

Breaking Ground

The Monthly Newsletter of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio

..... June 2004

Administration Pushes Bad Section 8 Plan: Opposition Grows

The Bush Administration continues its attacks on the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program in spite of calls from various members of Congress to roll back the policies proposed by HUD. One of the most effective and efficient programs run by the federal government, the Section 8 Voucher Program is facing attacks by HUD in 2004 and budgetary cuts and appalling policy changes from the Administration proposed for 2005 - 2009. Below runs a summary of how Section 8 is being threatened.

Why This Program is So Important

- The "Section 8" housing choice voucher program currently serves two million low-income households, the vast majority of whom are working families with children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.
- Housing vouchers were a Republican innovation and over time have become the dominant form of federal housing assistance, favored by Congress because they allow families to secure housing in the private market, often in safer neighborhoods with better schools and access to jobs.
- Housing vouchers have proven very successful and are popular among tenants and property owners alike. Currently, only one in four eligible families is served, and there are long waiting lists in communities across the nation. The bipartisan, congressionally-chartered Millennial Housing Commission strongly endorsed the voucher program in its May 2002 report describing the program as "flexible, cost-effective, and successful in its mission."

What is Happening Now – HUD cuts Voucher Program NOW!

- Congress provided enough funding to renew all vouchers in use by state and local housing agencies in the FY 2004 appropriations bill enacted in January.
 - Instead of allocating those funds to housing agencies based on their actual costs, HUD has decided to use a very restrictive formula that is resulting in some agencies facing a shortfall.
 - HUD recently "found" \$150 million to help replenish the reserves of certain housing authorities, which will help some housing authorities, like CMHA in Columbus which can meet, for this year, the cost overruns created by HUD's policy change. But other housing authorities must lower payments to landlords, raise tenant rents or simply not reissue vouchers that are turned in because HUD has refused to allocate all funds it has available.
 - HUD's actions are shrinking the number of families served and undermining private sector (i.e. landlords' and bank's) faith in the program, which has been so critical to its success up until now.
 - Members of Congress should urge HUD either to reverse its policy, or at a minimum, make sufficient changes to prevent any harm to low-income families who currently hold vouchers or who are on the waiting list.

Next on Deck - the Administration's FY05 Proposal

- However bad the current situation seems, the Administration's proposal for next year would make it much worse. The President's budget would cut the voucher program by more than \$1.6 billion and convert it to a block grant, called the "Flexible Voucher Program."
 - The Administration's proposal would reverse federal housing policies that have been carefully crafted and refined by Congress over many years. The proposal would eliminate key protections such as limitations on how much of a tenant's income must go towards the rent, and the requirement that three out of every four vouchers go to an extremely low-income family.



• Faced with fewer dollars, housing authorities would have no choice but to dramatically raise rents for tenants or terminate vouchers. Low-income people could face rent hikes averaging \$850 per year, or 250,000 families could lose their vouchers entirely and be at risk of homelessness. In addition, fewer families would be able to afford to live anywhere except very poor neighborhoods, reversing what has been one of the key benefits of the voucher program - the deconcentration of poverty.

• The Administration’s proposal would further undermine support for vouchers among the private housing market who have been critical to its success. As a coalition of industry groups - including the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders - noted in a recent letter to Congress, “Affordable housing providers consider the Administration’s Flexible Voucher Program extremely worrisome... We are greatly concerned the fixed dollar amount will not keep pace with the cost of providing rental assistance to needy families.”

• These radical changes are not needed. Section 8 costs are expected to level off in the years ahead on their own, without any cutting or major program changes by Congress. In fact, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that spending under the Housing Certificate Fund will grow by just 1.8 percent next year without any changes.

• Congress should reject the Flexible Voucher Program proposal, and continue its longstanding practice of providing full funding for the Section 8 voucher program.

House Members Ask for Full Funding of Housing Vouchers

One hundred sixty eight House members signed a letter to the Appropriations subcommittee responsible for funding Housing Choice Vouchers. The letter described the voucher program as “the only option for many families facing our nation’s affordable housing crisis,” and urged the subcommittee “to provide full funding for the Housing Choice Voucher program in the FY05 VA-HUD Appropriations bill and protect the 2 million households that benefit from this most successful program.”

In the letter, House members criticized the administration’s budget proposal, known as the Flexible Voucher Program, stating “[The] proposal would allow housing authorities to reduce the level of subsidy provided to each assisted family, eliminating the rule that families pay no more than 30 percent of their income for rent. It also ends the ‘targeting’ of 75 percent of scarce voucher resources to extremely low income families.”

The letter was circulated by Representatives Velazquez (D-NY), Shays (R-CT), Nadler (D-NY), McHugh (R-NY), Menendez (D-NJ), and Tiberi (R-OH). For a copy of the letter, see: www.endhomelessness.org/news/Velazquez-Shays-letter.pdf.

What You Can Do

Go to http://capwiz.com/cohhio/mail/oneclick_compose/?alertid=5198221 and ask your Senators and Representative to save the Section 8 voucher program. You can also get more information on the COHHIO web page at www.cohhio.org.

“Being poor is a state of mind, not a condition,” HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson’s explanation recently to the House Financial Services Committee about why he refused to discuss housing the poor.

House Members Question HUD Secretary on Changes to Section 8

Appearing before the House Committee on Financial Services recently, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Alphonso Jackson attempted to assuage the widespread tensions caused by the HUD rule released on April 22, which retroactively changed the method for paying Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to administer the Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers program. The Secretary announced that HUD would apply the “full inflation factor” to its payments to housing authorities, providing them with more of their funding upfront, rather than later in the year. In addition, the department would make available \$150 million from the program’s 2003 reserve funding to replenish the reserves of some 525 eligible PHAs.

Several Democrats on the Committee criticized the department’s remedy however and called for the rule to be rescinded. Ranking Member Barney Frank (D-MA) clarified with the Secretary that agencies would still receive the same amount over 2004 that they were due under the April 22 rule; the only difference is that they will receive more of that funding sooner. Congressman William Lacy Clay (D-MO) charged that such frontloading was simply postponing the problem. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) said that HUD’s new steps would do nothing to help the devastating effect that the new rule has had on New York City, which still faces a \$55 million shortfall for paying for existing vouchers through the end of the year. She also stated that the Administration’s handling of Section 8 has presented further problems by making landlords increasing hesitant about participating in Section 8 and other like programs. Congressman Michael Capuano (D-MA) wanted to know what had changed between April and now for HUD to take these new steps and criticized HUD for putting communities through three months of chaos, in which agencies were faced with having to revoke vouchers they had issued and tenants were faced with the fear of losing their homes as a result.

Secretary Jackson responded that HUD was merely carrying out the mandate of Congress by issuing the rule, referring to language included in the final negotiations over the 2004 HUD funding bill. Although HUD participated in those negotiations, the Secretary declined to give his opinion or the department’s position on the language and refrained from saying whether HUD would pursue the same language next year.

Several Republicans on the Committee joined with the Democrats in expressing concern over the risk of families losing their Section 8 vouchers. In reference to the Administration’s proposed changes to Section 8 for FY 2005, Committee Chairman Michael Oxley (R-OH) and Congressman Robert Ney (R-OH) agreed that if the growing costs in Section 8 are not addressed, the program would consume the HUD budget, threatening other HUD programs (an opinion not shared by the Congressional Budget Office). But they stopped short of endorsing the Administration’s proposed changes to the program for FY 2005. “The Administration’s proposal has some merit,” said Ney, who chairs the subcommittee responsible for legislation that would authorize such changes. “But it remains to be seen whether this is the solution or not.”

Congressman Patrick Tiberi (R-OH) invited the Secretary to visit Columbus, Ohio, to learn about the innovative ways that the housing authority there is maximizing its Section 8 budget, as well as the innovative work of the Community Shelter Board, which coordinates homeless services in Columbus and Franklin County and is a “national leader in attacking homelessness.”

