



HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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May 5, 2009

Mr. Mike Gerber, Executive Director
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
221 E. 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78711
Attn: Kelly Crawford

Subject: Minor Amendment
City of Houston/Harris County Amendment to the Partial Action Plan

Dear Mr. Gerber:

On February 5, 2009 the Board of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) and subsequently on April 19, 2009 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development approved Amendment 7 of the Partial Texas Action Plan for Disaster Recovery (Plan).

Now Harris County is requesting a minor amendment to Amendment 7. The minor amendment is for the Continuation of Katrina Crisis Counseling Program administered by the subgrantee Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County (MHMRA). Harris County originally requested to decrease funding for this program; however, MHMRA has continued to serve clients above and beyond the estimated persons served as approved by TDHCA in February; therefore, Harris County would like to increase MHMRA's funding from \$2,400,158.00 to \$3,004,449.00. This would also require a decrease in funding for the DHAP Case Management Program activity from \$1,000,000.00 to \$395,709.00. This requested amendment constitutes a change in funding of the approved program of under 5 percent in the funding allocation between the activity categories described in the Plan.

Attached for your review and approval is the revised funding summary table and program description for each activity.

Please advise regarding the necessary next steps to process our request promptly. If you have questions please contact Daphne Lemelle at (713) 578-2064.

Sincerely,

David B. Turkel
Director

DBT/dal/lc/mgb/ko

Enclosures

Harris County Minor Amendment to Amendment 7

Table 1 Funding Summary-Proposed Harris County Projects

Harris County Proposed Projects	National Objective	Estimated Persons Served	Amount Allocated	% Harris
Evacuee Public Services:				
Expanded Services to Hurricane Evacuees (HCSO)	LMC	210	\$1,965,191	10%
Evacuee Medical Services (HCHD)	Urgent Need	13,619 with 35,515 patient visit	\$6,049,691	30%
Continuation of Katrina Crisis Counseling Program (MHMRA)	LMC	2,448	\$3,004,449	15%
Youth Offender Services (HCJPD)	LMC	24	\$76,858	1%
DHAP Transportation Program (HCCSD)	LMC	100	\$246,516	1%
DHAP Case Management Program (HCCSD)	LMC	250	\$395,709	2%
Evacuee Housing:				
Multi-Family Evacuee Housing (HCCSD)	LMH	500	\$8,261,586	41%
Harris County Total			\$20,000,000	100%

Katrina Crisis Counseling Program

Funding in the amount of \$3,004,449 will be provided to the Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County (MHMRA) for the continuation of the Katrina Crisis Counseling Program (KCCP) for a period of 19 months.

In September 2005, upon the arrival of the evacuees to the Harris County area, MHMRA immediately organized and provided leadership and staffing for emergency psychiatric services at the Mega Shelters (Reliant Center/Arena and George R. Brown Convention Center) and Disaster Recovery Centers ("DRC's"), utilizing about 100 MHMRA employees. In addition to individuals with mental health needs, MHMRA served children, seniors, and individuals with mental retardation who were also particularly impacted. MHMRA coordinated emergency services with City, County, State and Federal officials, medical provider networks, Social Work schools, and other service providers.

This immediate local response grew into what became known as the Katrina Crisis Counseling Program that opened for operation in October 2005 with funding through the Texas Department of State Health Services. The KCCP was organized to provide longer term crisis counseling to Katrina survivors as temporary relocation grew into longer term displacement. KCCP staff assumed crisis counseling service provision at the Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC's) and throughout the community immediately after they were hired and trained. Contract services include: Individual Crisis Counseling, Group Crisis Counseling, Outreach, Screening and Assessment, Grief and Loss Counseling, Stress Management, Education and Information, Referrals to longer term, more formal mental health and/or substance abuse treatment (Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous), Referrals to other service agencies (FEMA help-line, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, Salvation Army, Red Cross, Interfaith, Unmet Needs), Networking and Collaboration with community leaders and public officials, regarding the disaster.

