

ASSURING QUALITY

*Implementing the Seven Dimensions
of Quality for Supportive Housing*



Albuquerque, NM

Boston, MA

Decatur, GA

Detroit, MI

Houston, TX

Irvine, CA

Portland, OR



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MetLife Foundation.

ABOUT THE CORPORATION FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) is a national nonprofit organization and community development financial institution that helps communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness. Founded in 1991, CSH advances its mission by providing advocacy, expertise, leadership, and financial resources to make it easier to create and operate supportive housing. CSH seeks to help create an expanded supply of supportive housing for people, including single adults, families with children, and young adults, who have extremely low-incomes, who have disabling conditions, and/or face other significant challenges that place them at on-going risk of homelessness. To learn more about CSH, please visit www.csh.org. For more information about CSH's consulting and training services, please visit www.csh.org/CSHConsultingGroup or contact the CSH Consulting Group at consulting@csh.org.

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INQUIRIES

To learn more about supportive housing, please visit www.csh.org for additional on-line resources and materials, including information regarding the communities in which we currently work. If you have questions or comments regarding this publication, please contact CSH at quality@csh.org. This document is available for free download at www.csh.org/publications and at www.csh.org/dimensionsofquality.

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OVERVIEW OF THE ASSURING QUALITY INITIATIVE: IMPLEMENTING *THE SEVEN DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING*

In 2009, CSH released a set of three publications to support the use of *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* quality framework by the supportive housing industry. Together, these three publications (available at www.csh.org/dimensionsofquality) provide definitions of each Dimension, descriptions of numerous indicators of quality, quality assessment tools and links to many additional resources.

CSH recognized, however, that many providers of supportive housing have very specific challenges with regard to the delivery of quality supportive housing and could benefit from specialized assistance to implement quality improvement strategies effectively. Some organizations have deep expertise in affordable housing development and operations, but less familiarity with serving special needs populations or coordinating with supportive services partners. Other organizations enter the supportive housing industry with extensive experience in the delivery of supportive services, but limited capacity or experience in housing operations. In other cases, experienced supportive housing operators enter into new partnerships or experience changes in their funding or regulatory environment, spurring the need for quality improvement in some aspect of their supportive housing operations. Some organizations experience growth that stretches their capacity. Still others are new to the supportive housing industry, and can benefit from the guidance offered by other organizations.

The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing

Dimension #1:
Administration, Management & Coordination

Dimension #2:
Physical Environment

Dimension #3:
Access to Housing & Services

Dimension #4:
Supportive Services Design & Delivery

Dimension #5:
Property & Asset Management

Dimension #6:
Tenant Rights, Input & Leadership

Dimension #7:
Data, Documentation & Evaluation

CSH strives to support supportive housing organizations in all stages of experience and organizational development. Through the *Assuring Quality Initiative (AQUI)*, CSH sought to implement a re-granting and capacity building initiative that featured:

- The provision of capacity-building grants to organizations operating supportive housing, to support their implementation of quality assurance strategies based upon the *Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* framework;
- The provision of training and technical assistance to the *AQUI* Grantee organizations by CSH staff with expertise in the *Seven Dimensions* framework;
- Documentation of the strategies, tools, and quality improvement practices implemented by the *AQUI* grantee organizations, to be disseminated by CSH throughout the supportive housing industry.

Through the *AQUI*, CSH provided grants of \$15,000 to each of seven grantees. These grant funds were intended to serve as a stimulus for the implementation of quality improvement activities over grant terms beginning in July 2010 and ending January 2011.

MetLife Foundation funds not only made the grants possible, but also supported the provision of technical assistance to the AQUI grantee organizations by staff from the CSH Consulting Group. CSH staff delivered technical assistance services through a combination of group conference calls, individualized conference calls, and through one in-person site visit with each grantee.

CSH selected the grantees through a Request for Proposal process. In selecting the grantees, CSH sought to support a geographically diverse set of grantees and prioritized organizations and partnerships that had not previously received significant technical assistance or training from CSH. CSH sought to provide grants to supportive housing providers or partnerships that committed both to launching quality improvement strategies for their supportive housing programs and to documenting and sharing their efforts, strategies, tools, and accomplishments with other organizations.

The seven grantees represent a diversity of supportive housing opportunities around the country:

- Caringworks, Inc. (Decatur, Georgia)
- Coalition on Temporary Shelter (Detroit, Michigan)
- Human Solutions (Portland, Oregon)
- Jamboree Housing Corporation (Irvine, California)
- Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (Boston, Massachusetts)
- Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico (Albuquerque, New Mexico)
- Temenos Community Development Corporation (Houston, Texas)

Each of the grantees completed self-assessments of their current alignment with each of the *Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing*, using a short assessment tool focused on “Key Indicators of Quality”, and then took a deeper look at one of the Dimensions, completing one or more of the comprehensive Assessment tools found in the publication [*The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing: Quality Assessment Tools*](#). CSH Staff from the Consulting and Training Group then worked with the organizations to create strategies for action, based on these assessment activities and the specific goals of the projects undertaken by the grantees.