In addition to Section 8, further topics of debate at the hearing included Hope VI, the President’s zero down payment initiative for new homebuyers, and GSE’s. For more information on the hearing, including prepared statements by the HUD Secretary and some Committee members, see <http://financialservices.house.gov/hearings.asp?formmode=detail&hearing=307> and www.house.gov/banking_democrats. Taken from the National Alliance to End Homelessness online newsletter.

Community Reinvestment Act Under Attack

The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), enacted to encourage federally insured financial institutions to meet the credit needs to the communities they serve, is under attack on several fronts and was the subject of a recent hearing in the House Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit.

Four federal banking agencies, the Federal Reserve, Comptroller of the Currency, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Office of Thrift Supervision, have proposed to significantly weaken CRA. And in the legislative arena, Representatives Richard Baker (R-LA) and Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) have introduced H.R. 3952, Promoting Community Investment Act of 2004, which advocates say would actually reduce investments.

The proposal issued by the bank regulators would eliminate the investment and service test portions of CRA exams for 1,100 banks by increasing the definition of small banks from \$250 million in assets to \$500 million. In effect, these banks would no longer have the same obligations to provide branches in low and moderate income areas or devote their assets to community development loans or other investments. The proposal also contains a predatory lending standard that focuses predominantly on the liquidation and foreclosure value of the home rather than the ability of the borrower to make the mortgage payments.

In response to the proposed regulatory changes, a group of 30 Senators led by Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) wrote to the regulators on May 18 expressing opposition to weakening CRA regulations. The letter said that “this proposal dramatically weakens the effectiveness of CRA, develops a weak predatory lending compliance standard and will have a negative impact on economic development and access to low cost services in low and moderate income neighborhoods across our nation.” The Senators urged the banking regulators to withdraw their proposal. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) expressed opposition to these proposed changes during the comment period that ended in early April.

A hearing before the House Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit on May 12 looked at ways to streamline the law. The hearing focused on H.R. 3952 as well as the regulators’ proposal. Many advocates argue that H.R. 3952 would promote disinvestment in communities since it would go even further than the bank regulators’ proposal by eliminating the investment and service test component of the CRA exam for banks up to \$1 billion.

Testifying before the Subcommittee, John Taylor, President and CEO of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC), said that streamlining CRA exams for banks with up to \$1 billion dollars would mean that 93 percent of banks, or 8,667 banks in the United States, would now have cursory exams that look only at limited lending activities. Judith Kennedy, President of the National Association of Affordable Housing Lending, also testified. Ms. Kennedy said some states would see significant changes if either the bank regulators’ proposal or the legislation were to be implemented. Ms. Kennedy said that in Ohio, the 82 institutions currently subject to the investment and service test would drop to 44 institutions under the regulators’ proposal, reducing investment in affordable housing and community and economic development by at least \$78 million. If the threshold were raised to \$1 billion, as proposed in the Baker-Hensarling legislation, only 26 institutions in Ohio would fall subject to the investment and service test.

Taylor noted, “Removing real CRA obligations for more than 90 percent of the banks in the country is the equivalent of unleashing a hurricane of destruction on low-and moderate-income communities across America. The result is closed branches, billions of dollars of lost investments, thousands of fewer community development loans, and a new era of redlining.”

For more information, contact the National Community Reinvestment Coalition at www.ncrc.org.

White House Notifies Agencies About Future Budget Cuts

The *Washington Post* reported recently that the White House has notified government agencies in a May 19 memo that, if the current Administration remains in power after the November elections, agencies should plan to set FY06 budget levels at the levels that were published but not made public when the FY05 budget was released in February. These projected FY06 levels include spending cuts for almost all domestic programs, including housing.

Even programs that received an increase in the FY05 budget are slated for cuts in FY06, including the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance grants program and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). And the *Post* points out that even the President's homeownership programs, which he has been touting on the campaign trail, would face cuts. Advocates can find the projected spendings levels for 2005-2014 at www.ombwatch.org/article/articleview/2079/1/2/.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) analyzed the projected spending levels and finds that "by 2009 the total funding for domestic non-entitlement programs outside homeland security would fall to its lowest level, measured as a share of the economy, since 1963." Specifically, CBPP finds that the Section 8 voucher program will be cut by 30 percent by 2009, which would mean the loss of funding equal to 600,000 vouchers.

The Administration also told agencies in the May 19 memo that if they decide not to implement the proposed cuts for certain programs, the agency must find offsets elsewhere in their budgets.

Focus Group Meetings Regarding the 2005 Qualified Allocation Plan

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) will be conducting four focus group meetings in order to discuss and gather feedback regarding OHFA's proposals for the 2005 Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). The locations and dates of the meetings are as follows:

- July 20th - Akron: Ocasek Government Office Building
- July 22nd - Lima: The Ohio State University at Lima
- July 27th - Columbus: Ohio Housing Finance Agency Building
- July 28th - Chillicothe: Horizon Technology Center

All meetings will start promptly at 1:00 and end at 4:30. Each group will consist of 20 people. Unless there is space available, no one may participate in more than one meeting and only one person per company/organization will be invited to attend the meetings.

Anyone interested in participating should send their name, contact information, company/organization name, and dates/locations willing to attend via e-mail to Suzette Thagard (sthagard@odod.state.oh.us or 614-995-4512). OHFA will make every effort to include all those who wish to participate. However, in order to ensure that a wide variety of interests and locations are represented at each meeting, OHFA will not guarantee that everyone who submits their name will be invited. Only a total 80 people will be invited, although a waiting list will be maintained in case of cancellations.

Names must be submitted no later than June 25th. Staff will contact those who submitted names on June 30th, and a list of those who are participating will be available on the web as well as summaries of the meetings.

Changes to the 2004 Continuum of Care Application

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the 2004 Super Notice of Funding Availability (SuperNOFA) on Friday, May 14th. This year's SuperNOFA includes 50 different program areas, and effectively puts \$2.3 billion on the table. Of that amount, approximately \$1.0 billion is for the Continuum of Care.

Having had a few days to review the SuperNOFA itself as well as the application information for the Continuum of Care, we noticed a number of changes (some rather significant – some not so) and wanted to offer the following observations:

Exhibit 1 (Continuum of Care)

- At least ten percent of the FY 2004 Continuum appropriation (approximately \$100 million) must be awarded to projects that predominantly serve persons experiencing chronic homelessness. Transitional, safe haven, or permanent supportive housing projects (new or renewal) that serve persons experiencing chronic homelessness at least 70 percent of the time will get credit toward this "goal."

- All Continua will be scored (under the Chronic Homelessness component of the Process and Strategy section) against the extent to which its goals include the design and implementation of ten year planning processes. Continua will also have to describe any changes in the number of persons experiencing chronic homelessness from 2003 to 2004.

- The Process and Strategy section has had its score reduced to 17 points (it was 20 points).

- The Gaps and Priorities section has had its score reduced to 10 points (it was 15 points).

- A Performance Measurement section worth 5 points has been added. HUD will measure program participants' success in moving to and maintaining permanent housing. HUD will also measure the extent to which program participants successfully access mainstream programs and become employed.

- An HMIS Implementation section worth 5 points has been added. HUD will measure the extent to which your Continuum demonstrates progress in the planning, implementation, and operation of an HMIS system covering all street outreach, emergency shelters, and transitional housing programs at a minimum.

- A new "scoring opportunity" worth 2 points for Removing Barriers to Affordable Housing has been added. HUD will measure the extent to which your Continuum demonstrates a local plan to remove regulatory barriers to affordable housing.

- All Continua must submit a combined application (Exhibit 1 along with all project exhibits) directly to HUD. Individual projects within a Continuum of Care can no longer be submitted to HUD separately.

