



## For Immediate Release

October 22, 2010

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## **'OPPORTUNITY CHICAGO' HELPS 5,800 CHICAGOANS SECURE JOBS**

*Report highlights how five-year initiative exceeded goals*

Despite the most challenging economic climate since the Great Depression, a workforce development initiative called Opportunity Chicago has helped nearly 5,800 Chicagoans find employment.

Started in 2006, Opportunity Chicago is a five-year initiative focused on connecting Chicago Housing Authority residents with training and job opportunities.

*A Partnership for Change*, a report released today by CHA, The Partnership for New Communities (PNC) and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), details the goals, strategies and outcomes of Opportunity Chicago. The report highlights a sense of urgency, strong public-private partnerships and a compelling vision as aspects that contributed to the program exceeding its goal of helping 5,000 public housing residents find and keep work.

Leaders hope the success of Opportunity Chicago will serve as a model for other cities across the nation.

"Not only do initiatives like this advance good public policy and practices, it also promotes family and community stability through employment," said Lewis A. Jordan, CEO of CHA.

The creation of Opportunity Chicago grew out of initial findings from the Plan for Transformation, a revitalization effort that includes the replacement of impoverished high-rises with mixed-income communities. After the first mixed-income sites became ready for occupancy, officials found a need to increase access to training and employment opportunities to help public housing residents comply with standards in new mixed-income housing – many of which require employment as criteria for residency.

"This initiative focused on Chicagoans who are often overlooked by the public workforce development system," said Maria Hibbs, Executive Director of The Partnership for New Communities. "Through intensive collaboration, the use of flexible resources, and dedicated partnership, Opportunity Chicago met the training needs of public housing residents while making significant changes to systems that serve them."

The result is a public workforce development system that is more responsive to a range of disadvantaged job seekers and can serve as an example for other cities across the nation.

"Our goal was to break the cycle of poverty for families living in public housing," said Mary Ellen Caron, Commissioner of the Department of Family and Support Services. "This was an opportunity for

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all three partners to help create sustainable, successful job training and placement programs as well as demonstrate the effectiveness of Chicago's workforce development system."

This report is the first of several documents to be released as Opportunity Chicago comes to a close in 2010. A *Partnership for Change* can be found at:

[http://www.opportunitychicago.org/pages/story/documents/OC\\_partnership\\_for\\_change\\_001.pdf](http://www.opportunitychicago.org/pages/story/documents/OC_partnership_for_change_001.pdf)

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### **About Opportunity Chicago**

Opportunity Chicago launched in 2006 as a collaborative, citywide effort to help place 5,000 public housing residents in quality employment in five years. Co-founded by The Partnership for New Communities, Chicago Housing Authority and City of Chicago, it has become a national model for housing authority resident services and workforce programming for low-skilled, low-income people. For more information, visit [www.opportunitychicago.org](http://www.opportunitychicago.org).

### **About The Partnership for New Communities**

The Partnership for New Communities brings together business, civic and philanthropic leaders to invest in strategic economic development, community-building and employment initiatives that promote large-scale improvements in the neighborhoods most affected by public-housing transformation in Chicago. For more information, visit [www.thepartnershipfornewcommunities.org](http://www.thepartnershipfornewcommunities.org).

### **About the Chicago Housing Authority**

CHA was created in 1937 to create and expand affordable housing opportunities for low-income families and seniors. Today CHA assists more than 50,000 Chicagoans living in public housing and participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Currently, CHA is carrying out the Plan for Transformation, an ambitious revitalization effort that will deliver 25,000 units of new, affordable housing by 2015. For more information, visit [www.thecha.org](http://www.thecha.org).

### **About the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services**

The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services is dedicated to supporting a continuum of coordinated services to enhance the lives of Chicago residents, particularly those most in need, from birth through the senior years. The Department works to promote the independence and well-being of individuals, support families and strengthen neighborhoods by providing direct assistance and administering resources to a network of community-based organizations, social service providers and institutions. For more information about DFSS, call 312-743-0300 or visit [www.cityofchicago.org/fss](http://www.cityofchicago.org/fss).