This Summary Report documents the progress of each of the organizations that received an *Assuring Quality Initiative* grant, and also highlights important lessons that other organizations can learn from the grantees' quality improvement activities. Profiles of each of the *Assuring Quality Initiative* projects are provided, including descriptions of the specific quality improvement strategies that the grantees employed, lessons they learned, and links to sample documents that were created or revised during the implementation of their quality improvement projects.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ASSURING QUALITY INITIATIVE GRANTEEES

Additional information about the grantee organizations and their quality improvement projects can be found within the detailed project profiles beginning on page 6 of this Summary Report.

- **Caringworks, Inc. (Decatur, Georgia)**
CaringWorks, Inc. is a nonprofit social services agency that works in cooperation with developers, owners and property managers to deliver quality supportive housing and services. Working directly and through partnerships with other services providers, Caringworks coordinates and/or delivers supportive services in the metropolitan Atlanta area to over 1,200 low-income households each year. Caringworks is affiliated with Progressive Redevelopment, Inc. (PRI), the leading non-profit developer of affordable rental housing in Georgia.
- **Coalition on Temporary Shelter (Detroit, Michigan)**
The Coalition on Temporary Shelter (COTS) was founded in 1981 to address the crisis of homelessness in Detroit. In 1982, COTS was incorporated as a private, non-profit organization and shortly thereafter began the tradition of providing emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and comprehensive supportive housing and supportive services to homeless men, women and children of the City of Detroit.
- **Human Solutions (Portland, Oregon)**
Human Solutions' mission is to assist homeless and low-income families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency by providing affordable housing, family support services, job readiness training, and economic development opportunities. Each year, Human Solutions' services touch the lives of more than 10,000 low-income and homeless people throughout Mid and East Multnomah County, Oregon.
- **Jamboree Housing Corporation (Irvine, California)**
Jamboree Housing Corporation's mission is to create opportunity for their residents with the homes they build and the services they provide. Jamboree is an experienced non-profit housing developer with a large portfolio of affordable housing developments, including more than 6,500 units, but with a vision of continuing to increase the number of supportive housing units within their portfolio. Jamboree currently operates 54 units of supportive housing, including the 25-unit Diamond Apartments in Anaheim, California that opened in 2009.
- **Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (Boston, Massachusetts)**
MHSA is an independent, non-profit organization established by Greater Boston homeless providers and citizens seeking to create a coordinated strategy to end homelessness. Incorporated in 1988 as a planning and service coalition, MHSA represents over 90 community-based agencies operating more than 250 programs statewide that serve approximately 98 percent of all homeless individuals in Massachusetts. Along with its member agencies, MHSA educates about the plight of homeless people; advocates for strategic use of public dollars based on research and best practices; innovates approaches and technologies that provide more efficient and cost-effective solutions to homelessness; and collaborates with all levels of government and the private sector to engage the public imagination in the effort to end homelessness.
- **Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico (Albuquerque, New Mexico)**
The Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico's mission is to prevent and reduce homelessness and to increase the quality of life for people with behavioral health issues in New Mexico by creating affordable, supportive housing in partnership with local communities and member agencies. The

Supportive Housing Coalition is a non-profit development organization and currently provides more than 350 units of housing created through new construction, property acquisition, rehabilitation, management, and the administration of tenant based rental assistance vouchers, including three (3) new construction projects completed in 2010.

- **Temenos Community Development Corporation (Houston, Texas)**

The Temenos Community Development Corporation was founded in 2005 to help revitalize a struggling area of Houston by promoting low-and-moderate income housing for individuals seeking to end homelessness and make progress toward sustainable independent living. The inaugural supportive housing project for Temenos CDC was the Knowles-Temenos Place Apartments, which opened in 2009 and houses 43 formerly homeless individuals.

LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE INITIATIVE

Each of the *Assuring Quality Initiative* projects was unique, and addressed different aspects of quality in supportive housing. In some way, however, each of the organizations demonstrated a strong commitment to ongoing improvement by engaging in the sometimes difficult process of honest self-assessment that results in the identification of effective quality improvement strategies. As a group, the grantees reported many commonalities regarding the implementation of quality improvement activities. In particular, several themes emerged:

- **Communication and coordination are the building blocks of quality supportive housing.** Several grantees used the AQUI funds to reconvene meetings that had previously been sporadic or non-existent. Numerous improvements to staffing patterns, data sharing practices, policies and procedures and program design were the result of simply being in greater communication with partners.
- **Doing the right work, at the right time, may make all the difference.** One organization made the salient point that too often quality improvement efforts are created in response to a crisis situation, when solutions need to be very narrowly focused, often need to be generated quickly to “put out the fire” and when tensions among staff are likely to flare up. However, taking the time to approach the same problem when there is not a crisis looming, allows staff to feel less defensive, allows time for partners to look at broader issues and to think more creatively, and allows staff with differing viewpoints to consider the big picture. In this environment, partners can align around shared commitments (such as ensuring safety for staff and tenants) rather than arguing about specific circumstances and responsibilities.
- **Policies and procedures matter.** Three grantees used a portion of their grant funds to conduct a thorough review of their operating policies and procedures. Most found at least a short list of necessary policies were either non-existent, or needed to be updated. Some found that policies existed, but had never been put into a formal written format. Some also found that their policies had unintended negative consequences for tenants, which needed to be corrected. Each of the three organizations found that the time spent reviewing policies and procedures was a good investment of their time and resources, which resulted in many concrete improvements in day-to-day operations.
- **Streamlined, reliable data collection processes and systems allow organizations to take quality improvement to the next level.** Four grantees grappled with creating outcomes measurement, monitoring and reporting systems that would fulfill reporting requirements for multiple funders, but also yield useful information for the organization. These organizations saw clearly the need for solid data to

