

**City of Fort Lauderdale  
Community Services Board  
August 11, 2014 – 4:00 P.M.  
City Commission Chambers – City Hall  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301**

<u>MEMBERS</u>	<u>PRESENT</u>
Wendy Gonsher, Chair	P
Helen Hinton, Vice Chair	A
Benjamin Bean	A
George Bishopric	A
Ann Clark	A
Mark Fillers	P
Wanda Francis	A
Andrew Jimenez	A
Jason King	A
Chris Lovell	P
Fred Roccanti	P
Jasmin Shirley	P

**Staff Present**

Mario DeSantis, Liaison and Housing Administrator  
J. Opperlee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**Communications to City Commission**

None.

**I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Gonsher called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was not present, nor was a quorum required for today's meeting. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**II. HOPWA 101 TRAINING**

Mr. DeSantis provided a PowerPoint presentation on Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA), including understanding the HOPWA program, client eligibility, support services, eligible activities, termination, and monitoring and compliance.

He explained that HOPWA was enacted in 1992 to devise long-term strategies that meet the housing needs of low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families, increasing their access to medical and other supportive services. It is not intended to be viewed as a permanent source of housing; however, the City of Fort Lauderdale defaults to the federal guidelines governing HOPWA, which are Section 8 regulations and

provide housing for a lifetime. The City's goal, however, is to move HOPWA clients to housing independence if possible.

Performance indicators are based on the development and completion of clients' housing plans, which seek to enable households to maintain stable living, reduce the risk of homelessness, and improve clients' access to medical and other supportive services. Mr. DeSantis explained that he is required to report on the following four goals:

- Stabilize housing by providing housing assistance and supportive services for low-income, HOPWA-eligible clients;
- Move low-income HOPWA-eligible households toward self-sufficiency;
- Annually move low-income, HOPWA-eligible clients from the HOPWA subsidy to self-sufficiency;
- Help low-income HOPWA clients maintain housing self-sufficiency through the use of the permanent housing placement (PHP) or short-term mortgage rent and utilities (STRMU) housing assistance programs.

Mr. DeSantis reviewed HOPWA's structure, which provides different types of assistance to move clients from homelessness to housing, depending upon their circumstances and skills as well as the programs provided by different HOPWA agencies. Most agencies have individual waiting lists for their services and offer their own confidentiality policies.

Eligibility requirements for Fort Lauderdale include:

- HIV-positive status;
- Income must fall within the annual federal income guidelines;
- Submittal of a truthful application;
- Lawful United States and Broward County residency for at least six months, with proper documentation.

Low-income eligibility includes families whose household income does not exceed 80% of the median income for the area, as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Mr. DeSantis noted that HOPWA serves very few clients whose household income exceeds 50% of this median.

Mr. DeSantis defined a comprehensive housing plan as a tool for case managers and clients to outline and manage housing and supportive services needs and goals in order to achieve housing stability. These deliverables must be achieved within a specific time frame in order for the client to receive assistance. The housing plan includes the issues that led the client to housing instability, the emergency situation that led to STRMU assistance, completion of steps to be taken to address housing issues, and referrals offered to and used by the client. The client develops his or her own objectives, deliverables, and time frame, and the plan is regularly updated as the client's circumstances change.

He noted that supportive services complement housing assistance by reducing the risk of homelessness and providing clients with access to health care. HOPWA agencies refer clients to affordable housing resources, work with property owners to secure units for clients, and assist in locating appropriate and affordable units. Supportive services include providing referrals to mental health care, counseling for substance abuse, day care, legal services, nutritional services, management of funds, and employment assistance.

Supportive services without a housing subsidy do not provide a financial benefit directly to the client, although legal services may advocate for the client and ensure the protection of his or her rights. These services are also provided by housing case managers, who seek to either obtain or maintain housing for the client. The services provided by different agencies are compartmentalized in order to reduce the possibility of redundancy. A client who is terminated from one agency for breaking its rules may go to another agency to receive services; however, if he or she violates HOPWA regulations, they are not eligible to receive HOPWA services through another HOPWA provider.

