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HUD and HHS announce joint effort to assist nearly 1,000 non-elderly persons with disabilities to move from institutions to independence

Federal partnership delivers first rental vouchers, supportive services for this group

WASHINGTON - U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Shaun Donovan and Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced today a joint partnership between the two agencies to help nearly 1,000 non-elderly Americans with disabilities leave nursing homes or other healthcare facilities to live independently. This is the first time two federal agencies are offering a combination of rental assistance, health care and other supportive services targeted to this population.

HUD is providing \$7.5 million in rental assistance vouchers that will help nearly 1,000 individuals with disabilities rent private apartments. Public housing authorities in 15 states will administer the rental subsidies and will work with state human service agencies to identify eligible individuals who could benefit from the program. For a local breakdown of the funding announced today, visit HUD's Web site.

Individuals receiving rental assistance through the program will also receive health and social supports that will enable them to live independently. These supports are provided through the HHS Centers for Medicare and Medicaid's "Money Follows the Person" (MFP) grant program, which allows individuals who qualify for Medicaid-funded nursing home or other institutional care to receive supports - such as in-home nursing and personal care services - while living in the community instead. In places where the MFP program is not available, services will be provided by a state-sponsored institutional transitional program comparable to MFP that includes dedicated supportive services.

As part of President Obama's Year of Community Living initiative, HUD and HHS launched a joint effort to provide housing support for non-elderly persons with disabilities who are currently receiving long-term care in institutional settings. The interagency collaboration is intended to allow persons with disabilities to live productive independent lives in their communities rather than in institutions.

"The Obama administration is committed to helping Americans with disabilities live independent lives. Housing is a critical piece of the equation when it comes to transitioning out of institutions," said Donovan. "Coordinating this effort with the Department of Health

and Human Services is an important step in ensuring that more Americans with disabilities will have the housing and support they need to fully participate in community life."

"Through our collaboration with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, I know that we will be able to dramatically change peoples' lives," said Sebelius. "Individuals with disabilities can have a life in the community that serves their needs and supports them in leading productive, meaningful lives."

The funding announced today is being provided through HUD's Rental Assistance for Non-Elderly Persons with Disabilities Program. It is part of the \$40 million HUD made available April 2010 to public housing authorities across the U.S. to fund approximately 5,300 rental assistance vouchers for non-elderly persons with disabilities to promote independent living for this community. Public housing authorities applied for funding under two categories.

Last October, HUD awarded \$33 million to support a first round of 4,300 vouchers, making it possible for non-elderly individuals with disabilities and their families to access affordable housing in communities that meet their housing needs and so avoid potential institutionalization. Today's announcement is for the second round funding to provide 948 vouchers targeted for non-elderly individuals with disabilities currently living in institutional settings, such as nursing homes, but who could move into a community with assistance.

These vouchers will augment work already being done by HHS' Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) through its Money Follows the Person (MFP) rebalancing demonstration program. Now in its fourth year, the MFP program has made it possible for almost 12,000 individuals to live more independent lives by providing necessary supports and services in the community. Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia are currently participating in the MFP program and CMS is expecting a new round of grant applications on January 7th.

State Medicaid agencies and local human service organizations will link eligible families to local public housing authorities that will administer voucher distribution. To improve the connections between the housing authorities and Medicaid agencies, HUD and HHS have launched the Housing Capacity Building Initiative for Community Living Project to assist seniors and individuals with chronic conditions who are at risk of institutionalization or who currently receive care in institutional settings, in finding appropriate housing in order to live more independent lives.

The Community Living Initiative is an outgrowth of the 1999 landmark Supreme Court ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.* In that case, the Court ruled that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects a person with a disability from being unnecessarily institutionalized. The Court said that such forced institutionalization can lead to isolation and segregation of individuals with disabilities and be a serious and pervasive form of discrimination.

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