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**Chicago Department of Human Services Ups Service
Connectors to 13**

Service Connectors Link CHA Residents to Jobs, Health Care

Expanding the group from nine to 13, Carmelo Vargas, Commissioner of the City of Chicago's

Department of Human Services (DHS), made public today the list of agencies which have been

designated as "service connectors" and will be given contracts for their services for the next 3 years.

An integral aspect of the CHA's Plan for Transformation that is administered by the City's DHS, service connectors are those agencies that connect individuals and families with the employment, job training, and health care and other services they need to make the transition to self-sufficiency. The choice of agencies is the result of a five month process involving representatives of seven City departments, tenants of the CHA and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the nation's leading funder of children and families' well being and according to Vargas reflects CHA and the City's intent of, "learning from what we've done so far and more finely honing our programs for the future."

"The CHA and the City are embarked on what may be the most ambitious anti-poverty movement ever undertaken – the reintegration not only of housing but of thousands of families, into the fabric of the larger City by providing them the opportunities which most of us take for granted," says Vargas. "Over the past few years, during which service connectors have worked with literally thousands of residents and relocatees we've learned volumes about what works, what doesn't, what services and opportunities need to be offered to residents and how best to deliver them. The agencies named today have demonstrated both a track record of performance and an understanding of what is necessary to be done as we move forward."

Of the thirteen agencies, ten currently provide services in the Plan for Transformation Employment and Employer Services, Centers for New Horizons, Changing Patterns

for Families, Hull House, Heartland Human Care (part of the Heartland Alliance), The Woodlawn Organization, Universal Family Connections, Uhlich and the West Englewood United Organization. Three agencies, Operation Able, Housing Opportunities for Women and Metro Family Services are new to work with the Plan but are well known for their expertise in job training, housing and case management respectively.

It is the role of the Service Connectors to connect those CHA lease holders who have left their former developments with the services they need to improve their life and employment skills as the former CHA residents transition into housing in the broader community or into newly developed CHA-financed mixed income communities. The 13 agencies will operate a total of 37 offices spread across the city.

“This was an extraordinary process, placing families at the center of the decisions and focusing on results while incorporating a depth of experience and diversity of view rarely found in such discussions,” explains Donna Stark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Being able to synthesize not only the data from the past year, but also the perspectives of tenants and service providers alike, as well as that of ‘experts’ in the field of job training, education and social service delivery, I think that the group has not only identified a great selection of providers, but created a results-based programmatic approach that will inform the work of other cities, like New Orleans, which are just beginning to grapple with these issues.”

\$20 million of federal funds is allocated for these programs and all contracts will be effective as of January 1, 2006.

For more information on the service connectors please contact the City of Chicago’s Department of Human Services at www.cityofchicago.org or by phone at 312-746-8545 and for more information on the Chicago Housing Authority and the Plan for Transformation please visit www.thecha.org or call 312-742-8500.

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