

**HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF WARREN  
(PA079)**

**MOVING TO WORK COHORT #5  
MTW FLEXIBILITY II COHORT**

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To Be Released By:

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**HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF WARREN (HACW)**

Moving to Work, Cohort #5  
MTW Flexibility Cohort II

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**HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF WARREN**  
**MTW Cohort #5; Flexibility Cohort II**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Warren County is a county in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As of the 2020 census, the population was 38,587. Its county seat is Warren. The county was established in 1800 from parts of Allegheny and Lycoming counties; attached to Crawford County until 1805 and then to Venango County until Warren was formally established in 1819. The city of Warren, where the offices of the Housing Authority of the County of Warren are located, is the county seat of Warren County. It is located along the Allegheny River. The population was 9,404 at the 2020 census. It is home to the headquarters of the Allegheny National Forest and the Cornplanter State Forest. It is also the headquarters for the Chief Cornplanter Council, the oldest continuously chartered Boy Scouts of America Council, and the catalog company Blair. (Information provided by Wikipedia.)

The Housing Authority of the County of Warren (HACW), from the Board of Commissioners, through the Housing Authority leadership, and throughout the staff is highly committed to this Application to participate in the MTW Cohort # 5 Demonstration Program, also described by HUD as the MTW Flexibility II Cohort. (The concept of “Flexibility” is already being tested in a prior MTW Demonstration Program Cohort involving larger Housing Authorities.)

The previous Flexibility Cohort (Flexibility Cohort I) had a different impact on HUD and its PHAs as opposed to this Flexibility Cohort II, because there was a smaller number of much larger PHAs, so the research, outcomes and findings affected fewer but much larger PHAs.

Flexibility Cohort II, however, has the potential for a more dramatic impact throughout HUD Public Housing/HCV PHAs given that more than 80% of the approximately 3,500 PHAs nationwide fall

within the Category of small to medium-sized Housing Authorities with fewer than 1,000 total Section 8 and Section 9 units. Consequently, understanding the significance of this Cohort makes it an exciting endeavor to provide the research, outcomes and findings for a dramatically larger proportion of HUD PHAs.

At the same time, however, it must be acknowledged that the range of Flexibility is more restricted in this Cohort in comparison to Flexibility Cohort I. Inevitably, large PHAs have tremendous flexibility with reference to staffing and financial resources. Small and medium-sized PHAs, however, have much more rigid constraints on their opportunities to promote Flexibility, because the basic responsibilities and staffing must be maintained, no matter what size the PHA. Among small to medium-sized Housing Authorities, there are many functions that cannot be dismissed in the management of a Housing Authority no matter what size. Accepting and approving applications for housing; certifying and recertifying tenants for housing; inspecting units; and all of the other basic responsibilities in operating a Housing Authority cannot be dismissed even with Regulatory Waivers.

As a high functioning PHA and as a highly creative PHA, the HACW relishes the opportunity to contribute to this body of knowledge.

## **MTW Plan-Part I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background: Moving to Work Demonstration Program and MTW Expansion**

The Moving to Work (MTW) Demonstration Program allows PHAs to design and test innovative, locally designed housing and self-sufficiency strategies for low-income families by permitting PHAs to use assistance received under Sections 8 and 9 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, as amended, 42 U.S.C.1437, et seq., (1937 Act) more flexibly and by allowing certain exemptions from existing public housing and HCV program rules, as approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The MTW Demonstration Program was originally authorized by Section 204 of the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996, P.L. 104-134; 42 U.S.C. 1437f note (1996 MTW Statute). Section 239 of the Fiscal Year 2016 Appropriations Act, P.L. 114-113 (2016 MTW Expansion Statute), authorizes HUD to expand the MTW Demonstration Program by designating an additional 100 PHAs (hereafter, the “MTW Expansion”). The 2016 MTW Expansion Statute provides that PHAs selected as part of the MTW Expansion must be high performers, meet certain size and Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) requirements, and represent geographic diversity across the country. All PHAs selected as a part of the MTW Expansion must follow the selection notice for their applicable cohort. All PHAs selected as a part of the MTW Expansion must also follow the MTW Operations Notice, which governs the participation of all PHAs in the MTW Expansion, establishes program structure, details terms and conditions, and provides all available MTW waivers and associated activities.<sup>2</sup> Eligibility and selection criteria under this Notice are based on the requirements of the 1996 MTW Statute, the additional criteria in the 2016 MTW Expansion Statute, and other indicators that

ensure qualified PHAs are selected. These criteria will also allow HUD to test important policy priorities of interest to the Department and the assisted housing community.

Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) with 1,000 or fewer combined units of Federal Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher units will be selected for the fifth cohort of the Moving to Work Expansion (MTW), which will test the overall effects of MTW Flexibility on a PHA and the residents it serves, with a particular focus on administrative efficiencies (MTW Flexibility II Cohort). Interested PHAs that meet the eligibility criteria established by HUD are invited to submit an application package to HUD to be considered for MTW Status. If the number of qualifying applications exceeds the number of awards currently available for this Cohort, HUD will select Applications by lottery weighted on a geographical basis.

## **MTW Cohort #5; MTW Flexibility II Cohort**

MTW Cohort #5 is an exceedingly important matter for study for HUD and housing in the United States. As indicated previously, almost 3,000 PHAs across the United States fit into the same-sized category as the HACW, so developing and applying flexible and innovative solutions to operating this large number of agencies could have a huge impact in the field of public Housing.

The MTW Flexibility II Cohort of the MTW Expansion will assess the overall effects of MTW flexibility on a PHA and the residents it serves with emphasis on how/whether MTW PHAs seek to achieve administrative efficiencies through MTW. The MTW Flexibility II Cohort will consist of PHAs with 1,000 or fewer aggregate authorized public housing and HCV units. PHAs seeking MTW designation in the MTW Flexibility II Cohort of the MTW Expansion will submit an MTW Plan and application package to HUD by the due date of December 8, 2023.

Upon receiving the MTW Plan and Application Packages, HUD will ensure that the MTW Plan and application packages are eligible and complete. If there are enough MTW Expansion slots available for all of the PHAs that were found to have submitted eligible and complete application packages, HUD will offer MTW designation under the MTW Flexibility II Cohort of the MTW Expansion to all of the eligible applicant PHAs. If there are more applicant PHAs with complete and eligible application packages than MTW Expansion slots available, HUD will conduct a lottery of all eligible and complete MTW Plan and application packages. Those applicant PHAs selected through the lottery will be offered MTW designation under the MTW Flexibility II Cohort of the MTW Expansion. If a lottery is conducted, the applicant PHAs not selected through the lottery will not receive MTW designation under the

MTW Flexibility II Cohort of the MTW Expansion but may apply for any future opportunities to join MTW under which they are eligible. All PHAs that submit an MTW Plan and application package under this Notice will be notified of their status (selected, not selected, not eligible/no complete application) after selections have been made.

Inclusion of a program or initiative in the MTW Plan and application package does not constitute approval of the program or initiative. If selected and designated as an MTW PHA, the PHA must pursue approval of all programs and initiatives through the MTW Supplement and all processes described in the MTW Operations Notice. This includes the approval of the waivers and associated activities in Appendix I of the MTW Operations Notice and the approval of any Agency-Specific Waivers and/or Cohort-Specific Waivers.



## **Housing Authority of the County of Warren and MTW Cohort #5**

### **HACW Vision and Mission**

The Mission of HACW is to be a recognized leader in providing quality affordable housing to families and vulnerable populations in a professional, dignified, financially responsible manner while being a positive force in our community through the formation of partnerships to assist provide appropriate supportive services and promote economic independence and self-sufficiency.

The HACW seeks to establish and constantly explore new opportunities to partner with other communities and agencies to expand additional affordable housing opportunities for low income, elderly, non-elderly disabled, homeless, veteran and family populations.

The HACW will use the additional resources and regulatory and budget flexibility that comes with MTW status to further improve the Public Housing and HCV Program, including facilitating increased resident services, housing development opportunities, and landlord involvement.

Public Housing was established to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Public Housing is independent living which is owned and managed by the Housing Authority.

The HCV Program is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market.

In order to accomplish its vision and mission, the HACW is making substantial efforts and will continue to implement initiatives to improve technology, customer service and communication among staff, with residents and with HCV landlords.

