

HOUSING FIRST SUPPORTS PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Housing First is *the* most effective approach to ending homelessness for most individuals, including people with mental health disabilities.

Everything is harder without a home; living with a mental health condition is no exception. Ending homelessness requires states and localities to ensure that community-based housing options are available to everyone, regardless of whether you have a mental health condition. The Housing First model offers flexible options for people with mental health disabilities who are experiencing homelessness, so that they can live successfully in the community just like everyone else.

Through Housing First, a person with a mental health disability gains access to stable, affordable housing and a host of voluntary services to help them gain control over their own lives and create their own plans for recovery. Although this approach will be different for everyone, the goal is the same: to end homelessness and provide individuals and their families with support to achieve stability.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Supportive housing – a combination of affordable housing with voluntary, coordinated services – is a highly effective strategy for helping people with mental health disabilities who are experiencing homelessness achieve and maintain housing stability.

With supportive housing, people with mental health disabilities are able to live independently in their own homes and apartments in residential neighborhoods, with access to voluntary services like case management (including as provided through Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)), peer support services, substance use services, and supported employment. These services are highly flexible, and designed to meet each participant where they are. The flexibility to direct one's own treatment is a crucial part of an effective recovery process, helping participants find a path that helps them maintain both their housing and their health.

Research shows that supportive housing:

- **Effectively ends homelessness for people with mental health disabilities.** A large body of research shows that Housing First is the [most effective](#) way to help people with mental health disabilities become and stay stably housed.
- **Reduces costs.** Studies consistently show that providing permanent supportive housing following a Housing First model [reduces use](#) of far more costly resources, such as shelters, inpatient psychiatric hospitals, emergency rooms, and jails and prisons. In addition, supportive housing programs can make use of federal, state, and local housing vouchers, to help people with mental health conditions transition into already-available housing stock, or facilitate the development of newer affordable housing, rather than requiring investment in new facilities designed exclusively for people with mental health disabilities.
- **Leads to better treatment outcomes.** Multiple studies have shown that participation in supportive housing [improves](#) residents' mental health and their engagement in mental health treatment.

Learn more about supportive housing [here](#).

SCATTERED-SITE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

The Housing First model can be used to support scattered-site supportive housing, where people with mental health conditions experiencing homelessness can access affordable housing and desired services while living in the communities they choose and interacting with people without disabilities as much or as little as they want. Scattered-site supportive housing places individuals who have mental health disabilities and are experiencing homelessness into private market apartments scattered throughout a city or county, and throughout multi-unit developments. Supportive services are offered either on an outpatient basis in the community, or through providers who can visit the person's home to provide services.

Supportive housing in scattered sites allows participants to interact with people without disabilities, and engage in social activities and other activities of daily living in their local communities. In addition, scattered-site housing is important to help individuals with disabilities avoid the stigma that comes from being part of an identifiable, segregated mental health program.

The Housing First model, along with supports like supported employment and peer support services, gives people the opportunity to participate in neighborhood activities, join community organizations, volunteer, find and keep a job, live in stable housing, and successfully contribute to their communities

Learn more about the importance of scattered-site supportive housing [here](#).

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