

**Lancaster County Office of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services**

Basic Information Series Volume: MH-6

**For Information Call:**

Crisis Intervention: 717-394-2631

Mental Health Case Management 717-393-0421

Administration Unit: 717-299-8021

**Basic Information Series**

## **Permanent Housing for Adults with Mental Illness**

Adults with serious mental illness (SMI) sometimes have a difficult time finding or keeping housing. This may be the result of many situations such as returning to the community after time spent in inpatient treatment, being unable to get a credit referral, not having natural supports to stay with, or getting evicted from a previous housing situation. Some people may experience barriers to housing that are difficult to overcome such as low income, criminal history and/or poor landlord/tenant history.

As a result, adults with a mental illness may be at high risk for losing their housing and becoming homeless. Individuals at risk of becoming homeless include those who are “doubling up” by living with a friend or family member, facing potential eviction, living in unsafe or unaffordable living conditions.

In a few situations, adults with SMI may become homeless. These situations include living on the streets, in a homeless emergency shelter, in a homeless transitional shelter, or living in long-term institutional settings (includes Wernersville State Hospital, prison, a nursing care facility).

Lancaster County Office of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (BH/DS) has permanent housing programs along with services and resources dedicated to ensuring that adults with mental illness can access and maintain permanent housing.

All services and resources outlined in the fact sheet require the individual to be open with BH/DS or a contracted mental health case management organization. The supportive housing services and resources are prioritized for persons who are literally homeless or are

## **Supportive Housing Services**

### **Housing Search**

These services are designed to assist persons who do not currently have housing or are immediately at-risk for losing their housing in finding affordable and adequate permanent housing. Services are also available for people who may need to move due to health reasons or are having trouble finding safe, affordable housing on their own. Typically these services are offered on a more short term basis.

While the intent of these services are to assist in finding housing, many of these services provide up to 9 months of follow up after acquiring housing to increase an individual's success in permanent housing. Post-housing services are based upon an individual's needs and goals, but they may include budget assistance, landlord/tenant mediation, access to community resources for household goods, and assistance with learning public transportation.

### **Housing Maintenance**

These programs are designed for people experiencing difficulties with their current permanent housing situation. Sometimes people need assistance to include creating positive neighborhood and community relationships, mediating landlord relations, managing the household (cleanliness of home, budgeting, etc.), accessing community resources, and improving natural supports. While these services are based in the person's need, they are typically limited to 2 years.

*\*Additional Supportive Housing Services are described on the reverse side of this fact sheet*

## Additional Supportive Housing Services

### Housing Resources

At times, Lancaster County BH/DS has access to resources to provide first month's rent, security deposits, or bridge subsidies. BH/DS may also have access to financial resources to assist in purchasing a bed, paying utility deposits and other housing related financial needs. Need is based upon a financial and clinical assessment, and the referral is completed by the mental health case manager.

1. Living in place not meant for human habitation,
2. Living in an emergency shelter,
3. Moving from an institution that they have resided in for 90 days or less and was in situation 1 or 2 prior to entering the institution
4. Living in transitional housing and was in situation 1 or 2 prior to entering transitional housing.

### HUD Supportive Housing Program

Eligibility criteria for HUD's Supportive Housing Program is different than other programs. In order to be eligible, a person must be homeless as defined by HUD.

The individual must lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence meaning the individual is in one of the following situations:

They must also have an open record with Lancaster County BH/DS, and they must be an unaccompanied adult without families or children. In this long term subsidized housing situation, the individual is responsible to put 30 percent of their income toward rent. Individuals interested in this program should contact 2-1-1 for a CHART assessment in order to be prioritized for this program.

## How do I access these services?

The first step to accessing these services is for the person to contact their mental health case manager. The case manager will discuss with the individual their current housing situation, the resources they currently have, and the different options available to them. If the individual and the mental health case manager agree that a need is present and the individual voluntarily agrees to the support, the case manager will make a referral to the appropriate housing resource.

Once a referral is made, a determination will then be made if the person meets the criteria for the supportive housing service or

resource. If a person is not eligible for services or resources, other options might be offered that may include accessing other community and or natural resources to meet their needs.

It is important to note that often, a person will need to pay the majority of the housing costs.



## What about transportation?

Supportive Housing programs do not provide transportation, but if this is an issue for any individual, a mental health case manager may be able to assist in connecting to transportation services.

Supportive housing services will assist in accessing public transportation through goals as outlined in the individual's plan. This may include accessing Medical Assistance

Transportation Program (MATP) for medical appointments, purchasing monthly bus passes or reduced fare passes for public transportation, or connecting with a community resource that may be able to assist with transportation.

Additionally, individuals are encouraged to access their own natural and community resources to get transportation.

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