

## **HOUSING CHOICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE**

The April 2005 meeting of the Oklahoma Alliance on Aging Education Committee focused on issues related to the diversity of choices for older and disabled people, in Oklahoma City and other communities in the state.

### **OKLAHOMA CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY . . . . . BARBIE BAKER, Senior Citizen Housing Supervisor**

Federal funds from the division of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) subsidize public programs across the country.

Oklahoma City operates ten multi-story housing projects in different parts of the metro area. People eligible to live in the facilities must be low income senior citizens or disabled adults of any age. Prospective residents choose the building they prefer. All facilities are on metro public transit bus routes.

Rent is adjusted to income of residents, and regular checked to ensure that the amount paid does not exceed 30% of adjusted monthly income of the resident or family.

For very low income people, a federal Section 8 voucher enables them to live in federally subsidized housing while paying a minimal amount of monthly rent.

To apply for Oklahoma City Public Housing, call any of the centers. Few people are on waiting lists. An attractive new brochure describes the policies and the facilities.

Each unfurnished apartment has a full-size kitchen equipped with basic appliances. Small pets are allowed. Trash containers are down the hall. Main dining rooms provide a healthy noon meal each day. Every facility has its own Community Center with a full time director for planned activities, including social activities, ceramics, exercise classes, adult education classes, and lectures. Resident councils meet four times a year.

Transportation is provided to nearby shopping centers, medical facilities, entertainment events and tours. Five service coordinators serve the ten housing projects.

Few people are on waiting lists in Oklahoma public housing. Other states have long waiting lists.

### **OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF HOMES & SERVICES FOR THE AGING . . . .**

#### **Mary Brinkley, Executive Director**

OAHSA is the state non-profit association of homes and services for the aging, with the Oklahoma organization being part of a national network.

Federal cuts in funding for meals programs and transportation have added to need for affordable housing for older people and physically handicapped adults in communities all over Oklahoma.

Smaller cities may have single building public housing facilities comparable to the metro centers in Oklahoma City. An example is El Reno in Canadian County, which has one public housing project - - **ASHTON ON THE GREENS**, comparable to the metro programs in Oklahoma City. It is located on an attractive lakeshore area.

Other designed senior rental communities are not subsidized. In these facilities, it is important to know what questions to ask. Age of residents may range from 55 to 80+. What services are available? Are there recreational activities? Is there a service

coordinator? Are there call buttons if help is needed, with 24 hour response? Rent increases?

Loneliness and depression can trigger medical problems. Over a fourth of the people in senior housing are on the verge of needing to move to supportive housing, such as assisted living, residential care, or a nursing home. Too often, emergencies force decisions.

Liability insurance costs to senior housing facilities have zoomed up.

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Retirement communities may be church affiliated, with several such facilities in the Oklahoma City metro area. Kenyon Morgan is a prominent architect of senior facilities, including church affiliated ones and Autumn House in Midwest City.

TULSA SENIOR SERVICES operates VINTAGE HOUSING, where Executive Director Bill Major has developed a complex of low income senior housing projects with a combination of funding sources including tax credits and HOME funds available through the Oklahoma Housing Finance Industry.

Interesting things are taking place in senior housing development in Oklahoma. We will take an up-to-date look at the status of these developments in a future meeting.

Vivian Smith, Education Committee  
Chairman