

EXPANDING HOUSING OPTIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: HOUSING ADVOCACY FOR CILS

SUMMARY OF CLASS TAKEN:

Course Objectives and Description – after completing this course, participants will be able to:

- identify and match major sources of federal or state funding for housing to consumer needs
- implement effective advocacy strategies to expand housing resources for people with disabilities
- play a significant role in their community's housing planning processes
- forge alliances with key housing partners

This three-week course is targeted to staff at Centers for Independent Living working as administrators, housing specialists, advocates, and others concerned with increasing the availability of integrated, affordable, accessible housing for persons with disabilities. A complete summary of all of the discussion posts for each session can be provided electronically to interested parties by contacting Laura Valentine.

Session 1: Introduction and review of course materials including:

- Choose, Get, Keep Integrated Community Housing
- Expanding the Availability of Accessible Housing
- Funding Sources Successfully Used by States to Support Development of Integrated, Affordable, and Accessible Community Housing
- Legal Issues
- Housing Funding Options
- Priced Out in 2012 (<http://www.tacinc.org/media/33368/PricedOut2012.pdf>)
- A Fair Share: Making the Case to Decision Makers
- Other documents that students were to locate include:
 - Economic Development Consolidated Plan – for HOME, Supportive Housing, Emergency Shelter grants, and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)
 - Public Housing Agency (PHA) information at: http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts and <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/index.cfm>
 - Locate non-profit housing developers in Nevada, including Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) – I would suggest CIL staff look up this information as I found a bonus in: <http://www.ruralnevada.org/how-we-can-help/>
 - Housing Division Qualified Allocation Plan (low income housing tax credit – LIHTC)

Session 2: Overview of Housing Resources

There are 4 housing authorities in Nevada, with some having multiple offices. Federal HUD programs funded through these entities are all different and should be based up community needs. All have a waitlist for Housing Choice Vouchers (what used to be called Section 8).

Other students mentioned great difficulties in contacting their local PHA and an overall sense of frustration by many people in accessing their services. However, not all Housing Authorities are the same and, the Memphis PHA has a great website at: <http://memphisha.org/>.

Session 3: HOME and Tax Credits

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is administered by the Nevada Housing Division and described in the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP), which must be updated annually. Information about this program, including compliance, can be found at: http://housing.nv.gov/programs/LIH_Tax_Credit/.

The HOME Program is also administered by the Nevada Housing Division. Information about this program, including their annual action plans, can be found at: http://housing.nv.gov/programs/Home_Program/. HOME is funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) administered by the Nevada Commission on Economic Development. How CDBG funds are spent is described in the Commission's Consolidated plan (ConPlan). There is a link to the ConPlan on the HOME program site indicated above. CILs, and the SILC, should be thoroughly knowledgeable about these plans, including annual plans submitted to HUD by the Housing Division, Economic Development and Public Housing Authorities.

Session 4: Understanding Vouchers

PHAs have Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8) and HOME offers rental assistance vouchers specified in the ConPlan. Fair Market Rents (FMRs) for Nevada can be found at: <http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/docsys.html&data=fmr15>.

CILs, and the SILC, should know where the gaps are on the types of vouchers that currently exist and advocate for expanding, and/or applying for new, funding or changing how funds are currently distributed.

Session 5: Working with the Public Housing Authorities

CILs, and the SILC, should know about PHA plans, participate in meetings to update plans and advocate for changes to plans when what is proposed does not meet current need. PHA information is found on the previous page. These plans are VERY difficult to understand so, it is best to develop working relationships with PHA planning personnel. People interested in Section 8 waitlist information can subscribe to: <http://affordablehousingonline.com/open-section-8-waiting-lists>.

Session 6: Understanding Tax Credits

As indicated above, the Nevada Housing Division is responsible for working with developers to use LIHTC to develop (or rehab) units in Nevada to best meet local needs. As developers are generally at the table to make their public comments, it is important that advocates/stakeholders also be at the table – otherwise, we run the risk that housing only meets the needs of developers, not the people who need both affordable and accessible housing, including persons of very low income.

