

Summary of Internal Audit of Financial Assistance program

We created questions to be considered: Are we being strong stewards of the money? Are we educating our churches about the process? Are we managing the process? Are we educating our Board? We decided that we needed to observe and interview the staff at the different locations to gather our information.

We interviewed Genell and Roxane at the Administrative Offices, then observed and talked to staff at the Wilmington Empowerment Center, Newark Empowerment Center, and at St. Mark's UMC/Mill Creek.

We found the referral process comes from churches, Concord working with Hicks Center, callers leaving messages, emails, and calls answered directly. As requests for Financial Assistance come into Friendship House, Genell inputs the client's information into the system, a criminal check is done, and an appointment is scheduled. Walk-ins are put into the system by staff members at the Empowerment Centers.

When the clients meet with Friendship House staff, the request is investigated and processed. Requests come in for medical expenses, electric bills, rent, prescriptions, transportation (bus passes, a bike), birth certificates, clothing, shoes, and help with other identification papers. Additional counseling on how to better use their finances is informally given.

Friendship House staff contact Delmarva Power and landlords to determine amount the client is in need of, then they direct the client to the other sources of support available, and steps the client needs to make in order to accomplish their request. We do not provide the total amount that the client often needs. They need to contact numerous organizations to cover the request, such as the welfare office, State Service Centers, Lutheran Community Center, St. Vincent DePaul groups, Salvation Army, etc. We do not send a check unless the whole amount will be provided by combined sources with the goal being to not lose their home. If their electric is stopped, they cannot live in the home so they are evicted. If this happens, they go to the bottom of the Section 8 housing list and must have a \$0 balance to transfer to another home with Delmarva Power. It does not help for us to give \$100 dollars towards rent if they owe \$600 and will still lose their home so Friendship House works with Delmarva Power or landlords to try to get a plan of payment from the client and other sources.

All checks are sent directly to the service provider: Delmarva Power, landlord, water company. If a prescription is needed the check is made out to the pharmacy. If we are paying for birth certificates and other documents, they come to the Empowerment Centers. In past, there was a limit of \$100 of Financial Assistance. This is not strictly adhered to. The needs of the client and their situation are used to dictate the amount funded. Clients can apply for assistance once a year.

We found differences in how each of the Empowerment Centers function based on the support provided through local churches and populations being served. We found that, although the computer system has improved the process greatly, a lack of communication leads to cases not being cleared from the system. This has been dealt with by Friendship House staff. We found that too much of Roxane's time is spent in the distribution of Financial Assistance checks to the different Empowerment Centers. This is being changed. We felt that there needs to be more recognition of Friendship House at the Newark Empowerment Center as the service provider.

In answer to our questions, Friendship House is a good steward of the Financial Assistance funds that it is given and distributes. The written process is several years old and is being edited. This will then be available to churches to better understand the process. We are also putting together a flow chart to share with the Board.