

RESIDENT SERVICES  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
Major Projects Report-COVID 19  
May 28, 2020

RESIDENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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**COVID 19 Updates:**

The RSD's approach to COVID 19 has been to serve Residents through an interdepartmental approach.

- 1) **Emergency Resident Outreach Log (EROL)**-The EROL targeting all **public housing residents** started at the beginning of the crisis with the realization that intensive outreach and communication was required **before** the PHA needed to respond to worst-case scenarios. This Outreach was not only a completely new way to outreach to residents, it was a new way for Property Management and Resident Services staff to work collaboratively.

The approach to this outreach and the follow-up outreach phases continues to be; to state the purpose of the outreach, create teams by identifying staff across departments to participate, create a standard operating procedure (SOP) that aligns with the purpose of the outreach, create consistent messaging for staff to use with a common script, create a tracking spreadsheet that aligns with the questions on the script, and create and update a universal Resource Guide to share with Residents. Below are two tables outlining data collected at the initial phase of the Outreach, and the additional Resident Outreach that was conducted.

PHASE 1 started on Monday, March 20, 2020: All public housing household were called and information on calls and attempted calls were tracked, in addition to other indicators.

PHASE 2 all public housing resident calls were completed by Friday, April 24, 2020. The Property Management staff was asked to input data and update the public housing software system (HAB) with the contact information collected from the resident survey including the main phone, second phone, emergency contact and email.

PHASE 3 The PHA mailed outreach questions to the residents not contacted through calls. Residents had the option to answer questions on-line through a doodle poll or by returning a paper copy to the office. PM staff is updating information into the log and into HAB.

PHASE 4 the PHA began work on the **Leased Housing Outreach Log** which began on Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, and completed May 8<sup>th</sup>. RSD staff who had also made the Public Housing calls, called Section 8 participants to share important resources and gather similar information. Staff are also asking, after consultation with Legal Counsel about whether individuals would be willing to self-report positive cases.

PHASE 5 is in development: The Leased Housing Reps will identify those on their caseload who have not been contacted with a call, and mail outreach questions to the Leased Housing participants. Leased Housing participants will have the option to answer questions on-line through a doodle poll or by returning a paper copy to the office. LH staff will update information into the log and into HAB.

PHASE 6 is in development: The Office of Strategy and Development are identifying a vendor/system to do mass callings to developments on a variety of issues. So, topics may include but are not limited to; operational changes (i.e. regarding floor washing), food delivery, or future topics such as voter registration reminders.

PUBLIC HOUSING

In the last report the response rate was 72%, in this reporting period the response rate from PHASE 3 outreach is approximately 91%.

LEASED HOUSING

Leased Housing	Total # of Leased Housing participants on Contact List	Number of Leased Housing participants with Direct staff contact
<b>Leased Housing</b>	2105	946 (45%)
<b>PBV</b>	362	126 (35%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,467</b>	<b>1,072 (43%)</b>

Additional Resident Outreach:

- a) **PHA and partner Food Task Force** and delivery service-see below for Food Delivery Task Force information
  - b) **Sodexo Food Pick Up Service at Hartford Park, 50 Laurel Hill Avenue** for children 18 years and under: Resident Services and Property Management Department staff outreached to Hartford Park Residents within 24 hours; all residents received a call that youth will receive 2 meals a day for 3 days from Sodexo Outreach on Tuesdays and Fridays from 11am -2pm.
  - c) **Resident Health Worker Outreach:** This Outreach began the week of 4/27 to our Residents who are working in the Healthcare field. There are 143 Residents identified as working in the Healthcare field. Hartford Park has the largest number of residents employed in the field at 53. Of the residents contacted, 3 requested assistance with Unemployment Insurance.
  - d) **Emergency Outreach** as needed:
- 2) **PHA established its own COVID 19 Hotline:** During the week of April 13<sup>th</sup>, and as COVID 19 cases increased dramatically in Rhode Island and Providence, leadership recognized the need to reach out to Residents. Postcards went out to the PHA on Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> for Residents to self-report, it included a staff name and Parenti office number. Residents can share COVID 19 testing information, and the PHA can follow up and share or find additional resources to help them keep their quarantine. The information in this document is confidential. This tracking sheet is a shared document with Directors, who are using the information to ensure staff safety.
- 3) **Food Task Force and Delivery Service** –This interdepartmental project relied on input and leadership from Facilities Management for production and distribution, Property Management for information on individual cases of need, OSD for funding from Rhode Island Foundation, Finance for procurement and funding management, Resident Services for resident outreach, and distribution.