- Continuum applications (both Exhibit 1 as well as project exhibits) should only include the actual application questions and appropriate responses. Do not include the application instructions or blank charts/tables.

- The permanent housing bonus has been modified to work on a sliding scale. Rather than all Continua being eligible for \$750,000, the bonus is based on your initial pro-rata need amount. If your pro-rata is above \$10 million – you are eligible for up to a \$2.0 million bonus. If your pro-rata is between \$5 million and \$10 million – you are eligible for up to a \$1.5 million bonus. If your pro-rata is less than \$5 million – you are eligible for up to a \$750,000 bonus. The bonus only applies to eligible housing activities.

- The Supplemental Resources section has had its score reduced to 13 points (it was 15 points) and has undergone some modification. Instead of the lengthy narrative, this section now includes a checklist regarding participation in mainstream programs.

Exhibits 2, 3, and 4 (Project Exhibits)

- All new Supportive Housing Program (SHP) projects – excluding HMIS projects – are required to have a three-year term. If you request a term of less than three-years, HUD will automatically change the request and make you responsible for the difference.
- All project exhibits (new and renewal) are required to list the applicant, project name, and the applicant’s DUNS number on each page of the narrative response.
- All projects will be required to estimate the number of persons experiencing chronic homelessness that will be served over the term.
- There is a new Participants/Subpopulations Chart for all project exhibits.
- For Supportive Housing Program (SHP) renewals, a question has been added under Project Information regarding the priority number from Exhibit 1.

General

This year’s SuperNOFA also included language regarding HUD’s goals and objectives with respect to “end chronic homelessness and to move homeless families and individuals to permanent housing.” This objective has a number of measurable indicators, five of which relate directly to the Continuum of Care homeless assistance programs. These five indicators are:

- At least 360 Continuum of Care communities or 90 percent of our continuums will have a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in 2004;
- The number of persons experiencing chronic homelessness declines by up to 50 percent by FY2008;
- HUD’s homeless programs will help at least 80,000 homeless persons move into permanent housing in 2004;
- At least 180,000 homeless persons become housed in HUD-funded transitional housing with supportive services in 2004; and
- At least 45,000 homeless persons become employed while in HUD’s homeless assistance projects in 2004.

In addition, there is language in the General Section of the SuperNOFA relating to future submissions. “For FY 2005, HUD intends to have applications submitted via the federal government’s new electronic application portal called Grants.gov. Applicants are encouraged to become familiar with Grants.gov Web site...so you will be prepared to apply on line for HUD and other federal agency programs.” For more information, contact Rick Taylor at COHHIO at ricktaylor@cohhio.org or Jeannette Welsh at jeannettewelsh@cohhio.org or 614/280-1984.

Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio Membership

Name _____
 Organization _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____
 Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Individual: _____ \$35 (Regular) _____ \$75 (Benefactor) _____ \$250 (Sustainer)
 _____ \$10 (Low-Income) _____ Fee Waiver Requested

Agency (according to budget):
 _____ \$35 (\$100,000 or less) _____ \$75 (\$100,001 - \$250,000)
 _____ \$125 (\$250,001 - \$500,000) _____ \$200 (\$500,001 - \$1 million)
 _____ \$250 (\$1 million-\$1.5 million) _____ \$300 (over \$1.5 million)

Please send your tax deductible check to COHHIO at 35 E. Gay St, Ste. 210, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

Thank you for your support!

Newsbriefs...

Homeownership Month Off to a Shaky Start

Two of the four large homeownership expos that HUD had scheduled for June as part of its homeownership month activities have been cancelled, apparently because of problems with the organization planning the events. And plans for two remaining expos, scheduled for Las Vegas and Miami, have been scaled back. HUD had contracted with Hope International Outreach, a conservative faith-based organization, to plan day-long public homeownership expos in four cities in June. HUD appears to have made the decision to cancel the two earliest expos, scheduled for St. Louis and Philadelphia, following "frustration" with Hope International. It appears that events were not well-publicized and that organizations trying to arrange to have vendor tables were running into difficulties.

According to Hope International's website for the expos, the group is linked to many conservative groups, including as an affiliate of the National Heritage Foundation. The NHF website notes that "{t}he American democratic experiment is slowly collapsing under the increasing burden of taxation, inflation, and inefficient government administration."

The expos were intended to allow members of the public to attend sessions and visit booths to gather information on buying a home. However, few housing-related organizations in the four cities were aware that the events were scheduled. Vendors were invited to exhibit for a \$350 fee, which HOPE International collected. Taken from Memo to Members, National Low Income Housing Coalition.

HUD Threatens to Fire Leading Expert on Health Homes

Controversy is brewing over Secretary Alphonso Jackson's proposal to fire Dave Jacobs, who has directed HUD's Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control for the past nine years. Mr. Jacobs, who is regarded as the leading national expert on these issues, is widely credited for balancing affordability and health concerns in crafting sensible policy in this contentious area. Mr. Jackson bases his charges on a HUD Inspector General report, which criticizes grants to five nonprofit organizations. In his public response, Mr. Jacobs disputes the charges as inaccurate, unjustified and unfair. Taken from Memo to Members, National Low Income Housing Coalition

Flexible Vouchers and Fair Housing Brief Available

The Poverty and Race Research Action Council has released a policy brief on the fair housing implications of the Administration's Flexible Voucher proposal. The brief makes the point that in addition to its other short-comings, the proposal would have a less-recognized but negative impact on the fair housing goals of the Section 8 program. First, by potentially limiting the rent levels, the proposal would limit the ability of low income minority households to move to less segregated, better served, and healthier neighborhoods. Conversely, if rent levels were maintained, then fewer families would have access to that housing. Second, allowing local variation in eligibility and program administration will further hurt these tenants by complicating, and therefore limiting, portability. And finally, a proposed mandatory one-year waiting period before a new voucher holder could move to another jurisdiction restricts mobility still further. The brief expands on each of these points and can be found at www.prrac.org/policy.php.

New Mortgage Company Created to Offer Alternatives to Predatory Lending in Dayton

County Corp. and National City Mortgage have formed a mortgage company to provide educational programs and finance loans for homebuyers typically targeted by predatory lenders. County Corp. has provided assistance to homeowners in the past through programs that target the elderly, disabled and low-income borrowers. The new mortgage company will allow County Corp. to provide a wide range of loans, including zero percent down, Federal Housing Administration and purchase rehabilitation loans, through the Miamisburg-based National City Mortgage. The program is designed to teach homebuyers how to understand and improve their credit scores, allowing homeowners to better protect their investment. Borrowers of all income levels can use the new mortgage company to buy homes anywhere in the state.

Realtors’ Find Support for Affordable Housing

The National Association of Realtors recently released another installment of their National Housing Opportunity Pulse. The poll finds considerable concern among adults in metropolitan areas about the cost of housing. A lack of affordable housing ranked second only to a lack of affordable healthcare options as a “very big problem.” In this poll, as a big concern it ranks above jobs and unemployment, crime, the environment, and keeping America safe from terrorism. Fully 67 percent of the respondents are concerned about the cost of all housing in their region, and 71 percent say that the gap between those that can afford to buy a home and those who can not is widening is also a “big worry.”

On a personal level, 21 percent of those responding said housing costs were so high they had to delay or cut back on healthcare expenses, 26 percent on children’s education, and 37 percent on major purchases. These findings are similar to those of a recent National Low Income Housing Coalition poll that found that 70 percent of likely voters felt the cost of their housing was a burden and 26 percent said they had difficulty meeting housing expenses in the last year.

The Realtors are highlighting two findings from the poll. The first is that 63 percent of the respondents answered “yes” when asked whether they would be willing to support more affordable homes being made available for people to purchase or rent next door to them. Over three-quarters of the respondents said they would support such housing in their wider community. In addition, 62 percent of the respondents said that “the issue of housing that if affordable” would be an important factor in determining what candidate to vote for. From this the Realtors conclude, “Affordable housing will be an election issue. Available at www.realtor.org.