guide their quality improvement efforts, manage day-to-day operations, advocate for continued or expanded funding and meet obligations to funders and regulatory entities. While each of the grantees is at a slightly different stage with regards to data and outcomes collection, those with more sophisticated, reliable and comprehensive data systems have been able to leverage that information to address more complex issues, and can analyze their data to ask – and answer – tough questions.

- **Times of rapid growth and organizational change may spur a need for quality improvement.** At least three grantees found that mergers with other organizations, or multiple new partnerships, resulted in a significant need for enhanced coordination and communication, between partners. Unexpected growth within a single organization may also result in gaps in policies and procedures, which leave staff wondering what is “supposed” to happen in the new environment. While it is natural that new challenges and issues will arise, it will be important to keep an eye on quality, during these times.
- **Bringing in a third party can provide objectivity and supplement staff capacity.** Several of the grantees used consultants to guide some aspect of their quality improvement work. One consultant helped facilitate a staff-driven Performance Improvement Committee, another consultant helped to develop logic models, and yet another consultant conducted sophisticated data analysis. Realistically assessing what can and cannot be accomplished in-house may be an important step in developing effective quality improvement strategies. In addition to appreciating the expertise that the consultants provided, the grantees also found that bringing in a neutral third party often created a safe environment where all stakeholders could feel heard and could constructively contribute.
- **Celebrating organizational strengths and successes is important.** Often, quality improvement efforts are focused on addressing thorny issues that may have negative consequences if they are not addressed. However, quality improvement activities can also help organizations understand the areas where they are strong and are making a positive impact. Acknowledging the good work done in supportive housing important for staff morale and encourages staff to move forward, even when their work is extremely challenging. Leaders within several grantee organizations expressed appreciating the opportunity to share the *Seven Dimensions* framework with their staff. Said one, “... [it] was gratifying for the staff to discover the thoroughness and quality of their work and to be able to build upon these successes.” One grantee also noted that initiating discussions about organizational strengths and successes is one way that organizations can help to create a “culture of quality improvement” within their programs.
- **Keeping one’s mission in mind helps to guide quality improvement activities.** Given the many constraints on staffs time and resources, it is sometimes necessary to pick and choose among many issues of quality that organizations would like to address. However, keeping the end goal in mind helps organizations to select the quality improvement strategies that will allow them to impact what is most important to them. One grantee hired an evaluator who repeatedly asked staff, “What do you want to accomplish, and why?” Similarly, every organization can ask, “Are we fulfilling our mission?” and implement quality improvement strategies accordingly.

PROFILE #1: CARINGWORKS, INC.

Decatur and the metropolitan Atlanta region, Georgia

INTRODUCTION TO THE GRANTEE

CaringWorks, Inc. is a nonprofit social services agency that works in cooperation with developers, owners and property managers to deliver quality supportive housing and services. Caringworks' mission is to improve the quality of life for low-income households and families by helping to increase their ability to be personally and economically self-sufficient.

Working directly and through partnerships with other services providers, Caringworks coordinates and/or delivers supportive services in the metropolitan Atlanta area to over 1,200 low-income households each year. Caringworks is affiliated with Progressive Redevelopment, Inc. (PRI), the leading non-profit developer of affordable rental housing in Georgia.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

As an experienced services provider, Caringworks had already achieved a high degree of alignment with *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* at the beginning of the grant period. However, the organization's President/CEO wished to strengthen the organization's ability to gather and use tenant input in meaningful ways, and to develop a Performance Improvement Plan, specifically focusing on strengthening and streamlining Caringworks' data and outcomes collection processes.

Two indicators of quality were the focus of their quality improvement efforts:

Dimension #6, Key Indicator #4: All involved organizations actively seek tenant input in decision-making at their highest organizational levels, support tenants in forming tenant councils, and meet regularly with any tenant-led organizations.

Dimension #7, Key Indicator #2: A quality improvement plan is in place to monitor and improve the projects' overall quality, on an ongoing basis, describes how input is regularly obtained from tenants, involved organizations, funders, and other relevant stakeholders, and includes relevant performance goals for both supportive services and property management activities.

STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

The *Assuring Quality Initiative* grant funds provided the opportunity for Caringworks to strengthen their ability to obtain meaningful input from tenants and to provide leadership roles for tenants and former tenants. Towards this end, Caringworks created a multifaceted approach to increasing tenant involvement which included the following objectives:

- Promote expansion of a tenant Alumni group, in order to expand resident involvement in programming and provide opportunities for former residents to engage in community service.
- Identify two qualified Board members to represent the tenant constituency
- Launch a Resident Advisory Board
- Support the participation of both staff and former tenants in Peer Specialist certification.

