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One Year Later, CHA's Work Requirement Yields Results

*Residents report education and employment increases following
implementation of revised public policy*

CHICAGO (Feb. 5, 2010) – Just a year after instituting a mandatory work requirement for its leaseholders, CHA is reporting increases in resident employment and school enrollment.

Today, 44 percent of public housing residents ages 18-61 are working, enrolled in school, or participating in a combination of both, and/or volunteering; about 28 percent are exempt, primarily due to disability or status as a caretaker; and 19 percent have been granted temporary safe harbor due to loss of a job, a medical condition or other extenuating circumstances.

In all, more than 91 percent of adults living in CHA are employed, working toward employment or are exempt.

Prior to this new policy, 37 percent of eligible adults reported employment.

“Through the work requirement, CHA has implemented a philosophy of self-sufficiency – providing opportunities for residents to learn new skill sets and increase their self confidence that allows them to achieve new goals,” CHA CEO Lewis A. Jordan said. “These goals include finding a job or getting training or education to get ready for a job when the economy bounces back.”

CHA instituted the work requirement in January 2009 as a condition of occupancy across its public housing stock. The policy, part of CHA's Moving To Work agreement with the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, mandates that every adult member of a public housing household between the ages of 18 and 61 be employed or participate in activities that lead to employment, for at least 15 hours a week in 2009 and 20 hours in 2010.

Besides being enrolled in an accredited school, residents may also participate in job training, a GED and/or literacy class or an internship to meet the requirement.

CHA helps residents meet the requirement through a variety of social services such as the comprehensive FamilyWorks program that includes free City College tuition (after financial aid) for all CHA leaseholders and links to child care assistance for those working or enrolled in school.

Since 2000, when the Plan for Transformation was implemented, the number of employed residents has increased from 25 percent to 39 percent, and the average earned wage has increased from \$10,000 to an average of nearly \$19,000 per year.

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