

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM



2016 PROGRAM REPORT

Housing Choice Voucher Program Director: Sondra Fewell

OUR YEAR

- 285 vouchers
- 447 inspections completed
- 241 recertifications
- 35 new families housed
- 120 applications accepted for Jennings County Waiting List

MARK'S STORY: SUPPORTING A NEW JOURNEY

Mark is in his 20s and is diagnosed with a developmental disability and autism. He had never lived on his own and was hesitant to move out of his parent's home. His mother heard about the Housing Choice Voucher Program Section 8, and once the waiting list was open, she came with Mark to OVO to apply for the program. Mark was approved for a voucher and found a great apartment. OVO staff provided assistance throughout the process, from helping him complete necessary paperwork to suggesting rental units available in the community. He now works part-time at a pizza parlor and is more confident in his ability to live independently. His mother is very relieved to know that he will be able to live on his own and make it without her someday. Both of them are thankful for the support OVO provides to its Section 8 tenants and the rental assistance that makes independent living a reality for Mark. He loves his home, and we are so happy we are able to be a part of the successes of such a wonderful young man. Moving forward, OVO will continue to work with Mark, to ensure his needs are met and support him on his journey!

OUR SERVICE

During our 2016 Client Satisfaction Survey, our Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program rated **100%** in client satisfaction. Our staff rated a **perfect score** in customer service, accessibility of staff, time in addressing concerns, and staff interaction during their inspection appointment. Additionally, 99% of clients stated they would recommend our Section 8 Program to a friend or family member.

"No one can beat Sondra and Angel [OVO's Section 8 Staff]"
-Sarah, Section 8 Tenant

"Know what they are doing, very helpful & friendly."
-Terry, Section 8 Tenant

"The staff in my opinion are at 10/10 always when I call. Great crew!"
-Rick, Section 8 Tenant

"I really like the ladies I have had to work with at OVO. They are awesome!"
-Phyllis, Section 8 Tenant

"I would be homeless if it wasn't for this program. I want to thank you all."
-Amanda, Section 8 Tenant

OUR STAFF

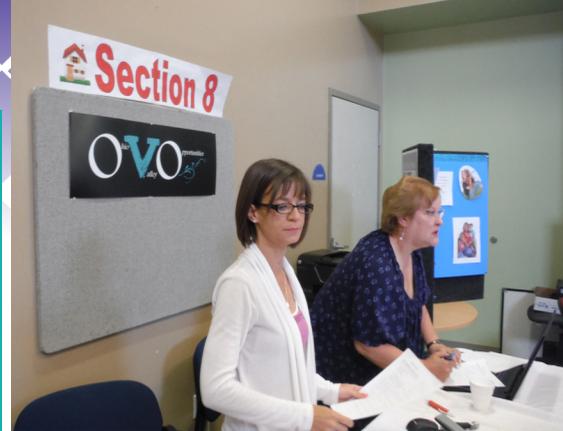
The 2016 Employee Satisfaction Survey showed that staff in the Housing Choice Voucher Program were extremely satisfied with their work here at OVO. They reported **100%** satisfaction working in their department and for Ohio Valley Opportunities. They also reported satisfaction in **every category** including benefits, their supervisor, and morale at the agency. Staff stated that what they liked best about working in the Housing Choice Voucher Program was **"helping families to gain resources for a better living"** and **"working in an environment where you can continue to learn and grow."**

OHIO VALLEY OPPORTUNITIES

421 Walnut Street, P.O. Box 625, Madison, IN 47250 P. (812) 265-5858 F. (812) 265-5850 www.ovoinc.org

Piloting Biennial Inspection Program

In 2016, OVO was excited for the opportunity to pilot a new inspection procedure for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. To ensure our clients are living in quality housing and maintaining their homes to acceptable standards, we are required to inspect homes prior to beginning a lease and throughout a family's residency in a home. Previously, we were required to inspect each home on an annual basis. Working with the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, OVO received permission to begin a new inspection schedule for clients. Under this new pilot program, if a client's home passes inspections for two years in a row, we can then move them to a biennial inspection schedule, which means every other year. This new procedure has the potential to reduce our inspection load, thereby freeing up valuable time to assist clients requiring additional support, provide vouchers to new families, and work with landlords to resolve identified issues. We are also pleased for the chance to test and establish best practices here in the state of Indiana.



CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Relocating and Updating Office Space

Our Housing Choice Voucher Program office got an overhaul last year! The program was moved into a larger office, improving client flow while visiting our office. The additional space provided room for a table and chairs for clients to complete their annual recertification and to meet one-on-one with our staff. During this process, we were also able to improve our file storage and organization, ensuring files are secure and easily accessible to our staff. This relocation and update help us provide excellent customer service!



Opened the Jennings County Waiting List

During the month of November, we were very excited to open the Section 8 Waiting List for Jennings County. This county has historically had a lower number of applicants for rental vouchers compared to our other counties, so we set a goal of 100 families applying for the waiting list. In order to meet our target, we increased community outreach. Staff visited a popular morning show on WJCP Radio in North Vernon to discuss important dates and information, and a public service announcement was included during radio news segments. A news release was run in the local newspaper and on OVO's website and social media. Flyers were posted at other community organizations and public spaces. Our hard work paid off, and we accepted 120 applications for the waiting list, exceeding our goal by 20%! We look forward to housing these new families and assisting them in achieving their goals and reaching self-sufficiency!



OUR GOALS

Seek Additional Funds to Assist Low-Income Families with Deposits

As a Community Action Agency, it is vital to our mission to identify community needs and seek solutions. Through our work with families new to the Housing Choice Voucher Program or those who are moving to a new rental using their voucher, we have consistently noted that lease deposits are a barrier for those we serve. Moving forward, we will be seeking additional funding through local support to fund Project LIVE. This program will provide one-time assistance with lease deposits to clients on the Section 8 Program. By providing this assistance, clients will then be able to sign a lease and utilize their voucher. Through Project LIVE, we will help bridge the gap to affordable housing and increase access to our rental vouchers for those in most need.

Continue Landlord Recruitment

Moving into next year, we will continue efforts to recruit quality and committed property owners to our program. Having stellar landlords is key to the success of our program and to the families we house. By increasing the number of property owners with which we work, we increase housing opportunities for our clients. Recruitment efforts through social, print, and online media will continue throughout 2017. Additionally, we will also focus efforts on landlord orientation and providing excellent support. Satisfied property owners are one of our best recruitment tools!

Expansion of Voucher Allowance

Increasing opportunities for those we serve is one of our primary goals in the Section 8 Program. As we approach full capacity for our allotted vouchers, we will be requesting an expansion of our voucher allowance. Since our service area is rural, quality and affordable housing is a persisting issue for our families. Demand for vouchers is incredibly high. We are committed to ensuring all vouchers for our tri-county area are utilized and to exploring ways in which to increase housing opportunities in our communities.



Ohio Valley Opportunities provides all of its services without regard to race, age, color, religion, sex, disability, national origin, ancestry, or status as a veteran.