During the grant period, Caringworks worked on achieving these goals simultaneously, with different tasks assigned to different staff members. The results were impressive. New members were recruited for the

Alumni group and the alumni group expanded from serving one housing site, to serving all of the Caringworks housing sites. The Caringworks Alumni group conducts regular social events, such as attending baseball games or holding barbecues, but also engages in regular service activities, such as volunteering in shelters and “adopting” a family for Christmas. The Alumni group participants express that it’s important to stay in touch with former tenants, so that tenants don’t have to choose between remaining a part of the community and moving to more independent housing. They also believe that tenants who have moved out of supportive housing can provide invaluable guidance and support to tenants who are still in supportive housing.

A new constituent board member was voted on to the board in December 2010. At the end of the grant period, CaringWorks staff were still searching for a second constituent board member, but felt it was more important to find the right person, than to meet their self-imposed timeline. The first new board member agreed to help launch the Resident Council and to also support the reinvigorated Alumni group. In addition, one staff member and one former tenant completed the Peer Certification process during the grant period, and two more former tenants were scheduled to complete this certification, shortly after the grant period ended.

With regards to their focus on the second indicator of quality, Caringworks charged their staff-led Performance Improvement committee with creating a new performance improvement plan, which was to emphasize strategies for creating more user friendly processes for data collection and outcomes analysis. Like many organizations, Caringworks found that they were spending a large amount of time reporting to multiple funders, each of whom had different requirements.

To address this challenge, Caringworks hired a consultant to guide the Performance Improvement committee and to help them streamline their reporting processes. Ultimately, Caringworks chose to purchase new software (called Efforts to Outcomes) which allows staff to enter case management notes and program documentation, but which also monitors outcomes for the programs. Staff are hopeful that this software will elevate Caringworks’ ability to collect, monitor and analyze data. Caringworks also hired a new staff member to manage the new software and the newly designed data collection system and began to train staff on the new software, in March 2010.

The performance improvement committee did complete their Performance Improvement plan, which was subsequently approved by the President and Board. Caringworks staff expressed that they feel they have made significant progress towards incorporating an emphasis on quality improvement into their agency culture.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Take the time to recruit effective Tenant representatives.** Tenants or former tenants who are asked to become Board members must have certain skills and capacities in order to participate in a meaningful way, and be able to fully understand the work of the Board, as well as their responsibilities. Caringworks was careful to avoid “tokenism” and took the time to thoughtfully identify leaders with the right mix of skills and experiences to effectively represent the tenant constituency.
- **Create outcomes measures thoughtfully.** Caringworks focused on establishing outcomes that relate to both the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. They also created a process for tracking client progress over time using scores from LOCUS and GAIN functional assessments. Caringworks recommends that other organizations take the time to first look at who they are and what they want to accomplish, before creating outcomes measures.

- **Consider bringing in a neutral party to facilitate quality improvement efforts.** Caringworks created a staff-driven committee to focus on improving services and agency processes, but chose to have this committee facilitated by a third party in order to enhance objectivity and focus. They also found that working with a consultant allowed them to take a step back to evaluate their own program and re-evaluate the kind of organization that they wanted to be, and what they wanted to achieve. They reported that the consultant helped them think about the kinds of questions that they wanted to be able to answer, and why those questions were (or weren't) important. They also found that the consultant helped them to engage staff in the quality improvement process.

RESOURCES

- [Training Calendar](#)
- [Resident Advisory Council Charter](#)

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PROFILE #2: COALITION ON TEMPORARY SHELTER (COTS)

Detroit, Michigan

INTRODUCTION TO THE GRANTEE

The mission of the Coalition on Temporary Shelters (COTS) is to alleviate homelessness by providing shelter, meals, and an array of services that enable people to achieve self-sufficiency and obtain quality affordable housing. COTS also exists to advocate for long-term solutions to the problems of homelessness.

The Coalition on Temporary Shelter (COTS) was founded in 1981 to address the crisis of homelessness in Detroit. In 1982, COTS was incorporated as a private, non-profit organization and shortly thereafter began the tradition of providing emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and comprehensive supportive housing and comprehensive supportive services to homeless men, women and children of the City of Detroit.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

COTS focused its grant-funded quality improvement efforts on *Dimension #7: Data, Documentation, and Evaluation*. Having already adopted the Housing First model, COTS engaged a consultant to oversee a comprehensive project focused on incorporating the Housing First model into every aspect of their supportive housing. The multi-faceted project included: interviews with staff, client, and Board members; a review of the organization's current 2008-2011 Strategic Plan; assessment of clients' needs; research into best practices; evaluation of current program and administrative objectives; analysis of funding sources' expectations and grant requirements; creation of a Monitoring Committee; determination of suitable measurement instruments; and determination of appropriate data collection and analysis procedures. Ultimately, the organization created logic models for both their permanent supportive housing and transitional housing programs, and created a "measurement framework", containing immediate and long-term goals for the PSH program.

STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

COTS issued an RFP for a consultant and were pleased to quickly engage a very qualified candidate. The consultant began the project by using *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* to assess the organization's supportive housing projects across each of the Dimensions. The Chief Operating Officer and the Grant Compliance Director also participated in this assessment, which helped them hone in on areas needing improvement.