Development	Date	Number Delivered	Food supplied by*
<b>Sunset Village</b>	3/23	24	PHA
<b>Codding Court</b>	3/25	21	PHA

Carroll Tower	3/27	16	PHA
Kilmartin Plaza	3/27	72	PHA
Hartford Tower	3/30	61	PHA
<b>TOTAL FOR MARCH</b>		<b>194</b>	
Parenti Villa	4/7	35	RI Comm. Food Bank (RIFB)
Dominica Manor	4/8	70	RIFB
Carroll Tower	4/9	99	PHA
Dexter Manor	4/10	60	RIFB
Dexter Manor	4/21	75	PHA
Dominica Manor	4/21	52	PHA
Sunset Village	4/23	24	PHA
Kilmartin Plaza	4/23	82	PHA
Carroll Tower	4/23	1	PHA
Hartford Park Family		2	PHA
Manton Heights		1	PHA
Section 8		1	PHA
<b>TOTAL FOR APRIL PHA SUPPLIED</b>		<b>337</b>	
<b>TOTAL FOR APRIL RIFB SUPPLIED</b>		<b>165</b>	
Parenti Villa	5/5	25	RIFB
		25	Frozen meals (City)
Dominica Manor	5/6	70	RIFB
		70	Frozen meals (City)
Dexter Manor	5/6	51	RIFB
		51	Frozen meals (City)
Carroll Tower	5/12	87	PHA
		70	Frozen meals (City)
Dominica Manor	5/13	40	PHA
		40	Frozen meals (City)
Dexter Manor	5/13	76	PHA
		11	RIFB
		76	Frozen meals (City)
Sunset Village	5/14	24	PHA
		24	Frozen meals (City)
Kilmartin Plaza	5/14	72	PHA
		72	Frozen meals (City)
Hartford Park family (2)/Coddington Court (2)**		3	PHA Boxes
Hartford Park family (16)/Coddington Court (2)**		18	Frozen meals (City)
SS**		2	PHA
SS**		16	Frozen meals (City)
S8**		1	PHA
<b>Coddington Court</b>	5/19	TBD	
<b>Dexter Manor</b>	5/20	TBD	
<b>Hartford Tower</b>	5/20	TBD	
<b>Dexter Manor</b>	5/21	TBD	
<b>Parenti Villa</b>	2/27	TBD	
<b>TOTAL-TO-DATE FOR MAY PHA SUPPLIED</b>		<b>305</b>	
<b>TOTAL-TO-DATE FOR MAY RIFB</b>		<b>157</b>	

<b>SUPPLIED</b>		
<b>TOTAL-TO-DATE FOR MAY FROZEN MEALS(CITY)</b>	<b>460</b>	
<b>TOTAL-TO-DATE FACE MASKS</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>Dexter Manor</b>
<b>TOTAL TO DATE FOOD BOXES (PHA/RIFB)</b>	<b>1,158</b>	
<b>**All DELIVERIES made by PHA staff</b>		

Other Food Programs:

**Sodexo:** Tuesdays and Fridays from 11am-2pm at 50/40 Laurel Hill Ave parking lot 2 meals a day for 3 days for children under 18 years old

**City of Providence:** 4/21 Carroll Tower 100 Hot meals distributed by PHA staff

**Boys and Girls Club:** 25 Hartford Park/Manton Heights families who participate in Boys and Girls Club received a bag of food.

**YMCA:** Food delivery to all Coddling Court residents for 5-weeks, every Thursday starting May 28. The food distribution will alternate each week between a grocery bag one week, and a box that will enable a family to cook a hot meal for 5 individuals.

