

# At-Promise Resident Training Program Description

Launched in 2017, the At-Promise Resident Training Program is an initiative of the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) that provides low-income HACM residents with a new pathway to self-sufficiency. The program builds upon the stability of HACM's quality, affordable housing by also offering on-the-job training, life skills development, and post-secondary education that together can transform residents' lives. At-Promise provides motivated residents with the opportunity to overcome barriers that could otherwise keep them locked into a cycle of poverty.

The name of the program stems from a realization that HACM's Secretary-Executive Director, Tony Pérez, had several years ago. "Many of our young people are perceived as 'at-risk'. I chose to call them 'at-promise' instead. The idea here is how many of these promises will go unfulfilled, not because these individuals didn't try, but because no one lent a helping hand," explains Pérez. "We can be that helping hand."

At-promise is what these residents represent—the promise of brighter futures, improved outcomes, raised expectations, and odds-beating lives that happen when we improve the quality of their education and a pathway towards family-supporting work.

The program starts with an informational session for residents who meet basic qualifications: residency with HACM, personal or professional references, and a preferred 2.3 GPA. From there, 25 applicants participate in interviews with members of HACM's leadership team, and then six individuals are selected to be part of an At-Promise class.

The final six complete a nine-week, paid training course that is geared toward assisting them in developing life skills. These individuals then work up to 20 hours a week for HACM in various positions for up to two years. They also further their education by enrolling in an academic program at a post-secondary educational institution. To help with the cost of education, they receive a \$2,000 HACM Scholarship and up to \$1,500 in tuition reimbursement per calendar year. In addition to the job skills and educational support, they begin developing a social and professional network that can provide them with support throughout their At-Promise journey and beyond.

HACM is committed to ensuring its residents have opportunities available to help them achieve self-sufficiency through programs such as At-Promise and the organization's numerous collaborative partnerships.

To date, 12 HACM residents have completed the training course and become part of an At-Promise class. They are not just classmates. They are also coworkers.

Program participant, Latisha Fowler describes the transformational effect HACM and the At-Promise experience is having on her life. “Before I became a resident of the Housing Authority, I was struggling to afford rent and utilities while trying to provide the necessities for my family. To afford rent in a decent area, I had to work long hours. I hardly had time to spend with my family and when I did, I was exhausted. Every month about 70% of my take home income went towards rent, which left very little for basic necessities. I would still fall behind on bills and sometimes paid the rent late,” said Fowler. “The Housing Authority has had a great impact on where I am in my life. I not only received affordable housing, but a stable home and opportunities to improve my standard of living. As a resident, I receive monthly resources on how to improve my credit, buy a home, continue my education, information on programs and jobs for my children and other programs that I may need in the future. It’s important that I am able to raise my children and guide them because I am not working hours on end to afford unaffordable housing. I appreciate the Housing Authority and all the great people that are involved with providing housing stability and access to programs that are improving my opportunities in life.”