Lead Paint Report

The Environmental Working Group has released their study of childhood lead poisoning in Ohio and it is a wake up call for us all. Their estimate is that there are 19,000 children with lead poisoning in Ohio and only one-third have been tested. The report gives statistics by county and by zip code. The web site for the report is www.ewg.org/reports/ohiolead/.

Administration Advises States on Medicaid and Homelessness

The Federal government sent a letter to State Medicaid Directors advising them on steps they can take to improve Medicaid for people who experience chronic homelessness. It included information about a report describing State practices that improve Medicaid access. The letter also encouraged States to “suspend” rather than “terminate” Medicaid benefits while a person resides in institutional or correctional facilities. Charlene Brown, Deputy Director of the Center for Medicaid and State Operations sent the letter on May 25 as part of the Department of Health and Human Services, ongoing effort to end chronic homelessness. Termination of benefits during incarceration can be a problem for people with mental illness when they return to their communities, as the process for re-enrolling in Medicaid can take several months. As an alternative, States may place beneficiaries on a non-payment status, which will keep them enrolled in the program. When they leave an institutional care setting, they can immediately be placed on payment status so they can receive services with no gap in coverage. HHS has placed the new report entitled “*Improving Medicaid Access for People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness: State Examples*” on its website. The 18-page report describes State efforts in three areas:

- 1) Expanding eligibility using so called 1115 waivers,
- 2) Helping people obtain Medicaid coverage quickly after leaving an institutional or correctional facility,
- 3) Simplifying the eligibility determination process

A copy of the letter to State Medicaid Directors, the report on State practices, and other material regarding Medicaid and homelessness can be found at www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid/homeless/

Tax Money Wasted on Shoddy Repairs, Plain Dealer (Cleveland, Ohio)

Sheryl Harris and Dave Davis, April 11, 2004

The contractor who installed Pearl Sullivan's first-floor toilet left the 77-year-old woman with a mess: Every time she flushes, waste water splatters onto her basement floor.

The Glenville woman's new security door is the wrong size. And, Sullivan said, her contractor broke apart a cabinet she was throwing away and used pieces to patch her floors.

In all, the bill for repairs came to \$10,765.

Some people might say the elderly widow hired the wrong contractor. But Sullivan didn't get to choose who worked on her home.

The city of Cleveland did.

And you paid for the work.

In the last five years, taxpayers have poured \$21.2 million in federal money into home repairs done through the city of Cleveland's Repair-A-Home and Senior Housing Assistance programs. With the big money have come allegations of impropriety between some city inspectors and some builders.

Cleveland Law Director Subodh Chandra said he became aware of possible wrongdoing in Cleveland's Department of Community Development, which oversees the programs, in the spring of 2003.

Chandra referred the matter to the U.S. attorney's office, which he said has taken the lead in a joint investigation with his office.

The law director declined to elaborate on the inquiry, but added, "It's fair to say that the investigation continues; it's ongoing."

The repair programs in question, which are paid for by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, are supposed to revitalize Cleveland's aging housing stock, pump federal money into the local economy and raise home values.

But some of the 1,300 homeowners who have received grants or loans under the programs say the process has gone horribly awry.

They say some city inspectors pushed them to get more repairs than they wanted, approved shoddy work and then turned a deaf ear when they complained.

Because Cleveland's Department of Community Development does not track complaints, it's difficult to assess how many people were left with substandard work on their homes.

What is clear from the two dozen homeowners whose cases *The Plain Dealer* examined in detail is that the programs have allowed poor work to stand unchallenged.

In both programs, a small group of community development employees decides what work will be done on homes, which builders to hire and, in the end, whether the work is acceptable and whether the contractor will be paid.

Once a company is awarded a repair job, it's not held to the work promised. In some cases, contractors have been allowed to make extensive changes to the scope of work without getting required prior written approval of homeowners.

There are other problems as well.

Cozy relationships have developed between some contractors and some of the inspectors who are supposed to approve their work.

Program administrators have not thoroughly checked the backgrounds of the roughly 50 companies working in the programs. As a result, they have paid \$8.9 million in taxpayer money to 15 builders who have had liens filed against them for unpaid state and federal taxes.

Nineteen contractors in the programs have violated state laws aimed at protecting homeowners and workers from lead poisoning - some of them on city-run jobs.

Yet program officials do not consult the state health officials who license and monitor lead-abatement contractors before awarding these kinds of jobs.

And the city has not stopped to question whether contractors convicted of felonies like drug trafficking and theft should participate in the programs or be sent into residents' homes.

Homeowners who qualify for the programs are among the city's most vulnerable - those who are moderate-to low-income, elderly or disabled. Some have been so distressed by the apparent indifference of Community Development officials to their plight that they have turned to other city offices for help.

"Oh, my God. It's a nightmare," said City Councilman Joe Jones, who has tried, with little success, to help Ward 1 residents correct poor repairs done through the programs.

Linda Hudecek, who until April 1 oversaw Cleveland's repair programs for six years, acknowledged before she left office that the programs have had problems, but she said she has seen them work repeatedly for "families with few options."

"Is it acceptable to have things not done properly?" Hudecek asked. "No, of course it's not. Do we need to always make sure we're holding our contractors' feet to the fire? Absolutely."

But some homeowners say that when things go wrong, they're the ones who get burned.

Low bids for pricey work

Doris Wooden turned to the city for help because her home, which is near the Garfield Heights border, needed a new roof.

A rehab inspector examined her house and determined it also needed vinyl siding, wiring, a new kitchen and driveway. The inspector's estimate for the combination grant and loan job: \$45,499.

The department asked four contractors to bid. Troy Henderson, a contractor friend of the homeowner, submitted a fifth bid.

When the bids were opened on Feb. 12, 2003, Leader Builders' was lowest - \$41,954 - and it claimed the job.

Henderson recalled that Fred Walker, the chief rehab supervisor, told him he could have the job because Wooden preferred him. But program rules required him to match Leader's low bid, which was \$3,545 below the city's estimated cost.

"I said, 'Fred, I can't do it for that amount,'" Henderson said. "No one I know - and I've been in this industry for 19 years - could do it for that amount.'"

As it turned out, no one did. The city added items including kitchen and laundry room cabinets and counters to the specs, raising the estimated cost to nearly \$47,000. By the time work was well under way, change orders increased the price to \$51,700.

Shortly after work started last June, Wooden began complaining about the quality of the work.

In July, documents show rehab inspector Deborah Whitsett asked the homeowner to sign off on a partial payment to Leader for items including the exterior and electrical work.

Wooden refused.

Instead, she drew up a list of 33 items she said were not done according to the specs. Whitsett declined to comment for this story.

At Wooden's request, her friend Henderson inspected the house and found an even more worrisome defect: Her new roof's asphalt shingles had been applied to felt laid directly on the wide-spaced boards above the rafters.

The plywood decking that is an integral part of a roof - the very thing that supports it and makes it weathertight - had been omitted, he said.

Wooden said Whitsett told her not to worry, that the contractor had determined plywood wasn't needed. The inspector then produced a change order showing the plywood as a deletion - this despite program rules that require change orders to be approved by the homeowner in writing in advance.

Wooden complained to supervisors in the department. "They really didn't want to hear it," she said.

Records show that city employees in late September were still trying to get Leader paid, even on the very day when Wooden and Jones, her councilman, met with Division of Neighborhood Services Commissioner Louise Jackson to demand that the homeowner's roof be torn off and redone. Jackson oversees the repair programs' day-to-day operations.

Although the city's rehab inspector had rated Leader's performance on this job as "good," a subsequent report by the nonprofit Lutheran Housing Network, made at Jones' request, found that the backer board under the vinyl siding was applied in a "hit-and-miss fashion." The report also criticized the gutter work on the house, the roof on the garage, the poor condition of the driveway and a potential hazard with the electrical box.

