



"Maximizing Individual Potential"



NEWS Release

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Area Agencies Team to Provide Housing for City's Homeless

Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Richmond Behavioral Health Authority and Homeward sign Memorandum of Understanding

Richmond, VA – Representatives of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA), Richmond Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) and Homeward today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU joins the three agencies in an agreement to help reduce the City's homeless population by providing housing and certain social services to eligible homeless families residing in the City's homeless shelters.

In the MOU, RRHA agrees to, based on the availability of housing units, make available up to 150 units during the term of the agreement. Under the agreement, RBHA and Homeward, in partnership with its community partners, agree to screen homeless applicants, according to the requirements outlined in the MOU, prior to referring them to RRHA.

Homeward launched the Ten-Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the Richmond Region in 2008. The MOU is in line with achieving the goals of that plan and will be instrumental in addressing the City's homeless problem as the number of homeless families in the city has increased resulting in full shelters. According to a recent study conducted by Homeward, on any given day in the Richmond region, there are at least 1,075 sheltered and unsheltered men, women and children experiencing

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homelessness¹. Homeward estimates that 500-800 homeless individuals in the Richmond region, in a given year are children².

From The State of Homelessness, 2007 Report on Homelessness in the Greater Richmond Area, of the 1,150 experiencing homelessness in the area:

- 72 percent of adults are males; 27 percent are females
- 70.5 percent are African-American; 23.1 percent are White and 3.6 percent are Hispanic
- The average age for adults is 43.44 years
- 53.8 percent have a high school education or GED, 20.1 percent attended some college and 8.8 percent have a college degree or higher
- 22.5 percent are veterans
- 33.4 percent are employed. Of those who are employed, 52.1 percent work full-time, 32.9 percent work part-time, and 15.0 percent do day labor or temp work.
- 51.1 percent of respondents have lived in Greater Richmond for 5 years or more; 34.4 percent have lived in the area for 17 years or more

RRHA is a multi-faceted Authority with a number of responsibilities including - providing subsidized housing, building new houses, helping first-time homebuyers through the home-buying process, partnering with government agencies and private businesses, purchasing and revitalizing property to remove blight, helping residents achieve self-sufficiency and more. But, the work the Housing Authority does to improve the quality of Richmond's communities is the crux of RRHA's mission.

"This agreement will allow for homeless families referred through RBHA to obtain housing in one of RRHA's public housing developments, said John Hill, RRHA's Deputy Executive Director for Affordable Housing. "Further, it lends itself to the elimination of homelessness in the city of Richmond through a collaborative and seamless approach which includes a comprehensive assessment of the family, referrals for medical, employment and other services and case management that will lead to permanent housing, increased self-sufficiency and confidence."

"Over the period of this MOU, 150 families experiencing homelessness will have expedited access to housing," said Kelly King Horne, Homeward's Executive Director. "The families presented with keys today will not be counted in our next point-in-time census. Having housing isn't the end of their journey, but it is the end of their homelessness. This partnership supports the Richmond Region's plan to prevent and end homelessness, and by combining affordable housing and supportive services, this agreement represents a best practice in ending family homelessness."

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¹ The State of Homelessness, 2007 Report on Homelessness in the Greater Richmond Area

² The State of Homelessness, 2007 Report on Homelessness in the Greater Richmond Area

RBHA is committed to providing quality behavioral healthcare services to all Richmond residents. RBHA provides an extensive array of mental health, intellectual disability, and substance abuse services that significantly improve the quality of life for the individuals served and for the community at-large.

As a part of the service array, RBHA provides a continuum of supports to targeted individuals who are homeless. More than 250 individuals and families who are experiencing the crisis of homelessness are served every year through several programs. Specifically, the Residential Support for Homeless Families program, which RBHA has been managing for almost two decades, helped find housing for more than 70 families last year. Many more received intensive support to access the community resources needed to become stable and self-reliant.

Wilson Washington, RBHA Chief Executive Officer, comments: “the agency is in motion and we are moving forward toward excellence...we have a tough job in managing complex consumers that are suffering from serious mental illness, substance abuse, and intellectual disabilities. We are tasked at accomplishing our mission in a very diverse and evolving political environment...with...competing priorities as well as scarce resources.”

“This MOU tremendously enhances the services that RBHA is able to provide to homeless families. It also serves to underscore the value of genuine collaboration among various providers in the community who share a common purpose to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Richmond,” adds Beth Rafferty, RBHA’s Mental Health Director.

The MOU terminates two years from the date of the agreement signing or upon signing 150 lease agreements referred to RRHA under the agreement.

“This agreement is a step in the right direction toward eliminating homelessness in the region,” said Anthony Scott, RRHA Executive Director. “RRHA is proud to be a part of this partnership with RBHA and Homeward...together we are making a difference.”

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About RRHA

RRHA plays a key role in assuring the city of Richmond's bright future and has been at the forefront of affordable housing community development for more than 68 years. RRHA is the largest housing authority in the Commonwealth of Virginia. RRHA serves nearly 10,000 residents and manages nearly 4,100 units through its Public Housing Program; and provides subsidized housing assistance to approximately 3,100 families through its Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program. RRHA also manages neighborhood redevelopment and conservation programs through the city of Richmond. For more information, visit rrha.org.

About RBHA

RBHA is licensed by the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services and is responsible for providing mental health, mental retardation, substance abuse and prevention services to the citizens of the City of Richmond. Integrated services are available for adults, children and families through a central intake unit. Services are provided directly by staff of the Authority and through contracts with private providers in the community. For more information, visit rbha.org.

About Homeward

With nearly 1,000 homeless children, single adults and families at a given point in time in Greater Richmond, Homeward is the regional catalyst to research, report and coordinate resources for people experiencing homelessness. In collaboration with regional partners in the City of Richmond and the counties of Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, New Kent, Powhatan, Charles City and Goochland, Homeward facilitates service provider trainings, client resource fairs, and conducts twice yearly 'point-in-time' counts of those at-risk and who are currently in the sheltered and unsheltered population. In 2008 Homeward launched the Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the Richmond Region. For more information on Homeward, visit www.homewardva.org