

Homeless Headlines

A publication of the Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies, 3435 Liberty Drive, Springfield, Illinois 62704 - (217) 789-0125

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Building on Solid Ground

Solid Ground is a supportive housing program for youth run by La Casa Norte in the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago. Solid Ground's male focused, bilingual services, and multicultural emphasis are distinct in the homeless youth service provider arena and are tailored to the predominantly Latino and Black youth who are served by this program. Overcoming barriers of racism and language, this project fosters pride in the culture and an understanding that violence is never a good alternative to poverty.

Solid Ground's service strategies incorporate both sanctuary and harm reduction models. The strategies are designed to reduce long-term trauma related symptoms of youth that place

them at risk for violent behavior, poor adjustment, and serious mental health difficulties. This approach encourages safety and independence from the moment they enter the house and continues with follow up care once they exit the program.

Their philosophy of service is aligned with building self-efficacy, strengthening social, emotional and moral competencies, and promoting opportunities for healthy bonding with adults and peers are key components of building stability and agency in the lives of youth. These factors

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Foreclosure Bill May Help National Housing Trust Fund

The foreclosure legislation under considered by Congress may help push legislation providing for a National Housing Trust Fund one step closer to enactment.

The Senate passed foreclosure prevention legislation April 10, and the House will begin work on foreclosure legislation next week with the expectation of passing a bill by early May (see article elsewhere in Memo). The final House bill could include

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Headlines/Hotline on the Internet - The Illinois Community Action Association publishes both Homeless Headlines and Homeless Hotline on the Publications page of its web site at www.icaanet.org. To receive both by email, send a blank email to: headlines-hotline-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. (Self service only.)

Illinois Department of
Human Services



True Housing Affordability: Neighborhood-Level Data in Some Illinois Areas

The Center for Neighborhood Technology recently unveiled a new interactive web mapping tool which provides neighborhood-level data on the affordability of housing in the fifty-two largest metropolitan areas, including Chicago IL/Gary IN/Kenosha WI, Champaign-Urbana IL, and St. Louis MO/Metro East IL. In an attempt to measure the “true affordability” of housing, this tool accounts for both housing and transportation costs as a percent of income, called the Housing and Transportation Affordability Index. Often housing alone is more affordable outside of city centers, in the suburbs or exurbs, but when factoring in transportation costs it becomes less affordable.

This site is designed to help individuals, planners, housing advocates, and policy-makers identify the true affordability of housing at the neighborhood level, and thus make better housing-related decisions. Be sure to zoom to census block group level of detail with street names, and to click on the “Advanced” theme for each region to view additional household variables.

To select the region of interest, go to <http://htaindex.cnt.org/>.

HUD CoC Electronic Applications, and Other NOFA Changes for 2008

For fiscal year (FY) 2008, HUD will require Continuums of Care (CoC) to submit their applications electronically, using e-snaps, an electronic system separate from Grants.gov. A notice in the April 30 Federal Register (www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a080430c.html) provides:

- ✧ Detailed instructions on completing the CoC registration process for e-snaps,
- ✧ Important information, including definitions and the necessary CoC planning process, that CoC and project applicants should be familiar with, and
- ✧ Information about the major changes that HUD will make to the FY2008 CoC Homeless Assistance competition.

HUD anticipates publishing its FY 2008 CoC NOFA (Notice of Funding Availability) in the Federal Register no earlier than July 1, 2008.

For further information, contact:

Darrel Bugajsky
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
77 W. Jackson, 24th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604-3507
(312) 353-1696, ext. 2716

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Homeless Headlines



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2007/2008 Out of Reach Data Released

According to a report released today, the Housing Wage for Illinois is \$16.23 for a two-bedroom apartment. The Housing Wage is the hourly wage a family must earn—working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year—to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment renting for \$844. The Housing Wage has increased 25.3% since 2000.



The report, Out of Reach 2007-2008, was jointly released by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), a Washington, DC-based housing advocacy group, and Housing Action Illinois.