Hudecek, who eventually inspected Wooden's home, said Leader had "cut corners, no questions about it" and the work needed to be redone.

She said Leader's work on Wooden's home landed the company and its president, Victor Keshishian, on informal probation.

"This has put him front and center for us in terms of watching anything he does," Hudecek said, adding that Leader "has not gotten any additional work from us because this thing needs to be cleaned up."

Keshishian tells a different story. He scoffed at the idea he was on probation, rattling off the addresses of homes he had worked on since last summer, adding, "I'm working on a job right now."

He defended the quality of his company's work, saying it satisfactorily completes about \$3 million in public and private contracts a year.

"There is no reason for us to cut corners," he said. "Why would I cut corners when I'm receiving full pay for the job?" He refused to answer additional questions.

Wooden has lived for 10 months with her furniture stacked in her garage. She sleeps on a cot, worries her roof will soon leak and has to keep her refrigerator and stove in her living room because the kitchen still isn't finished.

Hudecek and Jackson insist there's an easy way for Wooden to get her problem resolved: She can agree to let Leader redo the work.

To that, Wooden responded, "I think I would rather die and go to hell before I'd let them come out again."

Although other homeowners have complained to community development and the city's Consumer Affairs Department about Leader's work, those complaints haven't prompted Community Development to review Leader's performance. The company is the top contract winner in the programs, earning \$2.1 million since May 1999.

Lunch dates with inspectors

City officials also acknowledge not examining Leader's ties to city inspectors, though Hudecek concedes that one inspector appears to have too close a relationship with the builder.

Hudecek said rehab inspector Jackie Pierce is under investigation by city officials for possible disciplinary action.

He recently disclosed in a court proceeding in an unrelated matter that he had directed Keshishian to work on his mother's Cleveland home.

Appearing on behalf of Keshishian, Pierce testified that after work he went to Keshishian's office to ask him to deliver dirt to his mother's home, where Leader had recently completed waterproofing work.

Pierce also said under oath that he often lunches with builders, including Leader's Keshishian - a practice Hudecek said should not be taking place.

Pierce declined to be interviewed for this story.

Another inspector's actions have been questioned as well.

Contractor Subodh Jain said he wrote in October 2001 to Neighborhood Services Commissioner Jackson to complain about another rehab inspector.

Jain wrote that one of his employees had been asked to contribute \$100 toward inspector Danny Ferry's 25th anniversary trip to Las Vegas - a solicitation that was turned down.

"Ever since, none of the invoices and change orders have been processed," Jain wrote.

Ferry declined comment for this story.

Jain said that in April 2002, after receiving no response from Jackson, he wrote to Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell. "It is with deep regrets that I have to write to you to draw your attention to the fiasco that is the Department of Community Development," Jain began.

Jain detailed problems he had in bidding, getting approval to start jobs and getting paid. However, Jackson told reporters Jain's payments were held because he didn't comply with program rules.

The contractor didn't hear from the mayor, but Cleveland police showed up and took statements from Jain, his employee and a third person who Jain said overheard the conversation.

Jain, an engineer, said in disgust he yanked his company out of the program.

Other than conducting a broad review of the repairs it will tackle, Community Development doesn't regularly re-evaluate how it does business.

It does not, for example, conduct regular reviews of the contractors sent into people's homes.

Hudecek appeared stunned to learn from reporters that 15 of the contractors she was paying with federal tax dollars had together amassed \$100,000 of outstanding federal and state tax bills. They hadn't settled up with the government, despite being paid a collective \$8.9 million in the last five years.

Contractors have paid tens of thousands of dollars in overdue taxes only after the government filed liens against them.

Leader Builders led the pack in liens, with officials filing 14 of them against the company to try to collect nearly \$31,000. More than \$20,000 of that was owed to the Internal Revenue Service for unpaid federal taxes.

And Al's Construction - which has received more than \$211,000 in work over the last five years - owed the state about \$2,500 that its owner said he knew nothing about.

Allen D. Steplight, owner of Al's Construction, declined to comment further for this story. He is a twice-convicted felon, which raises additional questions about the program.

Steplight pleaded guilty in 1998 to felony possession of marijuana, according to Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court records. In 1992, he pleaded guilty in the same court to drug trafficking. In both cases, he received probation.

There are other contractors with criminal convictions in the program.

Thomas McGinley pleaded guilty to a felony in 1987 after admitting he paid thousands of dollars in kickbacks to the head of the Ohio Department of Youth Services to get contracts at a state detention facility.

McGinley sold his company in July 2000. He remains with McGinley & Sons as a general manager and has the authority to sign contracts with the city, owner Daniel Hoag said.

Families, children are put at risk

Although abating toxic lead has become a major focus of the city's rehab programs, Hudecek said that city officials were not aware that 19 builders in Cleveland's Repair-A-Home and seniors programs have been in trouble with the Ohio Department of Health, which licenses and monitors lead abatement contractors.

Dozens of warnings have been issued to these contractors, some of them on homes undergoing lead abatement through the Community Development programs.

Of contractors in the program, Leader's Keshishian had the most serious problems with state health officials, records show.

In January 2003, a state health inspector showed up at a Cleveland Heights home where Keshishian was supposed to be eliminating the lead threat, only to find that he had put two children at risk. The inspector found that Keshishian sent three unlicensed and untrained workers to do the job.

She found that Leader's workers started work while the children were home, that they had not properly protected the family's belongings from lead-contaminated dust and that they did not have respirators or the proper vacuum to clean the site.

The violations were so serious that state health officials considered prohibiting Keshishian from doing lead abatement work. Instead, they fined him \$7,500 last May after Keshishian admitted 12 violations of state law or regulations.

After hearing what *The Plain Dealer* had found, city officials said they would strengthen their background checks of contractors in the programs.

Likewise, the agency that funds Community Development's programs, HUD, doesn't check these issues either. HUD officials said cities are required to self-monitor their programs.

In the last HUD review of Cleveland's Repair-A-Home program, done one year ago, a HUD inspector visited four homes and found problems at each. On one job the HUD inspector noted that the city paid the contractor for electrical and porch work without ensuring it was done right. The electrical contractor left holes in attic walls and floors and did not put adequate covers around the breakers, the inspector found

Although HUD may cite problems, it doesn't compel cities to fix them.

Everything was wrong

The Repair-A-Home brochure promises "Work must be performed to the satisfaction of the homeowner," but the program seems designed to cut homeowners out of the process.

Neighborhood Services decides the scope of the project.

Neighborhood Services picks the contractors who bid.

Neighborhood Services chooses the winning bidder and approves the finished work.

Carol Owens said the city's insular way of handling rehab work trapped her in a disastrous home renovation.

Owens turned to the city for a low-interest loan in 1996. She and her husband Robert wanted to replace their driveway, siding and doors, but the 3 percent Repair-A-Home loan was such an unbeatable deal they decided to spring for an updated kitchen, a new roof and carpeting.

They signed a \$42,900 contract with Cuyahoga Valley Building Co., a contractor the city chose for them.

Owens thought the city would look out for her family of four, but she was wrong.

The new concrete drive sent water flooding onto her neighbors' property. When she complained, the contractor installed a 6-inch curb to route the water to the street and a drain that dumps water into the park behind her home.

Joe Sanson, owner of the now defunct company, blamed a subcontractor for the driveway. "I would agree that the concrete work was not the best I'd ever seen," Sanson said. "I offered to tear it out and redo it or not charge for it."

But Owens said she didn't trust him or the city by then. She and her husband hired Closer Look Inspections to do a private assessment of their Old Brooklyn home.

In September 1997, Closer Look's Al Tibbs deemed the already deteriorating driveway "one of the worst cases of workmanship I have witnessed in recent years." In his report, he said expansion joints were missing between the driveway and house, which could damage the home's foundation when the concrete expands and contracts because of the weather. He noted the siding job was "amateur" and that the gutters routinely dumped water on the foundation.

