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Caitlyn Grishkowsky (from left) with her kids, Aubree, 6 months, and Allison, 21 months, listen to case worker Melissa Taiji on Friday at Grishkowsky's apartment in Redding.

# HUD slashes funding for transition housing

■ Her stance on guns drives demand, it says

By Jenny Espino  
jespino@redding.com  
530-225-8220

More people may soon be living on the streets after the federal government ended funding for transitional housing and reduced the award for a permanent housing program in Redding.

The cuts by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development are hitting FaithWorks and Northern Valley Catholic Social Service particularly hard.

The two nonprofits sometimes operate at a loss, and the grants are crucial to cover daily operations.

FaithWorks' Francis Court transitional housing program saw funding, which last year was just under \$18,000, eliminated. It threatens to reduce case management hours for nearly a dozen families and checkups to those who have graduated to permanent housing.

NVCSS last Thursday said it was still trying to confirm a \$40,000 cut to its Partners in Housing II program. The amount represents a third of the rental subsidies for mentally ill and chronically homeless clients who have been housed at nine housing units.

The cuts came as no surprise to homeless advocates, who noted how HUD for years has been signaling that it is moving away from transitional housing in favor of permanent, supportive housing because it says it is less costly and more effective in ending homelessness.

"We are being pushed into that place," the Rev. Ann Corrin said. "We weren't willing to go there a couple of years ago. We can decide that we are not going to work and we are going to keep fighting for what we have, and we are going to see it get smaller and less effective. That is the choice we have been making so far. We don't

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have to go that way. We can say, instead, 'how can we change?'"

Bobbi Sawtelle, housing director for NVCSS, said rural communities in far Northern California face challenges when competing against larger, urban areas for federal dollars as budgets tighten.

They have the population. They have the numbers, and the requirements for the applications are designed to meet the needs you see in the larger areas, she said.

"We work really hard for what we have up here," Sawtelle said. "We don't have enough rent subsidies and we can't support the people who need them. Our apartment complexes have waiting lists that exceed a year or two years."

As is, NVCSS is running at a loss of \$20,000 to operate the nine units that receive the rental subsidies.

In its totality, Shasta County's award for 2015 was \$317,347. That is down \$56,000 from the previous fiscal year.

It was not known Monday whether NVCSS had a plan to make up the \$40,000 deficit, which will start to be felt July 1.

FaithWorks was weighing its options to make up the funding.

Melissa Taiji, the nonprofit's lone full-time case manager, said the leadership team talked about the possibility of donation appeals and fundraisers. But those won't come easy. FaithWorks' big fundraiser is a dinner with the graduates. Last October's event raised about \$9,000.

Taiji said the nonprofit was aware of HUD's shift to fund permanent, supportive housing, except that FaithWorks is not trying to be that.

It was set up as transitional housing and the model works, she said, putting herself as an example of the program's success. Ten years ago she was a 20-year-old living one week in a car with her husband and their children, the next week in a motel.

Before moving into one of the apartments, the couple had a moment of reckoning. They cleaned up from their drug use and got into rehab programs. They were then accepted into the program.

"It gave me life skills. It gave me where I changed my whole demeanor. When I came living here I was this ghetto little thing that just, like, thought she was hot and was just talking all kinds of you know to

everyone. Now I can use big words. I know how to pay my bills now. It gave me responsibility."

Redding Councilwoman Kristen Schreder, an advocate of a beefed up planning body to deliver housing programs and services for the homeless, said the HUD awards should serve as a word of caution for the need for long-term planning and a solid data collection system, which has been missing locally.

"You have to figure out what your priorities are and match them with the best practices and then find out what the funding sources are," she said.

Corrin echoed a similar sentiment. She said for a long time the Continuum of Care's main task was to secure the same funding for the same agencies year in, year out.

"It's a bigger picture than that," she said. She was optimistic about everyone coming to the table and working toward reducing homelessness, not simply supporting agencies.

Napa stood in contrast to Shasta County. The city and county in 2014 were awarded more than \$600,000 in homeless assistance. For its 2015 award, Napa will receive more than \$713,000. Part of that money covers the cost for continued planning and use of a management information system as well as two new permanent housing projects.

For Taiji, said it takes time to build trust between client and case manager, and she prefers for the person receiving the help to show willingness to change.

She and her family moved out of the Francis Court apartment after 14 months. She and her husband followed a five-year plan FaithWorks helped them create to attain homeownership. They did it in five years and three months. She came back to FaithWorks after getting her education to show others the way.

"I watch people grow here. I watch them learn how to pay bills and learn how to be involved in their kids' school. A lot of it is life skills — things that you think, 'Oh, well didn't their parents teach them that, or didn't they know that? I know my parents didn't. I didn't know how to do good housekeeping. I didn't know how to prepare meals. ... No one taught me those skills."

"So being able to have someone here that you can run upstairs, 'Hey tadadada, this is what's going on. Can you help me?'... We need to be able to be here for them," she said.