

# Evaluation: A Tool for Community Sustainability



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April 9, 2008

# Overview

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- A reminder of how hard this is (poverty hurts)
- Evaluation of HOPE VI in Portland
- Findings about important role of CSS
- Recommendations for community sustainability

# A Reminder of the Hardship of Poverty: One Staff Member's Perspective

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*"When you are surrounded by families in public housing who are not working, living off of systems, are uneducated (some), having many barriers (addictions, drug and alcohol issues, meth treatment, domestic violence, unhealthy relationships with men...combined with the inability to know where to start to make changes for yourself or where to go to do this; it becomes a very depressing environment.*

*...One needs to put themselves into that situation and wonder what would happen to them when surrounded by all of this."*

# New Columbia CSS and Relocation Staff, 2003

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# HOPE VI Evaluation: The Housing Authority of Portland

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- Evaluation to learn from residents about
  - The initial relocation experience
  - Satisfaction with housing, neighborhoods, schools during interim and after completion
  - Satisfaction with relocation and CSS services
  - Housing stability during interim
  - Self-sufficiency
  
- Surveys designed with help of staff

# Survey of Returning Households

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- ❑ Mailed survey to 107 households in February 2007
- ❑ Response rate of 42% (45 surveys returned)
- ❑ Asked about decision to return; satisfaction with neighborhood, housing, CSS; and self-sufficiency
- ❑ Only CSS results shown here

# Survey Questions Concerning CSS

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- ❑ How did CSS specialist help you?
- ❑ How satisfied are you with CSS services?
- ❑ How do you feel about the program closing?
- ❑ Was the CSS specialist truly interested in you?
- ❑ Was the CSS specialist available when you needed help?

# How did the CSS specialist help you?

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## □ *Tangible items:*

- *"Got me into a ready to rent class".*
- *"Daycare assistance, utility assistance."*
- *"Rent, budgeting, school choice."*

## □ *Intangible items:*

- *"Very supportive in the decisions I made and gave me good information."*
- *"To make me feel as if I was not forgotten."*
- *"With life stuff---encouraged me---said I needed more faith in myself. She was right."*
- *"She helped me through one of the hardest times in my life and became a friend."*

# Satisfaction with CSS

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- ❑ 90% reported that the CSS specialist was truly interested in them
- ❑ 82% said CSS specialist was usually available to help when needed
- ❑ Overall satisfaction with CSS services:
  - 80% very satisfied
  - 20% somewhat satisfied

# How do you feel about CSS program closing?

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- *"Sad, like I lost a friend."*
- *"Not too happy because you will always need someone to help you when you really need it to get good information and resources."*
- *"It is a program that should always exist to support the community."*
- *"Not very good. It helps many people who would not be able to help themselves."*

# How do you feel about CSS program closing?

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- *"Sucks. They were reliable."*
- *"The truth is we will always need the support of those specialists."*
- *"Not happy about it closing, because the people need the extra personal support and the leasing people aren't going to give people the personal sense of belonging."*
- *"I feel that without the program it will be a lot harder to get help with education."*

# Satisfaction with CSS is correlated with positive view of HOPE VI impact

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- Those who are very satisfied with CSS were more likely to report
  - Satisfaction with the way the HOPE VI project was carried out
  - HOPE VI had a very good impact on their family
  - HAP provided support needed to become more self-sufficient
  - The overall revitalization project was worthwhile
- Did not correlate with housing or neighborhood satisfaction

# So What?

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- CSS must be sustained!!!!
- My pet peeve:
  - People are more important than physical development
- A few recommendations ...

# Recommendations for Community Sustainability

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- Keep people a priority
- Know your population
- Know the service and resource networks
- Use evaluation as a tool for sustainability
  - The substance of evaluation is powerful information
  - The process of evaluation can help build community connectedness and capacity

# Keep People a Priority

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- Prioritize resident services—they are worth it
  - Evidence shows that a few services can make a difference in peoples' lives
  - Supported residents pay more rent
  - Supported residents create fewer problems within housing
  - Services improve likelihood of success in mixed income community

# Keep People a Priority

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- ❑ The residents are not just coincidental to your portfolio---they are the reason you have real estate
- ❑ Management should advocate for more federal, state, and local funding
- ❑ Leverage your resources and expertise within your city and region

# Know Your Population

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- A predictably complex population
  - Seniors
  - Disabled, Mentally & Physically
  - Families with Children and Teens
  - Working Able (with range of strengths/barriers)
- Tailor your programming to these groups

# Know the Service and Resource Networks

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- Evaluate the quality of your partners' services
  
- Tap into a variety of resources: think outside of the box
  - Private sector
  - Non-profits
  - Local, regional, state government institutions
  
- Find common goals with partners
  
- Leverage your strengths

# Evaluation: A Tool for Sustainability

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- Research can produce information about:
  - Community satisfaction, strengths, weaknesses, issues
  - The value of your services to the community
  
- Substance of research is powerful
  - Improve program design
  - Improve grant proposals
  - Leverage your assets and garner resources
  
- Process of research can be powerful
  - Engage community members in the evaluation
  - Build community and capacity

Thank you for all your hard work!



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