



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

August 23, 2013

THE BRIDGE



Housing Counseling Rocks for Seniors!



Innovative Programs That Empower Older Adults

By Suzanne Isaacs, HUD Office of Housing Counseling

The National Council on Aging's (NCOA) mission is to improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. Today, one in three older adults is economically vulnerable, and three in four cope with multiple chronic conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, or arthritis. The economic recession has hit these seniors hard, and a lifetime of work has turned into a daily struggle to stay healthy and make ends meet.

Every day can be a challenge to pay for medical expenses, utility bills, food, housing, and transportation. NCOA offers a holistic approach to help these older adults stay healthy and secure in their own homes and communities. They are a national voice for programs and policies working with thousands of community organizations that serve older adults across the country.

NCOA has developed innovative programs and services that empower older adults to take an active role in improving their own housing, health and economic security by partnering with corporations, government agencies, and foundations to accomplish their mission.

Through its programs, NCOA has significantly improved the health or economic security of more than 500,000 people from July 2011 through June 2012 by collaborating with over 2,000 community partners in the 50 states, DC, and territories that enabled them to achieve this social impact across a number of critical areas.

Home Equity

NCOA's federally approved Reverse Mortgage Counseling Services Network—spread across 18 states— offers unbiased information to help older homeowners determine if a reverse mortgage is right for them. In the past year:

- NCOA counseled 6,522 older homeowners about reverse mortgages, and provided 1,703 reverse mortgage borrowers with default mitigation counseling to help them find solutions to their delinquencies in property taxes and insurance.
- Over 800 HUD-approved reverse mortgage counselors nationwide used NCOA's Financial Interview Tool to help 82,262 older homeowners assess the suitability of a reverse mortgage for their situation.
- Over 23,000 people visited [NCOA's Home Equity Advisor](#) website and more than 2,400 completed a Quick Check on the site to assess their immediate housing needs.

NCOA recognizes that staying in one's home is not enough – often low-income seniors need further assistance to afford their health care, utilities, and daily living expenses, as well

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FROM THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Sarah Gerecke
*Deputy Assistant
Secretary
Office of Housing*

Greetings,

While many of us are taking our final summer vacations before the school year begins for children and youth across the country, this edition of *'The Bridge'* focuses on a very important population, our seniors.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 40.3 million people were 65 and older in the United States in 2010, accounting for 13 percent of the total population. This age group was larger than in any other decennial census, up from 31.2 million in 1990 and 35.0 million in 2000. The projected population of seniors, 65 and older in 2050 is 85 million, which will be 20 percent of the total population.

As people are living longer, HUD is committed to ensuring that our seniors have affordable supportive housing and access to programs that help them age in place. HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan said, "The Obama Administration is committed to helping our senior citizens and persons with disabilities find an affordable place to live that is close to needed healthcare services and transportation."

In this edition of *'The Bridge,'* we feature organizations such as the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and housing counseling agencies such as the Boulder County Housing Authority, the Brighton Center, Senior Citizens United Community Services, Inc., and Little Dixie Community Action Agency, that provide innovative programs and services benefitting seniors.

We learn more about the Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) or FHA's reverse mortgage program including how it can give older Americans greater financial security and how more housing counselors can become HECM certified. We also get an update on the outcome and lessons learned from a recent HUD HECM foreclosure prevention pilot in partnership with several organizations and government agencies including the NCOA, the National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association (NRMLA), and Health and Human Services (HHS) - Area Agencies on Aging (AAA).

There are many resources available for our seniors and those of us who support them with information and services. We have included a resource page that provides easily accessible links to senior resources at HUD and beyond.

Keep up the good work and enjoy your vacation!

~Sarah

HOUSING COUNSELING ROCKS, cont.

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as to find ways to maximize their income, either through better budgeting or additional sources, and minimize the symptoms of chronic conditions. Through identification of benefits, economic casework, employment assistance, and chronic disease self-management programs, NCOA helps older adults to remain healthy and independent for as long as possible.



