



# Bridges to Housing

## A Project of Neighborhood Partnerships

### BRIDGES TO HOUSING: OFFERING HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

**Bridges to Housing is a coordinated regional response to the crisis of family homelessness. Government agencies and housing and service providers in the four-county Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area have joined forces to develop a response to the needs of high need homeless families. Bridges to Housing supports local and regional efforts to end homelessness. Together, we refine systems for assessing family strengths and needs, and matching the best intervention to each family. Bridges to Housing is testing whether housing plus services works to stabilize high-need homeless families in the Portland area.**

#### INNOVATION

Bridges to Housing is an innovative and successful approach that provides families with a permanent, affordable place to call home, plus intensive support from a case manager and assistance with child care. Bridges to Housing is seeing concrete evidence that this program works to help families to stabilize and to make real change in their lives. Children have more opportunity to learn and flourish; parents are addressing their own health and educational needs.

#### CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Bridges to Housing represents a step forward nationally with its grounding in a regional framework as well as its commitment to best practices. This program was created with input from similar programs, and is now contributing to national knowledge on serving homeless families. Bridges to Housing welcomes families directly from homelessness and works with families to identify goals and barriers. Intensive case management plus resources to meet children's needs increase a family's chance of success.

#### EVALUATION

Bridges to Housing includes a significant evaluation effort, designed and conducted by the Regional Research Institute at Portland State University. The evaluation has three components aimed at understanding and assessing the impact of the program. These components are:

- A process study focusing on the implementation of Bridges to Housing and the experience of providers and families.
- A longitudinal outcome study of children and families served. This study is being implemented through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
- A comparative study on the impact and relative effectiveness of Bridges to Housing in improving outcomes for high resource-using families and their children.

The evaluation gives us confidence that the program is making a real difference in the lives of these families. Families are largely stable in permanent affordable housing.



## RESULTS TO DATE

The evaluation of Bridges to Housing seeks to contribute valuable information to support systems change at the local, county, regional, and national levels. To date, the evaluation has found that as a result of the program, children are more stable in their school and childcare settings, and educational performance increases. Family mobility significantly decreases as a result of the program. Participation in the program also reduces the incidence of domestic violence and reduces children's placement in foster care. Current and previous evaluation reports are available at: [www.bridgestohousing.org](http://www.bridgestohousing.org). A year-end evaluation report for 2009 will be available in April, 2010.

Bridges to Housing has been serving families since the spring of 2007, and has served over 260 families as of October 2009. In 2010, Bridges to Housing plans to begin serving an additional 100 families.

"I can't stress enough how much [Bridges to Housing] was really there for me...I've got a lot of gratitude and I've taken the things that I got from the program and continued moving forward with them. [My case manager] gave me the resources and the tools and I took them and ran with it..."

- Bridges to Housing,  
Head of Household

## PROGRAM MODEL

- Bridges to Housing combines three program elements: first, families will be placed into permanent affordable housing using a Housing First or transitions-in-place model; second, Bridges to Housing provides intensive case management using a strengths-based approach which is uniform across the four counties; and third, Bridges to Housing will provide support as funding allows for children's services and child care.
- Bridges to Housing operates in four counties in the Portland metropolitan area: Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties in Oregon and Clark County, Washington.
- Bridges to Housing stimulates the development of permanent supportive housing for families.
- Bridges to Housing is an important example of government agencies within counties working in new ways to meet goals, and it's an important example of governments working across county lines to make a difference in the lives of families who need it most.

## INVESTMENTS

- Significant philanthropic investment has been made totalling over \$3.15 million to date. Bridges to Housing is funded by: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Oregon Community Foundation, Providence Community Grants Council, the J.W. & H.M. Goodman Family Charitable Foundation, the Portland Children's Levy, and Enterprise Community Partners.
- Significant local public investment has been made in capital for family housing, as well as services and rent subsidies. The investment totals over \$25 million to date from the public sector.

## LEADERSHIP

- Neighborhood Partnerships administers funds contributed to Bridges to Housing. These funds supplement local resources to provide housing plus services to families in all four counties in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan region. Neighborhood Partnerships is also overseeing the evaluation, communicating learnings from Bridges to Housing, and raising additional funds.
- A Regional Steering Committee serves as a policy setting body, and includes representatives from each of the four counties. Members include elected officials, business leaders, non-profit organizations, staff from state agencies serving homeless families, funders, and formerly homeless mothers.
- The project involves city and county governments, non-profit housing and service providers and housing authorities.