The furnace that was to have been cleaned and repaired, he found, showed no signs of having either done. In fact, Tibbs reported, he measured "life-threatening" levels of carbon monoxide. But Tibbs reported that he couldn't get an accurate read: The gas exceeded the 2000 parts per million level, the top of the range his instruments could read.

Sanson said other than the driveway, he could not recall details about Owens' job.

When Owens refused to let Cuyahoga Valley back on her property, Neighborhood Services offered to send out another contractor to redo the driveway.

Owens wasn't interested.

"I don't want anybody from the city of Cleveland on my property again," she said.

In 2002, she and her husband sued Cuyahoga Valley Building in Cuyahoga Common Pleas Court. The following year, they won a judgment for \$42,900 - money Owens said she would never get because the company is no longer in business.

While the suit was pending, in June 2002, six years after her remodeling fiasco began, she went to a meeting where Mayor Campbell was speaking and made an emotional plea for help. Her complaint was sent to the city's Consumer Affairs Department.

It was only through Consumer Affairs attorneys, Owens said, that she learned that she had been charged the full price by Neighborhood Services, although the department had not paid the contractor for the driveway.

In May 2003, city records show, Community Development agreed to reduce Owens' unpaid loan balance from \$36,904 to \$16,717, deducting the cost of the substandard driveway and other items that were never delivered as promised.

It's not enough, said Owens. She wants the loan forgiven so she can afford to fix her home.

"I wish we had never gotten into the program because our home is worse now than it was when we got started," she said. "My house was just old - now it's damaged."

To reach these Plain Dealer reporters: contact Dave Davis at ddavis@plaind.com, 216-999-4808; or Sheryl Harris at shharris@plaind.com, 216-999-4409. News researcher Cheryl Diamond contributed to this story.

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Know Your Voting Rights

Under the United States Constitution, every American citizen has the right to vote. The fact that people who are homeless have no permanent residence should not be used to disqualify them. Many homeless people, however, while qualified to vote, are unable to register due to the many policy and legal barriers placed before them.

You do not need to own or rent property to vote. If you do not have a traditional address, you may use a shelter address to register to vote even if you are living on the land. The key to which shelter address you should use lies in which shelter you would be most likely to return to if you were to seek shelter. Although some states allow homeless people to use a geographical description to meet the address requirement (i.e. drawing a map to identify a specific street corner, park bench, etc.), this practice is not currently in use in Ohio.

You do not need to have a driver's license or social security card to register to vote. When the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) went into effect in January 2004, it made it more difficult for homeless people to vote, though not impossible. HAVA provides for new identification requirements for persons registering by mail and voting for the first time in a federal election. A person registering by mail must include his/her current Ohio driver's license number or the last four digits of his/her social security number on the registration form.

If you mail in your registration without including an Ohio driver's license number or the last four digits of your social security number, you will be issued a letter by the Board of Elections instructing you to provide that information or an equivalent identifier, such as:

- A copy of a current and valid photo identification showing your name; or,
- A copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, paycheck, or other government document showing name and address.

If you receive such a letter you should submit the requested information as soon as possible. You will, however, be able to establish your identity at your polling location as a last alternative.

You do not need to register to vote by mail. You may also register to vote in person at your local Board of Elections. Given the new identification requirements, registering in person may be preferred over registering by mail.

Persons with Felony Records Can Vote If Not in Prison

The Ohio Revised Code, Section 2961.01 makes provision for having your voting rights restored after a felony conviction. An individual may vote once he/she is no longer incarcerated. This is the case if you are released to probation, on parole, or pardoned. Even a convicted felon may vote once living outside of the prison system

When determining whether you are eligible to vote, incarceration is the key indicator. Simply put, if you are in prison, you can not vote. If you are out of prison you may vote.

Remember, you must register or re-register to vote after being released from prison on a felony conviction as your registration may have lapsed while you were in prison.

Misdemeanor Can Apply for an Absentee Ballot

If you are in jail on a misdemeanor, you can apply for an absentee ballot.

Please remember, there are registration deadlines. In the state of Ohio, you must be registered to vote at least 30 days before the election without exception.

If you have additional questions regarding voter registration or eligibility you should contact your local Board of Elections.

New Reports on Block Grants

With the recent controversies over the Bush Administration's various proposals to "block grant" the housing voucher (Section 8) program, a pair of resources from the Urban Institute provides some useful historical and fiscal context. One report discusses the history of block grants in the United States, and the other takes a closer look at the potential impact of 10 new block grants proposed in the Administration's FY05 budget.

Block grants, the reports note, are fixed federal grants to states and local governments or other local entities. In the case of housing vouchers, for example, the FY05 proposal would give federal housing funds directly to public housing authorities. Traditionally, the funds from what were, or might have been in the case of new programs, many distinct federally administered programs are pooled and disbursed directly to local entities to administer as they see fit as long as they meet the program-defined objectives. In theory, block granting provides state and local governments greater flexibility in designing and implementing programs, cutting administration costs, better matching solutions to local needs, and increasing the efficiency and impact of the federal aid in the process.

The earliest block grants were initiatives of Democratic administrations. The first block grant programs were the Partnership for Health in 1966 and the Safe Street Program in 1968. Support for block granting continued under Republican administrations. President Nixon proposed six block grants to replace 129 programs, though only three significantly scaled-back programs emerged. These first block grants provided more money than the individual programs they replaced. This changed under President Reagan, when only a quarter of the money previously available from the programs being replaced was available in the new block grants. A new wrinkle was added by the 104th Congress, with welfare reform legislation that replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and related programs with the TANF block grant. Previously, block grants were either new programs, or they replaced federal categorical grants. With the 1996 welfare reform, Congress for the first time replaced individual federal welfare entitlements with a block grant to states.

Historically, the major problem with block grants is that they had led to a reduction of funding over time. First, funding is often based on past spending even though this may not meet current or future needs. Studies have also shown that historically, the values of the block grants diminish over time as a result of the lack of proper adjustment for inflation and increased costs.

Another issue with block grants is the impact they can have on state and local administrations. Studies have shown that block grant programs work most effectively when there is good program infrastructure and administration already in place. Unfortunately, administering block grants can often strain already overburdened or poorly managed local administrations.

Related to this, block grants have also been subject to "creeping categorization," which occurs when Congress severely limits the flexibility of the program by adding restrictions or requiring that a portion of the funds be set-aside for particular purposes. For example, The Partnership for Health Congress mandated more than 20 new category grants for health services that were to be administered locally.

The reports conclude that if some or all of the current Administration's proposals are approved, this will be the fourth and potentially largest wave of block grants in history. Along with the federal housing voucher program, the current Administration's proposals would affect federal health insurance, foster care, food stamp, local law enforcement, transportation, job training, and Head Start programs. The proposed "Superwaiver" provision could transform these or additional programs into block grants in individual instances, upon state applications and approval by the secretary of the administering department. Since seven of the 10 proposed grants are for social welfare programs, such a change could have a significant and negative impact on the country's low income households, specifically those with children.

These reports provide a succinct historical and fiscal context for housing advocates. *Block Grants: Details of the Bush Proposals* can be found at www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310991, and *Block Grants: Historical Overview and Lessons Learned* is available at www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310990. Taken from Memo to Members, National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Bill Faith, COHHIO's Executive Director Receives National Fellowship Award

Bill Faith, COHHIO's Executive Director, recently received the James A. Johnson Community Fellowship Award from Fannie Mae. The first of its kind, the James A. Johnson Community Fellowship Program recognizes and rewards affordable housing and community development professionals for their leadership and career contributions to the field. Created in 1998, the fellowship program honors the distinguished service of James A. Johnson, immediate past chairman of the Fannie Mae Foundation and former Fannie Mae chairman and chief operating officer.