Benefits

- [NCOA's Online BenefitsCheckUp® tool](#) is a free and confidential resource that enables older adults and their family members to search for thousands of public and private benefits that help pay for prescriptions, health care, food, and more. Last year, NCOA and their community partners helped more than 340,000 individuals apply for and receive nearly \$865 million in benefits.
- [BenefitsCheckUp®](#) helped 180,000 of these individuals apply for and receive more than \$380 million in benefits.
- **NCOA's Community Partners** helped 160,000 individuals apply for and receive more than \$485 million in benefits.

Personal Economic Action Plans

In the past year:

- NCOA's community partners helped more than 2,400 older adults who are struggling financially to assess their options, develop action plans, and connect to services and benefits that improved their economic well-being.
- 500 older adults received financial education using NCOA's [Savvy Saving Seniors™](#) toolkits (available at www.ncoa.org/SavvySeniors).

Jobs

In the past year:

- As a national sponsor of the [Senior Community Service Employment Program](#) (SCSEP), NCOA provided job training and assistance to 4,396 low-income older workers who served 2.4 million hours of community service in nonprofit agencies.
- Over 840 of these older workers were placed into permanent jobs.
- Over 100 older adults were placed in jobs supporting environmental initiatives through the [Senior Environmental Employment](#) program.

Chronic Conditions

In the past year:

- More than 100,000 older adults participated in nearly 4,600 Chronic Disease Self-Management Program community workshops nationwide.
- Approximately 30,500 older adult clients at 114 sites in 27 states participated in evidence-based community depression care management programs, nearly double the previous year.
- More than 2,000 adults participated in nearly 100 online self-management workshops.
- NCOA also successfully advocated for \$10 million in new federal funding for chronic disease self-management programs.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, the National Council on Aging plans to:

- Increase use of NCOA's consumer oriented economic security resources, including [BenefitsCheckUp®](#), [Home Equity Advisor](#), and Savvy Saving Seniors™ financial education toolkits.
- Bring to scale innovations in benefits outreach and enrollment to reach broader geographic areas and populations.
- Expand their network of Economic Security Service Centers to enable more vulnerable older adults to receive personalized, one-on-one assistance.
- Provide targeted outreach to the population turning 65, so they can access the necessary resources and support to remain healthy and in their homes for as long as possible.

For more information, visit www.ncoa.org or contact:

Amy Ford

Director, Reverse Mortgage Counseling Services Network

National Council on Aging

amy.ford@ncoa.org



INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

What is the Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) and How Does It Benefit Seniors?

The Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) is the Federal Housing Administration's (FHA) reverse mortgage program that lets borrowers convert a portion of the equity in their homes into cash. The equity that has built up over years of making mortgage payments can be paid to the homeowner. However, unlike a traditional home equity loan or second mortgage, HECM borrowers do not have to repay the loan until the homeowner no longer uses the home as their principal residence or fail to meet the obligations of the mortgage.

The benefits of a reverse mortgage include the ability to withdraw equity in a fixed monthly amount or a line of credit or a combination of both. Borrowers can also use a HECM to purchase a primary residence if the cash on hand can be used to pay the difference between the reverse mortgage proceeds and the sales price plus closing costs for the property being purchased.



HECM Borrower Requirements

- Be 62 years of age or older
- Own the property outright or paid-down considerably
- Occupy the property as your principal residence
- Not be delinquent on any federal debt
- Participate in a consumer information session given by a HUD-approved HECM counselor

Property Requirements

Must meet **all** FHA property standards and flood requirements:

- Single family home or 2-4 unit home with one unit occupied by the borrower
- HUD-approved condominium project
- Manufactured home that meets FHA requirements

Financial Requirements

- Income, assets, monthly living expenses, and credit history may be verified.
- Timely payment of real estate taxes, hazard and flood insurance premiums may be verified.

Visit [HECM Requirements](#) for more information on the reverse mortgage program.

What Is Required to Become a HECM Counselor?



The screenshot shows the HUD.GOV website for HECM Counseling Agencies. It includes the HUD logo, the text 'U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development' and 'Secretary Shaun Donovan'. Below this is the title 'HECM Counseling Agencies' and a search form with fields for Agency Name, City, State (set to 'All States'), and Zip Code. A 'Sorted By' dropdown menu is also visible.

