

Oahu Outreach-Emergency Shelter Provider Meeting
Special Discussion: Emergency Shelter Diversion
March 24th, 2021

Service Providers in Attendance: Achieve Zero, Hale Kipa, Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center, Helping Hands Hawaii, Institute for Human Services, Kalihi-Palama Health Center, Kealahou West Oahu, Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, Mental Health Kokua, Project Vision Hawaii, The Radical Hale, Revive & Refresh, River of Life, RYSE, UnitedHealthcare Justice Liaison, Waikiki BID/BBB, Family Promise, Waikiki Health, Partners in Care, Shelter of Wisdom, Waikiki Health, Mediation Center of the Pacific, Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Please note that this list may not include providers calling in from unknown phone numbers.*

Link to recording: <https://vimeo.com/692386910>

Call to Order/Client Success Story

- While this story is about a couple who unfortunately lost their housing recently, we want to underscore the collaborative work between I.H.S., the HONU, and the Sheriffs to get this family connected to services. This older couple had been living in a rental unit without utilities for 14 years, and fell behind on rent due to a loss of income during the pandemic. The couple was very insulated from the world and had no phone or Internet. They also stopped opening mail during the pandemic, which led to SSA benefits being suspended. At first, the couple was in disbelief that they could be at risk of losing their housing and declined offers of referrals from the Sheriffs and I.H.S. However, things changed on the day of their eviction and the couple realized they would need help. Luckily, I.H.S. was happy to offer to connect them to the HONU for an immediate place to stay, even offering to give the couple a ride since the HONU driver was at another appointment. Shortly after they arrived, HONU staff began the process of reapplying them for SSA benefits and getting phone appointments set up. Mahalo to Eli at I.H.S. for being so patient and collaborative!

Announcements

- PIC Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) trainings for the City & County of Honolulu allocation have wrapped up, but the recordings will be available on the PIC website.
- The City's Office of Economic Revitalization will be hosting another update session for the Rent & Utility Relief Program on March 29th at 11 a.m. The session will be livestreamed on their Facebook page and recorded. It will be targeted at landlords and property managers who may have ongoing questions about the program.

Presentations

- **Shelter Diversion for Individuals – Connie Mitchell, IHS** (see attached slides)
- I.H.S. has a series of shelters and programs for people in various circumstances. Shelters can be a portal to assess a person's needs and connect them to resources if they are unable to be diverted.
- People in the process of being evicted or losing their housing:
 - Successful shelter diversion is usually dependent on having enough time.
 - If someone is being evicted, please encourage them to seek assistance immediately.

- Shelter is not the best situation for everyone. For people who have never been homeless before, we want to spare them the experience if possible, especially the experience of congregate shelter.
- People should try to apply for temporary rental assistance funds, such as through the COVID rent relief programs. For those who have a chronic problem of being unable to pay rent, we need to figure out income streams to help stabilize the household.
- Recently released from prisons or other institutions:
 - I.H.S. has a program focused on reentry, including 3 locations for males and 1 location for females. Many people who exit prisons to homelessness are at risk of reoffending.
 - For those with significant medical issues, such as those coming out of the hospital, I.H.S. has Tutu Bert's and other medical respite programs.
 - For those who are medically compromised, it is important to help get them stable. Other providers, such as HHHRC, HOME Project, and CORE can help with medical stabilization.
- Recently/newly homeless (already lost housing):
 - There are some programs that can help with one-time or short-term costs, both for people who are imminently losing housing and already homeless.
 - A list of rental assistance programs that can assist both literally homeless and at-risk households is available at <http://homelessness.hawaii.gov/eviction-moratorium-resources/>.
 - Please see later updates from DHS HPO for specific information about some of these programs.

Q&A and Follow-Up

- I.H.S. has some resources that can help seniors with some of the issues that come up as people have increasing health needs, such as connecting to CHORE services or taking care of their units to avoid health and safety issues.
- Medical respite programs can assist with people who are coming out of the hospital and need temporary in-home care. Many of the health plans understand that getting people into a safe place to recover will help them heal and are willing to support these services. I.H.S. shelters also have a pharmacist to ensure that people are getting access to their medications.
- Many people with complicated health needs are Medicaid-eligible and could be eligible for Home and Community-Based Services, CHORE services, or nursing care.
- **Shelter Diversion for Families – Jason Tannahill, Family Promise of Hawaii** (see attached slides)
 - Diversion at FPH begins with a phone call or referral for services. Staff will ask a series of questions about their situation and will try to keep them housed if possible.
 - To qualify for diversion, families need to have income. Without income, they will not be able to sustain housing, so the focus is to work with families on increasing their income and getting document ready.
 - It usually takes around two months for people to get into housing from the time they enter FPH's programs.
- **Oahu Mediation Updates – Tracey Wiltgen, Mediation Center of the Pacific**
 - No matter how dire the situation, MCP often notices that tenants in the eviction mediation process don't view themselves as being at-risk of becoming homeless.

- Due to program limitations and funding from the City, MCP can only allow for 1 no-show appointment. As much as possible, please try to remind anyone facing eviction that mediation is a good thing and is designed to help them. Even if landlords are not sending eviction notices to MCP as they should be, tenants can reach out on their own to set up a mediation appointment.
- Sometimes people get an eviction notice and immediately move out without exploring options to resolve their housing situation or have more time to look into other options. Eviction can be very damaging to people's credit history and can lead to bad rental references going forward.

Q&A and Follow-Up

- There are a small percentage of households being evicted who don't qualify for COVID rent relief. However, there will be people coming up on the end of their 18 months of rental relief and may be at risk of eviction again if they cannot afford rent on their own.
 - Eviction or loss of housing may be a good opportunity to address an underlying substance use disorder or undiagnosed mental health condition, especially if those conditions led to their loss of housing.
 - There is an ongoing need for housing navigation or housing search services, especially for people who are not yet homeless.
- **HPO Prevention/Diversion Programs – Harold Brackeen III, DHS HPO**
 - DHS HPO is a funder of several programs that can help people who are at-risk of homelessness in addition to those who are already homeless.
 - HPO SHEG Program new Service Specs (eff. 7/1/21) requires 50% of contracted resources to be put towards Shelter Diversion. No CES referral. HPO strongly suggests emergency shelter providers connect with Catholic Charities to build partnership and utilize this resource.
 - HPO HPP Program new Service Specs (eff. 7/1/21) requires 50% of contracted resources to be put towards Shelter Diversion. Program is for TANF eligible families only. No CES referral. HPO strongly suggests emergency shelter providers connect with Catholic Charities and U.S. VETS to build partnership and utilize this resource.
 - HPO RRH Program has a 60/40 split. 60% is RRH referrals through CES. Up to 40% is for imminent at risk (within 14 days to eviction), no CES referrals needed. HPO strongly suggests emergency shelter providers connect with ASI and I.H.S. to build partnership and utilize this resource.
 - Please note that HPO's Prevention and RRH programs may be set up differently than other programs funded by federal or other sources, and there may be additional flexibilities that are not present in other programs. Providers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these programs.
 - As the pandemic response winds down, HPO will be looking at group meetings with providers of these different types of programs.