

Tempe Serves as Model for Program and Community Collaboration

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

HPRP Grantee:	City of Tempe
CoC Name and Number:	AZ-502 – Phoenix/Mesa/Maricopa County Regional CoC

Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	2,243	Total persons in TH:	2,692
Total persons in Safe Haven:	25	Total unsheltered persons:	0
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	5,060		

Through careful planning and regional consensus-building, the City of Tempe utilized HPRP funds to make a significant impact in the community by rapidly re-housing hard-to-reach chronically homeless persons. Financial assistance provided immediate, safe environments, while the tireless efforts of supportive service providers helped stabilize participants' situations through case management and linkages to mainstream resources, so they could work on obtaining the necessary documents needed to qualify them for Section 8. With HPRP, participants received rent and utility subsidies. In partnership with this HPRP-funded assistance, 35 chronically homeless individuals then also received State-funded supportive services at scattered-site permanent supportive housing units.

Tempe's Housing Services Department began strategically planning and building regional consensus two years before HPRP, with the funding of its Homeless Outreach Program Effort (HOPE), consisting of a homeless outreach team led by Homeless/Fair Housing Coordinator Theresa James. HOPE provides help for those who need it the most, including crisis intervention, advocacy services, and transportation to local homeless service providers. HOPE team members soon discovered that a majority of the individuals

they found were chronically homeless, and ran into major obstacles when trying to house them. One such barrier was the selection criteria for the only emergency shelter program in Tempe, which prioritizes those who are employed, and then does a lottery for the remaining spots every night. Since the majority of chronically homeless individuals in Tempe are not employed, they had greater difficulty qualifying for existing programs.

In April 2009, the Valley of the Sun United Way launched a separate initiative to end chronic homelessness in Maricopa County (the county in which Tempe is located), called the Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative (PSHI). The United Way started a partnership with the State of Arizona's Department of Health Services, garnered the support of elected politicians and department heads in the county, and, most importantly, persuaded the State's behavioral health unit to provide supportive services for homeless persons living with severe mental illness. This regional collaboration became the key to finally achieving a housing solution for the chronically homeless individuals in Tempe who had been so difficult to house previously.

Theresa James saw the PSHI as an opportunity and jumped on it, convincing city officials to lend their support. As a result, Tempe decided to target some HPRP funds toward chronically homeless persons by screening for participants who had been homeless for at least one year with no drug or violent felonies in the last five years.

With the foresight that some program participants would need continued assistance after HPRP ended, James and her team were able to align the long-awaited opening of the City's Section 8 waiting list with the first batch of clients exiting HPRP. Prior to this, Tempe had revised its local Section 8 preference of being homeless in Tempe to include participating in a project, such as HPRP, that is designed to provide housing and appropriate supportive services to homeless persons with the goal of movement to the highest level of self-sufficiency.

"We started housing people with HPRP in April 2010, and by the time we opened the Section 8 waiting list in April 2011, we had reached our goal of housing 35 chronically homeless individuals," said James. On the day the waiting list opened, James and Tempe's supportive services partners worked to ensure that everyone housed with HPRP funds applied on the first day. That way, when names were pulled from the new waitlist, HPRP recipients were at the top of the list, among others who claimed the homeless

preference. Remarkably, of the 35 chronically homeless persons served with HPRP funds, 25 received a Section 8 voucher, 2 received HUD-VASH vouchers, one moved into another permanent supportive housing program, and 2 were able to gain enough income to live independently.

In addition to transforming the lives of those served with HPRP funds, Tempe leaders and community members can now see first-hand that permanent supportive housing (PSH) and rapid re-housing can help homeless persons transition to independence. As a result of lessons learned through HPRP, James is part of a new team working to build a PSH program from the ground up in Tempe, which includes building affordable housing for low-income families, as well as more PSH units for chronically homeless individuals. The City is looking at the feasibility of dedicating project-based vouchers to this project. The lessons learned through HPRP, such as the importance of political will and stakeholder collaboration in changing an entire region's approach to homelessness, have already informed Tempe's latest initiative, and the impact of successfully rapidly re-housing "hard to serve" clients will be seen for many years to come.

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