

# PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IN OHIO: SUPPORTING FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

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## ***Permanent Supportive Housing: The Basics***

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is a combination of permanent affordable housing with voluntary services that helps people live more stable, productive lives. When developed and implemented well, PSH can be an exceptionally cost-effective way to serve those homeless persons with the greatest challenges. Not only is PSH a humane and compassionate way to provide permanent affordable housing for disabled homeless persons, but it costs no more to operate than it does to serve homeless persons through the traditional, informal network of hospital emergency rooms, jails, and emergency shelters. Beyond the simple monetary savings for communities, PSH has also been shown to contribute to significant positive outcomes for the people it houses. For example, research indicates that when homeless persons reside in PSH they experience decreases of more than 50% in emergency room visits and hospital inpatient days, decreases in use of emergency detoxification services by more than 80%, and increases in the use of preventative health care services. In addition, PSH tenants experience increases of 50% of earned income and 40% in the rate of participant employment when employment services are provided in supportive housing. In sum, PSH is a humane way to provide permanent affordable housing to homeless persons with the greatest needs.

Over the past several years Ohio communities have increasingly focused on the development of PSH, particularly as a means to serve chronically homeless persons who might otherwise cycle between the streets, shelters, emergency rooms, and local jail/prison systems. There is now a pipeline of PSH projects in communities around Ohio that will meet the needs of more than 1,000 long-term homeless individuals and families over the next three years. Highlights include:

- In Columbus/Franklin County Continuum of Care (CoC), over 735 supportive housing units have been developed for chronically homeless persons and plans are in place to develop 760 additional units by 2013
- Dayton/Montgomery County CoC opened its first PSH project in 2007, housing 65 disabled homeless adults. The CoC plans to develop 295 additional units over the next three years
- The Balance of State CoC (comprised of Ohio's 80 most rural counties) currently has over 500 PSH units for disabled homeless persons and has successfully developed 187 additional units over the past two years alone. PSH projects will continue to be a priority

## ***Permanent Supportive Housing and Chronic Homelessness***

The 2009 Ohio Homelessness Report shows that for the state as whole, chronic homelessness decreased by 10% from 2008 to 2009, from 2431 to 2187 individuals. Dayton/Montgomery County CoC and Columbus/Franklin County CoC, two communities that have made huge strides in local PSH development, both reported significant decreases in chronically homeless in 2009 – a 30% decrease in Dayton and a 40% decrease in Columbus. Only Toledo/Lucas County CoC and the BOSCO reported increases in chronic homelessness, of 27% and 48% respectively; and both of these CoCs indicated that improved counting methods and greater participation overall contributed to the increases, as opposed to actual increases in chronic homelessness. While there are a number of potential explanations for this statewide decrease, the continued prioritization and development of PSH should not be overlooked as a key factor in the decline, particularly because of its targeting to chronically homeless persons.

## ***Challenges to PSH Development***

While many communities locally and nation-wide have come to see PSH as a critical and cost-effective way to reduce homelessness, particularly for chronically homeless individuals, the development of units is challenging and has become increasingly difficult over recent years. These difficulties stem mainly

from the limited resources available to support ongoing operations and the provision of necessary supportive services. The average annual cost per unit for PSH is \$13,000 - \$14,000 for program and on-site services, operating costs or rental subsidy, and 24-hour front desk coverage. Utilizing an analysis of the funding gaps in 830 units projected for development in the next three years in three communities (Cleveland, Columbus and Dayton), it was determined that Ohio PSH projects had an average per unit gap of approximately \$6,500 a year in operating and/or services funding.

In an effort to support current PSH development and foster future work in this area, COHHIO is participating in the **Ohio Supportive Housing for the Homeless Alliance (OSHHA)**. Created in 2008, OSHHA is a group of permanent supportive housing advocates and providers from Ohio who have developed plans for the creation of permanent supportive housing in order to eliminate chronic homelessness. Their purpose is to create and implement a public policy advocacy agenda that supports the development of permanent supportive housing units across Ohio as a solution for long-term homelessness. OSHHA's primary goal is the creation of a new state *PSH Gap Program*, a bundled supportive housing subsidy to fill in the critical operations and essential service funding gaps of new and existing PSH projects.

If you would like further information on OSHHA's and/or their proposed PSH Gap Program, contact Douglas Argue, COHHIO, at [douglasargue@cohhio.org](mailto:douglasargue@cohhio.org).