Each year the Foundation selects up to six seasoned professionals to receive a grant and a stipend for travel and education-related activities. COHHIO will also receive a grant as part of the program to help cover any costs related to Bill's participation in the fellowship. Candidates for the fellowship must be nominated on the basis of their career contributions, leadership, and potential for greater contribution to the field. The Fellows design and pursue personal development plans that include research, internships, study and other activities to enhance their skills and knowledge, foster opportunities for new solutions to affordable housing and community development challenges, and shape public policy. The James A. Johnson Community Fellowship Program provides a unique and intensive opportunity for individual growth and communal exploration of the challenges confronting the affordable housing and community development industry.

Bill will be looking at other agencies across the country to find new and unique ways to make COHHIO more efficient and effective in our work. He also will be using some of his time to spend with his family as well as time to reflect on the important work that we all do in serving low-income and homeless individuals and families. Bill will not be leaving COHHIO for a year. Instead, Bill will take several multi-week breaks over the course of the next year to accomplish these goals. We do not anticipate that these breaks will effect the work of COHHIO.

Materials Available from COHHIO

- *Organizational Development*. \$25 per topic. Board Governance; Fundraising; Human Resources; Leadership; and New Executive Director Basic Training.

- *Directory of Services* (March 2003 version). A listing of non-profit housing organizations and homeless service providers in Ohio. The Directory is organized by county and lists over 900 programs that serve homeless Ohioans as well as provide housing and economic development opportunities for other low-income families and individuals. \$15.

To order materials, contact Susan Francis at susanfrancis@cohhio.org or 614/280-1984.

COHHIO's Vehicle Donation Program

COHHIO can now accept vehicle donations. This program is an easy way to support COHHIO's work. Donated vehicles may include cars, trucks, motorcycles, boats, or RV's. This program has been made possible through a partnership with the Volunteers of America of Central Ohio. Contact Susan Francis at COHHIO for more information at susanfrancis@cohhio.org or 614-280-1984.

COHHIO's Predatory Lending Hotline - 877-228-1645

Do you currently receive *Breaking Ground* by mail?

If so, please switch to email delivery.

To switch: email Susan Francis at COHHIO at susanfrancis@cohhio.org.

It's a fact of life for nonprofits. Fundraising is how we keep our doors open.

Community Shares of Mid Ohio, of which COHHIO is a member, was established as a coalition of nonprofit organizations for the purpose of collaboratively participating in workplace giving campaigns that provide vital financial support from employee donations to member nonprofits.

Community Shares member agencies are community-based, volunteer-led nonprofits preventing family, school, and neighborhood violence, homelessness and hunger, child abuse and neglect, and environmental devastation; protecting civil and human rights; increasing literacy, democracy and voter education, healthy lives and safety, and diversity. We are committed to social justice and real solutions to local needs.

Community Shares honors the wishes of donors to direct their gift to the charity of their choice; seventy-five percent of Community Shares workplace givers designate their donation to a specific member agency.

GOALS

- To collaboratively raise funds for the benefit of member 501(c)(3) nonprofits actively engaged in programs directed toward community improvement, social change, and citizen education and empowerment.
- To establish a strong financial base to ensure the continued existence and effectiveness of member agencies.
- To enhance the capacity of member agencies to accomplish their missions through funding, leadership development, training, and education.

WORKPLACE FUNDRAISING

- Is a time and cost effective method of raising funds from individual donors.
- Reaches a large number of people with information about services within the community.
- Increases the resources available to the entire community by adding more local nonprofits to workplace campaigns
- Includes employees of all income levels and makes philanthropy more diverse and democratic.

IMPACT

- Raised over \$1,000,000 since 1993 for member agencies.
- Increased community exposure and funding for local nonprofits through cooperative federation participation.
- Expanded public sector campaigns in Franklin County, City of Columbus, Columbus Metro Library, Columbus Public Schools, and The Ohio State University to include over 150 additional nonprofits; added new private sector campaigns.
- Gave Community Shares members access to over 125,000 new potential donors.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

To reach our goal to assist member nonprofits, we need the support of visionary community members like you who understand the importance of building the infrastructure and capacity of agencies working for social and economic justice.

- If your workplace does not include Community Shares, ask your employer to include Community Shares in your annual charity drive.
- You can help us by introducing Community Shares to friends and colleagues who share your interest in expanding the capacity of progressive and environmental nonprofits and would be willing to speak on our behalf to develop new or expanded workplace campaigns. We can tailor a workplace campaign to meet the needs of employers and employees.
- You can also help by remembering Community Shares and your favorite member agencies through your support in your workplace giving campaign in the fall. It's easy to give and easy to help when you give through payroll deduction. You can direct your campaign gift to one or several specific agencies.
- And, don't hesitate to encourage your family, friends and coworkers to consider asking for Community Shares and our member agencies at the workplace.

You can reach Community Shares at 614/262-1176, or at comshare@core.com.

Community Shares generates stable funding for community-based, social justice nonprofits working on long term solutions to local needs:

- Social change and social service
- Community building and citizen involvement
- Self-help and prevention
- Grass-roots education and advocacy

Resources

TRAININGS

- *FIRSTLINK Luncheon Series, Columbus.* July 7 - Basic Introduction to Technology Issues; July 14 - IT Best Practices Shared and Discussed; July 21 - 2004 HR Updates, 1.2.3. Overview of What You Need to Know!; July 28 - Effective Information Management Overview; August 4 - Leadership is All About Appreciating; August 11 - Using Real Public Relations. \$15 per session, or \$75 for entire series, which includes a light lunch. For more information, contact William McCulley at education@firstlink.org or 614/221-6766, ext. 123.
- *July 14 - Ethical Practices, Ohio Community Corrections Association, Columbus.* Ethical practices are an ever growing concern in the helping fields. This six hour program will offer a strong foundation for participants to continue to provide services that meet the ethical standards of their licensing and certification boards. RCHs and CEUs for Counselors and Social Workers will be offered. For more information, contact Lusanne Green at 614/252-8417.
- *August 11 - Clinical Supervision, Ohio Community Corrections Association, Columbus.* This six hour seminar is for anyone who is currently offering supervision in a clinical setting or anyone interested in becoming a clinical supervisor. The goals for this seminar are to develop a professional role as a supervisor and to learn how to guide the supervised through the transformation of principles into practice. RCHs and CEUs for Counselors and Social Workers will be offered. For more information contact Lusanne Green at 614/252-8417.
- *September 14 - Lead Risk Assessor Refresher, Office of Housing and Community Partnerships, Ohio Department of Development, Newark.* Provides certified risk assessors with a review of the Lead Inspector/Risk Assessor training and update participants regarding Ohio's lead abatement laws and regulations. \$50 . For more information, visit the OHCP web site at www.odod.state.oh.us/cdd/ohcp and select "Lead-Based Paint Issues" or contact Betsy Giffin at bgiffin@odod.state.oh.us or 614/466-2285.
- *September 29 - October 1 - Community Development: A Civil Right, Ohio CDC Association Annual Conference, Cleveland.* For more information, contact Celia Elkins at celkins@ohiocdc.org or 614-461-6392.
- *November 3-5 - What's Next?: Exploring New Adventures, 2004 Ohio Housing Conference, sponsored by the Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing and the Ohio Housing Finance Agency, Columbus.* For more information, visit www.occh.org or www.homebuyerohio.com.
- *Ohio University Executive Leadership Institute, Athens.* October 5-8 - Leading with Vision, Value and Strategy. November 4-5 - Strategic Triangle in Depth: Leading Change. Spring 2005 - Courage and Compromise in Public Leadership. For more information, visit <http://oueli.voinovichcenter.ohio.edu/>.

