

## **East Side Housing Opportunity Program evaluation summary**

### **Results for the 2009 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 classes 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 2009***

EHOP exceeded most goals established for 2009. 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 2009.

#### **Program implementation**

- Forty-seven new Johnson families developed housing plans in 2009.
- Staff helped to place or stabilize 33 Johnson families in their housing.
- Case management services were provided to 34 Johnson families, and an additional 140 received moderate assistance or information and referral services.
- The housing specialist maintained active working relationships with 47 area landlords.
- Life Skills and homeowner education was provided to 144 Johnson other 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.

- All respondents rated their overall satisfaction with the services provided as "good" or "outstanding."

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- All but one participant reported that their housing situation had improved since they first sought help from the program, and of those, each 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 families enrolled in EHOP. Results are presented for clients served in 2009, and compare changes from the initial to the most recent assessment.

- At the time of their baseline assessment, two-thirds of EHOP clients were unemployed. As of the last assessment, fewer than one-third remained unemployed.
- Clients improved their employment and job stability from baseline to last assessment.
- Increases were seen in the percentage of EHOP clients who were able to meet both food and housing expenses in the previous month.
- As of the most recent assessment, nearly 90 percent reported paying less than or equal to 30 percent of income for housing.
- As of the last assessment, all school-aged children were attending school on a regular basis.

### Issues for consideration

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

- The student stability rate of 88 percent in 2008-2009 is at the highest level in the previous five years. While it is difficult to establish whether the stability rates for 2007-08 and 2008-2009 represent a long-term upward trend for John A. Johnson, it is encouraging to see that the rate is increasing.
- 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.
- While academic achievement of children enrolled in EHOP did improve, attendance declined during the 2008-2009 school year. Program staff should explore barriers to children attending school on a regular basis and should work with families to ensure that children have the opportunity to attend school.
- Program staff should continue to work with families to identify barriers to enrolling all eligible children into preschool. While the percentage of eligible children were enrolled in preschool increased from only eight percent to 64 percent, more than one-third of families with children eligible for preschool had all children enrolled.

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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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