



## Good Faith Communities Coalition

Taking action on homelessness and affordable housing with and for the poor in the District of Columbia

Washington, DC: Family Re-entry, DC: New Short Term Family Housing

September 26, 2018

### New Shelters for Families an Improvement, but Permanent Housing Elusive for the Very Poor



The first of seven planned **short term family housing (STFH) facilities** opened this week in [Ward 4](#). The facility can house up to 45 families who have been **homeless or with no safe place to stay**. This facility, and the others that will open over the next year, will replace the soon to be closed DC General shelter. The Mayor refers to the smaller shelters as "the centerpiece of the transformation of our emergency response system for families..." that will help "families stabilize and exit homelessness quickly."

**Profile of families living in shelter:** 525 families lived in all DC shelters at the end of August with more than 1100 children. As it nears closing, 59 families remain at DC General. On average, about 75% of the adult residents are single and head of household. Close to half of the adult residents are between 18 and 25 years old.

**How and when will families exit the new short term family housing (STFH):** the goal is to move households to permanent housing in 90 days. The reality is much longer, often more than a year. Rapid Re-housing (**RRH**) is the City's program of choice to transition most families from **STFH** to permanent housing. Families are assisted in finding a fair-market rent apartment (**\$1793/month for 2 BR**). The head of household signs the lease and pays **40% of household income per month for rent**. City rental assistance pays the remainder, generally for one year. **When RRH ends, the household is responsible for the full rent. A very limited number of long term housing vouchers are available for those most in need.**

#### Can most families afford \$1793 monthly rent after a year of RRH assistance?

Heads of household with work experience and good skills who have had temporary setbacks such as loss of a job benefit from the program. However, close to 80% of the families in **RRH** receive government benefits between \$644 and \$750 per month for **living expenses - and for many, this is their only income.**

**What does the data say about program success?** The Mayor claims success stating that **RRH** participants are permanently housed the day their participation in the program ends. However, **reliable data on housing stability after a month, a year or two has not been systematically collected - as yet.** Given household profiles, current household incomes, the scarcity of affordable housing and high rents, **one remains skeptical that families with significant skill and income deficits can turn things around in one year.** We are far from checking the **MISSION ACCOMPLISHED** box, "stable housing achieved" for all families who participate in **RRH**!

**EVICTIONS:** Washington DC ranks 115th among American cities in the [number of evictions](#) per year: more than 4500 household evictions in FY2016 or more than 12

households per day.

**REMINDER: Unity Walk, October 14, 2018. Opening Ceremony 2:30 - 3 PM, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Massachusetts Ave at Macomb St. Further information: [Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington](#)**

**Good Faith Board of Directors (2018): Rev. James E. Terrell, President, Rev. John Graham, Rabbi Gerry Serrota, John Hisle, Ann Friedman.**

**Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten - Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.**



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