Federal guidelines state that no one should spend more than 30% of their income on housing, including rent or mortgage payments, utilities, property taxes and insurance.

“As rents continue to rise across the state, Illinois workers are spending more and more of their income on their housing and have less money for food, clothing, transportation and other basic needs,” said Mimi Chedid, Policy Coordinator for Housing Action Illinois. “The persistent shortage of affordable rental housing combined with the current economic slowdown—largely caused by the mortgages foreclosure crisis—threatens the economic security of Illinois families.”

In Illinois, among metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, the lowest Housing Wage for a two-bedroom apartment is \$10.15 in the metro-east Bond County metropolitan area. The highest housing

wage for a two-bedroom apartment is \$18.15 in the Chicago metropolitan area.

In Illinois, a minimum wage worker earns an hourly wage of \$7.50. In order to afford market rate rents for a two-

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bedroom apartment, a minimum wage earner must work 87 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. Or a household must include 2.2 minimum wage earners working 40 hours per week year-round in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment.

State, metro and county Out of Reach data are available at www.nlihc.org/oor/oor2008/.

For further information, contact either Bob Palmer of Housing Action Illinois, or the staff of the National Low Income Housing Coalition at the addresses in *Headlines Directory*. ■

Making the Connection

Changes in LINK Card Process

Contributor: DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform



The authors of this column welcome your comments and questions. See contact information at the end of the article.

Many of you know that when your client receives cash or Food Stamp benefits from the state, the benefits are deposited to an account that is accessed electronically through the usage of a debit card called the LINK card. The way the card is used is very similar to how you use your debit or credit cards. Your clients go to the grocery store to buy food. To pay for the food with Food Stamps your

client swipes the LINK card in the stores' POS (Point of Service) device, just as you swipe your debit or credit card. The Food Stamp account is then debited the amount of the purchase. Cash can be obtained from local ATM's or any other location where cash is obtained, same as you do with your bank debit card.

Obtaining a LINK card can often be a challenge to our clients. This can be attributed to many things, such as work hours conflict with state office hours, or the person lives an extended distance from the office.

Targeted to begin later this spring (or early summer), the Illinois Department of Human Services is changing how new or replacement LINK cards will be issued to clients. The new process that is planned will hopefully make it easier for your clients to obtain a LINK card.

As a result of the change, most customers will not need to return to IDHS local offices to get their Illinois Link card after their interview and the benefits are approved - instead the card will be mailed to them. If one of your clients later needs a replacement card, they too will not need to come in to the IDHS local offices to request one - they will call a toll-free number or use an internet site to request one and a replacement card will be mailed to the address on record. The state is working with a private contractor to handle this new LINK card process.

The way the new process will work is when a person is newly approved for Food Stamps the contractor will mail the LINK card to the customer's home address. Customers will then call the Illinois Link Help Line or use a client

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HUD Rural Housing and Economic Development (RHED) Funds Available

The purpose of the Rural Housing and Economic Development program is to provide support for innovative housing and economic development activities in rural areas. The funds made available under this program will be awarded competitively. A total of \$17 million is available nationally. The maximum awarded to each applicant will be \$300 thousand.

This notice was published in the Federal Register for April 28, 2008 (www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a080428c.html). The application deadline date is May 30, 2008. Please be sure to read the General Section of this year's SuperNOFA, published in the Federal Register on March 19, 2008 for electronic application submission and receipt requirements.

Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants - Eligible applicants for the Rural Housing and Economic Development program are local rural nonprofit organizations, community development corporations, federally recognized Indian tribes, state housing finance agencies, and state community and/or economic development agencies. Also, you must meet all of the applicable eligibility requirements described in section III. C of the General Section (Federal Register March 19, 2008).

Cost Sharing or Matching - There is no match required under the Rural Housing and Economic Development program. Applicants that submit evidence of leveraging dollars under Rating Factor 4 will receive points

according to the scale under that factor.

