

East Side Housing Opportunity Program evaluation summary

Results for the 2008 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 venture of the East Side Neighborhood Development Company 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 2008

EHOP exceeded all service volume goals in 2008, including annual goals and four-year goals established for 2005-08. 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 2008.

Program implementation

- 36 new Johnson families developed housing plans for 36 new Johnson families, and an additional 92 actively worked on accomplishing their housing plans.
- Staff helped to place or stabilize 18 Johnson families in their housing.
- Case management services were provided to 52 Johnson families, and an additional 60 received moderate assistance or information and referral services.
- The housing specialist maintained active working relationships with 73 area landlords.
- Life Skills and homeowner education was provided to 41 Johnson and 40 other neighborhood families. Overall, participants indicated they were very satisfied with the programs.
- The Family Navigator contacted more than 200 families and provided referrals to families in a number of areas, including school support and daily living support.

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."

continued

- All reported that their housing situation had improved since they first sought help from the program, and most felt 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.

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.

- At the time of their initial assessment, 5 clients (18%) were homeless. At the most recent assessment, one family remained homeless, and another was living in an emergency shelter or doubled up situation.
- The percentage of clients able to work who were employed increased.
- The percentage of clients meeting both food and housing expenses more than doubled.
- The percentage of clients having some earned income rather than relying solely on public cash benefits increased.
- The percentage of clients in the process of restoring or beginning to establish credit increased.

Issues for consideration

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

- After decreasing during the 2006-07 school year, the student stability rate increased in 2007-08, nearly reaching the previous highest level. Staff should continue to monitor the stability rate in future years to determine if this trend continues.
- Although satisfaction 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, many clients 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.
- Staff may also want to discuss whether additional services could be provided that would reduce barriers to school-age children's regular attendance. The percentage of clients with all their school-age children attending on a regular basis declined from the initial to most recent assessment.

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For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *East Side Housing Opportunity Program evaluation report*. For more information about this report, contact Amy Leite at Wilder Research, 651-280-2661.

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