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With a new year upon us, I am pleased to bring you the first 2014 issue of the MFP/Pathways to Community Living Newsletter.

*In this edition, we have chosen to focus on Housing, as many of you are aware that the lack of suitable and accessible housing is the biggest barrier to a successful transition for many MFP consumers. Through discussions with two MFP transition coordinators, the MFP team was made aware of a landlord who goes above and beyond for MFP consumers, by ensuring that suitable housing is **not** an issue once consumers are ready to transition to the community. We are pleased to spotlight Bill Fady, a Peoria landlord that has been instrumental in providing MFP consumers with adequate, qualified housing since November 2012. Mr. Fady works closely with Tera Boettcher and Jessica Filiatreau, both transition coordinators at the Human Service Center (HSC) in Peoria. It is our hope that spotlighting the collaborative relationship which exists between Mr. Fady and the HSC transition coordinators will encourage more landlords throughout the state to "take a chance" on MFP consumers.*

Wishing all of you a safe and successful 2014,

*Lora McCurdy
Pathways to Community Living/MFP Project Director
Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services*

Peoria Landlord Goes Extra Mile for MFP Consumers

Submitted By Katie Eckles

In today's economy, obtaining affordable, accessible housing is a time-consuming process fraught with difficulties for low-income individuals. Locating suitable housing, and meeting all of the associated requirements is problematic for many low-income individuals, but even more so for some MFP consumers. Barriers to housing are even higher for individuals with disabilities, frail elders, and those with serious mental illnesses--all populations served by the MFP program. MFP Transition Coordinators agree that the shortage of affordable and accessible housing remains the biggest issue faced by MFP consumers attempting to transition into the community.

Housing availability, as well as landlords who are willing to work with transition coordinators and their consumers, are of the utmost importance for a successful transition back into the community.

Fortunately, for MFP consumers in Peoria, there is Bill Fady, a Peoria businessman involved in real estate management for over 20 years. Fady owns several rental properties around the Peoria area, including a 36-unit apartment complex, where MFP consumers currently occupy 9 of the apartments.

Fady's apartment building is featured on the Illinois Housing Search website (www.ilhousingsearch.org). The website is a free, online, web-based housing locator where landlords can list available housing. Users are able to search for affordable housing by geographical location, size, price, accessibility, and more. It was through this website that Tera Boettcher, MFP Transition Coordinator for the Human Service Center (HSC) in Peoria, found Bill's apartment building while conducting a housing search for one of her MFP consumers. HSC is a community

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agency that provides mental health services and support for individuals diagnosed with serious mental illnesses, and, is one of the few mental health centers in the state that contracts with the MFP program. Tera, along with colleague Jessica Filiatreau, are both social workers and MFP transition coordinators at HSC.

Tera first approached Bill about his apartment complex in November 2012, while preparing to transition an MFP consumer. Bill had never before heard of the MFP program, until the day Tera contacted him and explained the goals of the program. Now familiar with MFP, as well as the needs of MFP consumers, Bill is aware of how crucial housing is for a successful transition back into the community. "A lot of these people are at risk of being homeless if they aren't hooked into the right channels to locate proper housing. It's important work that Tera and Jessica are doing. They have a solid relationship with all of their clients and it is evident. Their clients trust and look up to them, and the consumers know they can depend on Tera and Jessica--this makes the transition process very smooth. Both of them go above and beyond for their clients. The relationship with the transition coordinator is a very important one."