Approximately 418 agencies nationwide and 1248 counselors are HUD-approved to provide reverse mortgage or HECM counseling. This number includes all branches, subgrantees, and affiliates of parent entities and locally approved housing counseling agencies.

Interested in expanding your agency's services to include HECM or reverse mortgage counseling?

1. First, at least one of your housing counselors must **pass [HUD's HECM certification examination](#)**.
2. Next, **submit a revised agency work plan** to your HUD Office of Housing Counseling Point of Contact to add HECM counseling. The revision should include data on why there is a need in your service area, delivery formats (in-person, telephone, or other method), fees, and details about the HECM counseling your agency will offer including how you will follow the Counseling Protocol.
3. Once approved, **HUD HECM roster counselors may offer counseling nationwide** only if the agency's housing counseling work plan has been HUD approved for that service area.

Adding more HECM approved agencies and counselors will greatly benefit seniors and provide them with more options for staying in their homes.

Visit [HECM counseling](#) to get more information on the certification examination.

OUT AND ABOUT AROUND THE NATION



Lessons Learned in HECM Foreclosure Prevention Pilot

By Michael Levine, HUD Housing Program Officer, Philadelphia Homeownership Center

Philadelphia, PA- HUD became aware of the high incidence of Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) tax and hazard insurance (T & I) related defaults and foreclosures and decided to take action. In 2011, HUD began requiring that default letters from servicers inform delinquent borrowers about opportunities for property charge default counseling. Unfortunately, less than 20 percent of eligible borrowers responded to the letters.

The Philadelphia HUD Office and Homeownership Center working with HUD's National Servicing Center, developed a pilot to help property charge delinquent HECM borrowers in the Philadelphia area including – Philadelphia, Montgomery, Delaware, Bucks and Chester Counties – remain in their homes or achieve a soft landing with alternate housing.

In 2012, HUD lined up experienced partners to launch the pilot including the National Council on Aging (NCOA), National Foundation for Debt Management (NFD), National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association (NRMLA), Health & Human Services (HHS)-Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), and four servicers.

The Process

HECM housing counselors and servicers contacted borrowers via phone and mail to offer assistance and to request their participation in the pilot. Interested borrowers signed authorizations to permit the servicer to release their information to the NCOA and other HUD partners. For borrowers who did not respond, counselors attempted home visits, if the Privacy Act permitted.

Working with the borrower on their budget, the NCOA-National Foundation for Debt Management counselor helped to determine if there was a plan of action to prevent foreclosure. All efforts were made to ensure that the client stayed in the home, if that was the preference. After working on the budget, counselors referred clients to the:

- **Benefits Data Trust (BDT)**, which assesses eligibility for additional public benefits with State and Federal agencies.
- **County AAA** for assistance with local resources and face-to-face support, if needed.
- **Lender or Servicer** to review proposed repayment plan, if feasible, so the borrower could stay in the home.

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Boulder County
Colorado

Aging Does Not Have to Mean Loss of Independence

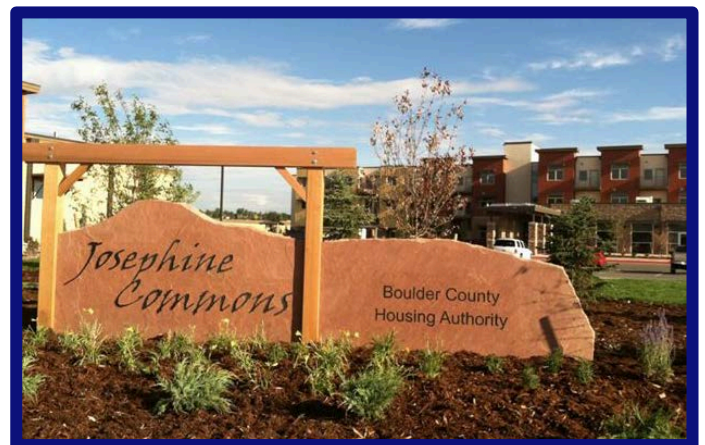
By Tonja Ahijevych, Housing Counseling Program Coordinator, BCHA

Boulder, CO- Nearly 34,000 people in Boulder County, CO are over the age of 65. Boulder County Housing Authority (BCHA), a division of the Boulder County Department of Housing & Human Services, provides a unique integration of specialized housing and social services for seniors, many of whom live on a fixed income.

