

Jacqueline Suarez, JCHA, Housing Assistant Tech, Kareem Jeter, Resident, Derrick Williams, Resident, Patricia Ramirez, Director of the Housing Choice Voucher program for JCHA



## Jersey City, New Jersey

Derek Williams was a forklift operator—and a good one, he says. But an accident in the late nineties left him with seizures. Without health insurance, he couldn't afford medication. Untreated, his condition cost him three jobs and ultimately his home.

A cooperative partnership between the Jersey City Housing Authority (JCHA) and the United Way of Hudson County changed that.

"These programs allow us to help people who would not ordinarily get help," says Patty Ramirez, Director of JCHA's Housing Choice Voucher program. "Ordinarily these families are not on any waiting list."

She says it works because "we confine our efforts to our areas of expertise." The housing authority recruits landlords to take part in the program, conducts inspections, and helps people search for housing.

"I don't know where I would be without this program," says Mr. Williams. "I can't be happier." His sons and grandchildren pay regular visits. He has also become part of the community at his building, helping set up and clean up for holiday celebrations.

His situation demonstrates how the two agencies mesh to serve someone's needs. Mr. Williams has a case manager provided by the United Way who helps him with his budget and makes sure he takes his medication and keeps doctor appointments. His housing is covered by the Collaborative Solutions program, a HUD-funded Housing First model with a grant from HUD.

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Kareem Jeter was working, but was not making enough to find a place to live. He was staying with relatives, where his two-year-old daughter was sleeping on a couch. "This has put a roof over my daughter's head and given me the opportunity to look for better employment." He is housed through the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid

Re-housing program that was part of the 2009 Recovery Act.

His case manager helped him with his resume and a year after he entered the program, continues to stay in touch.

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They are looking at an even more ambitious joint program, developing 21 special needs housing units at the United Way building, with project-based vouchers from the housing authority.

Everyone involved considers the current partnership an unqualified success. Says United Way director Carmel Galasso, "We can't do this without JCHA."