

## **2008 NAHRO AWARDS**

### **AGENCY AWARDS OF MERIT IN HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

#### **PROGRAM INNOVATION: RESIDENT AND CLIENT SERVICES**

#### **ELDERLY OR SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING-SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS**

#### **SOCIAL WORKER**

### **1. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM**

The Fort Worth Housing Authority operates five (5) public housing complexes. Many of the residents within these complexes are in need of supportive services to enable them to live independently and enhance and maintain the quality of their lives. FWHA has created a Social Worker position that conducts comprehensive needs assessments and performs individual case management for these residents. This position develops programs, coordinates activities and refers residents to community social service providers in order to meet their educational, physical, medical, social, and mental health needs.

### **2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM**

The variety and range of problems experienced by residents of public housing reflect the inherent diversity in ages, disabilities, economic conditions, social, and cultural orientation of said residents. Many public housing residents experience problems and obstacles that prevent them from improving the well-being of their families as well as their living environments.

In April 2004, the Fort Worth Housing Authority created and funded a Social Worker position to work with residents of public housing to significantly impact their needs by utilizing a holistic service approach. This individual utilizes a comprehensive approach to identify problems and works with community service providers to coordinate the provision of services and to tailor the services to the needs and characteristics of public housing residents. This individual also assists residents that are in danger of being institutionalized in securing services that will enable them to age in place and live independently.

### **3. THE RESULTS/SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM**

The Social Worker position has been very successful in impacting the needs of public housing individuals, families, the elderly and disabled.

During 2007, the Social Worker worked hands-on and coordinated with various service providers to enable public housing residents to receive the following services.

- Financial assistance was obtained that prevented eleven (11) evictions of public housing residents. One resident obtained financial assistance to attend culinary school.
- Thirty-nine (39) residents were provided free bus passes to go back and forth to doctor's appointments.
- Twenty-nine (29) residents received free eye exams and glasses.
- Ten (10) residents were approved to receive social security financial benefits. In addition, six (6) residents were approved for health care benefits.
- One (1) resident received travel assistance to return home to Los Angeles to attend a relative's funeral.
- Twenty (20) residents now utilize home health services.
- Eighteen (18) residents received free furniture.
- Two hundred two (202) residents received Thanksgiving baskets.
- Four (4) on-site housekeeping classes were conducted at one of the housing complexes.

In addition, the Social Worker conducts crisis intervention on a weekly basis with approximately twenty (20) residents with issues ranging from substance abuse to personal differences among residents. This individual also assists residents in getting their medications paid for if needed. Eight (8) residents have received free medications. The Social Worker also assists residents with getting their bank accounts set up on bill pay so that their rent will be mailed directly from the bank so they won't have to worry about it.

In summary, the Social Worker has impacted the lives of public housing residents by identifying, addressing and reducing problems – many times before they occur or multiply. This has resulted in enhanced harmony and the quality of life, and has created a sense of community among public housing residents.

#### **4. THE COST/FINANCING OF THE PROGRAM**

The cost of implementing the Social Worker program includes salary and fringe benefits, totaling approximately \$68,000. FWHA was able to leverage funds from various agencies including First Presbyterian Church and First United Methodist Church. Many of the costs of the services received by public housing residents were absorbed by various social service agencies and provided free of charge.

#### **5. INNOVATION**

The Social Worker utilizes a hands-on services approach along with a community-wide approach in securing and providing services for public housing residents. This pooling of available resources in a coordinated effort provides the Social Worker greater flexibility

and responsiveness in meeting the needs of public housing residents. This results in an innovative support system designed to improve the lives of public housing residents along with creating an optimistic future.