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PRESERVATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Moving Families from Hotels to Homes

by Thomas Plihczik, Executive Director, New Lease for Homeless Families

Every family deserves to grow and flourish in a home of their own. Meaningful partnerships can revolutionize systems. Data-driven evaluation informs our constant evolution. Those are the visions that guide New Lease's every day work to reduce homelessness in the Commonwealth.

New Lease is a non-profit founded by affordable housing owners to address the fiscal and humanitarian crisis of family homelessness in Massachusetts. With unaffordable market rents throughout the state, the numbers of families becoming homeless only continues to grow; currently over 4,000 families reside in the state's funded shelter and motel beds. Preservation of Affordable Housing, Inc. is one of the first owners to respond to the crisis by dedicating their time, expertise and affordable units to New Lease as well as serving on our board.



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New Lease strives to implement a homeless family preference in Massachusetts's HUD Multifamily housing stock to assist families residing in the state's costly shelter/motel system to exit to permanent homes. In fact, we implemented the first HUD-approved family homelessness preference in Multifamily housing in the nation. Part of our work entails sharing best practices with other communities across the country so that the success we have created can be replicated.

We prioritize having both a balanced and flexible approach for participating owners: owners have a high degree of choice to decide which developments will participate in the program, and at what rate units will be set aside for New Lease families in conjunction with existing transfer and admission waitlists. Our flexible, balanced approach ensures that owners can continue to serve all of the populations in need of affordable housing, at a rate that is manageable for each property.

Part of New Lease's early success is credited to the creation of effective partnerships between housing owners, social service providers and government agencies. New Lease facilitated planning meetings between all of the participating stakeholders with a driving philosophy of shared decision-making. Born from those meetings was a practical programmatic framework that fostered efficiency, communication and most importantly, ample support for our families to grow and succeed in their new tenancies. These rich partnerships have led to smooth admissions process for families, social service providers and properties, as well as to systemic changes that will transform how homeless families access and obtain permanent housing. As an example, frequent communication, robust case management and constant owner engagement has led to families having the tools to successfully mitigate past housing history and credit barriers to admission. As a result New Lease has a 96% admissions approval rate and a 100% housing retention rate.

New Lease is proud to work with Preservation of Affordable Housing, Inc. and our other committed owners to reduce family homelessness in Massachusetts. As of March, 2015, over 100 families have obtained permanent homes through our program. We look forward to partnering with the Baker Administration to work towards our common goal of ending the traumatic and costly experience of family homelessness. We particularly look forward to Chrystal Kornegay's tenure of leadership as the Dept. of Housing and Community Development's Undersecretary. Her deep commitment to serving low-income populations with affordable housing resources synergizes with our mission.

To find out how you can join this promising movement and keep up with our news/events, please visit our website at www.newleasehousing.org.

Information specifically for property owners who would like to join New Lease can be found at <http://www.newleasehousing.org/property-owners-join-us/>