Bill relies on the expertise and recommendations of Tera and Jessica when it comes to MFP tenants, which is why he doesn't feel the need to conduct credit or criminal background checks, something most landlords require of potential tenants. "Tera and Jessica are professionals, and if they tell me that they have an appropriate individual looking for an apartment, I trust their judgment." Bill also states that he's never once had any complaints or issues with any of the MFP consumers residing in his building. "I've never had a problem with vandalism or crime, or any other disturbances. These people are very mellow and non-violent. I think it's important to get the word out that these people are not violent individuals, even though they have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness. It's important not to make an assumption about these people, as each one is different and has their own personality. I've always believed in second chances." Bill is concerned with the safety of MFP consumers as well. He is careful about those to whom he rents other units, as he wants to avoid the possibility of a consumer being taken advantage of by another tenant. "This is a vulnerable population that needs someone to watch out for them. Many of these people don't have a lot of family support, so, it's important to make sure their needs are being addressed and they aren't being taken advantage of." Bill tries to keep units available for MFP consumers, as he is aware of the desperate need for housing for those individuals. "I would take an MFP consumer over anyone else. They are very compliant; the rent is always paid on time. I have a very good working-relationship with Tera and Jessica. They contact me when they have an individual ready to transition, as they know that finding housing for their client won't be an issue."

Bill's ultimate goal is to expand his properties in order to accommodate even more MFP consumers. "I see the friendships they develop with each other. They have a social network and look out for each other, and they are always quick to let me, Tera or Jessica know if someone is having an issue. The MFP consumers definitely take care of each other." If an issue ever does arise with an MFP consumer, Bill states that Tera and Jessica are always on top of it. "Both Tera and Jessica intervene when necessary and they are very competent social workers. It takes a certain kind of person to effectively work with this population. Both of them have proven to me, time and time again, that they care about this population. They know their consumers and their consumers' needs. MFP participants need this type of advocate on their side. Ultimately, these are people who are happy that they have been given another chance at living on their own. I will do whatever I can to help them out."

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Housing News

Submitted By Ben Noven

Statewide Interagency Council created per 811 grant

The State's Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Demonstration Program is expected to get underway in 2014. This funding, of which Illinois was awarded \$11.9 million by HUD in February of 2013 (one of only thirteen states who received funding out of forty-four applicants), is expected to provide up to 826 project-based vouchers to assist persons with disabilities who are coming out of nursing homes and other institutional facilities to help them transition back into the community. More specifically, this award will assist Illinois in its efforts pertaining to meeting obligations set into place by three court-ordered consent decrees, as well as the Money Follows the Person (MFP) Program. In November of 2013, IHDA finally received a Cooperative Agreement from HUD, outlining program schematics. After reviewing the Cooperative Agreement and providing comments, IHDA returned the Cooperative Agreement to HUD in December, 2013, and is expecting to receive comments from HUD sometime in the early part of 2014. It is expected that the first units receiving assistance through the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Demonstration Program will be on line come early Spring 2014.

Illinois Housing Search Engine / State Referral Network

The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IDHA) participated in an interagency agreement with the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, the Illinois Department of Human Services, and the Illinois Department on Aging, along with the Office of the Governor to maintain and continue developing its online housing locator (www.ilhousingsearch.org). Also included in the portal are marketing features available to providers of Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Targeting Program Units, which are used to target specific disabilities and homeless populations and income levels. The locator is also used to streamline transition efforts for consent decree members who are transitioning out of institutions. LIHTC units are updated daily, and are searchable by caseworkers, allowing for improved real time tracking of targeted units. For additional information visit: (www.ilhousingsearch.org). IDHA, along with HFS, encourages all transition coordinators to utilize this free resource when searching for affordable housing for their consumers.

New Housing Professionals within Governor's Office

The Governor's Office is pleased to announce the addition of three, full-time statewide housing coordinators. In collaboration with IHDA, IDHS, HFS and IDoA, the newly-hired housing coordinators will aid in identifying federal housing subsidies and other housing resources to meet the known demand for housing of Olmstead Class Members, MFP enrollees and persons transitioning from SODC's. The coordinators will work to ensure access to the State Referral Network, as well as expanding the supply of housing to meet the needs of persons transitioning from long term care to community integrated settings of choice.