**WBNA/Seven Stars Bakery:** 100 loaves of bread for a June 4<sup>th</sup> bread delivery to Parenti Villa

**Program Updates:**

**4. Jobs Plus Providence (JPP) Program**

- **HUD Jobs Plus Intensive Outreach:**
  - Financial Coaching-via phone/email in preparation for the end of JPEID
  - Unemployment Insurance Applications
- **Partnerships**
  - **Providence Public Library (PPL)** – is supporting on-going computer literacy through on-line teacher guided learning.
  - **Progreso Latino**-is supporting adult HSE learning through on-line teacher guided learning
  - **Young Voices**-is developing a distance learning program for their summer youth leadership
  - **One Providence Summer Youth Internship**-creating alternative programming for summer learning, and a continuous outreach to youth for summer engagement.
- **Staff changes**
  - The former PHA Community Health Worker, Leslie Sepulveda, will be joining the team full time as an Employment Case Manager

**5. FSS**

- Staff participated in Leased Housing Outreach calls (over 2,000 calls), and assisted in case management for crisis situations.
- Remote services
- PHA to review and consider HUD waiver for FSS
  - There have been no terminations (3 successful completions)
  - There have been no extension requests

**6. Resident Service Coordinator (RSC) Program**

- Remote support to caseload clients
- Unemployment Application support
- **Strong Families event** – on hold
- **Spring Health fairs** - on hold

## 7. Wellness Coordinator

- Remote services-including on-line group meetings. The Hartford Tower group meets on Thursdays and there have been 5 consistent participants.
- Resource list sent to all Wellness Center clients that includes zoom links to AA and NA meetings.
- Intensive follow up

## 8. VOCA Coordinator

- Continuous review of weekly Security Reports, to offer remote services
- Intensive follow up
- Has encouraged participation in on-line group meetings

## 9. Adult Education Program

- **Genesis Center**-conducting on-line distance learning for Adult Basic Education classes and phonline conferences to work collaboratively on outreach and recruitment for programs

## 10. VITA

- On hold-deadline extension until July 15 for filing
- Staff changed the signage on the building to reflect the new deadline, changed the voice message at the PHA regarding the new deadline, and shared that Federal Hill House is still offering services.

## 11. Financial Opportunity Center (FOC)/Homeownership Program

- **First Time Homebuyer Fair**-on hold
- Unemployment Application support
- Restructuring the FOC program to offer Financial Coaching more broadly to various residents. Pilot project in development to make strategic referrals to the Financial Coach for Residents with a payment plan resulting from the COVID 19 impact.

## 12. RSD Partnerships

- **Boys and Girls Club**-Their plan is due to DHS on June 1<sup>st</sup>. The Boys and Girls Club is planning on offering summer programming only at one of their 3 sites in response to program delivery changes required.
- **Head Start**-Setting up a phone conference to work together to share messaging to Residents for their new program delivery.

## OFFICE OF STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT

**Fund and Resource Development Updates** - OSD is coordinating fundraising and grant writing efforts across the agency.

### Recent funding awarded

- OSD is partnering with Leased Housing to shepherd forward our landlord engagement and resident support program for Section 8 tenants through our Blue Cross Blue Shield RI 2020 Blue Angel Health Grant award. We have revised and updated our plan for the \$50,000 in grant funds to reflect the current reality and built in some flexibility to be most responsive to the ever changing COVID-environment.

### New and pending applications:

- **CDBG** – 3 applications were submitted on May 1 for the City's CDBG Disaster Relief funding from the CARES Act, which support initiatives to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the coronavirus. PHA submitted three proposals, one for \$50,000 to support the crime victims' support program, one for \$114,000 to support employment case management for unemployed residents, and

one for \$34,000 to support the food task force. On May 12, the City Council committee on Urban Redevelopment passed a budget which included the \$34,000 funding for the food initiative but not the other two requests. PHA's three proposals were among over \$12M in funding requests the city received, of which it could only fund \$2.5M at this time. Nearly all funding the Council budget includes is for either food, housing or health care. However, the City may receive more CDBG-DR funding and if so PHA's other proposals may still be considered – and OSD will look to other opportunities to support these needed increases in services.

