

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

More than 100 homeless families housed through MBHP-piloted program

BOSTON – In December, more than 1,000 families were homeless and living in motel rooms, placed there by the state because shelters were overflowing. Today that number is under 700, thanks in large part to an innovative program that combines federal dollars and local know-how.

“I never believed I would be in the situation I was in,” said Lisa, who after more than three months sheltered in a motel was able to move her and her daughter into their own place in April. “I once owned my own business, owned two homes. That (motel) wasn’t who I was. I was dying in there.”

The Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP) since December has helped 116 families move from shelter to housing – 101 of them from motels and another 15 from state shelters. Ten more families are in the process of “leasing up” under the program, and another 40 families are in various stages of apartment search.

“Each day, families are signing leases and moving from homelessness into permanent homes thanks to this innovative program,” said Maura Pensak, MBHP’s director of client services.

Since December, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership staff members have met with 300-plus families sheltered in 10 motels across Greater Boston. The team’s goal was to identify families who, with just a little help, could move quickly out of the motels and into homes.

Using a combination of federal stimulus dollars through the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) and privately donated flexible funds from the Family-to-Family Project, MBHP has helped more than 100 families move out of motel, congregate and scattered site shelters and into homes. HPRP funds help families pay the rent for up to a year, and flexible funds help them with any related expenses, such as security deposits on apartments.

Families like Lisa’s also are connected with other resource agencies to help with career development, family counseling, medical needs, and more to help them sustain their tenancies. In other words, once their rental subsidy runs out, they should be able to pay the rent on their own.

Lisa now has a job, and there’s even discussion about her becoming a store manager in the near future. She says that while it will be hard work, she’ll “do whatever it takes” to be self-sufficient not just at the end of her year of rental assistance, but for good.



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“I feel that I wouldn’t have been able to do it without this kick-start,” she said. “At the end of my year, I want to be able to be on my own two feet.”

The program is based on a 2009 MBHP pilot program at the Cambridge Gateway Inn motel, when using a similar rental assistance and emergency fund structure MBHP helped house 22 families sheltered there.

“Children need a safe place to live if they are going to thrive,” said Chris Norris, MBHP executive director. “A motel room is no place to raise a child. Permanent housing and a support network can make all the difference – they play an instrumental role in getting a family back on its feet.”

MBHP also is working with local housing authorities, shelters and housing supports resources to help other motel-sheltered families who need more intensive assistance beyond the rapid re-housing model to obtain housing. Using focused case management, interdisciplinary resources and supports, job training, mentoring, and options to accumulate assets through a matched savings plan, MBHP will work with the balance of the families in motel shelters to secure housing.

MBHP is the state’s largest regional provider of rental housing voucher assistance. We serve homeless, elderly, disabled, and low- and moderate-income individuals and families. Our region spans Boston and 29 surrounding communities: Arlington, Bedford, Belmont, Braintree, Brookline, Burlington, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Lexington, Lynn, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Milton, Newton, North Reading, Quincy, Reading, Revere, Somerville, Stoneham, Wakefield, Waltham, Watertown, Wilmington, Winchester, Winthrop and Woburn.

Our mission is to ensure that the region’s low- and moderate-income individuals and families have choice and mobility in finding and retaining decent affordable housing; all of our programs and initiatives are designed to encourage housing stability, increase economic self-sufficiency, and enhance quality of the lives of those we serve. To achieve our mission and to promote efficient service delivery, we work collaboratively with a broad array of service providers and neighborhood-based organizations.

We believe that everyone deserves a place to call home.

For more information, contact MBHP Communications Manager Beth Wagner at (617) 425-6691, or log onto www.mbhp.org.

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