

Evaluation of the Section 811  
Project Rental Assistance Program – Phase II

Recruitment Letter and Interview Guide – Public Housing Authority  
(PHA) Staff/Managers

**PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY (PHA) INTERVIEW – RECRUITMENT LETTER**

Date:

Dear [PHA STAFF NAME]:

I am part of a research team at Abt Associates that is under contract to the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct a study on HUD’s Section 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA) program. The goal of the study is to track the implementation of the program and examine overall housing costs, healthcare utilization, and the quality of life of program residents. As part of this study we are conducting interviews with selected PHAs who made a commitment during the funding application process to leverage vouchers or rental units for people with disabilities for the state’s PRA program. The PHA interviews are being conducted in six states, including [STATE].

The purpose of the interview is to understand your perspective on the Section 811 PRA program and your PHA’s commitment of rental vouchers for non-elderly people with disabilities. We will ask questions about how the leveraged vouchers or other rental units are allocated to people with disabilities, how applicants learn about and apply for the subsidies, whether households receive any transition or ongoing supportive services tied to their rental subsidy, and how long the vouchers will be made available to the target population.

Our study is sponsored by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development. This study is completely voluntary. We are not conducting an audit. All findings will be reported back to HUD in aggregate form, but given the small number of PHAs involved with your state’s PRA program, it may be possible to identify specific PHAs. Your decision to participate or not will have no impact on your ability to participate in any HUD program now or in the future. All individual responses will be kept private. We will not use your name in any of our reports back to HUD.

We will call you in a few days to discuss the project further, discuss visit scheduling, and ask whether you are interested and available for an interview. We expect each interview to take about 30 minutes and plan to conduct the interview in person at a location of your choosing. If an in-person interview is not possible, we will conduct the interview by telephone.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for scheduling the call, compiling information for the interview, and completing the interview. HUD may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection information unless that collection displays a valid OMB control number 2528-0309, expiring xx-xx-xxxx.

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact [SITE LEAD] at [SITE LEAD PHONE NUMBER]. You may also contact the Abt project director, Melissa Vandawalker at (617) 349-2611 or HUD’s project officer for this study, Teresa Souza, at (202) 402-5540.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

[SITE VISIT LEAD]

**PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY (PHA) INTERVIEW – INTERVIEW GUIDE**

State: \_\_\_\_\_

PHA: \_\_\_\_\_

Respondent name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Interview(s): \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with us. Abt Associates has been contracted by HUD to conduct an evaluation of the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance program. We are speaking with housing authorities that committed housing vouchers or other rental units for the PRA grant in six of the states that are implementing the program. We are also talking with [GRANTEE] and [MEDICAID AGENCY] and other organizations that have responsibilities for the PRA program.*

*We hope that you will be candid in the information you provide about the program. The information you provide is crucial to improving programs that provide housing and services for non-elderly people with disabilities. In particular, we are interested in capturing your perspective and hearing more about how PHAs serve this population. In addition, this information will be used to inform the implementation of future rounds of Section 811 PRA grants.*

*While we will make every effort to protect your privacy, HUD staff will read our reports, and it is not possible to guarantee complete anonymity given the high level of HUD involvement in the PRA program effort. However, your name will not be used in reporting what we have learned during this onsite visit, and your responses will be combined with those of other housing authorities in other states.*

*There may be some questions you may not be able to answer or that are more appropriate for other staff in your organization. Would it be possible for us to contact you or someone else you designate after the interview in case we have missed any necessary information in this interview?*

*Would it be possible for us to contact you after the interview in case we have missed any necessary information? Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?*

## **BACKGROUND ON SECTION 811 PRA PROGRAM COMMITMENT**

1. I understand that you are the [STAFF POSITION]. Is that correct? What are your responsibilities for the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance program?
2. How did you/your PHA learn about the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance grant?
3. Why did your PHA decide to set aside housing vouchers or other rental units or develop admissions preferences for the target population of your [STATE'S] PRA program?
4. What is that target population? (*Probe for whether the leveraged vouchers are for non-elderly people with disabilities in general of a more specific population such as people leaving institutions. Frame the probes on the basis of the state's target populations.*)
5. How did you determine how many vouchers or rental units you could commit?
  - a. How did you determine the type of housing subsidy (Housing Choice Voucher, public housing, or project-based voucher) to commit?

## **RELATIONSHIP WITH STATE HOUSING AND MEDICAID AGENCIES**

6. (*DO NOT ASK PHAS THAT ARE ALSO THE GRANTEE/STATE HOUSING AGENCY*)  
Has your organization ever worked with [GRANTEE/STATE HOUSING AGENCY] before the PRA program? Please describe how you have worked with that agency. (*Probe for:*)
  - a. Tenant-based rental subsidies (Housing Choice Vouchers, state voucher program)
  - b. Project-based rental subsidies (Project- Based Vouchers, public housing)
  - c. Housing development programs (LIHTC, HOME, state funds)
  - d. Has any of your work with the [GRANTEE/STATE HOUSING AGENCY] been for special populations such as people with disabilities or people experiencing homelessness? (For example, NED vouchers, HOPWA, CoC permanent supportive housing, formerly Shelter Plus Care)?
7. Has your organization ever worked with or [MEDICAID AGENCY] before the PRA program? Please describe how you have worked with that agency. (*Probe for:*)
  - a. Programs that serve people with disabilities (NED vouchers, HOPWA, set-asides of the PHA's vouchers or public housing)
  - b. Programs that serve people experiencing or at risk for homelessness (CoC permanent supportive housing, formerly Shelter Plus Care, set-asides of the PHA's vouchers or public housing.)

