



**For Immediate Release:
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Head Start on Housing Puts HRA Families in Homes

NEW BRITAIN (July 25th) – When she lost her apartment recently, Maria B. found herself and her children homeless and having to live in a motel in Newington. Seeking help, she turned to her family service worker Isabel at HRA of New Britain where her young daughter attends pre-school. Isabel connected Maria to Head Start on Housing, a new state program that is helping homeless families who have children in Head Start and Early Head Start obtain affordable, permanent housing.

“I feel blessed,” Maria said of the event. “It has absolutely made a positive difference for me and my family.”

As more families have faced homelessness since the end of the pandemic, several groups around Connecticut, including the state Department of Housing and Office of Early Childhood, Head Start Association of Connecticut, and area emergency shelter providers, along with National Center for Child Welfare came together to organize Head Start on Housing. The program, the first of its kind nationally, helps Head Start families obtain Section 8 housing on a greatly shortened schedule. When she spoke to her service worker Isabel, Maria had been homeless

already three to four months. Then, Isabel did a home visit with her and started Maria in the process of obtaining a housing voucher through Head Start on Housing. Maria received a voucher as soon as her application was approved.

Ashley Sandoval, Family Engagement Coordinator at HRA, worked with Maria to file and obtain her housing voucher. Sandoval says Head Start on Housing achieves its quick results since it does not depend on referring clients to other agencies for help. “The program provides vouchers directly,” she explained.

The speed with which Head Start on Housing works has helped make a difference for many homeless families with children in HRA’s Head Start. Since December 2022, Head Start on Housing has housed 21 families and 48 children HRA has served. Another eight families with HRA who have received housing vouchers through the program are home searching currently and should secure housing in the near future.

With her housing voucher in hand, Maria was able within two months to secure a new apartment in New Britain located a convenient distance from HRA where her daughter goes to Head Start. She says she has found support throughout the process of securing her new home. Besides finding a room with an encouraging landlord, she has received a timely donation of furniture from Journey Healthcare. “Everything is going well now,” she said.

HRA would like Head Start on Housing to serve all families who need its services. To do that, the agency is looking to recruit additional landlords willing to accept the Section 8 housing

vouchers that HSOH clients receive. The program also is seeking donations of furniture, household items, and kitchenware for its clients. HRA encourages anyone interested to provide housing or donations to contact Ashley Sandoval, HRA Family Engagement Coordinator, by phone at 860-348-2232 or by email at asandoval@hranbct.org.

About HRA of New Britain

Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc. (HRA) is a multi-service, non-profit organization dedicated to increasing economic self-sufficiency among individuals and families residing in greater New Britain, Bristol, and surrounding towns. HRA's 30+ programs include Head Start, School Readiness, employment and job training, home heating assistance, financial literacy education, Polish & elderly victim advocacy, and support for HIV+ individuals. For more information, visit our website, www.hranbct.org.

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