Eligible Activities – The following are examples of eligible activities under the Rural Housing and Economic Development program. Permissible activities may include, but are not limited to the following:

- ✧ The cost of using new or innovative construction, energy efficiency, or other techniques that will result in the design or construction of innovative housing and economic development projects;
- ✧ Preparation of plans or of architectural or engineering drawings;

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Notice Issued on HUD-VASH Vouchers

HUD issued a notice on May 6 describing the special features of the new housing choice vouchers for veterans included in the FY08 HUD appropriations bill. The \$75 million in HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers will be administered by public housing agencies that partner with local VA medical centers.

The HUD-VASH program combines HUD voucher assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the VA at its medical centers and in communities. The notice states that ongoing VA case management and health and other supportive services will be made

available to HUD-VASH recipients at as many as 132 VA medical center supportive services sites across the country.

The notice reviews eligibility and selection, income eligibility, mobility and portability of HUD-VASH vouchers, case management requirements, turnover of HUD-VASH vouchers, project-based assistance, and reporting requirements, among other issues.

The \$75 million in FY08 funding is expected to fund 10,000 HUD-VASH vouchers, which will be distributed to PHAs in areas with VA medical centers. These areas were selected based on the population of homeless veterans needing services, the number of homeless veterans served by homeless programs in FY06 and FY07, geographic diversity, and VA case management resources.

View the notice at: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/08-1220.pdf>

For further information, contact the National Low Income Housing Coalition at the address in *Headlines Directory*. ■

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Solid Ground

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contribute to La Casa Norte's three major goals for their youth residents:

- ✧ They are in increasingly stable housing situations
- ✧ They have a stable source of income that is adequate to meet their needs
- ✧ They are self-actualized and develop the self-esteem, personal skills and supports necessary to maintain stability.

The capital project was funded with a mixture of grants from HUD, the Federal Home Loan Bank, the Chicago Department of Housing, and the Illinois Housing Development Authority. Additionally, Illinois State Senator del Valle successfully lobbied for increased funding for capital funds for the project.

Solid Ground residents actively participate and make a difference in their community, further preparing them to become healthy sons, fathers, and husbands.



Resident room at Solid Ground

Architecture

The design for Solid Ground came after La Casa Norte staff visited multiple sites that served youth throughout the country. La Casa Norte was intentional about the design and needed the architecture to reflect the culture and values of residents and staff while facilitating the development goals for the youth.

Amid the businesses and mixed use buildings of Chicago's Humboldt Park, Landon Bone Baker Architects have transformed a former commercial building into a home for previously homeless young men. Employing innovative designs for both space and furnishing, their design allows for the individual growth and community that each of the sixteen residents need.



La Casa Norte's Solid Ground Supportive Housing facility.

The top two floors include sixteen private bedrooms. Each youth has his own bedroom to facilitate positive development, and teaching residents the importance of maintaining independent housing. The rooms are asymmetrical to distinguish them from the cold, harsh look of other homeless housing, and have customized beds designed to maximize space for desks, chairs, and personal belongings. Group interaction is encouraged through a common kitchen, dining area and living room.

The previously unusable basement has become a computer lab, laundry and multi-purpose space. The ground level houses offices and a common kitchen where residents can meet, get counseling, take classes or just hang out. Other features include the use of natural light, recycled materials, and

bright colors to make the space warm and inviting.

With its effective use of space and integration into the neighborhood environment, Solid Ground Supportive Housing has become a model for meeting the needs of homeless persons of all ages.

Maxwell Award of Excellence

In January of 2008, La Casa Norte's Solid Ground won first place in the Youth Housing Category of the Maxwell Awards of Excellence national competition. The Maxwell Awards are a collaboration of the Fannie Mae Foundation, and the Partnership To End Long Term Homelessness.

