



Mayor's Office of Homeless Services – Biennial Performance Audit Follow-up for FY21-22

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Objective

The Department of Audits (DOA) conducted a Biennial Performance Audit Follow-up of the **Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS)** covering Fiscal Years Ended June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2019.

The performance audit whether the MOHS had effective and efficient policies in place to deliver on its permanent housing program to reduce homelessness.

Background

MOHS became a stand-alone agency in FY 2020 when the Mayor's Office of Human Service was separated into the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services and the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success. The mission of the MOHS is to prevent homelessness and provide outreach services. Out of the five largest **Continuum of Care (CoC)** jurisdictions in the State, the City has served nearly five times the number of clients as the next most active CoC.

Approximately \$15 million in funding for homeless services programs is provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) annually. As such, the City's CoC must follow guidelines and criteria established by HUD in the development, administration, and operation of services provided to the City's homeless population.

Findings From Prior Audit

The prior audit determined that it took 248 days on average to move a homeless client into permanent housing. Lack of adequate and available housing inventory, trouble acquiring necessary personal documentation, clients declining housing, and lack of monitoring all contributed to the delays.

Recommendations From Prior Audit and Current Assessments

Recommendation 1: Form a workgroup of stakeholders to obtain a listing of City landlords and initiate an outreach program to develop an inventory of permanent housing.

Partially implemented.

Effect: MOHS and Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) developed a list, but none of the 2,500 properties in the inventory was allocated to MOHS. Individuals are not getting into permanent housing fast enough. The goal established by the National Alliance to End Homelessness is 30 days.¹

¹ [https://endhomelessness.org/resource/summary-of-hearth-act-2/#:~:text=The%20HEARTH%20Act%20sets%20a,first%20two%20years%20after%20enactment\).](https://endhomelessness.org/resource/summary-of-hearth-act-2/#:~:text=The%20HEARTH%20Act%20sets%20a,first%20two%20years%20after%20enactment).)

Recommendation 2: Analyze affordable housing projects to include in MOHS's inventory and look at subrecipient permanent housing performance to reallocate funds away from underperforming projects with inadequate housing inventory.

Partially implemented.

Effect: MOHS, in conjunction with DHCD, did submit the HOME Investment Partnerships American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) to HUD which is intended to be used to increase the supply of affordable housing. But as stated above, properties were not allocated to MOHS.

In terms of identifying underperforming projects, the Resource Allocation Committee applies a ranking and scoring process to all housing projects except single room occupancy (SRO) units, which have a low utilization and decline rate. Without an adequate review of SRO units, MOHS cannot adequately serve the homeless community efficiently and effectively.

Recommendation 3: Continue to work with the Maryland Department of Health and Social Security Administration to improve client information validation and obtaining necessary documentation.

Partially implemented.

Effect: MOHS has formed a partnership with Identity Access Project (IAP) to assist in obtaining identification cards and birth certificates. However, because IAP does not assist with obtaining Social Security cards, there continues to be substantial delays validating that information. Failure to find an alternative method to speed up the process of obtaining clients' Social Security information, further contributes to delays in obtaining housing.

Recommendation 4: Develop ad hoc reporting of client activities from the time of application until housing is obtained including specific dates and number of days for milestones in the process of gaining permanent housing.

Not implemented.

Recommendation 5: Monitor those dates to reach milestones in recommendation 4 in order to: identify time lags and performance gaps in housing placement; resolve the issues; and revise performance base lines.

Not implemented.

Effect: Without any reporting or monitoring in place it is not possible to identify specific causes of the delays throughout the process of obtaining housing.