

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Report scope and principal themes**

*There is an essential and interdependent relationship between the physical environment of a housing community, the vitality of its social architecture, and the health and well-being of its residents. Effective solutions to the budget dilemmas of public and subsidized housing agencies rest with efficiently balancing these components, as opposed to eliminating one in favor of the other.*

*Buildings, as bricks and mortar alone, will not lift low-income residents to economic self-sufficiency. Absent the provision of resident services, efforts to develop or manage low-income housing communities as simply real estate can not be successful.*

*This report documents the key concerns, candid views and best practices of resident service practitioners primarily from 12 Eastern states, who work daily to address the unmet needs for human and social services, as well as, for employment, economic opportunities, and self-sufficiency.*

### **The Housing Stake in Resident Services**

- ❖ At more than 3400 public and assisted housing agencies nationwide, resident service practitioners are needed to strengthen and sustain the community life and welfare of over 6 million low-income families facing physical, economic, and social distress. About 966,339 of these families live in the 12 states represented by the Summit attendees.
- ❖ Jobless and working parents, frail senior citizens, the disabled, and youth in need of mentorship, have within their reach, meaningful opportunities to improve their lives due to the work of dedicated practitioners and the transformational services they provide.
- ❖ Given the enactment of Welfare Reform legislation, and later, the Public Housing Reform Act, increasing numbers of families are using resident services to attain and maintain self-sufficiency.
- ❖ Even though public housing production has waned, the silver lining in programs such as HOPEVI, has been the required provision of community and social services for residents to build economic assets, secure after-school care for their children, find affordable transportation, acquire employable job skills, and even join the ranks of homeowners.
- ❖ Elsewhere public and subsidized housing programs have traditionally included costs for service coordinators and service partnerships, in recognition of these essential needs in housing.

- ❖ Resident service operations have attracted significant in-kind contributions from state and local governments, and millions in funding from the private and independent sectors, as well as government grants, to augment housing agency budgets.

### **An Immediate Crisis**

The future of resident service operations to continue producing these outcomes faces great jeopardy. A \$250 million budget shortfall in Public Housing Operating Subsidies for fiscal year 2003 has not been resolved, and Congress has not completed appropriations for the HUD budget year that began in October 2002.

As a result, traditional HUD resources to support resident services are not assured over the remaining year and coming into FY2004. Hardest hit by reductions in service are likely to be unemployed and newly employed parents compelled to get off welfare, youth requiring after-school care, seniors living alone, the disabled in need of case management, and returning but jobless ex-offenders, needing to become family providers without recidivating.

Many housing agencies will also experience increased difficulty providing sufficient case management for domestic violence victims, recovering substance abusers, or those with mental illness and physical disabilities, unless....

### **More Storm Clouds on the Horizon**

The reality of a post 9/11 war against terrorism has brought about a rapid shift in national priorities that many practitioners fear will result in deep cuts to public housing and Section 8 voucher programs.

Already, public housing security and crime prevention efforts have been greatly weakened by the cancellation of \$350 million annually for the Drug Elimination Program, further reductions in Public Housing Operating Subsidies and possible reductions in Section 8 housing vouchers.

Nationally, use of illicit drugs was estimated as occurring among 14 million Americans, age 12 and older, with only 20% of addicts actually receiving any form of treatment while serious financial repercussions are mounting from the untreated. For example, the state of Maryland estimates the cost of not treating its addicted citizens totals approximately \$5.5 billion each year.

### **Summit goals, objectives and workshop topics**

On November 14 and 15, 2002 in Baltimore, Maryland, resident practitioners and their partners from 12 states in the mid-Atlantic/East Coast region, came together to examine the state of their art as service providers, along with new challenges and realities faced by their clients in the post 9/11 era.

Summit goals were to 1) explore ways of improving resident service delivery, 2) share best practices for maintaining programs success, and 3) discuss recommendations for problem-solving.