- **RI Foundation** - OSD has been working with Resident Services to prepare a proposal to the RI Foundation's special COVID-19 grant opportunity to address behavioral health issues tied to the pandemic. The grant would allow PHA to hire a social worker to work with tenants and refer them to outside behavioral health providers, and would also provide training opportunities for property management, resident services and other PHA staff who interact with tenants. The request is for \$87,864.
- **VOCA** - OSD is working with RSD to prepare an application for renewal of the PHA's Victims of Crime Act funding. The state's total VOCA funding is down to \$5.7 million this year, from \$11 million last year and \$7 million in 2018, when PHA was first funded. While we anticipate PHA's program will be funded again due to our success in serving many residents, we also expect we may face a reduction from this year's award of \$141,337. The application is due on June 5.
- **FEMA** – OSD submitted a Request for Public Assistance (RFA), the first step in seeking reimbursement from FEMA for Covid-19 related expenses. OSD is now preparing an application to FEMA to begin submitting emergency expenses for reimbursement. In particular, we will be seeking funds to support expenses incurred prior to April 28, which is the first date that any CARES Act funding can be spent. FEMA expenses, if approved, can be reimbursed at a rate of 75% which the PHA covering the remaining 25% of the cost.
- **AARP** - OSD is working with Facilities Management and RAB members at Kilmartin Plaza to apply for \$13,350 in funding for exterior improvements and landscaping through AARP. The organization provided funds in previous years to build raised garden beds in the front of the development and this application would allow the PHA to continue to build upon the garden's success with additional fencing, seating, shade structures, etc. In that area promoting safety and community building among residents.
- **Rotary** - The PCOC applied for a Providence Rotary Foundation grant of \$2,000 to continue funding our Employment and Technology for Youth initiative, which provides devices (iPads) to youth in our summer employment program who reach completion so they may continue their success in school and future employment. Rotary awarded us \$1,000 for this same purpose last year.
- OSD has continued to meet regularly with the City's Office of Art, Culture and Tourism regarding the previously awarded Hartford Artist in Residence program. Due to the COVID outbreak, the City budget for the project has been reduced from \$20,000 to \$15,000 and the start date has been pushed back until after July 1. We continue to meet with the City and selected artist, Angela Gonzalez, to plan for community engagement and mural design/installation in a way that will maintain the health and safety of all participants.
- **CP-HEZ grant submitted (pending)** –RSD submitted this grant to support Employment Case Management for PHA youth modeling the Jobs Plus approach. The request is for \$24,400
- **One Providence Summer Youth Internship (pending)**-RSD submitted this grant to the City to continue the summer youth work experience. The request is for \$43,925.65

- **WIOA Youth (pending)**-This grant will support work readiness for a target of 35 Youth at the PHA. The request is for \$270,384.37

**Public relations and messaging** – While maintaining communications with the various governmental partners noted above, OSD has been coordinating communications with residents and the general public through various means and maintains a targeted communications plan for public facing materials.

#### Mass Messaging

Most recently, OSD researched and implemented use of several mass communications tools including the ability to text and robocall residents and participants, an upgraded landlord portal, paid ads on social media promoting core messaging, and upgraded mass email service as we continue to grow our contact list of residents, tenants, partners, landlords, partners, etc. who wish to receive information and updates from the PHA. PHA sent out its first mass telephone message to tenants in five high rises on Friday, May 8, announcing that hallways would be cleaned beginning the following week between midnight and eight AM and asking tenants to keep their distance from facilities management staff who would be cleaning floors during this time. The call was connected to 823 tenants, according to CallMax, PHA's vendor. We are planning on future use of this new technology which also allows PHA to text tenants who receive texts, and to send mass emails.

#### Public Statements and Live Outreach:

We coordinated with the Executive Office to create and disseminate the PHA's first and second phase Special Operations Plans. Both included public release of documents outlining updates in PHA procedures and protocols to our website, via direct and mass email, and social media. OSD coordinated a new partner email list of 440 contacts in addition to our existing email lists of residents, participants, and landlords. The mass email announcing our Phase 2 Operations went to a list of 1844 emails with 93% of emails delivered successfully. 35% of recipients (615 unique users) opened the message and 102 clicked into stories within the message.

OSD worked with the Executive Director to prepare her for a radio appearance on Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup> on the Meals on Wheels "Together for Seniors" radio program.

