

Rental Assistance and Compassion Empower a Florida Woman to Get Back on Her Feet

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

HPRP Grantee:	City of Pompano Beach Office of Housing and Urban Development, FL
CoC Name and Number:	FL-601 Ft. Lauderdale/Broward County CoC

Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	1,005	Total persons in TH:	1,493
Total persons in Safe Haven:	35	Total unsheltered persons:	1,268
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	3,801		

“I can see how people look down on her,” said Laura’s* case manager at Crisis Housing Solutions (CHS), Jackie Berlin. “Presentation is key. I can see how people could take one look at her and think, ‘Oh, I don’t want to be bothered by this person; I don’t want to deal with them.’” But Laura, a transgender individual in Broward County, FL, experienced far different treatment with HPRP. While her immediate need was safe housing, she was wary of approaching CHS, mistrustful of the reception she would receive, and with good reason: based on the physical manifestation of her gender identity change, she had been attacked by a group several years ago, and the memory of that violent disrespect colored her attempts to reach out for help.

In one year, Laura had lost her job of seven years, and after numerous unforeseen crises such as major car repair bills, she was evicted and began staying with a friend. She approached CHS when her friend gave her a three-week deadline to move out, and her case manager began contacting landlords on her behalf. Jackie built up a repertoire with one landlord after explaining Laura’s need for safety, and when

the landlord identified several options, Laura moved in to the first one she visited. After three months' rental assistance from HPRP and continuing unemployment, Laura was able to pay rent unassisted, and exited HPRP.

Based on Jackie's follow up with her, "[Laura] should be fine. She's very bright, she has the capabilities... she's on the right track and she'll definitely get work, which will prohibit her from getting evicted again. Our rental assistance saved her three months' worth of rent that she was able to keep and build up from." But according to Laura's thank-you letter to CHS, it was the palpable dignity, sincerity and compassion with which Jackie treated her that Laura is the most thankful for. Laura's story speaks to the impact HPRP has on participants not only upon receipt of vital financial assistance, but also when organizations and case managers such as Jackie Berlin break cycles of disrespect or low self-esteem and empower participants to move forward.

**Names have been changed for confidentiality.*

For more information, contact Jackie Berlin, Crisis Housing Solutions at (954) 587-0160 or jberlin@broward.org.