

Housing Expertise and HUD Housing Counseling Prep Course

KEY LEARNINGS 2025-2026

Overview

Church World Service launched the Housing Expertise and HUD Housing Counseling Prep Course in August 2024 to strengthen housing knowledge across the Church World Service (CWS) network and support CWS' goal of becoming a HUD-approved housing counseling agency. After four courses for the CWS network, including one designated for Refugee Housing Solutions staff, Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS) took those learnings and evolved the course and offered three cohorts to the entire resettlement ecosystem of State Refugee Coordinators and organizations serving Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)-eligible populations. The final cohort concluded on July 22, 2026.

The course developed substantially over time. Early cohorts relied primarily on existing HUD materials. Later cohorts used an original slide deck and a structured professional development course in the learning management platform (LMS) Thinkific, with a syllabus, participant activities, surveys, and pre- and post-course assessments. This report highlights what RHS learned about demand, participant outcomes, course design, and sustained engagement.

Course Development

RHS officially launched the course in 2025 for State Refugee Coordinators and organizations serving ORR-eligible populations. **The first external cohort reached its 30-person registration limit within one week and included participants from 20 organizations.** Sessions averaged 19 participants, and 58% completed the LMS course. **Feedback was overwhelmingly positive** among respondents, and **test scores improved by at least 15%** across all measured knowledge levels.

The demand for attending the course remained strong in the next two cohorts. The second cohort **expanded capacity to 100 and registered 95 people from 30 organizations**; the first session drew 60 participants, and sessions averaged 45 participants. The third cohort **registered 60 people from 14 organizations**, averaged 29 participants per session, and had a 52% LMS course completion rate.

	Registration Limit	Actual Registration	Organizations
Cohort 1	30	30	20
Cohort 2	100	95	30
Cohort 3	100	60	14

What Participants Learned

KNOWLEDGE & CONFIDENCE

Across the three cohorts, participants reported gaining knowledge and confidence that they could apply in client-facing work. In the second cohort, 64% of final survey respondents reported greater knowledge and confidence in providing housing information. In the third cohort, that figure rose to 80%. By the end of the third cohort, all final survey respondents described themselves as either confident or very confident with the basics.

Assessment results showed a similar pattern. In the second cohort, 22 participants submitted pre-course assessments and 19 submitted post-course assessments. Average scores increased from 58% to 86% for basic knowledge and facts, from 55% to 78% for understanding concepts, and from 53% to 76% for applying information to decisions or recommendations. These gains ranged from 23 to 28 percentage points. One participant who had previously scored 467 on the HUD examination later passed with a score of 568 after completing the course.

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIAL

"I plan to apply that learning by taking a more holistic and empowerment-focused approach with every client, slowing down, identifying root barriers, and giving clearer, more supportive guidance throughout the housing process."

In the third cohort, 22 participants submitted pre-course assessments and 10 submitted post-course assessments. Average scores increased from 60% to 80% for basic knowledge and facts, from 59% to 78% for understanding concepts, and from 57% to 75% for applying information. These gains ranged from 18 to 20 percentage points. Because fewer participants completed the post-course assessment, the results reflect learning among respondents rather than outcomes for the full cohort.

RELEVANCE TO PARTICIPANTS' WORK

Survey responses suggest that participants were regularly applying housing knowledge in direct-service settings. In the second cohort, 64% of initial survey respondents worked for local resettlement providers, and more than 75% of respondents across the surveys reported assisting up to 20 clients with housing each month. Sixty-nine percent of final respondents planned to use what they learned to support clients. More than 90% described the training as engaging, relevant, and led by a knowledgeable instructor, and 92% rated their satisfaction at four out of five or higher.

In the third cohort, 86% of initial respondents worked for local resettlement providers, and 60% identified their role as case manager or housing specialist. Eighty-four percent reported assisting up to 20 clients with housing each month. More than 85% of respondents found the training engaging, reported learning something new, and viewed the instructor as knowledgeable. All final survey respondents agreed that the objectives were met and the information was useful to their roles, and 93% rated overall satisfaction at five out of five.

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIAL

"I would like to obtain certification and provide housing counseling to clients at our office and expand our client base by offering these services as well."

Implementation Lessons

The course changes made after the first cohort were intended to improve and increase course participation giving more time to complete assignments and assessments and improve the quality of program data. RHS increased registration capacity, sent materials earlier, added dedicated time for the post-course assessment, linked certificates to assessment submission, and offered a make-up session for participants who missed the opening class. These adjustments increased the course's reach and helped raise the number of submitted assessments in the second cohort, although only 33% of participants completed all LMS coursework.

A consistent pattern across cohorts was a decline from registration to attendance, course completion, and final survey response. In the second cohort, survey responses fell from 39 at the start to 16 at the end. In the third cohort, responses fell from 37 to 15. The length and density of the course, combined with participants' ongoing work responsibilities, may have made sustained participation difficult. Earlier materials, dedicated assessment time, and make-up sessions improved participation but did not fully resolve the challenge.

This pattern is important when interpreting the findings. Feedback and assessment results were consistently positive among respondents but may not be representative of every registrant.

Looking Ahead

The course demonstrated sustained interest in practical housing training among State Refugee Coordinators and organizations serving ORR-eligible populations. Participants who completed surveys and assessments consistently reported stronger knowledge, greater confidence, and high satisfaction, and assessment scores improved across all three knowledge levels.

Future versions can build on these strengths and could consider a shorter or more flexible delivery of the course. A simpler evaluation approach may also improve completion and response rates without losing the information RHS needs to understand course effectiveness. The most useful elements to preserve are the practical focus, structured study materials, opportunities to review complex topics, and clear connections to participants' day-to-day work with clients, landlords, housing navigation, and homebuyer education.

Overall, the experience supports the importance of continued investment in practical housing training and development opportunities to strengthen capacity and housing stability.

FEEDBACK

Refugee Housing Solutions wants to hear from you about the quality, relevancy, and helpfulness of our resources and tools.

Help us improve our offerings by completing this [short form](#).

You may also scan the QR code to access the form on another device.



www.refugeehousing.org

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