

## Positive Program Results

STRA is a flexible, outcome-based program. Individual service providers have tremendous discretion to match housing assistance with the unique needs of the households they serve. Although there are no specific service mandates, there is an emphasis on accountability. Providers are expected to meet the following housing retention goals for all households helped with eviction prevention or placed in permanent housing:

- **90% retain their housing at 3 months** after their assistance ends
- **80% retain their housing at 6 months** after their assistance ends
- **70% retain their housing at 12 months** after their assistance ends

The STRA program has been successful in meeting these goals, despite the ravages of our economy and the ongoing economic challenges faced by low-income households, with just one exception in the most recent program year when the three month retention goal dipped slightly below 90%. There is remarkably consistent success across the diversity of households and needs served by STRA. This shows that the program is working well to assist people in a variety of situations.

### Program Outcomes: July 2006–June 2010

Number of households receiving assistance	<b>6700*</b>
Average length of rent assistance provided	<b>2.6 months</b>
Percentage of households in unsubsidized rental housing at end of STRA assistance	<b>66%</b>
Percentage of households in subsidized housing/program at end of STRA assistance	<b>10%</b>

\* Does not include households assisted by domestic violence providers in 2009-10 because of reporting restrictions.



After 70 years, Home Forward remains true to the goals we have always championed—**shelter and support for our neighbors in need.** By providing the essentials of a home, we enable individuals and families to move forward in life. Today, we are more committed than ever to serving our community of Multnomah County by promoting **hope, access and the potential for a better tomorrow.**



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## Short Term Rent Assistance Program (STRA)



# From Homelessness to Hope: Bridging the Gap

Every day, thousands of people in our community are living on the streets, staying in temporary shelters, or on the brink of losing their housing. They come from a variety of backgrounds and face diverse circumstances, but have one hard fact in common: they are experiencing homelessness or the risk of homelessness. In some cases, short-term financial assistance can make all the difference. This is the focus of the Short Term Rent Assistance (STRA) program.

## What is STRA?

STRA is a unified countywide program that provides limited housing assistance (up to 24 months) to households in Multnomah County that are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Home Forward administers the program on behalf of Multnomah County, the City of Portland, the City of Gresham, and Home Forward. Each of these entities previously had its own short-term housing program. In creating STRA in 2006, the aim was to consolidate the community's resources to improve efficiency and results.

## STRA's Crucial Role

There is a huge need for housing assistance in our community. STRA provides people experiencing a housing crisis with a short-term financial bridge that leads to long-term solutions. Without this help, many people would have no other alternative. The program is crucial to the efforts of Portland, Gresham, and Multnomah County to end homelessness, which emphasize the need to place and maintain at-risk people in stable permanent housing.

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***“Short-term rent assistance is an essential part of our continuum of care that allows us to prevent eviction, so that people facing short-term emergencies do not become homeless. Last year we prevented 352 adults and 535 kids in 225 households from becoming homeless thanks to STRA.”***

*— Jean DeMaster, Executive Director, Human Solutions and co-chair, Coordinating Committee to End Homelessness*

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## The Services STRA Provides

STRA is designed to respond quickly when homelessness threatens an individual or family. It does this in three ways:

- **Safety off the streets:** Providing emergency hotel/motel vouchers for temporary shelter
- **Eviction prevention:** Assisting households in danger of eviction to maintain the housing they have
- **Housing placement assistance:** Helping households obtain permanent housing

Assistance can include rent or mortgage payment, deposits and application fees, move-in costs, and support services. These services are provided through 19 public and non-profit agencies that are selected based on demonstrated expertise and results with similar service delivery.

## To Apply for STRA-Funded Assistance

Applications for STRA-funded housing assistance are available through participating agencies. Get your agency referral by **dialing 2-1-1** and speaking with a **211** service representative.

## The People STRA Helps

STRA serves populations whose life conditions make them particularly vulnerable. These include people with disabilities or special needs, adults over 55, the chronically homeless, and communities with disproportionately high rates of poverty. Households must have incomes at or below 50% of annual area median income (\$35,600 for a family of four). Most participants have incomes well below the 50% level—46% of the adults served in the 2009–10 program year had monthly income below \$500 at the point they sought assistance.

### People Served: July 2009–June 2010

Families with children	<b>51%</b>
Female head of household (includes singles)	<b>69%</b>
Disabled head of household	<b>32%</b>
Senior head of household (55+)	<b>16%</b>
Veteran head of household	<b>4%</b>
Homeless at entry in STRA	<b>23%</b>

## How STRA Is Funded

Historic annual funding for STRA was approximately \$1.8 million, coming primarily from the City of Portland, Multnomah County, the City of Gresham, and Home Forward. Funds resulting from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) began flowing through STRA in July 2009, bringing the annual funding level to approximately \$3.5 million.

## Program Efficiency

STRA has significantly increased the administrative efficiency of our community's short term rent assistance system. Administrative costs have dropped from 23 percent of total system costs before STRA to between 12 and 15 percent. With the added program scale achieved through ARRA funding, administration costs went down to 9 percent. This demonstrates that the program infrastructure can accommodate increased service levels.