

AHFC Domestic Violence Housing Assistance Program**FY2013 Request: \$1,328,400****Reference No: 54796****AP/AL:** Appropriation**Project Type:** Economic Assistance**Category:** Public Protection**Location:** Statewide**House District:** Statewide (HD 1-40)**Impact House District:** Statewide (HD 1-40)**Contact:** Les Campbell**Estimated Project Dates:** 07/01/2012 - 06/30/2017**Contact Phone:** (907)330-8356**Brief Summary and Statement of Need:**

Domestic Violence Rental Assistance utilizes State General Funds to address the needs of homeless or near-homeless families who are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault. These same families might otherwise qualify economically for the federal Housing Choice Voucher program. However, because demand for vouchers far exceeds the supply, the targeted families are unlikely to receive assistance in time to address their immediate needs. AHFC will administer the funds through essentially the same mechanism and same locations as the federal Housing Choice Voucher program.

Funding:	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	Total
Gen Fund	\$1,328,400						\$1,328,400
Total:	\$1,328,400	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,328,400

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required	<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill		

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	
Totals:	0	0

Additional Information / Prior Funding History:

This is a new program.

Project Description/Justification:**The purpose of this authorization:**

To provide rental assistance to victims of domestic violence or sexual assault who have been displaced or otherwise are in need of alternative housing to prevent further harm to the household.

The projected outcomes include:

- Rental assistance for up to 150 households statewide who are displaced from permanent housing or otherwise at risk of displacement because of a recent or reoccurring instance of domestic violence as defined by Alaska Statute, Section 18.66.990(3),
- An opportunity for AHFC to reform its admissions policies for assisted housing with no adverse effect on victims of domestic violence, and
- A new tool to advance Governor Parnell's objectives in his "Choose Respect" initiative.

Program Description:

AHFC is the federally authorized agency responsible for administration of Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance program. The Congress appropriates funding through HUD, which is then distributed by formula among public housing authorities, nationwide. The HUD allocation of vouchers to Alaska consists of 4,275 regular vouchers and another 165 special needs vouchers funded through the Veterans Administration and Supportive Housing (VASH) program, and Non-Elderly/Disabled voucher program. Eligible families are those whose family income is below 50% of Area Median Income (AMI). Virtually all families served are below 30% AMI, which is below the federal Poverty Line.

Over the decade, demand for voucher assistance has far exceeded the supply with approximately 7,000 families on AHFC waiting lists. As the waiting list in Anchorage grew to over 4,000 families, AHFC decided to close it to new applicants because there was no longer a reasonable chance to reach families at the bottom of the list. Similar situations are arising in communities across Alaska.

AHFC administers its waiting lists by date and time of application adjusted by 'preferences' including displacement due to domestic violence (DDV). The preference system is a carryover from formerly mandated federal preferences, since abandoned by Congress in 1998.

The DDV preference requires that the domestic violence (DV) event occur within six months of an offer of housing assistance. This rule ensures a connection between displacement from housing and the need for rental assistance. Among the five largest voucher communities (Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Mat-Su and Soldotna) voucher turnover has shrunk to about three vouchers per month, so the likelihood of reaching DDV preference families within six months is vastly diminished. In Anchorage, where the waiting list is now closed, more recent victims of domestic violence have even fewer options.

This requested authorization would address this situation through a set-aside of rental assistance to help victims relocate into safe, affordable housing. AHFC proposes to manage the rental assistance in the same way and with many of the same rules as apply to the Housing Choice Voucher program. Where it may deviate from traditional practice is the method for selecting eligible applicants and the term of assistance. Two models serve as examples: the Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (VASH) program; and the Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program that AHFC administers in cooperation with the Department of Corrections.

In the VASH program there is no waiting list, per se. Instead the VA makes referrals to AHFC from among homeless veterans based almost entirely on VA criteria. The only exceptions are the denial of persons on the federal sex-offender registry and those convicted of methamphetamine production or sale. AHFC will look to the Governor's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault for guidance on whether to adopt a similar model and how such a referral system might work.

The TBRA program is based on a concept known as 'transitional housing' meaning that it is time limited. Unlike chronic homelessness due to disabilities, substance abuse, or other more organic reasons, most homelessness is episodic and not necessarily long term. Again, based upon consultation with the Governor's Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and other stakeholders, AHFC envisions the program as a means to an immediate objective: relocation of the victimized family with the aid of rental assistance. The TBRA program uses a two-year window of assistance as the basis for achieving economic stability.

Data from a wide variety of resources suggests use of these same models is applicable to victims of domestic violence. Although comprising less than 3% of AHFC's waiting list numbers, families who experience dislocation due to domestic violence often need immediate assistance. The current AHFC preference system no longer works for those who it was intended. Authorization of Domestic Violence Rental Assistance addresses this concern. By relying on referrals and a transitional housing approach, policy makers can expect rental assistance targeted to those most in need; a more rapid turnover of assistance, thus enabling more families to benefit from assistance.

Evaluation of an on-going program would be based upon number of families served, the rate at which housing stability is achieved, and a change in the rate of reoccurring episodes of domestic violence.