

East Side Housing Opportunity Program evaluation report **Results for the 2007 calendar year**

The East Side Housing Opportunity Program (EHOP) partners with school staff, neighbors, landlords, and community agencies to increase housing stability for families with children attending John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School in Saint Paul. The program is a joint venture between the East Side Neighborhood Development Company and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, and has served neighborhood residents since 2002.

Program staff help families find and maintain decent, safe, and affordable housing. The program also administers a Housing Trust Fund program providing rental subsidies. In addition to housing services, case management staff provide resources and referrals for a variety of issues that pose challenges to clients' self-reliance, including employment, income, mental health, transportation, child care, education, and other concerns. The program's Life Skills and homeownership education programs also provide training aimed at strengthening families and providing tools for stabilizing their housing situation.

Research methods

EHOP participates in an independent evaluation conducted by Wilder Research. The evaluation assesses program implementation, participant satisfaction, and program and participant outcomes. Information used in the evaluation comes from program records, client telephone interviews conducted by Wilder Research, client self-reliance assessments completed by the case manager, and Saint Paul Public Schools' student stability data.

Key findings in 2007

EHOP exceeded all service volume goals in 2007, including annual goals and three-year goals established for 2005-07. Additionally, Housing Trust Fund participants indicated they were very satisfied with

EHOP services, and case management clients experienced a number of improvements in self-reliance. Following are key findings from 2007.

Program implementation

- Program staff developed housing plans for 50 new Johnson families, and an additional 164 actively worked on accomplishing their housing plans.
- Staff helped to place or stabilize 16 Johnson families in their housing.
- Case management services were provided to 45 Johnson families, and an additional 76 received moderate assistance or information and referral services.
- The housing specialist maintained active working relationships with 92 area landlords.
- Life Skills and homeowner education was provided to 44 neighborhood families. Overall, participants indicated they were very satisfied with the programs.

Client satisfaction

These results reflect Housing Trust Fund recipients who participated in telephone interviews conducted by Wilder Research.

- Almost all respondents rated their overall satisfaction with the services provided as "good" or "outstanding."
- Almost all reported that their housing situation had improved since they first sought help from the program, and that services or referrals from EHOP helped them improve their situation.
- Almost all indicated they were better prepared to solve a housing problem in the future because of the services or referrals they received from EHOP.
- Almost all also indicated things had improved for them or their families in other ways besides housing because of the help they received from EHOP.

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Client self-reliance

These results reflect data from client self-reliance assessments completed by case management staff. Results are presented for clients with more than one assessment, and compare changes from the initial to the most recent assessment.

- All clients initially without housing had found housing by the time of their most recent assessment.
- A higher percentage of clients able to work were employed.
- Overall, clients showed improvement in the adequacy of their income for food and shelter, and a higher percentage met the guideline of spending less than 30 percent of their income on housing.
- Although the percentage of clients receiving all or part of their income from public cash benefits stayed the same, clients were more likely to also have some earned income.
- A smaller percentage of clients were identified as having poor credit.
- Overall improvements were seen in the adequacy of clients' education to meet their employment needs.
- Improvements were seen in the percentages of clients enrolling eligible children in preschool, having all children up-to-date on immunizations, and having a regular pediatrician or clinic for all children.

Issues for consideration

Results also provide insights that staff can use to inform future services. Following are issues staff may want to consider.

- After increasing in the previous two years, Johnson's student stability index declined in 2006-07 and fell below the program's goal. Staff can explore the reasons for the recent decline and how best to address this area.

- Although phone interview ratings were high overall, staff can consider whether there are ways to strengthen service-delivery areas where a couple of participants provided lower ratings.
- Despite a number of improvements, case management clients continued to face barriers to self-reliance. Most were still in the program and can continue to benefit from EHOP's supportive services, resources, and referrals.
- For example, more than 40 percent remained unemployed, and others continued to face challenges with job stability. About a quarter were able to meet only food or housing expenses.
- A larger percentage of clients had tenant/landlord problems at the most recent assessment, indicating staff may want to consider additional ways to provide support in this area.
- Although overall improvements were seen, almost half of the clients with eligible children still did not have any in preschool. Staff can continue to provide information on the importance of early education, and help with the supports needed for children to attend.

Looking ahead

As program staff plan services and goals for 2008 and beyond, results from the 2007 evaluation provide positive feedback about the services they have provided and changes experienced by clients. Results also provide valuable insights that can contribute to ongoing efforts to inform their services.

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For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *East Side Housing Opportunity Program report: Results for the 2007 calendar year*. For more information about the East Side Housing Opportunity Program, contact Joan Schlecht at 651-793-7340 or joan.schlecht@spps.org. For more information about this report, contact Caryn Mohr at Wilder Research, 651-280-2678 or cam3@wilder.org.

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