements, such as community service, educational courses and/or job training. The CHA provided case management and supportive services for two years prior to the implementation of the policy to help ensure residents would be able to comply. The CHA continued providing these services after policy implementation as well.

Using the percentage of households paying the minimum rent (\$75 for the CHA) as a proxy for unemployment, the study found that larger decreases in minimum rents occurred among households living in developments with work requirements than those not subject to the policy. Although employment increased, the average hours worked among employed households did not. The study did not find evidence that the sanctions imposed by the CHA for noncompliance increased evictions or other negative move-outs. This is most likely attributed to the CHA’s emphasis on helping tenants reach compliance instead of more punitive approaches. Although the study acknowledged the arguments in support of and against work requirements, it found that more than 80 percent of CHA residents expressed general support for the policy so long as the policy maintained a degree of flexibility. This included both residents that were impacted by the policy and those that were not.

The report cautions against drawing general conclusions from the study. The study was not based on a random-controlled experimental design and as such could be biased. Moreover, the study did not account for potential impacts of work requirements on mental or physical health, children’s behaviors, or other outcomes, and due to time restraints, only observed short-term outcomes and not long-term impacts. The CHA’s efforts to provide case management and supportive services before and during implementation, assistance to help residents meet compliance, and a degree of flexibility in policy were critical to its implementation. The costs and logistical challenges of providing these key components could prove challenging for non-MtW agencies.

For more information, please contact Eric Oberdorfer, NAHRO’s Policy Advisor, at 202-580-7213. ■

MtW Report, cont'd

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receive contributions of \$10 to \$50 to their incentive accounts. Residents have two years from when contributions end to leave assisted housing to receive 100 percent of their accrued deposits. The report found that many residents were not aware of their incentive accounts or how much money was in them.

The study looked at several other rent reform initiatives. CHA expanded its biennial recertification policy, where before it only applied to certain elderly and disabled clients, it now applies to all clients. If residents' incomes increase between recertification, their rents do not increase, but if their incomes decrease, they may ask for a recertification and a reduction in terms. CHA also uses banded rents, which calculate rents at the lower range of \$2,500 income bands. CHA hopes that these bands will encourage residents to pro-actively try to increase their incomes without having the additional income immediately go towards rent. CHA also believes that the bands will help to simplify rent calculations. The interim report notes that two-thirds of residents understood banded rents "somewhat well," "a little," or "not at all."

CHA also instituted a work requirement and supportive services program. Since the last report by the Center, two changes have occurred. First, CHA has changed the supportive services so that case managers are only asked to provide services to heads of households. Case managers are now expected to refer clients to social services in a model called "assess and refer." This change has allowed the amount of cases reviewed by case managers to increase by 30 to 70 percent. Case managers report that they are still able to meet residents' needs. The second change is that CHA has started to enforce the work requirements. Most case managers and property managers believe that enforcing work requirements has been the most effective motivator for residents to increase their work efforts.

Additionally, CHA has implemented three new miscellaneous programs. The first allows CHA developments with both public housing and project-based voucher units to use either program's regulations with respect to tenant selection, grievances, housing inspections, and termination procedures. The next allows public housing tenants in mixed-income communities who are paying ceiling or market rent for six months to "graduate" from the program, but remain in their units. The third is the High-Performing Unit (HPU) program, which allows Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) units that pass two consecutive inspections to qualify for biennial inspections if the landlord enrolls in a certification seminar.

The Moving Forward program has expanded housing choice. From 2008 to 2014, there has been a 28 percent increase in the number of housing opportunities offered by CHA. This increase involved all types of housing opportunities including public housing units, project-based HCV units, LIHTC affordable housing, market rate units, and tenant-based HCV units. In percentage terms, the greatest increase was seen in project-based HCVs.

The report also found that clients were satisfied with their development and CHA management. Eighty-nine percent of respondents said that they were either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the way that housing authority staff treated them. When asked open ended questions about things that should be changed, the residents wanted to have an improved understanding

of the MF program, expanding services and case management to more developments, and providing better security and rule enforcement. Many residents also stated that they would like to see programming expanded for children and the elderly and disabled.

The report made several recommendations. The report recommended that to help residents better understand some reforms, such as banded rents and biennial recertifications, CHA should undertake additional tenant outreach efforts. The report also recommended that CHA send periodic incentive account balances to tenants so that they have a better understanding of the money in their incentive accounts. The report noted that between 2008 and 2014, the number of four and five bedroom public housing units has declined by 30 and 69 percent respectively. The report recommends incorporating larger units into its development. The report recommends that CHA expand its collaboration with organizations that prepare children of public housing residents for economic success. The report recommended that CHA "continue to pursue new revenue opportunities." Finally, the report made numerous other recommendations.

Moving to Innovation Second Interim Moving Forward Assessment can be found at: <https://curs.unc.edu/files/2015/09/Moving-Forward-2nd-Interim-report.pdf>.

Questions? Contact Tushar Gurjal at tgurjal@nahro.org. ■

CLASSIFIED ADS

HOUSING COMPLIANCE COORDINATOR

Salary: \$25.48 - \$35.67 Hourly DOQ. Under the direction of the Housing Compliance Manager, the Housing Compliance Coordinator for the Housing Department of the Housing Authority ("Agency") will have the primary day-to-day responsibility to conduct comprehensive review and research of rental assistance client case files to ensure eligibility and compliance, and schedule and conduct audit unit inspections to ensure Housing Quality Standards (HQS) are met. Receive referrals of alleged housing program fraud or abuse, coordinate and conduct interviews regarding allegations of potential fraud and counsel clients, issue official warning or notices of intent to terminate housing assistance, if deemed appropriate. Establish formal repayment agreements for restitution, and monitor and track all repayment agreements, arrange the issuance and signing of the repayment agreements and collect and record payments received, and forward the payments to the Finance Department. Education and/or Experience: Bachelor's degree in social work, psychology, sociology, business administration or related field; and a minimum of four (4) years related experience and training. Experience and/or program knowledge of Section 8 and affordable housing programs preferred. **Contact:** <http://www.hacsc.org>

SENIOR MANAGER OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Salary Range: \$90,200 - \$135,300 Annualized DOQ. Under the direction of the Director of Housing, the Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives serves as a member of the senior management team and has the responsibility to plan, direct, coordinate, supervise and manage directly and/or through subordinate supervisory staff the activities in the assigned Division of the Housing Department for the Housing Authority ("Agency"), and will also serve as a resource for staff development and training. The Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives is to strengthen and maintain the Agency's wide range of existing relationships with other governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, community groups, and other stakeholders; build and cultivate partnerships to support the Agency's