



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Funding cut threatens East Valley program for homeless families, organization sees silver lining but needs replacement funding

MESA, Arizona-May 9, 2016 -- Officials at House of Refuge were notified on Monday, May 2, that in the latest round of US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding, House of Refuge's share was abruptly reduced to zero. House of Refuge is an East Mesa nonprofit that provides transitional housing and related services to 81 families, many of whom are single moms fleeing domestic violence situations. Anne Scott, Human Services Planner at Maricopa Association of Governments, stated, "Nationwide approximately 50% of the transitional housing programs were cut." House of Refuge, along with five other Phoenix area transitional housing programs, was part of this wave of national funding cuts.

For House of Refuge this annual grant from HUD made up a considerable portion of the operating budget. To make matters worse, the May 2 notification made clear that the elimination of funding was retroactive to February 1, the beginning of House of Refuge's fiscal year. "This is a huge shock," said Corey Kennedy, House of Refuge Board President. "We're still reeling from the blow and are trying to make sure this doesn't send fragile families who are progressing towards stability back onto the streets through no fault of their own." 95 adults and 160 children currently call House of Refuge their home.

Nancy Marion, Executive Director at House of Refuge, explained, "Available housing for homeless families is extremely limited. There are wait lists in place that average 70 to 80 families every month. With this HUD decision the wait lists have now doubled with House of Refuge's families alone. We have nowhere to send them. Specifically thinking of those fleeing domestic violence, they have once again been victimized. Appeals have been written, but it will only be through the support of our local community that we will be able to reach and help these families in time."

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House of Refuge officials say that while they're fortunate to have cash reserves and efficient operations, it can only keep operating for a few months before draining those resources. Finding new funding sources is critical to maintain the essential services House of Refuge has provided for 20 years with a success rate of over 90%. And House of Refuge is the only program of its kind in the East Valley. Kennedy said, "If the community can step in and replace what the federal government has cut, House of Refuge will emerge from this with an even stronger ability to help homeless families. If not, we'll be facing some very difficult decisions." According to Kennedy, tax credit donations under the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit program are a key way for individuals to donate to House of Refuge.

Marion believes there's a silver lining. "We are now freed from many HUD-imposed program restrictions that have increasingly hampered our efforts to help people overcome homelessness in the most effective ways," she said. Marion continued, "While it doesn't make sense to me, HUD has clearly decided that transitional housing programs like ours are too slow and cost too much. The reality is that for many families, programs like ours are their best shot at rising above the cycle of homelessness once and for all, and the federal government has just pulled the plug on their efforts."

About House of Refuge

Founded in 1996, House of Refuge (www.houseofrefuge.org) is one of Arizona's largest transitional housing facilities. Using 88 homes from the old Williams Air Force Base, House of Refuge provides a stable environment for homeless families working to get back on their feet and become self-sufficient. In that effort House of Refuge has logged a success rate of over 90%.

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