PUBLICATIONS

- *Reentry Barriers State-by-State Scorecard, Legal Action Center.* Examines the obstacles facing people with experience in the criminal justice system upon their reentry to society. The report card, which grades each state on whether its law and policies help or hurt those seeking reentry, is accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue of each state's legal barriers to employment, housing, benefits, voting, access to criminal records, parenting and driving. The report also includes recommendations on how federal and state policymakers can help reintegrate people with criminal records into society in ways that better promote public safety. Available at www.lac.org/roadblocks.html.
- *Practical Methods for Counting Homeless People, HUD.* HUD, through the Interagency Council on the Homeless, published the manual which describes data collection methods and sources. \$13.50. For more information, call the Urban Institute at 202/261-5687.
- *Two Homeless Veterans Resources, HUD.* 1) *A Place at the Table: Homeless Veterans and Local Homeless Assistance Planning Networks.* Designed to help organizations serving homeless veterans to more effectively participate in the homeless assistance program planning networks in their communities and, in particular, to access resources through the Continuum of Care planning process. 2) *Coordinating Resources and Developing Strategies to Address the Needs of Homeless Veterans.* Provides information on promising practices for effectively coordinating HUD funding with other resources in order to address the special needs of homeless veterans. Both available at www.hud.gov/homeless/index.cfm under homeless vets.
- *Department of Veterans Affairs CHALENG for Veterans Report.* HUD strongly encourages each local Continuum of Care to examine the identified unmet needs for supportive services and housing of homeless veterans by examining appropriate local community data contained in the VAs CHALENG (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Group) for Veterans. Available at www.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm?pg=17.

FUNDING

- *Home Depot Foundation.* Accepts requests for both operating and programmatic support. Particular consideration is given to requests that impact more than one of the Foundation's initiatives and promote community volunteerism. Initiatives include affordable housing, at-risk youth, environment and disaster preparedness. For more information, visit www.homedepotfoundation.org/hfus/enus/initiatives.html.

- Peter F. Drucker Award for Nonprofit Innovation. The award is given each year to three non-profit organizations in recognition of an innovative, existing program that has made a difference in the lives of the people it serves. The award has been given annually since 1991 and is accompanied by a first place prize of \$20,000 and two runners up prizes of \$2,500 each. The prizes are unrestricted and designed to celebrate and further the work of innovative non-profit organizations in the United States. Deadline for application is August 3, 2004. For more information, visit www.drucker.cgu.edu/innovationaward/.

- Washington Mutual Foundation. Makes millions of dollars in cash grants each year to support affordable housing/ community development and K-12 public education. To make long-term, safe, accessible and affordable housing available for low- to moderate-income (LMI) individuals and families, they provide three types of grants: general operating grants to support organizations developing long-term affordable housing; and capacity building grants for nonprofit housing developers; capital grants to build long-term, affordable housing for LMI individuals. The Foundation also support efforts to help low- to moderate-income individual and families with increasing their ability to expand existing small businesses in LMI neighborhoods that create job opportunities with livable wages; and providing opportunities to learn about financial management, home buying and applying for loans. For more information, visit www.wamu.com/about/community/support/givingguidelines/givingguidelines.htm. The web page doesn't list Ohio in the regional contacts by there are Washington Mutual offices in Ohio.

OTHER

2-1-1 Services. In 2000, the Federal Communications Commission designated 2-1-1 as the national community resource dialing code. 2-1-1 is now available to 85 million Americans, including 51 percent of Ohio residents. The 2-1-1 movement is spearheaded by the National 2-1-1 Collaborative, a partnership between the United Way of America and the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems. Clients who call 2-1-1 will receive assistance, ranging from home healthcare resources to assist an aging parent to where to enroll a child in summer camp. The implementation of 2-1-1 is intended to streamline access to resource information by responding to - community need. In Ohio, 2-1-1 is available in 23 counties, including Delaware and Morrow, which were the first to implement it. 2-1-1 will provide quick, easy access to thousands of community resources, including: child or spousal abuse help, counseling, elderly services, financial assistance, housing, job training, literacy/high-school equivalency classes, prenatal care, recreational activities, substance-abuse treatment, support groups, veterans benefits, and volunteer opportunities.

Workers' Compensation Update

Recent national statistics show that nearly a quarter of all occupational injuries and illnesses involve the back. And figures from the National Council on Compensation Insurance place the average cost (medical and indemnity) of a lower-back injury claim at nearly \$15,000.

With this in mind, the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) and The Ohio State University have joined forces on an award-winning research project aimed at preventing new as well as recurring back injuries in the workplace.

The joint research project yielded lifting guidelines that:

- Identify hazardous conditions associated with lifting tasks to avoid injury or the risk of re-injury;
- Help develop realistic transitional work programs for employees returning to work after a lower-back injury; and
- Facilitate communication between employers, transitional work developers, and medical providers by matching the injured worker with appropriate jobs and by redesigning jobs.

Using these guidelines can help prevent some of the most common and costly occupational injuries affecting this country's work force. According to BWC statistics, 18 percent of Ohio's workers' compensation claims filed in 2002 were attributable to back injuries.

An interactive version of these guidelines is available on BWC's web site (www.ohiobwc.com). BWC designed the on-line guidance to allow users to enter criteria for various lifting tasks. The information is analyzed and a risk level (of high, moderate, or low) is given for each task.

How to Contact...

NATIONAL

- Corporation for Supportive Housing:** www.csh.org
- National Alliance to End Homelessness:** www.endhomelessness.org
- National Coalition for the Homeless:** www.nationalhomeless.org
- National Community Reinvestment Coalition:** www.ncrc.org
- National Low Income Housing Coalition:** www.nlihc.org

President Bush - 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500; 202/456-1414; 202/456-2461 (fax); president@whitehouse.gov

Senators Voinovich & DeWine - United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510
Voinovich - 202/224-3353; 202/228-1382 (fax); voinovich@voinovich.senate.gov
DeWine - 202/224-2315; 202/224-6519 (fax); senator_dewine@dewine.senate.gov

Representatives - United States House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515; 202/224-3121

STATE

- Governor Taft** - 77 South High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215; 614/466-3555; 614/466-9354 (fax)
- Ohio Senate** - State House, Columbus, Ohio 43266-0604; 614/644-5466 (fax-R); 614/644-1982 (fax - D)
- Ohio House of Representatives** - 77 South High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215; 614/644-9494 (fax)

Legislative Directories are available by contacting us: COHHIO - 35 East Gay Street, Suite 210, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3138; 614/280-1984; 614/463-1060 (fax); www.cohhio.org.

COHHIO Staff

- Bill Faith, Executive Director - billfaith@cohhio.org
- Susan Francis, Communications and Development Coordinator - susanfrancis@cohhio.org
- Dan Garcia - Education and Outreach Coordinator - danielgarcia@cohhio.org
- Paula Jenkins, HMIS Support Coordinator - paulajenkins@cohhio.org
- Cathy Johnston, Special Projects and Advocacy Coordinator - cathyjohnston@cohhio.org
- Alfred Jones, YEP Youth Advocate - alfredjones@cohhio.org
- Angela Lariviere, Youth Empowerment Coordinator- angelalariviere@cohhio.org
- Jason Pittman, YEP VISTA - jasonpittman@cohhio.org
- Mary Scott, Administrative Assistant - maryscott@cohhio.org
- Rick Taylor, Managing Director -ricktaylor@cohhio.org
- Ande Ucubagabriel, Finance Director - andeuucubagabriel@cohhio.org
- Spencer Wells, Tenant Outreach Coordinator - spencerwells@cohhio.org
- Jeannette Welsh, Housing + Services Coordinator - jeannettewelsh@cohhio.org

35 East Gay Street, Suite 210, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3138
614/280-1984; 614/463-1060 (fax)
cohhio@cohhio.org
www.cohhio.org

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COHHIO is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to ending homelessness and to promoting decent, safe, fair, affordable housing for all, with a focus on assisting low-income people and those with special needs.