

Family Relocates for Educational Opportunity

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

HPRP Grantee:	State of North Carolina
CoC Name and Number:	NC-503 North Carolina Balance of State

Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	1,427	Total persons in TH:	879
Total persons in Safe Haven:	0	Total unsheltered persons:	681
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	2,987		

One family came to East Carolina Behavioral Health's (ECBH) HPRP while staying in a fishing shack - no potable water, not enough heat, no indoor shower or bath, and two very young children.

Unemployment and underemployment were serious barriers to increasing their income. Jackson*, the father, was trained as a firefighter through the military, but returning with bad experiences and PTSD from this role, he was adamant that he couldn't search for another firefighting job. He commuted to Virginia every day for the stronger job market, but the part-time jobs he had patched together weren't enough for the family to be self-sufficient. Trinity*, the mother, worked as well, but her wages didn't fill the gap between their state childcare subsidy and the cost of day care for the two kids.

HPRP financial assistance helped the family move into a trailer, but it wasn't a sustainable situation. Currituck County is home to North Carolina's Outer Banks, has a relatively high cost of living, and outrageously high rental prices. There are no subsidized units the case manager knew of, and Trinity and Jackson started talking about how and where he could utilize his VA benefits.

Under the GI Bill, Jackson could receive a housing allowance if enrolled in a college full-time. He identified an auto mechanic program in Tennessee that seemed worthwhile, and the school sent enrollment documentation to ECBH and the local Veterans Administration (VA). The case manager then reached out to Buffalo Valley, the nearest HPRP program in Tennessee. She sent Buffalo Valley the family's eligibility verification so they could charge housing searches and inspections as eligible expenses, and they returned all of the information she needed to work out rent reasonableness electronically. When they found a unit that passed, ECBH paid for their moving costs and deposits.

This plan was only possible with collaboration between North Carolina's and Tennessee's HPRP, Jackson's college, and the VA, and with Jackson and Trinity's courage to make such a big change for the sake of gaining housing stability. The housing allowance from the VA is more than enough to cover rent and basic utilities, and the family is getting linked to the appropriate mainstream benefits while Trinity searches for a job. When Jackson finishes with school, he can apply his education and training to get a job almost anywhere, and they'll be in a location where they have manageable living expenses and commensurate earning power.

**Names have been changed for confidentiality.*

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