The current 2015 QAP draft can be found at:

<http://housing.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/housingnvgov/content/programs/LIH/2015QAPDISCUSSIONDRAFTWED20141105.pdf>.

Session 7: Working with Tax Credits

Same as above – CILs and SILC should know what other states are doing to be knowledgeable when they come to the table to advocate for persons with disabilities.

Session 8: Your Community's Consolidated Plan Programs

The Center for Community Change has a guidebook regarding HUD's Consolidated Plan. I received a copy of this document for the class, so I have no idea where people can go to find an electronic copy on-line. I can provide a copy for any interested parties. Nevada's 5-year Consolidated Plan can be found on the Nevada Housing Division website provided above or from the Commission on Economic Development at:

<http://www.diversifynevada.com/programs-resources/rural-community-development/division-documents> (make sure to look at other reports in this same section or by going to the home page and searching for other reports). Specific information regarding the Affordable Housing Focus Group is an additional attachment for today's SILC meeting and can be found at the ADSD website under boards/commissions at: <http://adsd.nv.gov/Boards/SILC/Agendas/>.

Session 9: Making the Case

Information about people receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI), by State, can be found at: http://www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_sc/, including the entire publication and data tables. As SSI is not sufficient to pay rent, which can sometimes even include when rent is subsidized. Sometimes additional subsidies, or changes to the ConPlan or QAP requires input by local advocacy groups and/or stakeholders. If people you work with have a mental illness, know about: <http://www.bazelon.org/>.

BUT – Become involved!!

Session 10: Advocacy and Collaboration Strategies – Poverty Argument

Know about the Technical Assistance Collaborative – especially their document “Priced Out” regarding, as above, the discrepancy between income/poverty and housing affordability. This document is available at: <http://www.tacinc.org/media/33368/PricedOut2012.pdf>.

HUD defines extremely low income as 19.2% of Area Median Income (AMI) – see how that compares to what is documented in the QAP and ConPlan!!!!

Session 11: Advocacy and Collaboration Strategies – Legal Argument

Think about Fair Housing – you can find this information on the HUD website (<http://www.hud.gov>). This information is also available through the local PHAs and may also be indicated on Economic Development and Housing Division sites.

Don't forget about ADA and Section 504.

Session 12: Advocacy Strategies – messaging

What is your role as a CIL, and/or the SILC, to ensure that Nevadans with disabilities (all types) have the resources they need for successful independent living? Does it include working with other advocacy groups and/or stakeholders (federal, state, and local) to determine all levels of need and also the best solutions to bridge the gap between need and service/support provision?

Read the attachment – A Fair Share: Making the Case to Decision Makers (this document is available on the ADSD website with other SILC meeting materials).

Session 13: Additional Resources

Know about:

- Technical Assistance Collaborative (not only Priced Out document but also vouchers for non-elderly people with disabilities)
- Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities
- National Low Income Housing Coalition (<http://nlihc.org>) – advocates guide at: <http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/2014-Advocates-Guide.pdf>
- Other resources, including U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, to be used to sway public policy regarding affordable housing, including:
 - <http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Channel/Permanent-Supportive-Housing-KIT-557.aspx>
 - Rural Housing Toolkit: Money Follows the Person (I got this document from class but, I cannot locate it on-line – I can provide a copy to interested parties)
- Work with state entities to determine other resources I have not mentioned here
- Know advocates/stakeholders – this could include religious entities, businesses (not only for and non-profit entities but banks and others who might assist with funding), homeless shelters, elected officials, community human services organizations, individuals/families that need the services and supports, etc.

BUT – Know your Resources and Partners!!

Session 14: Action Plan for Housing

For the purposes of the class, students had to draft an action plan on how to increase affordable and accessible housing in their community and/or state. I can share this as needed but, a good plan should be developed as a group initiative. **Yet another reason to become involved!!!!**

Session 15: Continuing you Plan

Same as above – we should meet as a collective of stakeholders to develop an Action Plan that includes suggestions on improvement to other planning documents.