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HUD, HHS ANNOUNCE JOINT EFFORT TO ASSIST NEARLY 1,000 NON-ELDERLY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO MOVE FROM INSTITUTIONS TO INDEPENDENCE

In June of 2009, in recognition of the 10th anniversary of the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision, President Obama announced the "Year of Community Living", a year-long effort dedicated to his vigorous commitment to enforcement of civil rights for Americans with disabilities and to ensuring the fullest inclusion of all people in the life of our Nation.

The Olmstead decision, issued in July 1999, requires states to administer services, programs, and activities "in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals with disabilities."

In support of the president's efforts, Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) and Shaun Donovan, Secretary of the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) jointly announced that they would support and encourage their agencies to begin to work more closely on policies and programs that would increase community living opportunities for persons with disabilities.

To mark the beginning of this new collaborative relationship and in response to advocates' cries of unnecessary institutionalization due to limited home and community based services availability as well as an insufficient supply of affordable, accessible housing options, HUD announced that it would award approximately five thousand housing choice vouchers specifically for non-elderly disabled individuals who are either currently institutionalized for long term care and wish to return to the community or who are at risk of institutionalization.

Continuing the work of the "Year of Community Living" under the "Community Living Initiative", on October first of this year HUD awarded forty three hundred (Category I) vouchers, totaling more than \$33.5 million dollars, to 20 States and the District of Columbia to help support individuals with disabilities that are at risk of institutionalization to remain in the community.

Today, we are pleased to announce the award of nearly one thousand additional (Category II) vouchers to 15 States to support individuals who are currently institutionalized in long term care settings such as nursing homes and other institutions, to return to the community and receive the necessary supports to live as independently as possible.

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2011/HUDNo.11-003



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“The Obama administration is committed to helping Americans with disabilities live independent lives. Housing is a critical piece of the equation when it comes to transitioning out of institutions,” said Donovan. “Coordinating this effort with the Department of Health and Human Services is an important step in ensuring that more Americans with disabilities will have the housing and support they need to fully participate in community life.”

As part of the continuing efforts to collaborate to increase community living options for persons with disabilities a number of these awards were made to states with Money Follows the Person Rebalancing Demonstration (MFP) programs that have demonstrated relationships with their local housing authorities which will administer these vouchers. HUD and CMS facilitated these partnerships by conducting an extensive outreach and training program to MFP grantees and PHAs to help each understand the other’s programs and respective needs.

The MFP Demonstration is designed to support States in the identification and reformation of legal, budgetary or other barriers to increase the availability of community services, “balance” their long-term care systems, and help Medicaid enrollees transition from institutions to, and remain successfully in the community. Now in its fourth year, the MFP program has made it possible for almost 12,000 individuals to live more independent lives by providing necessary supports and services in the community. Twenty-nine States and the District of Columbia are currently participating in the MFP program and CMS is expecting a new round of grant applications on January 7th. In places where the MFP program is not available, services will be provided by a state-sponsored institutional transitional program comparable to MFP that includes dedicated supportive services.

In order to support these efforts’ success, technical assistance will be provided to both MFP programs and housing authorities to successfully link individuals interested in transition to services and supports and affordable, accessible housing options. This technical assistance will be provided by HHS, through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services by way of the [Housing Capacity Building Initiative for Community Living Project](#). This project joins the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Health and Human Services (HHS), under the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Money Follows the Person (MFP) Rebalancing Demonstration, to assist federal, state and local agencies and community partners to create a sustainable, collaborative system between housing and human services agencies.

“This is the first time two federal agencies are offering a combination of rental assistance, health care and other supportive services targeted to this population,” said HHS Secretary Sebelius. ”Through our collaboration with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, I know that we will be able to dramatically change peoples’



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lives. Individuals with disabilities can have a life in the community that serves their needs and supports them in leading productive, meaningful lives.” said Sebelius.

HUD & HHS are excited about this first collaborative effort and look forward to its success as well as other opportunities for collaboration that will increase an individual’s ability to live in the community and receive the supports they need to lead full, independent lives.

We will show that by aligning our program goals and activities around housing and services, we can dramatically change peoples’ lives. Individuals with disabilities can have a life in the community that serves their needs and supports them in leading productive, meaningful lives.