

Central Intake and HMIS Prove Keys to Successful HPRP Implementation

Positive Stories / Lessons Learned from HPRP: *Community Success Story*

HPRP Grantee:	City of Buffalo
CoC Name and Number:	NY-508 Buffalo/Erie County CoC

Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	382	Total persons in TH:	365
Total persons in Safe Haven:	13	Total unsheltered persons:	178
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	938		

When HPRP first came out, the Homeless Alliance of Western New York, Inc. (Homeless Alliance) knew there was a great need in Buffalo for these funds. Households on the brink of homelessness and those who only recently became homeless needed more services than the Homeless Alliance could offer them, and HPRP was the chance to change that. The novelty and complexity of its regulations also necessitated collaboration; in order to meet the diverse set of client needs that existed, the community would have to use HPRP as an opportunity to create more effective ways of finding the "right" clients and getting them the most appropriate services. The community believes that what made HPRP so successful in Buffalo was the fact that the homeless services community came together and developed the plan for implementing HPRP.

The central phone intake system that was developed exemplifies the collaboration that the City of Buffalo and its nine subgrantees undertook together, to implement HPRP. One agency completed initial screening over the phone, and a legal services organization assessed clients for mainstream benefit eligibility and followed up. Intake staff then referred them to one of the seven case management agencies

to complete applications. By doing this, clients could be referred to the agency that would best meet their needs, clients never needed to shop around for assistance, and their HPRP eligibility was uniformly assessed.

The Homeless Alliance also integrated the HMIS system into the intake process and every step thereafter of HPRP service provision. Case managers scanned and uploaded all eligibility documentation into HMIS, then added case notes and further documentation as necessary. They also used HMIS to request financial assistance, which a central finance agency approved after reviewing a client's documentation electronically. This also served as a system of checks and balances to ensure that the funds were being spent properly.

After such a successful experience with HPRP, the Homeless Alliance "opened" the HMIS to include names and last four digits of SSNs. This more effectively prevents duplicate entries, and some of the providers are now requesting that the Homeless Alliance open the system further to allow client-level data sharing between providers. Understanding the advantages of using HMIS as a recordkeeping and reporting tool has been an unexpected benefit of HPRP, and the continued and improved use of HMIS throughout the community will ensure quicker service and efficient utilization of resources.

The City of Buffalo's HPRP implementation required a very close collaboration that was widely recognized and inspirational to the community. With consistent implementation among subgrantees, the Homeless Alliance has been able to provide accurate data on the success of the program. It also provides a model for the use of ESG funds for homelessness prevention, and the collaborative effort built lasting working relationships that will be maintained for the long run. Dale Zuchlewski, Executive Director of the Homeless Alliance, sums up the successes that the community found through its implementation of HPRP: "When we pull together, we can accomplish a lot more than we could individually – this is one of the goals of HEARTH, and essential to serve our community members in need."

For more information, contact Dale Zuchlewski, Homeless Alliance of Western New York, Inc. at 716-853-1101 or Zuchlewski@wnyhomeless.org.