



HCVP Newsletter

News For Housing Choice Voucher Program Participants and Providers

Spring 2010

Census 2010: What it Means to You

DC Mayor Adrian Fenty estimates that we undercounted the population of DC by 31,000 people in 2010. For each person who went uncounted, the district lost about \$3,500 each year for the past 10 years. That is a very conservative estimate of over one billion dollars of lost revenue for DC!

With this information, it is easy to see why the task of a more accurate count is so important to us all. These funds will go toward



many of our public programs including schools, roads, libraries, and many other public projects. The U.S. Census questionnaire will be arriving in your mailbox this April. Please take a moment to fill out the 10-question form. In less than 10 minutes we can bring more resources to our city.

Additionally, the census has excellent part-time job opportunities for individuals who are at least 18 years old. They are currently accepting applications and

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Family Self-Sufficiency Program



Ward 7 Councilmember Yvette Alexander (back row, right of center) joined Former HCVP Director Velma Navarro (center) and Interim Executive Director Adrienne Todman (second from right, front row), DCHA Commissioners and staff at the FSS graduation.

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is once again accepting new applicants. The program ended 2009 with 26 new graduates, 16 of whom met their FSS goal of becoming first-time homebuyers. Ward 7 Councilmember Yvette Alexander was the Keynote speaker for the ceremony.

The goal of the FSS program is to assist participants in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to obtain economic independence by developing and working towards established goals and optimism toward the future. Through commitments and partnerships with service providers in the District of Columbia and the surrounding Metropolitan area, the FSS Program links its participants with public and private service providers and other resources to assist in achieving economic self-sufficiency.

The program's new manager, Cheryl Robinson, has big plans for the program in 2010.

Project EARN! (Empowering All Residents Now) is a new workforce program for housing choice voucher participants who are currently unemployed. It will provide workforce services and assist voucher holders in obtaining gainful employment. Voucher holders will receive services such as job-readiness training, apprenticeship training, occupational skills training and job placement assistance.

The FSS program will host an FSS Roundtable in March 2010 to collaborate with other FSS programs in the eastern region: Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland, and Alexandria, Va. The March Roundtable discussed

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A Message from the Interim Executive Director

Today marks a new chapter for DCHA.

Many of you know that Michael Kelly left DCHA in 2009 to become General Manager for the New York City Housing Authority. It is my privilege to serve as Interim Executive Director, and I am proud to see that we are continuing to hold up the standard of excellence that Mr. Kelly set for almost 10 years.



Ms. Velma Navarro, HCVP Director, has also resigned; she is relocating to be closer to her family and loved ones. Ron McCoy is now serving as Interim HCVP Director, and he will continue to maintain the positive strides HCVP has made under Ms. Navarro's guidance.

We have welcomed new faces to HCVP as well. Hammere Gebreyes joined our staff and took over the controls of our Local Rent Supplement Program from Kim Cole, who has done an excellent job. Ms. Gebreyes is quite familiar with her office and our residents; she is off to an excellent start.

Also we have added Cheryl Robinson as the new Family Self Sufficiency Program Manager. Ms. Robinson previously worked in DCHA's Office of Resident Services, and she has a strong background in helping residents succeed in reaching their goals.

During the last few years, HCVP has undergone many programmatic changes including the implementation of biennial recertifications, a new reasonable rent determination methodology, enhanced housing counseling services and a more effective electronic inspections process.

At the same time, we have enhanced customer service through DCHA's new and improved website. Here, landlords and tenants can log in to get specific information regarding their units in the program, including payment and inspection histories. We have held monthly educational seminars for participants as well as a comprehensive workshop on the program for landlords.

The HCVP team has worked to make the program more effective and improve processes in all areas, while managing continued participation and growth in the District-funded Local Rent Supplement Program, as well as the overall Family Self-Sufficiency, Homeownership and Good Neighbor Programs.

I am confident DCHA staff have the knowledge and the tools to continue our role as a national model in the housing industry. DCHA, like all other institutions, has room to improve, and we will continue to build on our foundation of excellence to insure this happens. We are strong, we are innovative, and we will continue to get things done.

My best wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Todman
Interim Executive Director

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testing for employment opportunities. As a part of the 2010 census team you can earn good pay, get paid weekly, work flexible hours, receive paid training and help

your community.

Many of the jobs pay as much as \$20 per hour, and the temporary employment status will not have an effect on your rent. A sample test is available online at www.2010censusjobs.gov.

Testing locations will include libraries, recreation centers and select DCHA public housing properties. For more information or to find a testing location, call the toll-free jobs line at 1-866-861-2010.

Local Rent Supplement Program Update

As DCHA's Local Rent Supplement Program (LRSP) enters into its third year of operation, the program is increasing efforts to bring on-line affordable housing opportunities to the District's most vulnerable residents.