Seniors can receive housing assistance through Housing Choice Vouchers, allowing them to choose housing within their community of choice and/or through affordable properties owned and managed by BCHA.

In response to the growing housing need for seniors, BCHA offers nine housing developments throughout the County specifically for Senior (age 55+) and Elderly (age 62+) residents. This includes the newest development, Josephine Commons (J.C.), completed in August 2012 and fully-leased upon opening. J.C. is Phase I of this community, which includes 70 apartments and two duplexes, community rooms, a full-kitchen with Meals on Wheels service, and a community garden. Phase II, to be completed in Fall 2014, will offer family housing for self-sufficiency program participants and seniors.

To further meet the needs of seniors, BCHA Housing & Community Education (BCHA - HCE) offers free individual counseling and education in areas of financial literacy, housing, reverse mortgage, and linkage to community programs. The focus is to provide the community with education, resources, direction, and empowerment to make choices around housing and finances that improve and maintain self-sufficiency.



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OUT AND ABOUT AROUND THE NATION, cont.

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Featured BCHA programs for seniors include:

- **Boulder County's Project HOPE:** Offers assistance to frail older adults to help them live with dignity and security through rental assistance, care coordination, and support services including transportation, home-delivered meals, and adult day-care.
- **Boulder County Aging Services:** Provides caregiving, respite, long-term care, Medicare counseling, wellness and nutrition assistance, LGBT services, rental assistance, and more.
- **Senior Tax Deferral:** Allows Colorado seniors to postpone tax payments until they sell their property, or their estate is settled after their death.
- **Senior Tax Exemption:** Establishes a property tax exemption for qualifying senior citizens, and surviving spouses of senior citizens who previously qualified.
- **Senior Tax Worker Program:** An opportunity for seniors to earn money equivalent to the Boulder County-designated portion of their property taxes (up to \$1,000). Seniors must own property in Boulder County and live at the location where the taxes are due.

Health & Safety Coverage Programs:

- **The Medicare Savings Program:** Covers Medicare Part B premiums, and may cover co-pays.
- **Old Age Pension:** Provides cash benefits and in some cases Medicaid for those 60 and older who have little or no income.
- **Home Care Allowance:** Pays a caregiver to provide health-related services (*must be medically screened*).
- **Working Adults with Disabilities:** Provides a Medicaid purchase option for working adults with a qualifying disability.
- **Adults without Dependent Children:** Medicaid is available to low-income adults between 19 and 64 years old who do not have a dependent child living in the home with them.
- **Long-Term Medicaid:** Assistance for adults and children who need long-term support to remain in their home, or who need nursing home care (*must be medically screened*).

Other Services:

- **Adult Protection:** Our staff investigates reports of abuse, neglect (including self-neglect), and financial exploitation of at-risk adults who are unable to protect themselves due to a physical or mental limitation. We can help arrange some limited short-term or emergency services, provide case coordination and short-term case management, and help coordinate or provide guardianship or representative payee services, and referral information.

For more information on Boulder County Housing Authority and their programs for seniors, visit www.bouldercounty.org.

Seniors Tackle Tough Community Issues with Volunteer Network

By Stephanie Stiene, Financial Services Director, Brighton Center, Inc.



Brighton, KY- Since 1966, Brighton Center has served as an innovative leader that strengthens the vitality of the community and engages people as they work and live to achieve their hopes and dreams. From modest beginnings, Brighton Center has grown to provide a uniquely comprehensive range of programs and services including family and work supports; financial and homeownership; workforce development; substance abuse recovery; early childhood education; and neighborhood based programs including housing development.

Brighton Center also provides targeted services for seniors such as reverse mortgage counseling and the following programs:

- **Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)** is America's largest volunteer network for people 55 and older. RSVP is comprised of nearly 500,000 volunteers across the country who tackle tough issues in their communities. The program offers a full range of volunteer opportunities with many local non-profit organizations to:
 - Organize neighborhood watch programs
 - Tutor and mentor disadvantaged or disabled youth
 - Renovate homes
 - Teach English to immigrants
 - Assist victims of natural disasters.

Funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, volunteers choose how, where, and how often they want to serve.

- **Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP)** empowers seniors through increased awareness and understanding of protecting themselves from the economic and health-related consequences of Medicare and Medicaid fraud, error and abuse. The SMP also serves to enhance the financial, emotional, physical, and mental well-being of older adults – thereby increasing their capacity to maintain security and independence in retirement, and to make better financial and healthcare choices.

Brighton Center offers financial education (and scam awareness) in group settings to seniors, as well as, support services to make sure their basic needs are met so they can age in place.

For more information on current RSVP volunteer opportunities, visit www.brightoncenter.org or contact Stephanie Stiene, Financial Services Director at 859.491.8303, ext. 2324.

INQUIRING MINDS WHAT TO KNOW

What Housing Assistance is Available for Seniors Seeking Affordable Rental Housing?

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCED \$749 MILLION TO FUND HOUSING FOR VERY LOW-INCOME SENIORS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

[Washington, DC](#) – Thousands more very low-income senior citizens and persons with disabilities now have access to affordable supportive housing thanks to \$749 million in housing assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These grants helped non-profit organizations produce accessible housing, offer rental assistance, and facilitate supportive services for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The grant funding awarded under HUD's Sections 202 and 811 Supportive Housing programs kick started construction or major rehabilitation on more than 189 housing developments in 42 states and Puerto Rico. When complete, more than 4,800 elderly households and persons with disabilities will have been affordably housed with access to needed services.

"The Obama Administration is committed to helping our senior citizens and persons with disabilities find an affordable place to live that is close to needed healthcare services and transportation," said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. "Recent bipartisan changes to these two supportive housing programs will allow us to better serve some of our more vulnerable populations who would otherwise be struggling to find a safe and decent home of their own."

Enacted in early 2011 with strong bipartisan support, the *Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act* and the *Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Act* provided needed enhancements and reforms to both programs. Nonprofit grant recipients will now receive federal assistance that is better connected to state and local health care investments, allowing greater numbers of vulnerable elderly and disabled individuals to access the housing they need even more quickly.

[Section 202 - Supportive Housing for the Elderly](#) provides very low-income elderly persons, 62 years or older with the opportunity to live independently in an environment that provides support services to meet their unique needs. Nearly 400,000 homes for low-income elderly households have been produced to date from Section 202, which is currently the only federal program that expressly addresses this need for affordable elderly housing.

By funding research to identify 'promising practices' in partnership with Health & Human Services (HHS), HUD is evaluating existing



models of affordable housing with services for elderly populations.

Some of the innovative work in progress includes research on, "*Enhancing Aging in Place for Older Adults: Design of a Demonstration Program of Housing with Services.*" The Lewin Group and [Leading Age](#), an association of 6,000 not-for-profit organizations dedicated to making America a better place to grow old, are analyzing effective models of pairing affordable housing with supportive services that allow the elderly to age in place, which improves the quality of life and provides cost savings.

One of the programs in the study is "*Vermont's Support and Services at Home*" (SASH) program which:

- Provides place-based community health teams that coordinate care and long-term services and support.
- Focuses on reducing unnecessary Medicare and Medicaid expenditures.

The study will also compare outcomes of SASH participants in HUD housing to individuals who are not in HUD housing.

[Section 811- Project Rental Assistance](#) serves very low-income persons with disabilities and provides them with the opportunity to live independently in their communities by increasing the supply of rental housing with the availability of supportive services.

Benefits of Section 811 include:

- Helping vulnerable populations,
- Helping prevent and end homelessness among people with disabilities,
- Providing community living opportunities, and
- Expanding integrated permanent supportive housing options.

Get the latest information on [Section 202, Section 811 and other multifamily programs.](#)

OUT AND ABOUT AROUND THE NATION, cont.

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If no repayment plan was feasible, the counselor worked with the borrower and his/her family and friends, along with Area Agencies on Aging, to find suitable replacement housing and assist with relocation. By reaching out to subsidized and market rate housing providers, the counselor identified vacant units at affordable rents.

