

# The Future of Supportive Housing

November 2008



Corporation for Supportive Housing

50 Broadway, 17th Floor, New York, NY 10004

CSH is a national non-profit organization and community development financial institution that helps communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness.

For information, please visit our website at [www.csh.org](http://www.csh.org) or contact [info@csh.org](mailto:info@csh.org).

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In 2002, more than one hundred public and non-profit leaders came together in Columbus, Ohio to discuss promising approaches to ending homelessness, building political will, attracting public investments in supportive housing, and developing a consensus plan for moving forward across the nation. This shared vision and plan was summarized in the **Compact to End Long-term Homelessness** and endorsed by hundreds of allies. At the same time, the federal government, as well as many states and localities, were developing plans, blueprints, compacts, and campaigns of their own with the same expressed goal: ending long-term homelessness and the seemingly endless cycle through institutions, public spaces, and emergency care that constitutes life for hundreds of thousands of Americans, year after year.

## Keeping the Promise



Today, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, calls upon our partners and allies to re-affirm our commitment to this effort, including a strong, continued focus on the core goals laid out in the Compact:

- **Creating and sustaining at least 150,000 units of permanent supportive housing for families and individuals who are experiencing long-term homelessness;**
- **Ending the practice of discharging large numbers of people into homelessness from hospitals, mental health and chemical dependency treatment facilities, jails, and prisons; and**
- **Securing investments in additional affordable and supportive housing alternatives from mainstream systems, so that housing, linked to support services as needed, is available to those who are homeless, or would likely be homeless without it.**

Together we have made tremendous strides on many fronts. Our undertaking has resulted in significant increases in the number of people who are now living in supportive housing and significant reductions in long-term homelessness in communities across the nation. Federal investment in permanent

supportive housing, through HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Program, as well as through grants from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, has increased significantly, bolstered by bipartisan support for investing in permanent supportive housing as a solution to long-term homelessness. State and local government investment has also increased significantly, and more organizations from diverse sectors, including health and behavioral health, homeless services, corrections, affordable housing, child welfare, veterans services, and other sectors are now engaged in creating supportive housing for the people who need it.

In addition, there is a growing body of evidence that supportive housing works. Study after study in communities across the country has documented the efficacy of supportive housing as an intervention to end long-term homelessness, support recovery, and reduce the demand for more costly care in hospitals, shelters, and jails. Looking ahead, we remain firmly committed to reaching the goal of ending long-term homelessness.



Jackson Street Village, Saint Paul, MN.

# A BOLDER VISION: Expanding Our Reach

We can and must do even more. To achieve our goal of ending long-term homelessness, we must stem the tide of people who are most likely to experience long-term homelessness in the future. Supportive housing must be embedded within bigger, more comprehensive efforts to prevent and end homelessness. In the past decade, we have made significant progress in moving thousands of people with disabilities into supportive housing, ending long, costly, and difficult years of life on the streets and in emergency shelters. Today, however, a growing number of Americans face rising risks of losing their homes, and the nation's ever-increasing shortage of affordable rental housing limits opportunities for a safe and healthy life in the community for people with disabilities, returning veterans, young people leaving foster care, victims of violence, and families with the lowest incomes. We must ensure that the most vulnerable members of our communities have stable housing linked to the supports they need and opportunities for health, work, safety, and connections to family and neighbors.

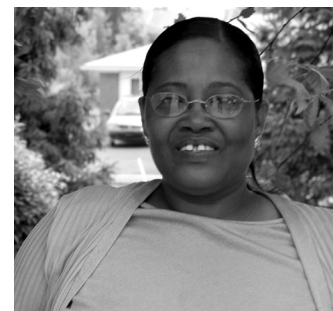
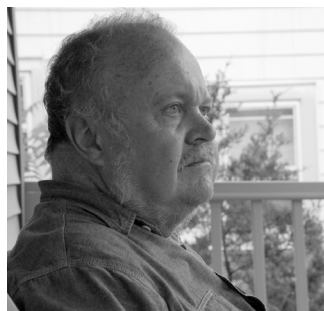
As we look ahead we must sharpen our focus to identify people with multiple and complex problems who are most in need of supportive housing. We must increase our engagement and efforts with a broader range of systems that are currently responsible for vulnerable people who are caught in costly patterns of sustained crises that include homelessness, repeated contact with hospitals, jails, and/or foster care, unemployment, and poorly-managed, disabling or life-threatening health conditions.

This increased focus “upstream” requires that we sustain and strengthen current leadership and commitments to invest in supportive housing and plans to end long-term homelessness. But we must also systematically and comprehensively engage new partners from other systems, including substance abuse, criminal justice, workforce, child welfare, veterans, foster care, aging and others. We must work together to identify vulnerable people who are at the greatest risk of homelessness, prolonged

crises, and high costs for ineffective public investments — and make supportive housing available as a better solution.