Directors of the PSH and Transitional Housing programs met with the consultant multiple times, both in groups and individually, to identify and prioritize areas for inclusion in the logic models. All aspects of the programs were reviewed thoroughly to create the logic models. The consultant then drew up quality assurance plans based upon the logic models and identified areas of focus. As drafts were drawn up, meetings took place in which plans were reviewed and refined as appropriate with input from administrators, directors, and program staff.

These processes helped them to identify – and address – several issues which had not been previously noted at the organization. They discovered that they were in need of an updated Tenant Satisfaction survey, which has since been drafted. They also discovered that many policies were in place and were being followed, but had not been 'formalized' in a policy manual. Some procedural issues were also revisited. For example, they found that their intake form contained many of the same items that are also

part of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This led to a re-examination of the in-take form, which is now being modified to eliminate questions in common with the HMIS Intake. This will greatly streamline intake procedures and save time for staff and clients.

The Housing First philosophy has been successfully incorporated into COTS program logic models and into the corresponding Quality Assurance plans. These tools will allow COTS to determine the effectiveness of the Housing First model in their Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing programs.

Going forward, the comprehensive process made possible by the AQUI grant will be used as a template for further development of logic models and quality assurance plans in other programs, including administration, going forward for the development of a new strategic plan. One staff member said, "The results will endure far beyond the grant period, as information and process can be duplicated to develop other QA plans and utilize them as a foundation for moving forward with future strategic planning." The implementation of the program evaluation and quality improvement processes will be monitored by the Human Services Committee of the Board of Directors, who will report the results to the Board.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Talk about what your staff and organization are doing right.** COTS was pleased to note that the assessment of their alignment with the Seven Dimensions identified many areas of organizational strength. They noted that this is important to discuss with all staff, since a discussion about what works supports the creation of a "culture of quality improvement".
- **Quality improvement activities can help drive strategic planning.** COTS staff believe their Quality Improvement Plan will inform the organization's next strategic planning process beyond 2011 (the organization is currently operating under their 2008-2011 Strategic Plan). COTS Board of Directors has a Quality Improvement Sub-Committee, which will help to integrate what is being learned through quality improvement activities, into strategic planning efforts.
- **Streamline data collection forms whenever possible.** COTS discovered that their paper intake form was duplicative of their electronic HMIS system forms. They are now using just the electronic intake, and adding a few key questions from the intake form, which will greatly reduce staff's time to complete the forms.

RESOURCES

- [COTS Permanent Supportive Housing Logic Model](#)
- [PSH Measurement Framework](#)
- [COTS Tenant Satisfaction Survey](#)

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PROFILE #3: HUMAN SOLUTIONS

Portland and Multnomah County, Oregon

INTRODUCTION TO THE GRANTEE

Human Solutions' mission is to assist homeless and low-income families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency by providing affordable housing, family support services, job readiness training, and economic development opportunities. Each year, Human Solutions' services touch the lives of thousands of low-income and homeless people throughout Mid and East Multnomah County, Oregon. Human Solutions provides four key programs to help people attain self-sufficiency:

1. **Homelessness Services:** Human Solutions provides emergency shelter, transitional housing, "Housing First," and permanent supportive housing for homeless households. Human Solutions currently provides shelter or housing to more than 525 people in more than 175 homeless households *each night*. Homeless households participating in Human Solutions' housing programs work with professional staff to create an individualized action plan to ensure they receive the services needed to escape homelessness. More than 80% of the households served by Human Solutions are homeless women with young children.
2. **Affordable Housing:** Human Solutions owns and operates 14 affordable housing complexes containing 539 apartments. At each one of these apartment complexes they provide Resident Services programming to help families and individuals maintain stability by connecting them to community resources and help empower youth to reach their full potential.
3. **Employment Programs:** Human Solutions provides employment programs so each year hundreds of wage earners can find jobs and/or improve their job skills to increase their household incomes.
4. **Prevention Services:** Each year, Human Solutions helps approximately 9,000 households by providing utility assistance to prevent shut-offs, allowing people to be safe and warm in their homes. In order to prevent more people from becoming homeless, they also help more than 330 households with eviction notices remain in their homes each year by providing emergency rent assistance.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Human Solutions (HSI) focused its quality improvement efforts on *Dimension #1: Administration, Management and Coordination*, and *Dimension #7: Data, Documentation and Evaluation*. HSI sought to strengthen its administrative capacity to oversee its relationships with property managers, resident services, and case management services, in order to improve tenant outcomes. Specific goals included: to create improved protocols to improve collaboration among resident services, property management, case management and partner agency service staff; to improve tracking of tenant progress through changes to tenant files; to improve financial forms and files to ensure stronger fiscal compliance; and to create an organization-wide Performance Improvement plan. Human Solutions also wished to create more streamlined data and outcome collection processes, in order to be able to evaluate the program's long-term impact on supportive housing tenants.

STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

HSI used the AQUI funds to expand the role of their Quality Assurance Coordinator, in order to accomplish these goals. To this end, staff first conducted a review of their alignment with *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing*, using CSH's Quality Assessment tools for *Dimension of Quality #1: Administration, Management & Coordination* and *Dimension #7: Data, Documentation & Evaluation*. Human Solutions staff then developed a [Quality Improvement Action Plan](#) informed by the self-assessment process, and used it to guide their activities throughout the grant period.

Human Solutions found that they had neglected putting in place some key policies and procedures, as well as various organizational documents, due to the rapid growth of their organization. They began developing schedules for reviewing and updating their policies and procedures, performance improvement plans and the Memorandum of Understanding delineating the roles and responsibilities for all involved organizations and staff. They also identified some specific policies that were needed, staff training needs, the need for updated job descriptions and the need for better input mechanisms to gather feedback from tenants.

Clear responsibilities and specific timelines were assigned to various staff across different departments. As a result, the team addressed every goal that they had set out to achieve during the grant period, as described in their Quality Improvement Action Plan. Additionally, Human Solutions created a Housing Department manual which contains the forms that were developed or improved upon during the implementation of their quality improvement project, as well as other forms, policies and procedures that were already in place. They developed a new tenant satisfaction survey that will be mailed out to tenants on a yearly basis and expanded the use of a survey that is given to clients exiting their programs. Additional details about HSI's accomplishments are provided within HSI's Quality Improvement Action Plan.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Communication is the key.** While HSI's Permanent Supportive Housing team (comprised of asset management, resident services, supportive services and property management staff) had been meeting periodically, this grant allowed them to meet more frequently. They found that meetings which had previously focused on 'problems of the moment' began to be used to discuss 'larger' issues. As a result, they identified - and addressed - a number of issues that directly impacted tenants' outcomes.
- **Put policies and procedures in writing.** While neither the most interesting nor compelling part of supportive housing operations, policies and procedures have practical implications for the daily and long-term operation of supportive housing and the delivery of services to tenants. Human Solutions realized that some policies that had been verbally communicated to staff but had not been put in writing; they realized that if there was staff turnover, they would lose their institutional memory regarding their own policies and procedures. They reported, "Working through *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* and the QI Action Plan gave us the opportunity to see how important it is to have a well written and easily accessible written foundation of policies."
- **Review policies and procedures from Tenants' perspective.** During the process of meeting with partners to coordinate their work, HSI discovered that tenants were being charged a fee to break a lease, even when those tenants wished to move from transitional housing to permanent supportive housing operated by their own organization. The fee (which has since been discontinued) discouraged tenants from moving into permanent housing. HSI realized that there may be unintended policy consequences for tenants that staff do not anticipate or observe. They now regularly ask the question, "How can our policies harm the tenants and how could our policies be changed to help them?"

RESOURCES

- [Human Solutions' Quality Improvement Action Plan](#)
- Click to view new [Human Solutions policies and procedures](#), including:
 - Policy on Staff Access to Tenant Records
 - Hiring and Training of Residents as Paid Staff and/or Volunteers
 - Incident Report Policy Procedures
 - PSH Resident Complaint Policy
 - Resident Complaint Form
 - Schedule of PSH Events/Tasks
 - Annual Training for Social Services and Resident Services Staff

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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PROFILE #4: JAMBOREE HOUSING CORPORATION

Irvine, California

INTRODUCTION TO THE GRANTEE

Jamboree Housing Corporation's mission is to create opportunity for their residents with the homes they build and the services they provide. Jamboree is an experienced non-profit housing developer with a large portfolio of affordable housing developments, including more than 6,500 units, but with a vision of continuing to increase the number of supportive housing units within their portfolio. Jamboree currently operates 54 units of supportive housing, including the 25-unit Diamond Apartments in Anaheim, California that opened in 2009.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Jamboree Housing focused its grant-funded quality improvement efforts on *Dimension #1: Administration, Management and Coordination*; *Dimension #5: Property Management and Asset Management*; and *Dimension #7: Data, Documentation, and Evaluation*. In particular, Jamboree's efforts were focused on implementing new software to better manage their housing financing records and asset management documents; strengthening ongoing communications with service delivery partners; and creating agreements with services partners regarding tracking of tenant outcomes, which would protect tenant confidentiality but allow essential information to be shared.

STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

Jamboree first tackled making the funding documents for all of its properties available online, in a secure web-based application. For each of the 65 properties in which Jamboree has an ownership interest, there are multiple layers of public and private financing, each with application binders several inches thick, with documents of varied lengths. Moreover, not all of the documents were readily available to the Development, Finance or Asset Management Departments. To this end Jamboree invested in software and several hundred hours of staff time to upload documents to ensure that all of their properties' documents are located in one secure area so that all staff can easily access them, which they believe will enable them to perform Asset Management functions more effectively. In addition, all regulatory and other essential documents were placed onto the secure server in one location.

The AQUI grant also provided Jamboree with the opportunity to convene a stakeholder group, in order to ensure that services were being provided in the most efficient and effective way possible, at the Diamond Apartments. Jamboree and HOMES are co-general partners, and they contract with John Stuart Company to provide on-site management at the Diamond Apartments. The County has contracted Telecare to provide services there, but as Telecare has no contractual relationship to the property ownership, they had not yet developed effective protocols for communicating about issues regarding the residents served. A staff person from the CSH Consulting group facilitated the stakeholder's meeting, which was attended by field and supervisory staff from Jamboree, HOMES, Telecare, the John Stuart Company, Orange County Mental Health, and the City of Anaheim.