Pilot Results

By the end of the pilot in June 2013, counselors achieved a rate greater than 50% in developing feasible repayment plans for borrowers. Only 20% of borrowers were being prepared for a "soft landing." And the remainder were still in counseling.

Lessons Learned

With good counseling and flexible servicing, many borrowers can get back on track even if the loan was approved as due and payable. Major takeaways from the pilot include:

- Benefits enrollment, creative counseling and budgeting are key.
- Counselors and servicers need to partner to triage and fix salvageable loans.
- Each servicer deals uniquely with the seeming conflict between HUD deadlines/rules designed to reduce risk and not wanting to evict seniors.
- For a win-win, servicers should meet all HUD requirements and take judicious and creative advantage of flexibilities provided by the [FAQs to Mortgagee Letter \(ML\) 11-01](#).

More defaulted mortgagors can be helped, if they could be reached before they are due and payable

- Since few contact HCAs after receiving a default letter, we need better ways to connect them with counselors.
- All authorization forms signed by the mortgagor when first receiving HECM counseling should contain language allowing their contact information to be sent to the Property Charge Loss Mitigation (PCLM) default counselors, if default occurs.
- If such authorization existed, servicers would be in a position to alert PCLM counselors directly about a default.
- With upcoming Home Equity Reverse Mortgage Information Technology upgrades, HUD would be another option for such an alert if all servicers provide complete default data.

For more information on the HECM Pilot, visit www.ncoa.org.

Key Techniques to Assist HECM Borrowers

1. Enroll in benefits,
 - a. e.g., Medicare Savings Program, Supplemental Security Income
 - b. Weatherization & Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
2. Secure new insurance policy replacing forced place insurance.
3. Get live-in family members to commit funds
4. Get lenders to refund tax & hazard insurance overpayment
5. Bundle or forego internet, cable, or land line phone
6. Provide flexible enforcement on new monthly budget

HECM Pilot Success Story



Mrs. Harris had fallen behind on her T&I and was experiencing a \$600 monthly budget shortfall. She was in default for \$4,508.00 and agreed to participate in the HECM pilot program because she wanted to stay in her home.

After meeting with her NCOA-NFDM counselor to conduct a budget analysis, the counselor enrolled Mrs. Harris in a Repair Assistance Program to fix deferred maintenance at her home. After the repairs were made, Mrs. Harris was able to get rid of her forced placed insurance, resulting in cost savings.

Benefits Data Trust (BDT) enrolled Mrs. Harris in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or food stamp program to receive \$200 per month and Medicare, which saved her \$105 per month. In addition, she received a Low Income Subsidy (LIS) prescription co-pay reduction. Her lender agreed to an extended repayment plan from 12 to 24 months and Mrs. Harris' daughter agreed to pay her car expenses.

By participating in the HECM pilot program, getting counseling to manage her budget, and enrolling in benefit programs, Mrs. Harris was able to decrease her budget shortfall and successfully remain in her home to age in place.

RESOURCES FOR SENIORS

HUD.gov has a wealth of information to help housing counselors provide guidance to and find resources for their senior clients. Remember, only HUD HECM roster counselors can provide HECM counseling for seniors.

Information for Senior Citizens

Looking for housing options for yourself, an aging parent, relative, or friend? Do some research first to determine what kind of assistance or living arrangement you need.

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/information_for_senior_citizens

HUD Subsidized Low Rent Apartment Search by City and State

First select the state then a new menu will appear allowing further filtering by county and/or city and number of bedrooms. Leave zip code blank to get a complete list of HUD subsidized apartments in the city or county.

<http://www.hud.gov/apps/section8/index.cfm>

Find Your Local Public Housing Agency (PHA)

If you need **public housing** assistance or would like specific information about public housing programs such as **housing choice vouchers**, please contact your local Public Housing Agency.

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts

Understanding the HECM Program

Reverse mortgages are increasing in popularity with seniors who have equity in their homes and want to supplement their income.