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award

In February of 2008, Solid Ground's Architect, Landon Bone Baker Architects won first place for Adaptive Reuse of a Commercial Building as Housing for Homeless Youth in the



(l to r) Peter Beard, Executive Director, Fannie Mae Foundation; Sol Flores, Executive Director, La Casa Norte; Keith Decker, Co-Founder and Board Member, La Casa Norte; Robert Hohler, Executive Director, Melville Charitable Trust

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Awards for Architectural Excellence in Community Design. This was a city-wide competition.

At the Solid Ground ribbon cutting ceremony in November 2006, Chicago's Mayor Richard M. Daley presented the organization with the city's inaugural

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LINK Card

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web site to select their PIN. To access the Help Line or web site, it is anticipated your client will need to enter his/her SSN and date of birth and the 19 digit number on their Link card. The local IDHS offices will be able to continue to issue cards in situations such as:

- ✧ Expedited/Emergency FS approvals
- ✧ Crisis Assistance cash cases
- ✧ Disaster Food Stamp Program cases
- ✧ Homeless clients that use the local office address

To prepare for this change, state staff needs to make sure they have correct

addresses in the state computer system. You want to make sure your clients have informed the state office of any address changes, as soon as possible. Also you can tell your clients to check their medical cards to make sure their birthdates are correct, since this is one piece of information that is needed to access the LINK Help Line or website. If this information is wrong, let the caseworker know.

State offices will be working in the next couple of months to get the word out about the upcoming changes to the Illinois Link program, so posters are being placed in the local FCRC offices waiting rooms and fliers will be given to your clients. The state will also be asking you for your help to guide clients through this change, so they will be providing you more information as

well about the change when it occurs. Since this is a major change, any help you can provide your clients, I know will be appreciated by state staff as well as your clients.

The DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization focused on advocacy and planning in DuPage County, Illinois and designer and trainer of Making the Connection: A Guide to Accessing Public Benefits. The DuPage Federation is affiliated with Northern Illinois University, Regional Development Institute. Questions can be directed to knelson@dupagefederation.org or cking@dupagefederation.org ■

RHED

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- ✧ Preparation of legal documents, government paperwork, and applications necessary for construction of housing and economic development activities to occur in the jurisdiction;
- ✧ Acquisition of land and buildings;
- ✧ Demolition of property to permit construction or rehabilitation activities to occur;
- ✧ Purchase of construction materials;
- ✧ Homeownership counseling, including on the subjects of fair housing counseling, credit counseling, budgeting, access to credit, and other federal assistance available, including features for persons with disabilities, such as full accessibility, visitability, and universal design;
- ✧ Conducting conferences or meetings with other federal or state agencies, tribes, tribally designated housing entities

(TDHE), or national or regional housing organizations, to inform residents of programs, rights, and responsibilities associated with homebuying opportunities (all meetings and conferences should be provided in alternative formats for persons with a variety of disabilities, as appropriate, and in applicable languages common in the community for limited English proficient (LEP) families);

- ✧ Establishing Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), lines of credit, revolving loan funds, microenterprises, and small business incubators; and
- ✧ Provision of direct financial assistance to homeowners/businesses/developers, etc. This can be in the form of default reserves, pooling/securitization mechanisms, loans, grants, the funding of existing individual development accounts, or similar activities.

Further Information and Technical Assistance.

For information concerning the HUD RHED program, contact Linda Streets, Community Planning and Development Specialist, Monica Wallace, Community Planning and Development Specialist, James Hedrick, Presidential Management Fellow, or Nikki Bowser, Community Planning and Development Specialist, Office of Rural Housing and Economic Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, SW., Room 7137, Washington, DC 20410-7000; telephone (202) 708-2290 or 1 (877) 787-2526 (toll-free). Persons with speech or hearing impairments may access this number via TTY at (800) 877-8339. Prior to the application deadline, staff will be available at the above number to provide general guidance and clarification of the NOFA, but not guidance in actually preparing your application. Following selection, but prior to award, HUD staff will be available to assist in clarifying or confirming information that is a prerequisite to the offer of an award by HUD. ■

Solid Ground

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Red Ruby Slipper Award for their leadership and advocacy in the fight to end homelessness.