## HOW PHA IS ALLOCATING LEVERAGED VOUCHERS

8. Describe how your PHA is allocating leveraged vouchers or other rental units for the Section 811 PRA program. Describe how the set aside or admissions preference works.
  - a. Is it a general preference that puts households higher on the waiting list, or is it a limited preference or set-aside for a specific number of units?
  - b. Is the preference or set aside new for the PRA grant or is it incorporated into an existing preference system for people with disabilities or experiencing homelessness? Explain.
  - c. Is the preference or set aside restricted to individuals referred by a state agency or service provider? If yes, explain.
  - d. Is the preference or set-aside restricted to persons with specific disabilities or diagnoses? If yes, describe how these preferences are restricted.
9. How do individuals learn about the leveraged vouchers [or other rental units if the leveraged units are something other than vouchers] specifically for the target population of the PRA program?
  - a. Do PHA staff spend any additional time marketing or conducting outreach to the PRA target population? If so, what type of outreach do they do? About how much staff time (e.g. in terms of FTEs) is spent on these activities?
  - b. Is there a centralized agency or staff person from the [GRANTEE], [MEDICAID AGENCY], or other PRA partner that refers all PRA applicants to you? If yes,
    - i. Describe this process.
    - ii. How do you communicate the availability of subsidies for PRA-eligible applicants to the [GRANTEE], [MEDICAID AGENCY], or potential applicants?
10. Is there a waiting list for vouchers or units leveraged for the PRA grant? If yes,
  - a. Are applications for leveraged vouchers selected from your PHA's main HCV waiting list or was a new waiting list developed for the PRA leveraged vouchers or rental units?
  - b. Who maintains it? How often is it updated?
  - c. Is there any eligibility determination conducted for applicants prior to being placed on the waiting list?
  - d. What is the status of your PHA's waiting list for HCVs and for leveraged vouchers and units? Is the list open on an ongoing basis, for a limited period of time, or to certain categories of people?
  - e. How many households are on the waiting list meet the eligibility criteria for leveraged vouchers or rental units?
11. Describe the application process for leveraged vouchers and other rental units. Is this process the same as for other HCV or public housing households?
12. How long will the leveraged vouchers or units be made available with a preference to the target population? How was the time period determined?
  - a. Will the vouchers or units be available upon turnover to the PRA target population?
  - b. Has there been any turnover of PRA vouchers or units? If yes, describe the process and why the vouchers or units turned over.

13. How does your PHA track the leasing of leveraged vouchers and other rental units for the Section 811 PRA program?

- a. Does your PHA identify vouchers or units for the PRA program in HUD reporting systems?
- b. Does your PHA differentiate between vouchers or PRA units for the PRA program from other vouchers or units from other housing assistance for people with disabilities (Mainstream or NED vouchers)?

### **SUPPORTIVE SERVICES TO PHA RESIDENTS**

14. Does your PHA provide or coordinate any supportive services or supports to individuals applying for leveraged vouchers or units to help applicants apply to or move into subsidized housing? If yes,

- a. Describe these services and supports and how they are funded.
- b. Are these services available to all residents served by PHA or for residents served by a specific housing program?

15. Does your PHA provide or coordinate any supportive services or supports to help residents assisted with leveraged vouchers or rental units after they have moved into subsidized housing? If yes,

- a. Describe these services and supports and how they are funded.
- b. Are these services available to all residents served by PHA or for residents served by a specific housing program?

### **PHA'S OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITH PRA LEVERAGED VOUCHERS AND UNITS**

16. Have you experienced any challenges with administering leveraged vouchers or other rental units for the PRA program? If yes, describe the challenges and how they were overcome.

17. Do you think the program is targeting the right population based on local need?

18. *(IF THE PHA IS ADMINISTERING NED OR MAINSTREAM VOUCHERS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES)* How does this program – that is, the vouchers you are leveraging for the PRA program – differ from NED or from other mainstream vouchers for persons with disabilities?

19. Is your PHA housing more non-elderly persons with disabilities than you were prior to Section 811 PRA?

- a. Based on your administrative data (50058's), what percentage of your Housing Choice Voucher program was already serving non-elderly persons with disabilities?
- b. How has that changed?

20. Do you think the program is a success? Why or why not? Are there any changes or modifications to the PRA program you would suggest?

21. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to mention about your experience with the PRA grant?