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/housing/sfh/hecm/hecmhome

Counseling Guidelines for HECM Borrowers with Delinquent Property Taxes/Insurance

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=ohc_guidelossmit.pdf

National organizations and government agencies providing senior housing information and resources include:



Senior Citizens' Resources

Government resources for seniors on money, housing, health, consumer protection, and more

<http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Seniors.shtml>



Real Possibilities

Before entering into a reverse mortgage agreement educate yourself, consult with trusted advisors and understand the pros and cons

http://www.aarp.org/money/credit-loans-debt/reverse_mortgages/



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Administration for Community Living (ACL)

Structured to provide general policy coordination while retaining unique programmatic operations specific to the needs of each population we serve.

http://www.acl.gov/Get_Help/Help_Older_Adults/Index.aspx



National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association
Reverse Mortgage Calculator

Your Guide to Reverse Mortgages
<http://eldercare.gov/Eldercare.NET/Public/Index.aspx>

eldercare locator

— Celebrating 20 Years —
Connecting You to Community Services

A public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging (AOA) connecting you to services for older adults and their families. Reach us at 1-800-677-1116.

<http://eldercare.gov/Eldercare.NET/Public/Index.aspx>

CHAMPIONS OF SERVICE



Ruby Gann has worked as a housing counselor with Little Dixie Community Action Agency (LDCAA) in Choctaw County, OK for more than seven years. In addition to her housing counseling duties, Ms. Gann takes the lead in reporting, tracking and evaluating counseling activities agency-wide and ensures all LDCAA counselors are in compliance.

Ms. Gann truly has a passion for helping people and she exemplifies the Mission of Community Action: ***“Helping People. Changing Lives.”*** She is dedicated to every client she works with to help them achieve their dreams of homeownership. When clients present with credit issues, and/or other factors that negatively impact their goals, she simply WILL NOT give up on them. She will make repeated contacts to creditors until she successfully works out a plan of action. She maintains consistent contact with clients always offering encouraging words to keep them on track, refusing to allow them to give up on their dreams.

Ms. Gann is trained and certified to provide various types of counseling. However, her area of expertise and what she is exceptional in is credit counseling. She has a very successful track record of working with creditors and getting them to lower or in some cases, forgive debt.

For example, in 2010, a client applied to Little Dixie for housing through the HOME program for housing rehabilitation. At this time, Little Dixie was focusing on replacement of dilapidated homes that met with HUD's HOME program criteria. The family consisted of a 72-year old U.S. Veteran and his wife. Both were retired and living on a fixed income that met the low-income federal guidelines. Sadly, the applicant (Veteran) was also battling cancer. Although the HOME program did not require participants to have exceptional credit, it did require families

to have clear title on the property they owned.

A title search revealed a tax lien on the property, making the family ineligible until the penalties were paid. The amount due exceeded \$3,000 which was more than the family could afford, especially with the medical expenses. Furthermore, the family was adamant that they did not owe the debt.

The family was referred to Ms. Gann by the Rehab program director and upon review of their file, she was committed. They were an elderly couple who were living in very dilapidated housing. Their roof leaked throughout the home; in some areas - the floors had caved in and there were many other problems that made the home unsafe and impossible to heat and cool.

Ms. Gann immediately contacted the Tax Commission and began the process of trying to come to a resolution. It was a time-consuming and very difficult and unique situation. After a lot of hard work and collection of documentation, and due to the unique circumstances, Ms. Gann was able to have the debt completely waived.

The family had their old dilapidated home torn down and replaced with a brand new manufactured home that featured numerous energy savers and was much safer and affordable. The lowered utility costs equated to an increase in expendable income.

Ruby Gann is a Champion of Service, because, without question, her hard work, dedication and personal characteristics have resulted in many families achieving their dream of homeownership. She goes above and beyond what is required. She never complains and keeps her eye on the prize---getting families into a safe and affordable home.

She is an asset to Little Dixie and to her community and to every agency whose goal is to help people achieve their dreams and become homeowners.

**Congratulations Ruby Gann,
we honor you as a Champion of Service!**



THE BRIDGE is pleased to recognize Champions of Service who have provided exemplary service in the Housing Counseling arena, inside and outside of HUD. Nominations of persons both inside and outside of HUD are welcomed. Please send your nominations by the 20th of each month to:

thebridge@hud.aov.

