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PRESS RELEASE

DHS Rapid Rehousing for Reunification Aims to Help Families Get Back Together

PHILADELPHIA, PA May 24, 2018 – The City of Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS), in partnership with the Office of Homeless Services (OHS) announces its new pilot program, Rapid Rehousing for Reunification. This program provides housing support to help families who are DHS-involved get back together.

DHS Commissioner Cynthia Figueroa said, “We know that safe and affordable housing is a major obstacle for many families involved with the child welfare system—and plays a huge role in timely reunification of parents and children. Our hope is that we learn from the Rapid Rehousing for Reunification pilot program and successfully impact family stability.”

The program targets families who are projected to be reunifying with their children in six months or less, but face delay because they lack safe and affordable housing. National research shows that families with children in the child welfare system face unstable or inadequate housing that delays reunification in 30% of cases.

Rapid Rehousing for Reunification is a public-private partnership between DHS, OHS, and Rapid Rehousing provider, Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Inc., a current OHS Rapid Rehousing provider.

OHS Director Liz Hersh said, “It is exciting to see DHS apply this model to child welfare. We know from experience that rapid rehousing is the first step to getting people off of the street and in this case bringing families back together where they belong.”

The program requires families to use 30% of their income toward rent, and will subsidize the remainder for one year. Families will work with the provider to find their own housing. The program goals are to: reduce delays obtaining safe housing; reduce delays in family reunification; and reduce children’s return to DHS services because of family housing problems.

During the pilot phase which runs through June 2019, the program will serve 30 families and will be the first known program of its kind in the nation. Rapid Rehousing for Reunification is modeled after the evidenced-based rapid rehousing model that has been used effectively in homeless services—which found that one year after exit, 70% of families were stably housed without a subsidy and 13% were in stable housing with a subsidy.

Through its Catalyst Fund, The Barra Foundation awarded \$350,000 over three years to help implement and evaluate the pilot. Program development has been led by Stoneleigh Fellow Nan Feyler, whose focus with DHS has been reducing the impact of substandard housing on child-welfare

involvement.

CHOP Policy Lab will provide data analysis and qualitative interviews in order to understand the program's impact on: reducing delays in reunification; facilitating housing stability; promoting family stability; reducing the risk of children returning to DHS care after being returned to their families. Findings will assist DHS in making adjustments to the program, and inform any program replication or expansion efforts.

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The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) is the county child welfare agency. We lead, support, coordinate and implement services to prevent and address child abuse and neglect; and operate juvenile justice programs for Philadelphia. www.phila.gov/dhs