The Summit had five objectives:

1. to generate in-depth discussions of current trends, program and policy issues, and needs for improving the state of the art,
2. to examine key barriers and obstacles affecting resident service operations, successful maintenance, and effective management,
3. to identify best practices and workable partnerships for strengthening families and households, and for ensuring the overall community welfare,
4. to establish a multi-state network for training and technical assistance to resident service practitioners, related to employment and training, family self-sufficiency, home-based health-care, family wellness, disease and substance abuse prevention, safety, literacy, case management and other supportive services
5. to produce recommendations for advancing the resident services state of the art, and for educating decision-makers concerning the implications of current and proposed policies, and program revisions.

Key topics covered in workshops panel discussions included:

- \_\_\_ *Public-Private Resources*
- \_\_\_ *Turning resident Dreams into Reality: Family Self-Sufficiency and Homeownership*
- \_\_\_ *Combating Substance Abuse in Public Housing*
- \_\_\_ *Creative and Practical Strategies to Improve Job Retention*
- \_\_\_ *Bridging the Health Gap to Strong Families, Safe Environments and Powerful Communities*
- \_\_\_ *From Welfare Reform to Reauthorization: Partnering for a Generation of Economic Independence*
- \_\_\_ *Enhancing Academic Success*
- \_\_\_ *Creative and Innovative Employment Strategies*
- \_\_\_ *Facing Challenges of Aging in Place*
- \_\_\_ *Self-Determination and Self-Help*

## **25 Models including Best Practices**

In four plenary sessions and nine workshops, Summit presenters and panelists shared many tools and techniques from a total of 25 models based on resident service programs underway at agencies represented by the 12 states in attendance. Highlights regarding the following 25 models are included in the full Summit report with full details on the accompanying diskette:

- \_\_\_ Maryland Governor's Commission on Fatherhood
- \_\_\_ HUD-HOPEVI
- \_\_\_ Presidential Classrooms
- \_\_\_ HABC Peer Helper Program
- \_\_\_ The CVS Regional Center
- \_\_\_ MLK,Jr. After-School Program
- \_\_\_ Time Dollar Youth Court
- \_\_\_ AERS(Adult Education & Review Service Program

__ Congregate Housing Services	__ HABC Business Development
__ Vehicles for Change	__ Empower Baltimore
__ HABC Employer Engagement Services	__ Great Valley Brook Ventures w Massachusetts Tenants Union
__ Housing Association of Delaware Valley	__ Delaware State Housing Authority
__ STRIVE (in 9 states)	__ MoneySmart (HUD&FDIC)
__ Section 8 Homeownership (Anne Arundel Housing Commission)	
__ Baltimore City Multi-Agency Drug Treatment	__ Baltimore Department of Social Services-Job Retention Team
__ Newport-PA Housing Authority Work Incentives	__ The Abbottsford Center (Nurse Managed Health-care)
__ HABC Baltimore Cardiovascular Health Model	__ Summit Health Research Institute (SHIRE)

### **Viewpoints regarding HUD policy directions**

Regarding future policy directions and lessons learned with implications for HUD programs, practitioner attendees expressed the following views:

- ❖ The dilemma for housing agencies has become how to secure existing vital community and social services, and at the same time, provide clean, safe and healthy environments for people to live in.
- ❖ HUD programs such as Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS), HOPEVI, and Resident Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (ROSS), Capital Funds, 'Move to Work', JOBS PLUS, and Family and Elderly Service Coordinator Grants, have all shown that housing development or property management does not succeed without resident services. Increased resident services are similarly needed in the Section 8 voucher program.
- ❖ The argument to get rid of resident services as unfunded mandates in subsidized housing, is at best, reactionary and expedient, and in the long-run, a very damaging reaction to the threat of looming federal and state budget cuts.
- ❖ Lowering public and subsidized housing performance standards to exclude the safety net of resident services and family self-sufficiency programs, hastens a return to crime and social chaos by abandoning the poor in plantation-type warehouses.
- ❖ Past experience has shown that increased urban strife and hopelessness, stabs violently at the heart of the American Dream. Corporate greed notwithstanding, America, as a just and civil society can ill-afford the moral retreat from helping its poor, especially while the nation anticipates fighting threats abroad.

