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Project Hope; Negotiation to Unify Advocacy for Successful Passage of Foreclosure Legislation to Protect Low Income Households in Massachusetts

UMass Boston Center for Social Policy

Donna Friedman, UMass Boston Center for Social Policy-Research Associate Professor

Project Hope

Summary/Abstract

Project Hope is a multi-service agency at the forefront of efforts in Boston to move families beyond homelessness and poverty. It provides low-income women with children with access to education, jobs, housing, and emergency services; fosters their personal transformation; and works for broader systems change. The Center for Social Policy was asked by Project Hope to carry out collaborative action research to help them identify viable employment pathways, accessible in the neighborhood or through use of public transportation, for parents with children who have limited workforce experience and education. Together, the research involved: working with agency staff to survey families served by Project Hope regarding their workforce aspirations; analyzing employment and business data to identify business sectors likely to be seeking new entry-level workers; and consulting with the agency's workforce development leaders regarding strategies for developing new partnerships with employers seeking workers with skills and aspirations like those of families served by Project Hope

Goals and Objectives

To enable the community based organization to use solid evidence for its workforce development strategic planning

Partners

The partners in this project include:
Paul and Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation
Project Hope, Inc.
Brandynn Holgate, UMass Boston, Center for Social Policy- Research Associate
Funding support: Fireman Foundation

Approaches and Results

For this project, the researchers employed Collaborative and Action research using analysis of secondary data, such as labor market and agency administrative data, along with interviews of a sample of employers in the area and a survey of families served by the agency.
As a result of this research, Project Hope, Inc is incorporating the data found to inform its workforce development strategic planning. Also, the Center of Social Policy Director is facilitating a planning process with the agency's senior leadership and members of its Board to develop its outcome measurement system in ways that support ongoing learning and ultimately demonstrate the impacts of the agency's interventions for policy, funding and community-based audiences.

References and Resources

Entry-Level Workforce Investment Feasibility Study. May 2011, co-authored by Brandynn Holgate and Tressa Stazinski.
Project Hope
550 Dudley St., Roxbury, MA
Phone: 617-442-1880 Web link: www.prohope.org

Negotiation to Unify Advocacy for Successful Passage of Foreclosure Legislation to Protect Low Income Households in Massachusetts

Summary/Abstract

The Coalition for Occupied Homes in Foreclosure (COHIF) was formed in response to the wave of foreclosures that has affected communities across Massachusetts. While widespread predatory lending practices left homeowners vulnerable to foreclosure, falling property values have prevented owners from avoiding foreclosure through sale or refinancing of their homes. With Over 20 bills pending, COHiF members were not united in their advocacy. Unless they developed some level of consensus on which bills to push, no legal protections for these low income households would stand a chance of passing. Animosity was present among sub-camps having to do with differences on strategy tactics and provisions within pending bills. The Center for Social Policy partnered with COHiF's organizational members to enable them to work at cross-purposes relative to pending foreclosure bills.

Goals and Objectives

The goal is use analytical and facilitation expertise and resources to lead to united advocacy plan that would result in passage of state legislation to protect low income households from evictions due to foreclosures

Partners

The Coalition for Occupied Homes in Foreclosure (COHIF)
Hyams Foundation
Tim Davis-UMass Boston Center for Social Policy- Research Consultant
Charleen Regan-UMass Boston Center for Social Policy-Research Consultant
Prof. Maureen Scully-UMass Boston-Assoc Dean, Graduate Programs and CSP Sr. Research Fellow
Funding support: Boston Foundation

Approaches and Methods

To start the facilitated dialogue, CSP members engaged key legislators who announced to the COHiF members assembled of their awareness of the infighting among advocacy groups and its consequences; legislators shared their perspectives as to which pending bills had the greatest likelihood of passing. Then, the funders and legislators left the room. What followed was a hard but very respectful and productive conversation, structured and facilitated by CSP Senior Research Fellow, Professor Maureen Scully.

Results

Within two weeks of the dialogue, COHiF members came to a consensus on which bills to rally around. The prevention of foreclosure legislation which members rallied around was successfully passed by both the House and Senate in Spring 2010 and signed into law by the Governor in July 2010

Next Steps

CSP research consultants have an ongoing relationship with the housing policy advocacy organizations., CSP also has faculty provided analytical support as and when needed

References and Resources

•**Planning Office for Urban Affairs, Inc.**
Phone: 617-350-8885
Email: me@poua.org
Web Link: www.poua.org

•**Boston Tenant Coalition**
Phone: 617-423-8609.
Web Link: www.bostontenant.org