Eligible activities in Fort Lauderdale include facility-based and project-based housing, tenant-based rental vouchers, permanent housing placement, STRMU, housing case management, and legal services. Mr. DeSantis described these programs, which provide services to clients depending upon their abilities and needs: for example, clients in facility-based housing will need more supportive services in order to receive appropriate levels of care, while clients in project-based housing need fewer such services and clients in the tenant-based voucher program are able to live independently and pay a portion of their rent.

Short-term rent, mortgage, and utility assistance (STRMU) is emergency time-limited assistance and may not be received by clients in these housing programs. Mr. DeSantis emphasized the short-term nature of this emergency assistance, which is intended to help individuals or families remain in their housing units. It may not be used to assist clients who are seeking housing units, security deposits, or first month's rent, nor may it be used to meet non-emergency household responsibilities. STRMU assistance may be provided for up to 13 weeks in one year, with the possibility of an emergency extension to 21 weeks.

Permanent housing placement (PHP) assistance is provided to clients every 24 months, with exceptions for divorce, domestic violence, habitability, and other emergency issues. If a tenant destroys his or her unit, s/he is placed on probation and must develop a corrective action plan; however, if destruction recurs, the client is terminated from HOPWA subsidies. This assistance is intended to be used sparingly, and clients' income must be sufficient to make living in his or her unit sustainable.

Supportive housing case management consists of housing plans that establish or maintain a stable living environment for the client. It may serve clients who are moving from facility-based, project-based, or tenant voucher programs, as well as from PHP or STRMU programs. Legal services provide advocacy services for clients in imminent need of them, including those experiencing eviction and habitability issues; they also provide assistance with kinship petitions, education, legal rights, garnishment, immigration, tax, and administrative services. Mr. DeSantis advised that most legal services are related to habitability or wrongful lease termination.

Fort Lauderdale HOPWA services may be terminated for the following reasons:

- Class I Program Violations: these include violations including manufacture of illegal substances, sex offender status, violent criminal activity or drug use that results in a safety issue, fraud, documentation issues, eviction of a family member within the past five years, or threat of physical violence toward Staff. These violations may be appealed.
- Class II Program Violations: these are violations of other program rules not listed as Class I violations or client obligations, including failure to provide current documentation, failure to attend appointments, failure to meet tenant obligations, or verbal abuse or harassment of Staff. Corrective action plans are issued for these violations and the client is put on probation, in the absence of extenuating circumstances.

Mr. DeSantis noted that a draft due process chart has been developed, which is placed into the client's information packet. Agencies may differ regarding how their appeal process is carried out; if clients are not satisfied with this process, they may appeal the agency's decision to Mr. DeSantis. He emphasized that incidents of violence, drug dealing, or drug manufacturing are given priority, as it is critical that these violations do not continue in HOPWA units.

He concluded that HUD monitors the City's HOPWA process annually to ensure compliance. At present, there are two minor findings that specific agencies are asked to address and improve. Mr. DeSantis performs desktop monitoring throughout the year; most requirements are monitored through the PROVIDE system. HUD also requires reports from program participants in order to track the agencies' performance and the necessity and effectiveness of support services. All agencies are required to go through fiscal management training.

The Board members discussed the presentation, noting that HOPWA's infrastructure has improved significantly over the years. Ms. Shirley commended the City and the HOPWA agencies on their collaboration to assist HOPWA clients with stable housing.

Mr. Lovell requested an update on the ongoing issue of HOPWA units administered by the Housing Authority. Mr. DeSantis advised that this agency has contacted Mr. Brown and himself via email, stating that they are relinquishing their HOPWA units as of

September 30, 2014. This issue will be discussed further at the Board's September meeting. All these units are currently filled.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]