

City of Lawrence Outside Agency Annual Report For Calendar Year 2017

Reports on activity should be submitted electronically to Danielle Buschkoetter, at dbuschkoetter@lawrenceks.org by Thursday, February 15th 2018 at 5:00pm. For the following questions please refer back to your [2017 application for funding](#).

Reporting Period: Calendar Year 2017

Agency Name: Housing and Credit Counseling, Inc., (HCCI)

1. Refer to the program in which your agency received funding; provide a participant success story that helps demonstrate the accomplishments of the program.

HCCI counselor, Annie, counseled Jessica, a student at the University of Kansas (KU) who shared an apartment and lease agreement with three female students. One of her roommates decided to move out and the remaining tenants were informed if they locate a new tenant to assume her part of the lease, the vacating tenant would be released from the lease agreement. The tenant wanting to move out found a male applicant. The lease agreement states if the new tenant is a male, and all other tenants are females, all tenants must agree in writing that the male can be added to the lease. Jessica objected and did not agree. Nevertheless, the male moved in with the permission of Jessica's two roommates.

Jessica could not seek KU's legal counsel as all roommates are KU students which could have posed a conflict of interest. Jessica was educated by Annie on her rights and responsibilities in the situation. Mainly that the landlord is not in compliance with the terms of the rental agreement because the male was allowed to move in without Jessica's written permission. Therefore Jessica could serve her landlord with a noncompliance notice and break her lease if the landlord did not make a good faith effort to address the issue (fix the problem) within 14 days.

Though Jessica called back one day later as the situation escalated. She said her roommates are angry with her for complaining about the male moving in. The day prior, she was in her room, had the door closed, and one of her female roommates came into the apartment with a few male friends. Jessica could hear them saying loudly how easy it would be to enter her room and sexually assault her. Jessica was upset and stated she is now fearful to stay in the unit. Jessica's boyfriend also heard the statements.

Jessica was informed by Annie that sex/gender is a protected class under the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and sexual harassment is a violation. Not only are the actions of landlords and other rental housing employees subject to the FHA, but tenants and their guests can also be charged with violating the act. Sexual harassment does not have to be motivated by sexual desire. It could be violated by hostility toward a particular sex, even if the harasser is the same sex. The tenant was provided fair housing information in writing to relay to her landlord and was also given the contact information for the City of Lawrence Human Relations Office as well as HUD. The tenant met with her landlord and conveyed the information provided by HCCI and requested to terminate her lease without repercussion.

A month later Annie followed up with Jessica. Jessica relayed the following message via email: The help that I received was exemplary. It was quick, concise, and explained in a way for me to be able to apply it to my situation. I ended up moving out of my apartment, without repercussion, and into a new one under the same rental management company. The help I received from HCCI was essential for me to get out of a bad living situation and be able to live in a place I felt comfortable and happy.

2. Refer to your 2017 application for funding; provide a brief narrative of the activities funded with City funds.

HCCI's Rental Housing Counseling and Education Program helps people help themselves to maintain adequate, safe, affordable and equitable rental housing through counseling, education and collaboration with other agencies. Historically, about 90% of clients served by this program are low-income households.

HCCI is dedicated to promoting positive relations between tenants and landlords. In the last year, HCCI has empowered 248 tenants via phone counseling with practical education and options with their market rate, subsidized and affordable housing issues. On the flip side, landlords received instruction on rights, obligations and business practices. Sample forms helped both parties and served as verification that proper procedures were followed.

HCCI's preventive classroom education services were especially useful for Lawrence Public Library Teen Group participants in order to prepare them to move into their first rental. Willow Domestic Violence Center clients were well-informed on their rights and responsibilities in tenancy and extra protections victims of domestic violence are afforded when renting from government funded landlords. AmeriCorps volunteers were educated in order to help those they advocate for to ensure a positive rental outcome. The practical application of Tenant/Landlord laws, to include Fair Housing, was offered to area landlords and property managers.

3. Refer to your 2017 application for funding; provide specific detail (use supportive documents, if needed) to demonstrate what progress was made toward your proposed outcomes.

HCCI projected 245 Lawrence residents would be served by this program in 2017. At year-end, HCCI served a total of 287 Lawrence residents. Of these, 248 were counseled and 39 attended 5 classes prepared and presented by HCCI's Rental Housing Counselors. Note - Lawrence was host site for the USDA Rural Rental Housing Association Annual Training. We presented training covering the Kansas Residential Landlord and Tenant Act and Fair Housing Act to the 103 statewide property managers in attendance, but those numbers are not counted in our education attendee total except for 6 of whom were Lawrence residents.

HCCI counsels clients in an efficient and cost effective manner. While HCCI is not an enforcement agency, its mere existence acts as a deterrent to some landlords who would not otherwise remain in compliance with landlord/tenant laws. The outcome is a better quality of life for tenants. Homelessness and blight adversely impacts the economic health of Lawrence. While an ongoing task, through teamwork, renters, landlords, code enforcement, along with social services, civic leaders, and HCCI collectively act to effect positive change.

4. Refer to the line-item budget provided in your 2017 application for funding; is this accurate to how your allocation was actually spent? If no, what changed and why?

HCCI spent 100% of the \$15,560 allocation as outlined in the 2017 grant application.

HCCI appreciates the opportunity to partner with the City of Lawrence to provide this unique service to counsel both tenants and landlords regarding rental housing issues.