



HOUSING TASK FORCE REPORT 2004 Activities and Priorities

The Housing Task Force focuses on authorizing and appropriations legislation; implementation of existing laws; and implementation and enforcement of fair housing laws – all with respect to the needs of people with a full range of disabilities and housing needs.

The one bright spot of the year was that the CCD Housing Task Force signed a Voluntary Compliance Agreement with HUD to settle the Section 504 discrimination complaint which the Task Force had filed in 2000. HUD agreed to do a number of things that will help people with disabilities: (1) to provide an inventory of housing that is available to them – not lost to elderly-only; (2) to conduct training of field staff on the issue of elderly-only implementation; (3) to improve its methods of measuring the housing needs of people with disabilities; and (4) to conduct its long overdue Section 504 self-evaluation. The Task Force has developed an Advocacy/Action Guide for member groups on this settlement.

One of the major efforts of the Housing Task Force was strong opposition to Administration efforts to block-grant the Section 8 tenant-based rental assistance program either to the states or to Public Housing Authorities. While Congress did not accept the Administration's proposals – this will be an issue that returns in 2005.

When the Administration could not get its way on block granting Section 8, it began to eat away at the effectiveness of the program through a number of administrative/fiscal management measures. While the efforts of advocates, reined in HUD in some places, problems lie ahead as PHAs attempt to keep their Section 8 programs running with less funds. This will have a direct and negative impact on people with disabilities because PHAs now have an incentive to provide vouchers to those with higher incomes who need less of a subsidy. Task Force co-chairs met with HUD Secretary Jackson and Hill staff on this.

The Administration and Congress have been renewing the Section 811 Mainstream vouchers out of the Section 811 funds. Section 811 funds are limited and their major purpose was to provide housing for people with severe disabilities. As the Mainstream vouchers come up for renewal, the funds for new housing are cut proportionately. Task Force leaders met with HUD on this issue as well as with Members of Congress and their staff – unfortunately to little avail.

Priced out in 2002 shows that people with disabilities who receive SSI benefits have the “worst case” housing needs and are most in need of subsidies. The Task Force worked for increases in

funding for all disability-related programs, homeless programs, and Section 8. Unfortunately, housing programs saw their funding cut to provide for NASA and other programs.

The Task Force weighed in with HUD on better ways to collect data on the housing needs of people with disabilities to reflect those who receive a variety of benefits – SSI, SSDI, Veterans benefits, etc. It worked in coalition with other groups to help design an effective – but non-segregated – Section 8 project-based program. The Task Force supported the National Housing Trust Fund and the Inclusive Home Design Act. The CCD/TAC Opening Doors project provided four new reports to Task Force members and their affiliates.

2005 Priorities

- Maintain the Section 8 tenant-based rental assistance program as a program that provides housing assistance to those with the lowest incomes and the greatest needs. This will include opposing efforts to block grant the program; make additional cuts in funding; or change the targeting requirements to benefit only those with higher incomes.
- Increase funding for all housing programs that help people with disabilities from Section 8 to Section 811 to McKinney Homeless programs, to the Community Development Block Grant. In doing so, work to ensure that each of these programs addresses the needs of the full range of people with disabilities.
- Advocate that the renewal costs of Section 811 Mainstream vouchers come from the basic Section 8 program not the small and very under-funded Section 811 program. Section 811 was designed to provide housing for those who have severe disabilities and the need for supports. If it was funded adequately it could be a major player in the implementation of the Olmstead decision and the President's New Freedom Initiative.
- Support enactment of the National Housing Trust Fund. This legislation has the potential to add to the stock of affordable housing, something which has not gone on for some time. Work to ensure that the needs of those with the lowest incomes are addressed in this legislation.
- Work with HUD, Congress, and members and affiliates of Task Force organizations to ensure that HUD lives up to its agreed-upon responsibilities in the VCA. Continue to work with Members of Congress to convince HUD that people with disabilities are among its most important constituents, whose needs must be addressed.

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Housing advocates are a somewhat impassioned group - and these folks represent the best of the best!