Carefully targeted, high quality supportive housing must be an integral part of the vision and strategies of national and community leaders who work to create stronger, safer, and healthier communities. This larger effort will require expanded partnerships to develop new resources, and to adapt, test, and increase investments in promising models of housing-based solutions that can achieve better outcomes.

Engaging new partners from these systems — and securing vital investments in more effective and accessible approaches to supportive services linked to housing opportunities — will require that we demonstrate the value of supportive housing in producing better outcomes for extremely high-need individuals and families while controlling costs and burdens to these systems. As we seek increased collaboration with this diverse set of systems, our efforts will remain focused on those people who are most in need of supportive housing — those who experience prolonged or repeated crises, who have physical disabilities, mental illness, chronic health conditions, substance use problems, and other barriers to a stable life and a home in the community. This strategy will enable us to identify and engage people who are at risk of homelessness, and ensure they are not added to the ranks.



## THE ROAD AHEAD: Reaching Our Destination

CSH has partnered with leaders at both the national and local levels to identify solutions and increase resources to end homelessness. As we expand our focus upstream we will concentrate our efforts and aim to achieve the following goals:

1. Reach the goal of creating 150,000 units of supportive housing for people experiencing long-term homelessness, allowing opportunities for hope, recovery, and a measure of self-sufficiency for thousands of people and a better quality of life in our communities.
2. Establish supportive housing as a successful intervention for some of the most vulnerable people with complex problems who are involved in mainstream systems — including corrections, substance abuse, child welfare, workforce, and veterans — and establish supportive housing as an integral element of healthy and safe communities.
3. Secure the necessary investments in supportive and affordable housing from public and private systems to ensure that housing-based solutions are available to those who most need them, with a focus on veterans, people with disabling or life-threatening chronic health problems, and families with children who are living at or near the poverty level.

# Building Broader Partnerships

Achieving these goals will require a concentrated, comprehensive, and sustained effort. As we work to sustain current investments in supportive housing, our efforts must also draw upon the leadership, experience, and resources of new partners in systems that have not often focused on homelessness or housing as essential elements of solutions to community problems that have been defined in other terms. We will increase our efforts to engage these larger public systems and embed supportive housing as an important component of efforts to achieve their mission and goals. Our engagement will focus on the following:

- Engaging criminal justice systems and corrections agencies to embed supportive housing as a component of re-entry initiatives, with a focus on directly linking people with serious health conditions and histories of homelessness to supportive housing when they exit incarceration.
- Engaging the child welfare system in order to plan for and support the transition of youth aging out of foster care, reunify families and prevent the entry of families into the child welfare system.
- Engaging with public housing authorities and the education system to support innovative housing solutions for families with children who have the greatest barriers to success and opportunity.
- Engaging the Department of Veterans Affairs and other veterans' systems and organizations to facilitate the connections between VA resources and supportive housing for homeless and at-risk veterans.
- Engaging the nation's workforce development system, and other employment organizations, to facilitate connections between workforce resources and supportive housing in order to provide work opportunities, support stabilization and recovery, help employers access the skills and employment potential of supportive housing tenants, and provide a high-quality workforce for jobs in supportive housing.
- Engaging the health care system, including Medicaid, hospitals, and other health care and treatment providers that come in contact with aging, disabled, and chronically ill adults in order to identify individuals who could most benefit from supportive housing, and integrate promising and evidence-based services for vulnerable adults with supportive housing as a strategy for improving health access and outcomes while controlling the growth in health expenditures.
- Engaging the private and philanthropic sectors in order to access human, technical, and financial resources to achieve our goals.

## Strategies For Advancing Our Goals

Moving forward, CSH and our partners will focus on a core set of strategies for achieving our goals, including the following:

- Cultivate and provide leadership to make supportive housing integral to a shared vision and community-wide strategies for building and sustaining safe, healthy, vibrant communities in which long-term homelessness continues to decline and ultimately is ended.
- Increase resources to create and sustain supportive and affordable housing, with a particular emphasis on supportive services linked to housing that enable people with the greatest barriers to stay housed and improve their lives, while reducing their reliance on crisis or institutional care.
- Integrate and coordinate investments for housing and services to use resources efficiently, align incentives with plans and goals, and make it possible to take supportive housing to a much larger scale.
- Align and strengthen commitments to significantly increase funding for rent subsidies and supportive housing operating costs to leverage capital investments and reduce the critical shortage of affordable housing opportunities for people with the lowest incomes.
- Renew funding for rental or operating subsidies and for supportive services in order to sustain the supportive housing that now exists.
- Invest in building the capacity of community development corporations, housing developers, and government and non-profit agencies to create and sustain high-quality supportive housing with innovative, cost-effective, and evidence-based services to produce better outcomes for people and communities.



- Integrate supportive housing and other housing-based solutions with existing services, supports and organizations in local communities that work to prevent homelessness.

Over the past decade, we have made great strides and established a solid track record to build upon. With the energy and strength of our existing partnerships and an eye to fostering new ones, CSH looks forward to meeting the challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities that lie ahead. Together, we will ensure that everyone who needs it has access to supportive housing.