As a result of the stakeholder meeting, several practical steps were taken to improve the quality of the project. The partners established bi-weekly on-site team meetings to discuss resident services issues. Staff also created a standard format for the meeting agenda to ensure consistency. The agenda includes a review of each resident's status, so that staff can discuss and proactively address any behavioral issues and work together to prevent evictions. The staffing of the project was also reviewed and some staffing

changes resulted. The meeting was also an opportunity for the supportive housing partner organizations to share with representatives of the County and City how some of their regulatory requirements impact supportive housing operations, on a day-to-day basis.

Jamboree reported that, "... the stakeholder meeting enabled us to pull in all of the Resident Services and policy making stakeholders in a way that was safe for all to participate. It was good to have a neutral third party there to listen and provide other practical examples of successful partnerships in other parts of the state and country" and that, "...all parties felt that their role and considerations for how they go about their particular service were heard without criticism, and it enabled us to take the conversation to a good and productive place."

Jamboree's final goal was to come to an agreement with services partners regarding what tenant information should and should not be shared, and to create a method for appropriately monitoring tenant outcomes. Jamboree was able to document simple outcomes such as household size, income, length of tenancy, but did not have access to more clinical information. They hoped to begin a dialogue with service delivery partner Telecare that would result in a better understanding of the needs of the residents. Several CSH staff provided some technical assistance regarding what may and may not be shared, according to HIPAA and other regulations, and suggested some approaches to determining what information is shared. While this conversation continues, progress has been made towards ensuring that a) tenants rights are not violated b) information is only shared on a "need to know" basis and that c) discussions between housing and services providers will focus on discussing tenants' *behaviors*, rather than their diagnostic profiles and other clinical characteristics. Jamboree also drafted a reporting template, on which each services partner will report outcomes for their programs.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Review the frequency and flow of communications among partners.** During the stakeholder meeting, it became apparent that while upper level managers were frequently conversing with partners about clear expectations, sometimes on-site staff did not receive the same communications. The partners also established the need for pro-active discussion about tenant issues, among partners.
- **Address tough issues in a neutral setting.** Jamboree reported that asking a neutral party (in this case, CSH) to facilitate their stakeholders meeting allowed every partner to feel heard and created a productive working environment.
- **Invest in the infrastructure that will make daily operations more efficient.** While the purchase and implementation of their new software required both money and time, Jamboree felt that this investment paid off, resulting in greater staff efficiency and stronger compliance practices.

RESOURCES

- [Resident Services Coordination Reporting Template](#)

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PROFILE #5: MASSACHUSETTS HOUSING AND SHELTER ALLIANCE (MHSA)

Boston, Massachusetts

INTRODUCTION TO THE GRANTEE

MHSA is an independent, non-profit 501(c) 3 organization established by Greater Boston homeless providers and citizens seeking to create a coordinated strategy to end homelessness. Incorporated in 1988 as a planning and service coalition, MHSA represents over 90 community-based agencies that serve approximately 98 percent of all homeless individuals in Massachusetts. Along with its member agencies, MHSA educates about the plight of homeless people; advocates for strategic use of public dollars based on research and best practices; innovates approaches and technologies that provide more efficient and cost-effective solutions to homelessness; and collaborates with all levels of government and the private sector to engage the public imagination in the effort to end homelessness.

MHSA designed Massachusetts' statewide Housing First program, *Home & Healthy for Good*. MHSA collaborates with fourteen (14) of its member agencies who provide the housing and intensive case management services for tenants. Together, they have provided housing and services to more than 430 chronically homeless persons since 2006. MHSA is responsible for administrative oversight, data collection and program evaluation of *Home & Healthy for Good*.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

MHSA focused its grant-funded quality improvement efforts on *Dimension #4: Supportive Services Design and Delivery* and *Dimension #7: Data, Documentation and Evaluation*. MHSA addressed aspects of both of these Dimensions by designing and conducting an evaluation of the services provided by the organizations within the *Home & Healthy for Good* program. The evaluation focused on comparing the services delivery practices, service costs, and tenant outcomes across 12 organizations. The goal of the evaluation was to determine the most effective services models and practices throughout the *Home & Healthy for Good* program, in order to support the replication of those models and practices. By comparing service components by program with the outcomes by program, MHSA hoped to determine the service components that are most strongly associated with successful programs. Another goal was to be able to model the baseline costs associated with the effective implementation of permanent supportive housing, so that this data could be used to support advocacy efforts.

STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

A lead consultant from Root Cause was engaged to conduct the evaluation, and was assisted with the data analysis by a group of analysts called Public Service Economics. The team's analytic activities focused on identifying the components of the services provided that are most associated with tenant success and were designed to help answer important questions, such as: Are integrated systems of service more effective than intensive on-site services? Are there certain critical services that must be linked to all supportive housing? What is the key determinant of successful services delivery?

