

## 2007 NAHRO AWARDS

### AGENCY AWARDS OF MIEIT IN HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

#### ADMINISTRATIVE INNOVATION

##### Electronic File System

- 1. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM:** The Fort Worth Housing Authority (FWHA) serves approximately 5,000 clients annually. In an effort to maintain the highest level of security regarding each client's personal information, to have the ability to better track client files and to provide each FWHA staff member more efficient use of time, a two-story, two unit, \$250,000.00 electronic filing system was installed in 2005. Each tray in this electronic filing system is the equivalent of four, four drawer file cabinets. Each unit holds forty trays for a total capacity equal to three hundred and twenty, four drawer filing cabinets.
- 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM:** In 2004, discussions began in-house regarding the changes in the laws governing the safety and security of personal information contained in the files maintained by housing authorities across the country. With growing concern, FWHA management staff began examining alternative means of storage. Several ideas were presented and discarded, with the final determination to pursue information regarding an electronic file system. This secured system encompasses two floors of the FWHA building and is managed by two file room clerks. Each file is labeled with a pre-printed bar code and is electronically scanned in and out of the system by one of the file clerks. Because each file is electronically scanned there is no need to file folders in any particular order. When a file is requested the information is typed into the system and the system will automatically pull the proper tray containing this file and dictate its drawer within the tray. The clerk will then scan the file and enter the requestor's information so that there is no question as to who has that particular file. This system has significantly decreased the number of "missing" files within the agency, which in turn saves a considerable amount of time and, therefore, money.
- 3. THE RESULTS/SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM:** This electronic filing system has proven to be a cost effective program for FWHA. Because of the limited number of persons with access to the file room, two (2) versus thirty-two (32), the two clerks now have the time to not only deliver files, but to receive and maintain them. The timeliness of delivery and the instant knowledge of where a file is located within the building have made everyone involved with the clients and client confidentiality feel more secure.
- 4. THE COST/FINANCING OF THE PROGRAM:** The cost of this system as mentioned in the summary was approximately \$250,000.00 and took fourteen months from the time of ground breaking to the time the last file was scanned into the system. Based on the research that was performed and the capabilities of this system, approving

financing for this program was easy to justify. This system has proven to be very beneficial to the daily operations of our program and will in time pay for itself. FWHA strives each day to find more cost effective, innovative programs and tools to enhance and streamline our organization.

5. **INNOVATION:** FWHA contacted five (5) other area agencies in North-East Texas, some smaller and some much larger and discovered that we are the only agency at this time to have this innovative electronic filing system in place to provide better customer service.