Finally, OSD team member, Ainsley Cantoral, was a panelist representing the PHA's ConnectProv initiative on April 7<sup>th</sup> in a live Zoom discussion hosted by the Venture Café in Providence of why RI needs to invest in broadband, especially amid the pandemic. Over 30 attendees from across the state participated in the conversation, which highlighted the need to connect Rhode Island residents not only to high speed internet but to devices so they can be competitive in the job market, successful in school, and socially connected as they age in place.

#### Media Stories:

In part due to a HUD request for updates and positive stories of phas during the covid-pandemic, the PHA developed a story highlighting our emergency food work and especially the Food Task Force. The story has been shared with HUD, shared out via a mass email, and posted on social media. View the piece here: <https://provhousing.org/emergency-food-boxes-for-public-housing-authority-seniors/>.

OSD also worked with partners at Blue Cross Blue Shield of RI on a press release announcing the PHA as one of the recipients of their Blue Angel Community Health grants. You can read that release on their website: <https://www.bcbsri.com/newsroom/press-releases/blue-cross-blue-shield-rhode-island-makes-500k-investment-improve-access>.

#### Flyers and Signage:

OSD continues to develop and help distribute flyers, banners, and signs at public housing developments and PHA offices, notifying residents of changes to policies and updated protocols. ways to interact with PHA staff as well as other changes, including information on a Security vendor and the cleaning vendor serving the high rises. New metal signs were added to all high rises in early May that highlight the presumption that every development has cases of corona and that residents need to take precautions to stay safe. Additional materials were created included updated food box inserts with information about Project Hello, the 2020 Census, and other key information for seniors, as well as materials like signage for all laundry rooms on best practices during the pandemic. Signage has been added to laundry rooms to ensure that residents follow social distancing in those spaces.

#### Website/Social Media:

We have worked to reiterate these messages through the PHA's website as well as our social media channels. From April 14-May 11, we have gained 22 new page likes (up to 824 total) on Facebook. Our posts during the month (Apr 15-March 13) were viewed 4,030 times, with more than 514 engagements – these numbers were boosted in part by spending \$5.00 on Facebook ads to promote one post (\$15 was spent on two posts the prior month). The numbers also reflect aggressive efforts to put out relevant content, and most recently, to share content in a bilingual format to increase participation in our social media by a Spanish speaking audience (while our resident population is 70% Spanish speaking, our Facebook followers are overwhelmingly English speakers right now at roughly 60% of our followers). We have also developed branded graphics, videos, and other online messaging in both English and Spanish to include with our posts.

Our website traffic has also increased greatly since the start of pandemic. In 2020, we have seen acquisition levels to get to our website (via search tools like google, social media, direct links, etc.) increase greatly - the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 months of the year, we have almost reached our total views and visitor levels for the entire year of 2019! Comparing April 2019 to 2020, we have increased by 2,865 unique users (3,999 users for April 2020) and 7,274 views (12,729 views in April 2020).

#### Resource Guide:

OSD continues to update the resource guide on a weekly basis and share it with staff in the Resident Services, Leased Housing and Property Management Departments, as well as with the public via the PHA website.

#### Mail:

Two mail pieces went out since our last report. We included a Department of Health flier in English and Spanish on tips for how to successfully quarantine with the monthly rent mailer. We also mailed postcards to all public housing and Section 8 participants promoting Census participation as part of our grant from the RI Foundation related to Census outreach.

We also assisted with communication to residents who have participated in the Wellness Resource Center.

***RAB communications and report***-OSD staff members continued to do regular check in calls with RAB members to identify resident community concerns and needs and to provide information and updates. OSD continued a series of four RAB conference calls per week with groups of 4-6 residents at a time, including one weekly call held entirely in Spanish. In May, these check-ins moved to Zoom to provide an opportunity for RAB members to experience a greater sense of connection to PHA and fellow RAB members and to engage these leaders in the use of technology to support collaboration. A first full RAB zoom meeting is being planned for Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>.

We have worked to address issues identified by RAB members on an ongoing basis, such as:

- \*Concerns about packages being left in common areas for high rise residents.
- \*Concerns about residents not taking seriously social distancing requirements
- \*Concerns about non-essential visitors in the buildings.