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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Social Justice Committee
Monday, November 27, 2023 – 6:30PM
*This meeting was conducted via Zoom***

Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee co-chairs to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolutions are discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan

MINUTES

CB8 Members Present: Sarah Chu, Saundrea I. Coleman, Valerie Mason, Abraham Salcedo, Erica Bersin (Public Member), Wendy Machaver (Public Member)

Resolutions For Approval:

Resolution 1: Expansion of the NYCHA Reentry Program

1. Presentation from NYCHA on the Family Reunification Project with Abraham Tejada
 - What is the NYCHA Family Reentry Program?
 - Family reentry is an opportunity to reunite families and simultaneously promote public safety by strengthening community ties and integrating justice impacted people into their communities
 - This two-year program allows people to return to NYCHA after incarceration to rejoin family under a special permission program.
 - During the program period, rent does not go up as the returning individual does not factor into the rent.
 - Participants are connected to social services, job training, adult education. During the application process, participants indicate programs they would like to be connected with.
 - After two successful years, the participant can be added to the family's lease.
 - How does the program define family?
 - Relatives are defined as husband, wife, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, brother (including half-brother), sister (including half-sister), grandfather, grandmother, grandson, granddaughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, father-in-law, and mother-in-law, and domestic partners.
 - Cousins, Aunts/Uncles not covered
 - Who is eligible?
 - Participants must be at least 16 years old
 - Have left a correctional facility within the last 3 years
 - Qualifying "relative" relationship with NYCHA resident
 - Not Eligible
 - People convicted of making meth in public housing
 - Registered sex offenders
 - Previously evicted from public or Section 8 housing

- Currently engaged in illegal alcohol or substance abuse
- Permanent Exclusion & Trespass Bans
 - If the individual was permanently excluded or a trespass ban by NYCHA because they were arrested while claiming a NYCHA address, these exclusions and bans may be suspended for the duration of the program if they are accepted as a participant.
 - After successful completion of the program, the permanent exclusion or trespass ban can be removed.
- Additional Restrictions
 - Program generally does not apply to Section 8 families or 13 tax credit developments
 - Family member in senior housing and under 62 years old
 - If apartment is extremely overcrowded
- Participants must be willing to...
 - Participate in intensive case management for at least 6 months
 - Live with family members who currently live in NYCHA housing and who agree to participate
 - Make a positive change in their life
- Mr. Tejeda urged any interested applicants to apply as there may be ways to work through some program barriers
- The program and referrals in Numbers
 - 337 referrals, 194 accepted – November 2013 – 2023
 - 33 denied
 - Ineligible conviction
 - Overcrowded
 - Not a qualifying relationship
 - Impact on victims
 - 109 withdrawn
 - Head of household or participant withdraws
 - Found another housing option
 - 1 pending
 - Only 8 were terminated due to arrest
- Success Stories
 - The program works with a long list of partners including Center for Community Alternatives, Center for Justice Innovation, Exodus, Fortune Society, Housing Works, Women's Prison Association, Osborne Association, Youth Justice Network, and others.
 - Applicants can apply while in prison or jail, but need a release date. It is recommended that applicants apply one to two months prior to release date.
- How to Refer People to the program
 - Phone: (212) 306-6024
 - Email: family.reentry@nycha.nyc.gov
 - NYCHA Family Re-entry Staff includes:
 - Abraham Tejeda, Family Reentry Administrator
 - Sarah Giguere, Family Reentry Project Manager
 - Natasha Crump, Family Reentry Community Coordinator

Q&A (Summarized for Brevity)

1. Q: Why are Section 8 and tax credit housing excluded?
 - i. There are different ways to fund affordable housing and Section 8 and 9 are in different pools. Public housing is funded by Section 9 and the Family Reentry program is directed for this housing group.
2. Q: Is that because of RAD PAC developments?
 - i. I understand those to be Section 8. There is an exemption, but it is complicated. People with compelling application should still apply.
3. Q: Applicants are denied if they have substance issue - what if they are seeking treatment?
 - i. If they are currently seeking treatment, that is another reason for being included in the program. Housing might be one of the stabilizing pressures to stay in recovery.
4. Q: Is the program equally available to city and state time served?
 - i. Yes. Participants include those incarcerated in prison as well as those who served time in jail.
5. Q: What does a home visit look like?
 - i. The program staff schedule a time, visit, ask a few questions about having the applicant move in with the sponsoring relative, and determine how many people live in the apartment. It is straightforward and primarily to verify if there is overcrowding and to gauge how prepared the person is to take in the family member.
6. Q: What are the different avenues for people to find out about this program?
 - i. We share information at parole sites in Manhattan and the Brooklyn, still working on Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx. Manhattan and Queens have parole orientations where this information is shared and there are family days all over the city. With a big city and small team, we need help reaching all corners of the city. We target places with key people - knowledge holders in the community to spread the news. We will go anywhere there is a reentry population.
7. Q: How do you assure there is no pressure on the families to participate in the program?
 - i. During the application process, the participant goes to the service provider who makes an assessment and then supports an application to NYCHA. Part of the application is for the NYCHA head of household, a separate application. We do a home visit to understand the interest of the family. The application does not go to committee for final determination until after the home visit.
 - ii. [A suggestion was made to do 1:1 interviews with the family/head of household.]
 - iii. We will take the suggestion into consideration, but also mindful that we don't want to create more hoops for people.
8. Q: Does every prison in the state have a reentry program?
 - i. There are counselors that are supposed to do discharge planning which can differ based on facility, capacity of staff, how many people are released at a time. Our materials are in the resource binder at each prison and in prison libraries.
9. Q: Can you explain the high number of withdrawn applications?
 - i. We don't have the data, but anecdotally, people had other options. Some applicants may have chosen a partner instead of a relative, the head of household may have changed their minds, or delays may have led to the withdrawal of the application.

Resolution

Resolution proposed by Sarah Chu, seconded by Valerie Mason

Whereas, the NYCHA Family Reentry Program reunifies formerly incarcerated people with family members after they have served their time,

Whereas, this two-year program reunites the participants with qualified family members for two years during which their rents are held stable and the participant agrees to engage in supportive programming,

Whereas, stable housing and community ties are pathways to successful reentry and successful program participants are eligible to be added to their family leases,

Whereas, the NYCHA Family Reentry Program has been an enormous success as 96% of program participants between 2013 and 2023 successfully completed the program,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, Community Board 8 Manhattan urges the City of New York to support and increases resources to expand the NYCHA Reentry Program,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED Community Board 8 Manhattan urges all NYC elected officials to disseminate information regarding the NYCHA Reunification Program to their constituents.

Vote: 6 (Bersin*, Chu, Coleman, Machaver*, Mason, Salcedo) –0-0

* Public Members

2. **Old Business** – None
3. **New Business** - None

This meeting was adjourned at 7:27 pm

Saundrea I. Coleman and Sarah Chu, Co-Chairs