In support of this, the HACW is applying to HUD for selection as a MTW Cohort #5 Housing Authority. The Housing Authority of the County of Warren is uniquely positioned to work very effectively with HUD in this endeavor.

As a MTW Cohort #5 Housing Authority, Housing Authority of the County of Warren will continue to enact policies and procedures that will build strong relationships with its residents and resident organizations, its local landlords, and staff members that will be cost effective, provide housing choice for qualifying tenants, and support tenants and their families in achieving self-sufficiency.

### **HACW's Plan for Implementing its MTW Demonstration Program**

In implementing MTW Cohort #5, the Housing Authority of the County of Warren will apply HUD's key principles for the expansion to: (1) Simplify, (2) Learn, and (3) Apply. As with all other PHAs, HACW has had to operate in an environment where intervening and having the resources have been nebulous. Working with HUD, its MTW advisers and with HUD's assigned Technical Assistance experts, the HACW will establish an ideal environment in encouraging and supporting its residents for a great housing experience, while at the same time developing and implementing Flexibilities that will allow the Housing Authority to operate more efficiently and effectively.

The Housing Authority of the County of Warren brings a unique and comprehensive perspective to the table. The HACW has worked hard on its relationships with its residents who live in both public and leased housing, its applicants, and its landlords.

Working hand-in-hand with HUD, the HACW will: (1) Re-evaluate its staffing plan and Chart of Organization; (2) It will assess how better to work with its resident organizations and tenants; (3) It will assess how to develop better, more efficient and more effective relationships with its landlords; and (4) It

will determine how best to target its resources, including staffing and financial resources to the greatest benefit of residents, staff and housing development possibilities.

As part of this process, the HACW will assess all applicable waivers and associated activities in Appendix I of the MTW Operations Notice and will work with HUD on the approval of any Agency-Specific Waivers and/or Cohort-Specific Waivers, selecting from the following list:

- Tenant Rent Policies - 1(i) and 1(j): Alternative Utility Allowance (PH); Alternative Utility Allowance (HCV);
- Tenant Rent Policies - 1(r) and 1(s): Elimination of Deduction(s) (PH); Elimination of Deduction(s) (HCV);
- Tenant Rent Policies - 1(t) and 1(u): Standard Deductions (PH); Standard Deductions (HCV);
- Reexaminations - 3(a) and 3(b): Alternative Reexamination Schedule for Households (PH); Alternative Reexamination Schedule for Households (HCV);
- Reexaminations - 3(c) and 3(d): Self-Certification of Assets (PH); Self-Certification of Assets (HCV);
- Housing Quality Standards (HQS) - 5(d): Alternative Inspection Schedules (HCV);
- Project-Based Voucher Program Flexibilities - 9(c): Elimination of PBV Selection Process for PHA-owned Projects Without Improvement, Development, or Replacement;
- Project-Based Voucher Program Flexibilities - 9(d): Alternative PBV Selection Process (HCV).

It is understood that the expression of interest in these MTW waivers and associated activities in this section will not be binding on the HACW should it receive MTW designation under the MTW Flexibility II Cohort of the MTW Expansion. The selection of MTW waivers and associated

activities by the HACW is for informational purposes only and will not be a factor in selection of PHAs for the MTW Flexibility II Cohort.

### **The Housing Authority of the County of Warren, Housing Team**

As already indicated, the HACW has assembled an outstanding team perfectly suited to working with HUD to address the HUD MTW Cohort #5 demonstration Program.

The Team members who will be most involved in the implementation of the Moving to Work, Cohort #5 are:

### **Members of the Board of Commissioners**

- Lorri Dunlap, Board Chairperson
- Kristie Fry, Board Vice Chairperson
- Karlene Smith, Board Member
- Melissa McLean, Board Member
- The Authority is currently recruiting for the Resident Board Member position. The position is currently vacant.

