Community Services Division
Housing Assistance for Vulnerable Families

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Steve March, County Auditor
Fran Davison, Senior Performance Auditor
Marc Rose, Performance Auditor

Multnomah County Auditor's Office
web.multco.us/auditor

We reviewed selected programs in the Department of County Human Services, Community Services Division

- GAO project focused on housing assistance to low income households.

- Housing Inventory identified 18 programs in Community Services that provide housing assistance.
  - We identified 11 programs that provided services to families.

- Many programs appear to be innovative implementations of best practices.

- The portfolio of services is complex and program costs and system performance are difficult to track.

- Data could be used more effectively for decision-making.

- Great demand and limited capacity limits the number of people who can access and receive services from these programs.

- Community Services housing programs help many families gain and maintain stable housing. We found that the Community Services staff were forward-thinking, knowledgeable, and innovative in their approaches.

- The programs appear to be:
    - Innovative
    - Adaptive
    - Based on leading practices

Leading Practices

Leading Practices	Description
Coordinated Entry	Provides centralized process to coordinate intake, assessment and referrals
Homelessness Prevention	Helps households avoid homelessness with rent assistance, utility bill payments and supportive services
Emergency Shelter	Provides shelter to those whose homelessness cannot be prevented
Rapid Re-housing	Moves homeless households into housing as quickly as possible
Support Services	Provides flexible coordinated services tailored to each household's specific needs, such budget planning, connecting households to resources, and case management.

Community Services Programs Employ Leading Practices

Leading Practices	Community Services Programs
Prevention Emergency Shelter Rapid Re-housing	STRA – provides short-term housing assistance to low-income households at risk of homelessness.
Emergency Shelter Coordinated Entry Rapid Re-Housing Support Services	Coordinated Entry for Homeless Families – includes 211info and referral; provides shelter and emergency services, housing placement, support services.
Support Services	Anti-Poverty Services – provides support services to low-income households to assist them in gaining skills to achieve self-sufficiency.
Support Services	Assertive Engagement Training – provides a curriculum and conducts trainings on a client-centered approach to case management.

Housing // Challenges

It is difficult to see the impact of programs, because program costs and system performance are not transparent.

- New and evolving programs
- Programs providing similar services
- Many service providers
- Few reports designed for an outside audience

Greater data analysis could improve efficiency and effectiveness

– Data is collected in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

• Service providers gather and report information, but have little capacity to analyze.

• County capacity toward analysis is limited and most capacity is targeted toward direct services.

• Successful communities use data to illuminate and focus housing assistance efforts.

Demand for services outweighs supply

- Resources are limited
- Many are turned away
- Varying processes for gaining access to services
  - Coordinated Entry
  - Providers have their own processes in many cases

- Describe individual Community Services programs and how they work together to provide services to vulnerable families.
  - Consider an online dashboard to describe programs and provide information on program performance.

- Analyze data to illuminate the characteristics of the client population and to better understand why some clients are successfully stabilized into housing and others are not.

Housing// Questions

- Thank you.
- Questions?