La Casa Norte

Founded in 2001, La Casa Norte's mission is to providing a safe and nurturing environment for homeless and abandoned people, where they will benefit from a comprehensive program of education, guidance and counseling in a community setting. Along with the Solid Ground Program, La Casa Norte also operates the Crisis Center, which is a non-residential program that provides free bilingual and culturally sensitive case management, housing advocacy, and job training and placement services to youth and families in the Humboldt Park neighborhood and surrounding communities. LCN's Crisis Center provided critically needed services to over 400 households in 2007 and distributed over \$50,000 in direct financial assistance toward first months rent, past due rent or security deposit, and assistance towards utilities.

For further information, contact :

Sol Flores, Executive Director
La Casa Norte
3533 W North Ave Chicago, IL 60647
773.276.4900(p)
773.342.4253(f)
www.lacasanorte.org

Trust Fund

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complete versions of two bills important to NHTF advocates: H. R. 1427, GSE reform legislation; and H. R. 2895, the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund legislation.

Both bills have passed the House without companion legislation passing the Senate. Attaching them to a large foreclosure bill would provide a vehicle for the bills to forward; if the GSE bill and the National Housing Trust Fund bill are included in foreclosure legislation that gets voted out of the House, they would be part of the negotiations with the Senate and could be accepted by the Senate and sent to the President as part of the larger package.

Senate Committee to Consider GSE Bill

On May 6, the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, chaired by Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), will mark up pending legislation that would restructure Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the housing-related government sponsored enterprises. It is anticipated that the Senate's GSE overhaul bill will include provisions to establish an Affordable Housing Fund. Advocates will also work to include S. 2523, the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act, into the GSE bill.

For further information, contact the national Low Income Housing Coalition at the address in *Headlines Directory*. ■



Headlines Directory

Center for Community Change

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Washington, DC 20009
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<http://www.communitychange.org>

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

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Washington, DC 20002
Ph: (202) 408-1080
Fax: (202) 408-1056
<http://www.cbpp.org>

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

1325 S. Wabash, Suite 205
Chicago, IL 60605
Telephone: (312) 435-4548
Fax: (312) 435-0198
<http://www.enteract.com/~cch/index.htm>

Coalition of Citizens With Disabilities in Illinois

300 E. Monroe, Suite 100
Springfield, IL 62701
Telephone: (217) 522 7016
Fax: (217) 522-7024
TDD: (217) 522-7016
<http://www.inw.net/~ccdi/>

Corporation for Supportive Housing

203 N. Wabash, Suite 410
Chicago, IL 60601
Phone: (312) 332-6690
Fax: (312) 332-7040
Email: il@csh.org
www.csh.org

Food Research and Action Center

1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, # 540
Washington, D.C. 20009
Telephone: (202) 986-2200
Fax: (202)986-2525
foodresearch@frac.org

Housing Action Illinois

11 E. Adams, Suite 1601
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Fax: (312) 939-6822
<http://housingactionil.org>

Housing Assistance Council

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Fax: (202) 347-3441
<http://www.ruralhome.org>

Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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<http://www.ilcadv.org>

Illinois Coalition to End Homelessness

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Illinois Department of Human Services

Homeless Services and Supportive
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Fax: (217) 524-6029
<http://www.state.il.us/agency/dhs/>

Illinois Food Bank Association

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Illinois Housing Development Authority

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National Alliance to End Homelessness

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Telephone: (202) 638-1526
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National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

333 ½ Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
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Telephone: (202) 546-1969
Fax: (202) 546-2063
E-mail: nchv@nchv.org
<http://www.nchv.org/home.html>

National Coalition for the Homeless

2201 "P" St., NW
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Email:
mstoops@nationalhomeless.org

National Community Reinvestment Coalition

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National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

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National Low-Income Housing Coalition & National Low Income Housing Information Service

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National Rural Housing Coalition

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Rural Development

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