### **Ms. Tonya Mitchell-Weston, President/CEO**

Tonya has been a Houser for nearly 35 years. She began her career in Harrisburg, PA where she participated in creating the area's first tax credit Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing. She now serves as the President/CEO of the Housing Authority of the County of Warren. Until recently, Tonya served on the Executive Board of the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies as the second Vice President. She was the chairperson of the PA Civil Service/Human Resources Committee; Chair of the

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee; and a member of the Professional Development Committee. She currently serves nationally on the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials' (NAHRO) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Advocacy (DEI&A) Committee and Co-chairs its EIEA subcommittee, the Small Housing Authority Committee, Vice Chair of the regional NAHRO's DEI Committee and as a Congressional Contact for the region. She is a member of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh's Affordable Housing Advisory Council and its DEI subcommittee, Affordable Housing Task Force, and Blueprint Communities Committee.

Tonya holds a BA in Organizational Management, an MBA in Management, and an MS in Strategic Leadership. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in Organizational/Strategic Leadership.

### **Melissa Morse, Director of Housing Programs**

Before being promoted to the director of Housing Programs in 2022, Melisa spent most of her 25 year career as the Assistant Property Manager where she has done a wide variety of jobs from processing applications, interviewing applicants, issuing and processing work orders and billing, conducting inspections, accounts receivables, maintaining resident files, re-certifying annual incomes and household compositions to the physical property management of the public housing and multifamily developments. She has also managed the housing choice voucher program.

Melissa has been a resident of Warren County most of her life. She graduated from Corry Area High School and received an associates degree from the Jamestown Business College.

**Lisa Feeny, Assistant Property Manager**

Lisa has been the Assistant Property Manager for Low Income Public Housing since August 2022. She currently manages two family developments, one high rise, and one low rise building in three municipalities. She also handles the accounts receivable, billing and payments. In addition, Lisa is responsible for lease-ups, housekeeping inspections, recertification paperwork and processing, assisting with new resident briefings for both public housing and the housing choice voucher program.

Lisa has been a resident of Warren County her entire life. She graduated from Warren Area High School and received an associate degree from Jamestown Business College. Lisa has more than 15 years of front desk and customer service experience.

## MTW Plan—Part II

### a. Plan for Future Community/Resident Engagement

The HACW will continue to engage assisted households in its low- income and affordable housing programs, as well as the broader community and stakeholders, in the implementation and development of its local MTW program.

As HACW does in all of its programs, as a MTW Cohort# 5 designee, the HACW will continue with its entire engagement efforts with the local community, including outreach to racial and ethnic minorities, persons with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, families with children and groups representing such persons.

In addition, the HACW will work closely with landlords to build additional HCV opportunities for HCV residents.

### b. PHA Operating and Inventory

#### Housing Programs

#### HCV Units

The HACW currently has the capacity to provide tenant-based rental assistance to 69 HCV families. The number of households fluctuates throughout the year, as families are removed and added program due to new admissions, portability and termination. The HACW currently has approximately 24 applicants on its waitlists. The waitlist is open and purged regularly. The oldest application date on the waitlist is currently May 1, 2023. Approximately 10-20 applicants are pulled off the list and processed each month.

#### Conventional Federal Public Housing Units

The HACW currently has 233 Conventional Federal Public Housing Units located at

four sites. The River View Terrace and Brokenstraw Center developments are comprised of 65 (15-2 bedroom and 46-3 bedroom, and 10-4-bedroom) family townhomes. There are 47 families on the waitlist for these developments. Conewango Towers has 125 one-bedroom units and 6 two-bedroom units. Rouse Manor consists of 37 1-bedroom units. Conewango Towers has 11 applicants on the wait list. Rouse Manor has a waitlist of 10 applicants.

**c. Plan for Local MTW Program**

The Housing Authority of the County of Warren's MTW Cohort #5 Application is taking place in the context of what the Housing Authority has systematically done over the years to make things work effectively with residents, landlords, and staff. The HACW looks forward to the opportunity to implement Regulatory Waivers and other activities that will allow the HACW to function more effectively, build in Flexibility and efficiencies to improve circumstances for residents, landlords and staff.

