



San Diego County links homeless San Diegans with mental illness to supportive housing as a first step towards stability and recovery.

## What is "supportive housing?"

Supportive housing is a community-based service model that provides housing integrated with support services such as: mental health services, primary health care, alcohol and drug services, case management, and social services to help homeless individuals with mental illness gain stability and live more productive lives. Supportive housing programs are used throughout the United States as a way to solve the dual challenges of homelessness and mental illness.

The National Coalition to End Homeless estimates that supportive housing is responsible for a 28 percent decline in chronic homelessness nationally between 2005 and 2008, with some communities experiencing even sharper declines.

Supportive housing has two components: 1) permanent housing for participants and 2) mental health services, case management services, rehabilitation and recovery services, substance abuse services, and social services for participants.

### Who provides supportive housing programs?

Supportive housing is sponsored by the County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency under the purview of the Behavioral Health Services Division (BHS) in partnership with mental health service providers and housing developers to provide housing to persons experiencing homelessness and mental illness.

Supportive housing units are integrated into affordable housing developments across the region.

### Who needs supportive housing?

Supportive housing is for our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. People who are either homeless or at high risk of becoming homeless and who are living with mental illness.

- According to the National Institute of Mental Health, one in every four Americans suffers from a mental illness in a given year.
- Approximately 3.5 million Americans, including 1.35 million children, experience homelessness in a given year, according to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. The actual number is probably much greater.
- Approximately 59 percent of the region's unsheltered homeless suffer from mental illness.

- People with mental illness are much more likely to become homeless than the general population because untreated illness can disrupt their ability to maintain relationships, hold jobs, receive medical care, or respond to offers of help.
- Like other illnesses such as diabetes or heart disease, mental illness can be successfully treated with regular access to health care.

### How does supportive housing work?

Supportive housing units are generally integrated in new affordable housing developments. BHS works with developers and community partners to make a small percentage of the units available to qualified participants in the Full Service Partnership (FSP) programs and to provide them with mental health services, case management, recovery services, educational programs, employment opportunities or training, and social services.

Participants hold their own leases and contribute to their rents, and are subject to the same rules and regulations as all other tenants.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Who pays for supportive housing?

Supportive housing, among other mental health and recovery services, is funded by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), a California voter-approved measure passed in 2004. This act taxes individuals with a personal income of more than \$1 million a year. These individuals pay a one percent tax on the portion of their income that exceeds \$1 million.

## Is supportive housing safe to have in my neighborhood?

Yes. Participants enrolled in the FSP programs are carefully screened for eligibility before being accepted to the housing program and receive ongoing support and care.

- Statistics show that crime does not increase in neighborhoods with supportive housing.
- Supportive Housing is not a temporary shelter or psychiatric facility.

## Will my home decrease in value if supportive housing comes here?

No. Numerous studies have proven that home values do not decrease when affordable housing developments with supportive housing for individuals with mental illness comes to a neighborhood. In fact, they frequently increase because of neighborhood improvements and revitalization.

## Why should I support the supportive housing program?

Supportive **Housing Matters** because it works. It helps people get treatment for their illnesses and stop living on the streets. It helps communities save money on services for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and mental illness.

Homeless San Diegan's with mental illness are a small percentage of the overall population, however, they use a large proportion of the most expensive community resources including acute hospital care, emergency department services, and law enforcement services.

- Studies in several cities have shown that a chronically homeless individual costs an average of \$42,000 a year in public services such as emergency care.
- In supportive housing, that cost dropped to \$16,000 a year—and often much less.

## What kind of results does supportive housing get?

- A 70% increase in recovery over traditional treatment programs.
- Supportive housing increases part-time and full-time employment for participants, enabling them to become more self-sufficient—with 42% of participants able to work full or part-time jobs after just six months of supportive housing.
- Formerly homeless people who move to supportive housing take better care of themselves, follow their medication schedules, and discontinue alcohol and drug abuse.
- Housing homeless people with mental illness reduces ER visits.
- Medicaid payments drop an average of 55% when clients enter supportive housing.
- 17% fewer justice system referrals.

## Supportive Housing Projects and Developers in San Diego

Currently, there are 12 County MHSA projects—with an estimated value of 34 million dollars in state and local funding—identified for development across the region. These 12 supportive housing developments outline just one of the many elements of MHSA's supportive housing program. If all the existing projects are successfully developed, they will provide 973 affordable housing units, with 194 of the units designated for MHSA supportive housing residents.

Developers currently active in the MHSA program: Father Joe's Villages, Townspeople, Squier/ROEM Properties, Affirmed Housing, BRIDGE Housing Corporation, MAAC Project, Wakeland Housing, Housing Development Partners, Hitzke Development and Meta Housing.

## Supportive **Housing Matters** because home is where recovery begins.

If you know of someone who may benefit from supportive housing, or to learn more about supportive housing, visit [www.HousingMattersSD.org](http://www.HousingMattersSD.org).

Housing Matters funded by the County of San Diego and produced by:

**Cook + Schmid**

3033 Fifth Avenue, Suite 200  
San Diego, CA 92103  
(619) 814-2370  
[CookandSchmid.com](http://CookandSchmid.com)

### Sources for this FAQ:

Gilmer, Stefancic, Ettner, Manning, and Tsemberis. "Effect of Full Service Partnership on Homelessness, Utilization and Costs of Mental Health Services and Quality of Life among Adults with Severe Mental Illness," Archives of General Psychiatry, November 2009.

University of California San Diego School of Medicine study published in the American Journal of Psychiatry, February 2005.

2002 Arthur Andersen report on homelessness.