

# SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM



## YEAR IN REVIEW

- 285 total vouchers available
- 251 families recertified
- 479 inspections completed
- 56 new families were housed under the program
- 2 families transitioned to home ownership
- 279 individuals added to the waiting lists



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# 2015 PROGRAM REPORT

## HRITA'S STORY:

After her husband's disabling injuries on the job, Rita's family struggled to make ends meet. Bills were piling up, and they were nearing eviction from their home. When the family was approved for a Section 8 rental voucher, things began to look up. Rita says,

*"Because of the help I was able to get, I was able to pay bills and finish raising our children. Section 8 was a hand up and not a hand down. Now, we have one daughter happily working and married with a child of her own. Our son is at the Art Institute. Our youngest is still in high school and hoping to get into college. Because of Section 8, I was able to get a job that has become a career and live my dream of becoming a chef! Not by being able to go to college when I had babies I had to care for but by helping me pay the rent so I could work my way up from the bottom to the top."*

Rita now has a job she loves, and her children are launching successful careers of their own! After a promotion at her work this year, her family was able to transition off the Section 8 Program, and they no longer receive any type of public assistance. Furthermore, since her family has shown they are capable of making payments, their landlord offered to sell them the house they have been renting. Rita is now a proud homeowner!

## WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

### Helped People Get Housing Faster

With updates in standards at the state level, OVO was able to make changes in how we process paperwork that streamlined processes and made our program more efficient. For example, the ability to request background checks for our clients allowed us to more quickly determine eligibility and issue a voucher faster to families. Updates to some of our necessary forms assisted our clients in completing them faster and reduced the processing time by weeks. All of these changes allowed us to better serve our clients and help families find a new home faster.

### Updated Tenant Education

Every client that receives a voucher attends a Tenant Briefing that educates new tenants on our program requirements and expectations. In 2015, our staff updated this presentation, which ensures that all clients are receiving consistent information and that our staff are highlighting all necessary program requirements. During this update, we were also able to add tenant education to the briefing to include topics such as the qualities of good tenants, communicating with landlords, and tenant expectations. This new presentation will help our clients be successful tenants and be sought out by good landlords.

### Opened the Waiting Lists

For the first time in three years, we were able to open all three county waiting lists. From April 13-17th, we received a total of 279 applications from individuals and families seeking a rental voucher. During this week, OVO was able to coordinate an agencywide services fair to coincide with the opening of the waiting lists. This fair allowed clients coming to our office to not only submit their application for Section 8 but to also receive information on and apply for our other services, such as enrolling their preschoolers in Head Start and applying for Energy Assistance. We were excited to accept so many applications and look forward to the opportunity to assist these families in moving into a new home!

## WHAT OUR CLIENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT US

Our Section 8 staff received a **100%** satisfaction rating for all surveyed categories, including helpfulness, friendly and courteous service, and timeliness in responding to client questions and concerns. Additionally, **100%** of our clients stated they would highly recommend our program to a friend.

*"I love my home." -Chris, Section 8 Tenant*

*"What Section 8 means to my family and I is unmeasurable."  
-Joseph, Former Section 8 Tenant and Current Homeowner*

*"Thank you for such a great program and my son and I being able to live in a house of our own."  
-Jerica, Section 8 Tenant*

*"This program has changed my life. This program has brought light to me on my darkest days and because of it I will be able to achieve my goals."  
-Brenda, Section 8 Tenant*

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## WHAT OUR STAFF ARE SAYING ABOUT US

During the 2015 Employee Satisfaction Survey, **100%** of staff in the Housing Choice Voucher Program reported being very satisfied working for OVO and in their department. What staff liked best about working in their department was *"helping people" and that their "supervisor is very open to improving the process and listening to ideas."* Staff also strongly agreed that morale was high in their department and completely agreed that their job made a difference in the lives of others.

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## GARY'S STORY:

As a disabled veteran living on a pension, Gary had difficulties keeping up on his housing expenses. So, he was very excited when he received his Section 8 voucher and could begin his house hunt. He was approved for a one bedroom home but was having a hard time finding a rental that fit within the required payment standard.

Based on OVO's assessment of the rental market in his area, our staff determined that clients seeking one bedroom units had difficulty in finding housing within the payment standard. We researched policies and procedures and made a plan to submit a request for an increase in the payment standard for one bedroom apartments.

In August 2015, the program director submitted a formal request to the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, who administers the program at the state level. That same month, we were notified that our payment standard for all three counties had been increased by 10% not only for one bedroom units but for all unit sizes!

With this increase in the payment standard, Gary was able to find a great one bedroom townhouse that he can call home. His landlord is also happy, since she is receiving reasonable rent for the home. She is so pleased with her experience with the program that she is interested in leasing more of her rentals under the Section 8 program. Gary now has a home he loves, and OVO staff will continue to work with and support him. With OVO's assistance and advocacy, clients like Gary can now more easily find new, affordable homes for themselves and their families.

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## WHAT'S NEXT

### Landlord Recruitment

OVO is committed to providing our clients with the maximum amount of housing opportunities with the highest quality possible. Recruiting excellent landlords with rental properties throughout our counties is vital to meeting this goal. Throughout 2016, we will focus on landlord recruitment by holding New Landlord Presentations to educate landlords interested or new to the program. We will also institute a beautification award to reward our best landlords and properties and to educate the community and potential landlords on the quality of Section 8 rentals.

### Landlord Education

To ensure our program's success, it is important that both tenants and landlords are aware of and meeting their responsibilities under the program. In the coming year, we will implement a Landlord Education series, to assist landlords already participating in the program in learning best practices as property owners on such topics as lease enforcement and their legal rights. We can also teach property owners ways in which OVO's support can help our landlords be successful and have the best possible experience participating in the Section 8 Program.

### Increase Access to Additional Resources

The ultimate goal of our programs here at OVO is to assist our clients in reaching their full potential and self-sufficiency. Therefore, we will be assisting our tenants in accessing other community resources that can help them move toward these goals. We will be educating our clients on employment support services, financial literacy, and homebuying resources to help them transition to home ownership.