- ❖ More intelligent solutions can be found by examining the best practices and problem-solving models of the past, in relationship to the present, to prepare for the future. Much of what has worked best, was the result of multifaceted partnerships:
  - with housing agencies and their resident group leaders,
  - between the housing agency and various units of government, and
  - between the housing agency and the private (business), and independent (faith-based, foundations, and non-profit) sectors.
- ❖ Most resident service operations substantially leverage scarce housing agency resources with in-kind contributions and funding dollars from categorical grants and philanthropic sources (as much as \$5 of external funding to \$1 of agency resources).
- ❖ Interdisciplinary service teams coordinated by resident practitioners, and involving healthcare and social-work professionals can be structured through local interagency agreements that reduce red-tape and bureaucratic procedures, for more effective responses to emergencies and more efficient use of resources.

### **Closing Plenary Consensus, Priorities and Next Steps**

Important groundwork has been laid for additional activities during the year with the aim of making the Summit an annual event. There were several recommendations for next steps and follow-up to the Summit including that:

- Practitioners in the field of Resident Services must team up for a radical transformation, given forthcoming policy changes, proposed budgetary cuts, and increased challenges for clients.
- Resident services have to remain an important part of what we do in the business of housing the poor; subsidized housing is not simply a real estate activity or subject to conventional business practices.
- Resident services and other social programs must not become the “sacrificial lambs” as the country shifts its focus to other priorities. The guns and butter tradeoffs may have negative consequences on progress made within the last few years regarding self-sufficiency, welfare transitions, and employment.
- Resident services practitioners require a dedicated advocacy voice at all levels of government in the form of a national alliance that can function as a forum for the voice of resident Services practitioners.
- A resident service alliance consisting of practitioners should also include partners for the purpose of collaboration. If the organization were to consist solely of practitioners, it would become self-serving.

- Such an alliance needs a unified agenda with national legislation directed at ensuring the welfare of residents in public and assisted housing community, with requisite representation, input and partnerships. It should build on what exists in other parts of the country.
- Short and long term strategies are needed, and they should be as inclusive as possible.
- Some saw the uniqueness and importance of this meeting as being the courage to bring together counterparts from other agencies.
- The statement was made that some practitioners will be stopped from thinking outside of the box by their Executive Directors and that it is difficult to develop an organized voice for resident services advocacy within existing industry groups.

Summit participants gave unanimous support in adopting the following motions:

**1) “There should be the formation of a national alliance of resident services practitioners, resident leaders, partners and volunteers in public housing who impact resident services programs. The alliance will develop a short and long term agenda with a support system.”**

2) To produce a written document of the full summit for national distribution in early 2003.

3) To form a regional work group that will work out the details of the new alliance that was voted upon.

4) Dates for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Resident Services Summit were set for November 12, 13 and 14, 2003 in Baltimore, Maryland. The summit will last 2½ days.

5) Dr. Little will set up an initial conference call to discuss the alliance formation during the second week of January 2003.

Summit attendees also adopted a list of priorities, stemming from the workshop and plenary discussions as recommendations to become part of an on-going information and action agenda:

- ❖ The importance of health issues, especially impacts on children, mental health, and healthy homes. Human health, housing and ecology are interconnected.
- ❖ Ensuring that Resident Services Programs a part of housing authorities’ operating budget as a dedicated line item, to ensure that family needs get support, and not just bricks and sticks.

- ❖ Practitioners require a network of support and to continue dialogues begun at the Summit. Issues include preventing burn out and addressing high turnover rates.
- ❖ Financial support for the production of a quarterly newsletter as a regular form of communication should be pursued.
- ❖ The summit should become an annual event and enlarged.