

# UESF Housing Stabilization Strategy

## Introduction

This presentation addresses and explains UESF's anti-poverty strategy. UESF's strategy is designed to accomplish moving vulnerable families closer to self-sufficiency through housing stabilization.

## Evolution of UESF's strategy of self-sufficiency through housing stabilization

- 1983: UESF was established as the City's emergency fuel fund. The fuel fund was created through the collaborative work of the governmental, corporate, and religious communities after fatalities occurred due to the lack of adequate utility assistance.
- Mission Statement 1983: To provide utility assistance to vulnerable families to prevent utility terminations and to restore terminated utility service.
- 2008: UESF created a holistic approach to addressing more complete housing challenges such as evictions, foreclosures, food insecurity, and more. While still addressing lack of utility service, UESF began to focus upon poverty. UESF realized that while some families were paying their utility bills, they were doing so by not paying rent, or not purchasing adequate food for their children.
- "Heat or Eat" dilemma:
  - Pay for food and do not pay for utilities. Children's health suffers because they are cold or do not have water.
  - Pay for utilities and do not pay for food. Children's health suffers because they are malnourished.
- UESF Strategic Planning Process: Result of process was that UESF began to view the lack of utility assistance as a symptom of poverty. UESF began to address poverty and the underlying causes of housing instability
- 2017: Today, everything UESF does focuses upon the achievement of housing stabilization. The elements of housing stabilizations are as follows:
  - Case management
  - Housing and utility assistance
  - Housing location
  - Landlord negotiation
  - Formal benefits screening and enrollment
  - Budget Counseling
  - Self-sufficiency and life skills education
  - Employment referrals
  - And more
- Mission statement today: UESF stabilizes housing for families facing a housing crisis by address their immediate needs and removing the barriers to long-term stability

## UESF approach

- UESF programs today
  - Utility Grant Program
  - Oil Assistance Program
  - Housing Stabilization for Vulnerable Families
    - Veterans
    - Families with Disabilities
    - TANF Recipients

- Water High Users
  - Shelter to Permanent Housing Program
  - Benefit Access Center
  - Self-Sufficiency Workshops
  - Rapid Re-housing Program
  - Family Housing Stability
- Assistance: direct, indirect, referrals.
- Problems and solutions paradigm
- Case management model—necessary to address issues regarding change in UESF culture
- Performance measurement, including participants’ change in net income

#### **Example of newest UESF program—Family Housing Stability**

- Homeless and imminently homeless families of children in the Philadelphia School system
- Community Schools
  - “By meeting the needs of the whole child and the neighborhoods in which they live, community schools better supports students and families, and address non-academic barriers like violence, hunger, or homelessness., which too often keep students from succeeding in school.” Mayor’s Office of Education Website
  - UESF as a recurring presence at Community Schools
  - Schools/UESF partnership to identify symptoms of non-academic needs
  - Solid referral system from Schools to UESF

#### **Case Study #1**

- Fixed income: SSDI \$1143
- Referred from PWD
- Monthly water bill averaged over \$4000 a month.
- Monthly usage was **631 ccf**, about the amount of water in a large swimming pool
- Water conservation measures and education reduced usage to **3 ccf**. Water conservation measures addressed:
  - 2 toilets
  - 2 Bathroom aerators
  - Shut off valve
  - Major Pipe Repair
- Monthly water bill reduced from \$4000 to **\$40**
- UESF BenePhilly Center. Family received the following benefits:
  - PECO Customer Assistance Program (CAP)
  - SNAP
  - Medicaid
  - Medicare Savings Program/Medicare Extra Help-PA
  - Senior Property Tax Freeze
  - Property Tax Rent Rebate
  - PCA Food Voucher
  - Senior Water Discount
- Value of annual benefits through UESF BenePhilly Center: **\$4,300**

**Case Study #2**

I met a technician doing work at UESF. He thanked me for what UESF did for his family and him 20 years ago. When the technician was 8 years old, DHS(?) was on the verge of removing him from his mother's home due to lack of electric service. A UESF grant restored electric service and kept the technician united with his family, perhaps setting the foundation for the technician's successful career and second generation self-sufficiency. While UESF could have done a lot more with its current model, the utility grant was sufficient to keep the family together.