In addition to the HUD-identified activities to be approved, based on experience, the HACW will continue to implement improvements to its Landlord Relations including: Streamlining Operations through Technology, Education, Outreach and Communication. To facilitate technological solutions, better customer service and better communications, HACW will consider implementing some or all of these following strategies:

- Ensuring utilization of its housing software system that supports the housing programs and the MTW Cohort #5 initiative;
- Developing a Landlord Portal providing access to all forms and documents;
- Real-time inspections;
- Tenants potentially moved in same day;



- Established Landlord Advisory Committee;
- Pictures of Units and amenities to help market rental units.

The HACW is fully compatible with HUD's Fair Housing and Civil Rights Initiatives

**d. Proposed Use of MTW Funds**

The Housing Authority of the County of Warren will use all resources and where appropriate, fungibility to enhance housing and program opportunities for its residents and will use the MTW Cohort #5 status as a way to provide top level housing resources in coordination with an expanded and satisfied array of opportunities for residents, landlords, staff and added housing opportunities.

The Housing Authority of the County of Warren will work with HUD identified Technical Assistance contractors to determine the best strategy with reference to Waivers and Safe Harbors. Along with the Waivers required in tandem with the activities the Housing Authority of the County of Warren ends up selecting, the fifth cohort of the MTW Expansion will evaluate Flexibility and efficiencies and their effect on Housing Authority operations.

**e. Application Tasks and Preparations**

1. **Application Deadline:** The deadline for submitting the MTW Plan and Application is midnight, December 8, 2023.

The Application Process is accomplished by the Executive Director sending an e-mail to HUD to “John Concannon; Director, Moving to Work Demonstration Program”; e-mail: [MTWFlexibilityII@hud.gov](mailto:MTWFlexibilityII@hud.gov) with the finished MTW Plan and Application package attached to the e-mail as a PDF. The Subject Line should be titled: “MTW Expansion MTW Flexibility II Cohort – Application Package” and in the body of the e-mail, should include the name and number of the PHA and relevant contact information. We will at our end prepare the MTW Plan and Application

Package so that all that the Executive Director needs to do is to set up the e-mail as instructed above and send the e-mail.

2. **Deadline for Posting the Draft MTW Plan:** The “Draft MTW Plan” must be provided publicly 30 days prior to submitting the MTW Plan to HUD in the Application; so the absolute deadline for publishing the “Draft MTW Plan” is November 8, 2023. (The final MTW Plan is finalized after the Board Meeting, based on input received and adopted up to that point.)

Preparing the MTW Plan will be an iterative process between TCI and the Housing Authority. (1) We will provide the first draft by next Friday. (2) The Housing Authority should amend the Draft by filling in details about the ways in which the Housing Authority wants to apply Work Flexibility and Administrative Efficiencies. (3) TCI will then rework the Draft to meet the formatting requirements required by HUD. (4) The Housing Authority should collect comments and input from the Board and others to further amend the Draft. (5) TCI will then prepare the final version of the MTW Plan for submission to HUD.

3. **Board of Commissioners’ Meeting:** The ideal timing for presenting the “Draft MTW Plan” to the Board of Commissioners and for the Board to pass the mandatory Resolution in support of the Plan and Application is in the November Board Meeting. (The Board Meeting could be any time up until December 8th, as long as the Resolution and application documents can still be signed at that point.)
4. **Preparing the Board of Commissioners:** It is a good idea to have the Plan and Application on the Agenda in the October Board Meeting, so that the Board and Public can be prepared for the November Meeting.
5. **The Board Meeting** must be at least 15 days following the Public Hearing.

6. **Public Hearing**: The Public Hearing should be scheduled as soon as possible. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to explain the process to all interested parties, and to share a preliminary Draft of the MTW Plan for comment and questions. HUD does not state any requirements for the scheduling or Notice for the Public Hearing. The Housing Authority should use its own requirements or normal practice for providing Notice for the Meeting. Attendance and Minutes must be available for the Public Hearing to be included in the Application Package. The very last date that the Public Hearing can be scheduled is November 23<sup>rd</sup>, as long as the Board Meeting is December 8<sup>th</sup>, but the Public Hearing should be scheduled much earlier.

7. **Resident Meeting(s)**: Although not required, the Housing Authority should meet with the RAB or with Resident Officers as soon as feasible to brief them about the MTW process, Plan and Application Package. Attendance and Minutes must be available for the Public Hearing to be included in the Application Package.