Some of our grantees have been unable to complete their projects due to a lack of capital funding, so the focus for this third year is to assist all previously awarded grantees in moving forward with their projects and bringing their projects to completion.

Based on legislation recently passed by the DC Council, DCHA will be able to convert unexpended LRSP funds to capital dollars so that some of the current LRSP grantees will be able to close their financing gaps and complete their current projects. DCHA will be working closely with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), DC Housing Finance Agency (DCHFA) to coordinate efforts and provide as much assistance as possible to complete these projects.

The program's second year included completion of projects that were either new construction



Hammere Gebreyes has been named the new LRSP Program Manager at DCHA.

or substantial rehabilitation and saw families begin the lease-up process. Included in the projects that have recently come on-line are Ontario Courts, the Residences at Georgia Avenue and Open Arms.

DCHA also celebrated the completion of the program's first newly constructed apartment building, the Residences at Georgia Avenue, in which 14 units are designated LRSP. The Residences at Georgia Avenue boasts amenities such as a green roof and a grocery store on the premises. Additionally, the recently opened Dunbar Apartments, will house 16 previously homeless women

through LRSP funding. Open Arms will be providing much needed housing and supportive services to these women.

Last year also saw the addition of a new member to the HCVP family in Hammere Gebreyes. Ms. Gebreyes joins DCHA as the new LRSP Program Manager.

In the previous two years, DCHA housed 678 families with tenant-based vouchers with local funding. In addition, more than 47 grants were awarded to 22 organizations that had existing units or sought to rehab existing or build new housing for extremely low income District residents through the Project- and Sponsor-based components of the program.

These organizations are considered program partners and many provide supportive services in addition to housing for clients with special needs in an effort to ensure that families are able to maintain housing. More than 1,000 families will have their housing subsidized through the Project/Sponsor program component once all of the rehabilitation and new construction of units is completed.

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basic FSS challenges and the grant submission process for FSS. Although participants will not attend this roundtable, we welcome input from program participants as to what you believe are program challenges.

The FSS program is currently finalizing its partnership with Home Depot. Home Depot will provide onsite training to our first time home-

buyer clients and teach clients basic "do-it-yourself" repairs.

To be eligible to participate in the FSS program, you must:

- ◆ Be a voucher holder, receiving rental assistance through the HCVP and have a desire to improve your economic situation;
- ◆ Agree to comply with the terms and conditions of the HCV lease;

- ◆ Be able to seek and maintain employment during the term of the contract; and

- ◆ Make a commitment to yourself to strive for excellence

For information on how you can become a participant in the FSS Program, contact Cheryl Robinson at 202-535-1000.

Clients and Landlords, Want Your Tuesday or Friday Back?

Tuesday is walk-in day for HCVP clients; Friday is walk-in day for HCVP landlords. On these days, it is impossible to predict how many people will come to DCHA and how long each will have to wait for service.

Did you know that you can now handle many of the tasks without having to come into the DCHA office? DCHA's new website at www.dchousing.org has interactive sections dedicated especially for HCVP clients and landlords. You can get the services and information you need at any time that's convenient for you.

Participant Options:

HCVP participants can log into DCHA's website with a valid email address, and they will be able to use the website to:

- ◆ Search for vacancies
- ◆ Sign up to get automatic emails letting you know of new vacancies that meet your criteria, such as number of bedrooms and geographic area
- ◆ Apply for DCHA jobs
- ◆ Apply for "Do Your B.E.S.T." summer youth employment program

- ◆ Apply for Section 3 jobs
- ◆ Search resources and social services by keywords, name and locations
- ◆ View a fully searchable Frequently-Asked-Questions section
- ◆ Set up an automatic email notification of scheduled inspections and inspection results
- ◆ Set up an automatic email notification of recertification dates
- ◆ View Past HCVP News-letters
- ◆ Request inspection of unit*

Landlord Benefits:

HCVP landlords can log into the website securely and are able to:

- ◆ Advertise your available unit(s) to recipients
- ◆ View all your properties listed with the Housing Choice Voucher Program
- ◆ View/download all payment details for your properties
- ◆ Receive automatically emailed schedules of inspections and the inspection results
- ◆ View inspection results
- ◆ Request inspections*
- ◆ Receive automatically emailed tenant recertification reminders

- ◆ View tenants with payment information
- ◆ Request a rent increase**
- ◆ Receive Housing Provider Association information updates
- ◆ View Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection Checklist***
- ◆ View Past HCVP News-letters.

***Annual inspections will take place during the tenants' anniversary month, in the same manner as recertifications and rent increases.**

****Requesting a rent increase might result in a decrease in rent payment based on current market studies.**

*****More than 50 percent of all units fail their initial inspection. This keeps units out of the program and our clients either unhoused or searching. It also keeps your unit uninhabited for a longer period of time. Landlords can use the HQS checklist to self inspect units either quarterly or biannually, to improve compliance success rates.**

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