

# HARLEM UNITED

## *Who Does What? Improving Rent Collection by Coordinating Roles*

*The Harlem United Perspective*

The Supportive Housing Network of New York's  
13<sup>th</sup> Annual New York State Conference

**June 6, 2013**

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- With funding from HUD, HOPWA, HRA/HASA and Public Health Solutions, Harlem United has:
  - **586 supportive housing units for HIV positive clients, including**
    - 509 scatter site apartments located in the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn
      - 392 permanent housing units
      - 117 transitional housing units for up to 2 years
    - 77 congregate housing units in Manhattan
      - 53 permanent congregate housing units
      - 24 emergency, transitional housing for up to 6 months

- In addition to HIV, all of our clients have histories of homelessness and most have mental health and/or substance abuse diagnoses
- Of the 509 scatter site units, 144 units are designated for women with mental illness or women with children
- An additional 39 scatter site units are for families
- The remaining units are for single adults

For FY13 thus far (7/12 – 4/13)

- **HU's rent collection rate for all of the supportive housing programs combined is 80%**
- The permanent congregate housing programs\* do better at rent collection than the scatter site programs
  - 95% for congregate compared to 76% for the scatter site programs
  - However, with varied populations served within the scatter site programs, there is a large range among the programs: 62% to 87%

\* Clients in transitional congregate housing do not have a rent obligation

- Harlem United treats rent collection as an essential component and responsibility of the supportive housing program
- It is NOT dealt with by an external body but rather integrated into the supportive housing model
- Supportive housing programs and the Case Managers
  - Collect rent directly from clients, monitor payments made on a monthly basis, and track and calculate the rent arrears
  - Work closely and directly with clients to address their barriers to paying rent based on HASA's guidelines for case conferencing, harm reduction principles and motivational interviewing techniques

- Each program mails monthly invoices to each client with a rent portion, indicating
  - The rent amount due
  - The amount past due (the total arrears)
  - The date payment is due (by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month)
- Clients receive a receipt for their rent payment and the program keeps copies of the money order in a binder, in addition to entering the payment in the tracking sheet

- Each program maintains a spreadsheet to track rent payment by client by month

### Sample tracking sheet

Name	Jan '13	Feb '13	Mar '13	Apr '13	May '13	Income	Date of Award Letter	Rent Share	Total Amt. Paid	Total Amt. Owed	Arrears
Client A	246.00	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	852.00	September-12	247.50	5905.00	\$10,621.70	\$4,716.70
Client B	250.00	255.00	240.00	250.00	250.00	805.00	January-13	241.50	1230.50	\$1,425.00	\$194.50
Client C	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	0.00	PA	PA
Client D	250.00	0.00	245.00	0.00	264.00	785.00	February-12	235.50	5095.00	\$8,927.50	\$3,832.50
Client E	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	PA	January-09	PA	0.00	PA	PA

- Client misses one rent payment
  - Client receives letter by the 7<sup>th</sup> of the following month explaining the importance of rent payment and the consequences of non-rent payment
  - Case Manager discusses rent payment during the next monthly home visit
- Client misses 2<sup>nd</sup> rent payment or accrues rental arrears equaling 200% of the rent share
  - There is a case conference to identify/discuss barriers to rent payment and the strategies to address them
  - Case conferences conclude with a behavioral contract and payment plan to pay arrears

- If client continues to miss rent payments, pays inconsistently, or makes partial payments, the eviction process is initiated
- Eviction is the last resort, after all other strategies to help clients prioritize their housing, manage their money, and accept the consequences of their behavior have been tried
- For HASA funded programs, the eviction process is set by HASA and requires 3 case conferences (Level I, II, and III) before HASA will approve the eviction

- When the social service program is also responsible for rent collection, the dual role can interfere with the client/case manager relationship, making it challenging for the case manager to accomplish the other aspects of the job, such as care coordination, assisting client with medical and other needs, etc.
- Evictions cost money but so does the choice not to evict
  - It is becoming more and more difficult for programs to manage their contracts with the funding we have without the client rent portions getting paid. We need that money to help balance our budgets

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