Brady Harden joined the Office of The Statewide Housing Coordinator for Long Term Care Reform in March 2012. Brady came to the office with a distinguished history in the development of supportive housing for persons with disabilities and for persons experiencing homelessness. For nearly twenty years, he served as the Chief Executive Officer of Inner Voice, Inc, an agency that

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formerly managed the City of Chicago's emergency shelter network and that annually provides supportive services to thousands of homeless Chicagoans.

Brady is a graduate of Knoxville College, Knoxville Tennessee with a B.S. in Commerce. He was a founding member of the Chicago Task Force on Homelessness and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and Project VIDA, an agency providing HIV/AIDS prevention services in Chicago's Little Village Community. He received the 2001 Malcolm X College Partnership in Education Award, the 2005 DePaul University Irwin W. Steans Center Community Service Award and the 2008 Partnership Award from the Chicago Low Income Housing Trust Fund.

Lore Baker received her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Master's Degree in Gerontology both from Eastern Illinois University. After nine years of directing a transitional housing and intensive case management program for people experiencing homelessness in Decatur, Illinois and developing more than 40 units of supportive housing there, she went to work for the Supportive Housing Providers Association. In her five years with SHPA, she progressed from the Communications and Outreach Director to Assistant Director to Executive Director. She led a staff of thee and worked with more than 120 member organizations that provide permanent supportive housing across the state of Illinois. She served on the IDHS Social Services Advisory Council, a variety of Task Forces and Committees and is an advisory council member of Home First Illinois. Lore began her new role in the Governor's Office as one of three Statewide Housing Coordinators for Long Term Care Reform on January 7, 2014. She looks forward to collaboratively working with the State of Illinois' Departments to transform the Long Term Care system from institutional to community-based.

Juanita Irizarry comes to the Statewide Housing Coordinator team in the Governor's Office from The Chicago Community Trust, the region's community foundation, where her grant portfolio included housing, homelessness, and disabilities. In that role she funded work related to the long term care reform effort including affordable housing developers, such as IFF, who are working to create units of affordable housing for people with disabilities, and she collaborated with the State, directing grant funds for technical assistance and capacity building, including funding the Technical Assistance Collaborative to help the State develop its successful Section 811 application. She also staffed the Trust's Persons with Disabilities Fund, which in 2010 released its "Quest for Equality" white paper calling upon the State to greatly enhance its efforts to contribute to improved quality of life for people with disabilities through community living, education, and employment. Previous to her role at the Trust, Juanita led a Latino-focused fair housing and housing advocacy non-profit which served as the court monitor for the Latino Consent Decree requiring the Chicago Housing Authority to open up access to public housing for Latinos. During that time, she served as a gubernatorial appointee on the Executive Committee of the inaugural Illinois Housing Task Force. These roles build upon several positions in various neighborhood-based and regional affordable housing development corporations in the Chicago area as well as a couple of staff and board roles in the homelessness arena. Juanita studied urban planning and policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago and public administration at the Harvard Kennedy School.

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Transition Statistics

As of December 31, 2013, the Pathways to Community Living partner agencies successfully transitioned 327 individuals from institutional settings to Qualified Home and Community Based residences for Calendar Year 2013. This brings the total number of individuals transitioned to 1,103 since the inception of MFP in 2009. Thank you to all the transition coordinators and stakeholders for their continued efforts in assisting individuals reclaim their independence in the community.

Future Stakeholder Meetings

The MFP Stakeholder meetings for 2014 are tentatively scheduled to be held on March 26th, June 25th, and October 22nd from 10:00am to 12:00pm. Stakeholder meetings will immediately follow the monthly MFP Implementation Meetings which will be held from 9:00am-10:00am during those months.

We would like to encourage greater consumer participation in the committee meetings. If you would like to refer an individual or know someone who would like to participate, please let us know! You may email that information to Pathways to Community Living Staff by clicking the “contact us” link on the program website at www.mfp.illinois.gov.