

Roanoke's Community Housing Resource Center Serves as a Model of Success

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

HPRP Grantee:	City of Roanoke
CoC Name and Number:	VA-502 – Roanoke City & County/Salem CoC

Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	398	Total persons in TH:	125
Total persons in Safe Haven:	0	Total unsheltered persons:	38
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	561		

The City of Roanoke had identified the need for a comprehensive housing resource center where it would centralize homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance to maximum effect. Matt Crookshank, of Roanoke's Council of Community Services (CCS) explained, "Back in 2006, we envisioned a place that everyone in the community could access and get as much housing-related help as they needed." Roanoke would need to work with its subgrantees, like CCS, to realize this goal. The arrival of HPRP was the catalyst and the foundation of this local effort.

Using CCS as the operating agency and HPRP as the funding source, Roanoke launched a "Community Housing Resource Center." In the Center's first year, CCS formalized local HPRP practices and gained footing in the community. United Way later contributed Emergency Assistance Funds, which allowed the Center to become Roanoke's main homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing provider. United Way and CCS joined forces with other financial contributors to allow for the program to continue beyond HPRP's eventual grant expiration. CCS became the manager of HPRP financial assistance, while other

local agencies provided intake and case management services. Their cooperation engendered the wraparound model of service delivery that is integral to the Housing First approach.

In the beginning, CCS spread the word about its rapid re-housing activities by sending staff to meetings of local shelter providers and the CoC. Via word-of-mouth, case managers at other agencies learned to refer their clients to the Center. Program participation grew through these informal channels, and the CCS has since worked with shelters to implement a formal referral process. As more participants were rapidly re-housed and stabilized in their new homes, courtesy of HPRP, they were referred to community agencies for legal assistance, job training, and mental health services. Housing First conversations began to take place among providers that had never before utilized the model. Many Roanoke social services community members now recognize that prioritizing housing allows program participants to better their lives immediately, and to address their other needs from a place of safety.

Through CCS and its collaborators, Roanoke has provided financial assistance and accompanying services to more than 500 households of both individuals and families. Roanoke will continue to serve the community through funds from state and city allocations of Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and state-funded Homeless Solutions Grant (similar to ESG, but funds solely rapid re-housing). The funding will also be used to establish community-wide housing barriers assessments and intake forms that fulfill HMIS data collection requirements, to hire a liaison to work with shelters and housing providers, and to explore a central intake with additional funds from the National Alliance to End Homelessness. HPRP, reports Crookshank, changed the dialogue about how to best serve the homeless, and its model will be replicated and supported to benefit Roanoke's community in the future.

For more information, contact Matt Crookshank, Council of Community Services at 540-266-7554 or mattc@chrcblueridge.org.