SUCCESS STORY



Benefits Check Up Tool: Providing Access and Information to Life Changing Programs

By Roberta McQuaid Monou, HECM Counselor, SCUCS

Senior Citizens United Community Services, Inc. (SCUCS) is a non-profit agency that provides services that enhance the quality of life for senior citizens in Southern New Jersey, especially those with the greatest socio-economic need. SCUCS offers services such as:

- In-home Care,
- Geriatric Care,
- Housing Assistance,
- General Housing Counseling,
- HECM counseling,
- Camden County Nutrition Project,
- Emergency Services- 24 hour hotline,
- Financial Services,
- Recreation Trips, and
- Volunteer Opportunities.

Recently, SCUCS HECM counselor **Ms. Roberta McQuaid Monou** assisted a client who was at-risk due to a property tax related default. Ms. Barbara, a senior who lives alone in her own home, came into the office seeking housing assistance. She had worked for many years until she was diagnosed with cancer. The treatment helped Ms. Barbara to survive the disease, but ruined her teeth. She could not work while in treatment, which affected her finances. As a result of her illness, she also could not afford to buy needed dentures or pay her property taxes.

Ms. Barbara was unaware that due to her loss of income, she became eligible for many programs. After her initial meeting with Ms. Monou, she learned that there were more than 40 pages of programs available to her. When she returned for face-to-face counseling with Ms. Monou, they completed the *Benefits Check Up*, which alerted her to specific programs to meet her housing needs.

While her lender strongly directed Ms. Barbara to a fixed rate product, she really needed a resource that would last as long as she would. Through counseling, Ms. Monou was able to show Ms. Barbara all of her options and how they would play out in the future.

Ms. Barbara decided on a reverse mortgage which was directed to pay off her back taxes. She has a line of credit which will ensure that she can pay her taxes for many years to come. She also receives prescription drug assistance from PAAD (Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled) and utility assistance from Lifeline (Senior Citizens Utility Program), both offered in New Jersey. With her new benefits, Ms. Barbara was able to get her teeth fixed and is comfortable being seen outside of her home smiling again.

Ms. Barbara was so pleased with the results of her counseling services, she told her son about her experience and soon after, he met a senior waitress in a local diner. The waitress was struggling with financial issues and was not aware of possible senior entitlements.

He referred the waitress to Ms. Monou at SCUCS for assistance. Although the waitress was not a homeowner, Ms. Monou used the *Benefits Check Up* tool to guide her to numerous programs, which she could apply for to improve her financial condition. Now, she may be able to stop waitressing, which will help as she suffers from a bad back.

Helping one senior led to another being helped and I'm sure so many more. For information on SCUCS, visit www.scucs.org.



ON THE HORIZON



Upcoming Changes for HECM Counseling

Earlier this year, the Office of Housing Counseling convened a team to help strengthen the Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) Program and revise the HECM Protocol. To date, the team has produced several guidance listserv emails relating to HECM counseling such as: *lender steering and lender questions*, *guidance on thoroughness and depth of counseling sessions*, and *required use of Financial Interview Tool (FIT) and Benefits Check-Up (BCU)*. Additionally, the team issued guidance for HECM counselors in California in response to recent changes in their law requiring face-to-face counseling. We also reviewed and approved two HECM continuing education courses.

Now, the team is tackling HECM borrower issues such as mortgage defaults due to delinquent property taxes and hazard insurance. Working with FHA staff, the team recommended changes to HECM underwriting guidelines to address this problem. Proposed program changes may include new escrow requirements for taxes and insurance and expanded financial assessment by housing counselors for potential HECM mortgagors beyond the FIT analysis now used. Expect FHA to issue a mortgagee letter addressing changes to the HECM program in the next few months.

We are also working on HECM Protocol revisions to make HECM counseling more meaningful and complete for potential clients. Counseling must not only address program requirements, but the specific goals and client needs. Meaningful counseling should include all the potential avenues available to the client, not only a HECM loan to meet their specific needs and goals.

We will be seeking comments and feedback via focus groups including two upcoming virtual stakeholders meetings on HECM counseling on **September 4 and September 17, 2013**. Registration information will be sent via our Housing Counseling listserv. Comments and suggestions can also be submitted via email to Housing.Counseling@hud.gov. Please indicate **HECM Underwriting and Protocol Suggestions** in the subject line.

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