During 2006, the KCCP delivered more than 35,000 crisis counseling sessions, provided more than 4,400 crisis counseling sessions by phone, and made more than 1,700 mental health referrals.

In December 2006, funds from the Texas Department of State Health Services ended and MHMRA agreed to continue the program through a phase-down plan that would end all services within six months and hopefully setup in-kind collaborations with other services providers for the benefit of evacuees still facing crisis. In lieu of phasing down the program, Harris County proposes to continue the program with CDBG recovery funds to assist 6,992 individuals and provide the necessary emotional closure to set them on a path of developing self-sufficiency and integration into the Houston/Harris County community or resettling back to their home communities. Case workers recognize that evacuees enrolled in mental health and counseling services have profound needs and require immense assistance. Case workers must also conduct broad outreach to assist evacuees that would benefit greatly from, but are not receiving services. We anticipate this program continuing for another 19 months with full closure within 24 months of receipt of grant funds. Clients continue to receive case management services, but also continue to cope with integration into the community, especially with economic distress. Services will be comprised of all eligible public services under CDBG regulations, including but not limited to rental and utility assistance.

National Objective

This activity will meet the CDBG National Objective of primarily benefiting low and moderate-income persons.

Eligibility Requirements

Since crisis counseling may be necessary for evacuees of varying income levels, the services provided under this program will not be restricted to only low-income persons; however, at least 51 percent of all persons served through this program will be of low and moderate income. In general, evacuees who receive services through the Katrina Crisis Counseling Program must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Evacuees must provide proof of household income (at least 51 percent of the persons served will have incomes within the applicable income limits);

- Evacuee status must be documented via FEMA eligibility, or other documents proving displacement as a result of the Hurricanes Katrina or Rita.

Distribution of Funding

Funding under this program will go towards payment of salaries, supplies, and professional fees and services necessary to continue services to evacuees served under this program.

DHAP Case Management

Funding in the amount of \$395,709 will be utilized by Harris County to provide services to evacuees currently enrolled in the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP). DHAP is a step-down program designed to move participating evacuees from receiving housing assistance to becoming self-sufficient and all funding will terminate August 1, 2009. Though most current DHAP clients will be able to adequately move to self-sufficiency, there are many clients that do not have the resources to maintain long-term permanent housing. The clients that fall under this category are often elderly and disabled on fixed income. Additionally, clients identify several barriers to becoming fully self-sufficient, mostly pertaining to job placement and retention.

As DHAP concludes, Harris County proposed providing additional case management services to those clients participating in DHAP with the greatest barriers to becoming fully self-sufficient. Case managers have recognized that many clients continue to face limitations to achieving self-sufficiency, despite the extension of the program. Case managers will offer incremental rental and utility assistance upon termination of FEMA funding at the end of July 2009. Case managers will no longer offer these extended services, and expect clients to achieve self-sufficiency by January 2010. The services under the Case Management Program will include:

- Counseling and mental health services
- Food vouchers
- Prescription drug vouchers
- Child care vouchers
- Education and tuition assistance
- Rental assistance
- Utility assistance

The Harris County Community Services Department's Social Services Division will operate this program. The services and assistance that Harris County will provide to clients are those that DHAP clients and case workers alike have identified as serious impediments to becoming fully self-sufficient. Case workers will coordinate with clients to identify which clients will benefit most from available services as well as identify clients most likely to achieve success with this type of assistance. All clients receiving benefits will be required to maintain counseling and mental health services.

Eligibility Requirements

The services provided under this program will be restricted to clients participating in DHAP who are at least 51 percent low-income. In general, evacuees who receive services through DHAP Case Management must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Evacuees must provide proof of household income;
- Evacuee status must be documented via FEMA eligibility, or other documents proving displacement as a result of the Hurricanes Katrina or Rita.