MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Recent inquiries have been about the availability of funds to help with repair and rebuilding costs. Navigators review eligibility and options with residents for funding programs and share information on where they can complete the applications. Navigators are also assisting with scanning and uploading documents and completing the online applications.

Bi-weekly meetings are held with Navigators, DOLA personnel, and IDF staff to review new programs and recent modifications, which keep Navigators abreast of all options for residents. Navigators have helped bring unique situations to the attention of DOLA staff who are then able to review program criteria according to current needs and real-life situations.

Work is ongoing to assist with repairs to manufactured homes damaged by the Straight-Line Wind Event. Work is being done to coordinate services for multiple communities through a variety of funding sources.

TRENDS / CONCERNS

Although everyone’s timeline for recovery varies, there continues to be concerns for the effects of long-term trauma on residents. Navigators can point to the extended benefits available for counseling and support through Jewish Family Service’s programs, and support groups offered by Mental Health Partners. Frustration related to the time it takes to complete funding processes, insurance deadlines and overall financial concerns wears heavily on those impacted.

Insurance funding for rental units, ALE - Additional Living Expenses, will expire at the end of 2023 for many households. This is something that many residents mention as a future concern. Navigators hope to assist households with applications for funding programs at that time.

PROGRAMMATIC CHALLENGES

A vacant Navigator position was recently filled. Navigators hope to continue the year with a robust staff. Data entry, because of the transition between systems, needs to continue and has moved forward slowly due to lesser staff in recent months.

FUTURE PLANNING AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Navigators still hear from residents who have not accessed any services to date and help them identify resources that are available to them. They have also been hearing from families who were in touch with a Navigator last fall, or many months ago, and who need different services at this time than in prior months. Recovery Navigators are supported by funding that will allow services to continue only through December 2023. In the coming months, they will evaluate ongoing needs to determine if services should continue into 2024.
CLIENT IMPACT STORIES

- A widowed senior, originally unsure of how the rebuilding dollars would come together (underinsured) and anxious about approaching the decisions about construction alone, worked with a Navigator and will be moving into her new home within weeks. She was able to piece together insurance proceeds, the Community Foundation’s Rebuilding Grant, and Housing Recovery Program funds to do the rebuild and is hopeful about returning to her neighborhood where she had lived for more than 20 years.

- Navigators work with several single seniors that describe sadness in making so many decisions alone. They encourage a working relationship with a Navigator to help process decisions and obtain information about resources for support. Small financial support, such as gift cards, have been able to assist with replacing household items and bridge the gap of food insecurity. The food pantry located at the Marshall ROC location has also been greatly appreciated.

- Families living below 80% of the Area Median Income were appreciative of financial assistance by way of gift cards for replacing children’s clothing and household goods destroyed in the fire. Even small amounts have been described by residents as a “lifeline” after the financial impact of all that was lost and the cost of relocating, in some cases, multiple times.

PROGRAM DATA