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Western Pennsylvania Housing Authorities

SECTION 504 NEEDS ANALYSIS

Client

Housing authorities of the following communities: City of Erie, City of McKeesport, Beaver County, Fayette County, Clarion County, Westmoreland County, Somerset County and Lawrence County

Project Description

Assist these seven local public housing authorities in analyzing the extent to which their policies, programs, and facilities accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities, specifically in light of recent court rulings.

Challenges

Recent court rulings have been interpreted by HUD to mean that accessibility requires complete freedom of movement throughout a dwelling unit, not just in bathrooms and kitchens. In order for a dwelling unit to comply with Section 504, the entire unit must be on an "accessible route."

Based on this new interpretation, HUD has deemed many public housing authorities to be out of compliance with requirements of Section 504.

The challenge of this assignment was to prepare transition plans that achieve a balance among the need for timely compliance with Section 504, the need for competing improvements in the public housing stock, and the need to arrive at a plan that is acceptable to HUD and achievable within the housing authority's funding constraints.

Solution

M&L based transition plans on research and demographic data, including surveys and interviews, inspection of public housing stock and facilities, and review of administrative policies.

M&L delivered a transition plan to each housing authority that describes the following:

- Modifications to public housing and related facilities to achieve Section 504 compliance
- Recommended adjustments to administrative policies and procedures
- Cost estimate for required modifications
- Timetable to achieving compliance

Benefits

- Specific, manageable plans that balance multiple needs with limited funds. As the plans are based on solid research, PHAs can be confident their funds are being used to best advantage.
- Realistic, detailed cost estimates
- Detailed timetables to keep PHAs on track

Planning and Development Consultants