



Bringing America Home

National Coalition for the Homeless

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ACTION ALERT

Ensure that Homelessness Prevention Funds Are Well-Spent

ACTION REQUESTED: The National Coalition for the Homeless urges people experiencing homelessness, homeless advocates and homeless service providers to weigh in with their state and local officials to ensure that funds from the new \$1.5 billion Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) are spent in a manner that benefits people in greatest need of assistance.

BACKGROUND: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, otherwise known as the “Recovery Act” or the “stimulus bill,” included the creation of a \$1.5 billion Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HPRP funds may be used for providing short- and medium-term financial assistance (including rent and utilities payments) and housing relocation and stabilization services for people who have lost their housing or are in danger of doing so. The funds for this program will be distributed to state and local jurisdictions using the same formula as HUD’s Emergency Shelter Grants program.

On March 19, 2009, HUD released a Notice for HPRP, including information on application procedures, eligible activities, and program requirements. Homeless assistance providers, advocates, and people experiencing homelessness should immediately provide input to state and local authorities responsible for distributing HPRP funds in their jurisdictions to determine how these funds will be utilized.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Select the “HPRP Fund Formula Allocations” link on the HUD Homelessness Resource Exchange website, <http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewHPRP>, to learn the amount of money the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has allocated to your jurisdiction.
- View the Notice from HUD, with information on application procedures, eligible activities, and program requirements, at this website: http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRP_Noteice_3-19-09.pdf.
- Contact the housing authority in your jurisdiction to learn which officials are responsible for developing the state or local plan for distributing HPRP funds.
- Make recommendations to the jurisdictional authority to assure that funds are used in a manner that benefits the lowest-income people.
- NCH has identified key recommendations—listed below—that will improve implementation of the HPRP. You are welcome to advocate additional recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. *Accept HPRP funds* – The HPRP Notice establishes allows for grantees to decline their share of HRPR resources. NCH urges advocates to assure that their jurisdiction applies for HPRP funds if eligible.
2. *Ensure public and provider participation in substantial amendment development* — The Notice grants jurisdiction the option to shorten the citizen participation comment period on the

“substantial amendment” to the Consolidated Housing Plan they will be preparing as a condition for receiving HPRP funds. Advocates should press their jurisdictions to utilize more generous comment periods as well as information gathering methods outside of formal citizen participation to assure the substantial amendment has community member buy-in and support.

3. Target HPRP resources to poorest Americans — The Notice permits grantees to extend HPRP to individuals and families with incomes at or below 50 percent of AMI. Advocates should urge jurisdictions to target HPRP services to individuals and families in their community with the greatest need for prevention or rapid re-housing.
4. Include persons in shared housing as eligible recipients — The Notice describes various risk factors for homelessness that jurisdictions ought to consider when determining an individual’s eligibility for homelessness prevention assistance. NCH recommends that jurisdictions include individuals and families sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, shared housing, or similar circumstance to be eligible recipients for HPRP prevention assistance.
5. Assure permanency planning – The Notice places a time limit of 18 months on rental assistance provided to HPRP participants. Advocates should press their jurisdictions to articulate clear processes and commitments of resources to assure transition of HPRP participants receiving rental assistance into permanent housing following the conclusion of the term of their HPRP rental assistance.
6. Assure availability of supportive services — The Notice disqualifies most supportive services from eligibility for HPRP funding. Since supportive services are necessary complements to rental assistance and housing relocation or stabilization services, advocates should push their jurisdictions to identify and increase other sources of funding for supportive services targeted to HPRP recipients. For example, the Recovery Act infuses state and local workforce agencies with significant resources for employment and training services. ESG jurisdictions should describe in their HPRP substantial amendment how they plan to connect HPRP recipients to supportive services offered by workforce and other supportive services providers.
7. Service provider considerations — State and local advocates should press their jurisdictions to assure equitable geographic distribution of HPRP providers and comparability in HPRP services offered by such providers so that consumers need not “shop” for the provider with the best benefit package.
8. Supplement, rather than supplant, prevention funds — The Notice does not direct grantees to assure that they shall use HPRP resources to supplement, rather than supplant, state and local resources currently expended on homelessness prevention. Advocates need to push jurisdictions for non-supplantation commitments, regardless of the absence of federal direction.
9. Assure effective project monitoring – The Notice requires grantees to monitor HPRP activities. Advocates should push jurisdictions to include in their substantial amendment a robust monitoring plan sufficient for providing evidence of the effectiveness of the HPRP.

ACTION RESOURCES: To learn more about the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program, visit: <http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewHPRP>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Contact NCH public policy staff at info@nationalhomeless.org or 202.462.4822.