In order to answer these questions, the evaluators used three primary strategies:

- 1) Review comprehensive data on the HHG organizations to determine the services model utilized by each, the associated costs, and corresponding tenant outcomes (including housing retention rates as reported by providers, and various quality of life measures, as reported by tenants) for each organization.

- 2) Conduct interviews with provider organizations to better understand their service delivery practices.
- 3) Ask the HHG organizations to complete a short self-assessment of their alignment with “Key Indicators of Quality”, from the *Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing*.

These strategies were implemented in consecutive order, with evaluators first conducting the administrative data review, gathering baseline data for all agencies related to costs, funding and housing retention of tenants. An initial analysis of types of services and varying retention rates was charted.

Further interviews were then conducted to more closely examine the delivery service model implemented at each organization. The interviews focused more directly upon both the experience of providers and tenants, helped to clarify issues highlighted by the data, and allowed the providers to explain the unique challenges and opportunities within their programs. In this stage, the evaluators were able to create a description of the service networks that had been developed within each program. The evaluators also compared the results of the Seven Dimensions self-assessment tools to the results of these interviews.

Finally, the evaluators created a more in-depth analysis, integrating the information gathered during site visits, the on-site interviews, and the self-assessment forms provided by each organization. This analysis was compiled into a final report. MHSA plans to use the report to create an assessment checklist, which will be used by the HHG providers to review the design and delivery of their supportive services programs.

The evaluation process and review of the report data has already helped MHSA identify several areas across the Home & Healthy for Good program, where quality improvement efforts could strengthen the system. In particular, MHSA sees a need for the HHG system to work on successfully reengaging tenants into the community, once they have been stabilized in housing, and are moving forward on a “Work First” initiative.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Good data is essential if you want to be able to ask - and answer - tough questions over time.** MHSA and Root Cause recommend that programs build strong data collection practices, at the very outset of program operations. The project undertaken by MHSA was only possible because they had an existing database with comprehensive historic data on all tenants within the *Home & Healthy for Good* program, since the beginning of the program. MHSA emphasizes that having good data is essential not only for understanding programs, however, but is also essential to be able to successfully communicate about – and advocate for - supportive housing.
- **Skilled, committed front-line staff are essential for the achievement of positive tenant outcomes.** One of the main findings of the evaluation was the importance of having competent staff that were willing and able to build strong relationships with tenants, and help them connect to community resources. This insight was underscored by the interviews conducted by the evaluator, which made clear that the quality of the relationship between the staff and tenants was more important than the provision of any specific services.
- **Don't forget to think about what it will take to maintain quality over time.** The evaluator noted that even when a relatively high level of quality has been achieved by a specific organization, program quality may eventually suffer if there is staff turnover or other program changes. Therefore, building in the organizational supports to maintain quality in a variety of circumstances is important.

RESOURCES

- [Quality in Supportive Housing - Final Report](#)

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PROFILE #6: SUPPORTIVE HOUSING COALITION OF NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque, New Mexico

INTRODUCTION TO THE GRANTEE

The Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico's mission is to prevent and reduce homelessness and to increase the quality of life for people with behavioral health issues in New Mexico by creating affordable, supportive housing in partnership with local communities and member agencies.

The Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico, Inc. (SHC-NM) is a private, non-profit affordable housing development organization formed in 1996 in response to a growing recognition by local service providers that there was a community-wide gap in safe and affordable housing for homeless and near-homeless individuals with behavioral health issues. Since that time, SHC-NM has grown to provide housing to over 500 households in New Mexico and has assisted an additional 1,100 households avoid or escape homelessness through the administration of a housing assistance and eviction prevention fund. SHC-NM currently provides more than 350 units of housing created through new construction, property acquisition, rehabilitation, management, and the administration of tenant-based rental assistance vouchers.

The agency continues to experience exciting and challenging organizational growth. In 2010, SHC-NM completed three new construction projects totaling 153 units, one in rural Las Vegas (NM) and two in downtown Albuquerque. The latter two projects combine affordable, mixed-income units, innovative sustainable green elements and award-winning design. SHC-NM currently has additional projects in various stages of development totaling 130 apartment homes throughout New Mexico.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

SHC-NM focused its quality improvement efforts on *Dimension #1: Administration, Management & Coordination*; *Dimension #3: Access to Housing & Services*; and *Dimension #5: Property & Asset Management*. Specific goals included: creating consistent administrative policies and procedures to guide property management, maintenance, and supportive services activities at numerous housing sites; strengthening policies and procedures for screening potential tenants, in order to ensure that procedures are designed to reduce barriers to housing for the target populations and are compliant with Fair Housing laws and the Americans with Disabilities Act; strengthening their administrative infrastructure by implementing new property management software and accounting software packages, and corresponding written policies; and supporting the skills and development of the agency's growing staff through training in best practices for supportive housing.

STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

SHC-NM began their project by completing four of the Quality Assessment tools (contained within [*The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing: Quality Assessment Tools*](#)). The Executive Director and staff found this process extremely helpful for identifying the practices and policies that had not yet been put in place. They used the process to create a list of specific policies that they wished to put in place during the grant period. They also used their self-assessment to create a Quality Improvement Action plan, specifically focused on issues of Property and Asset Management.

SHC-NM was able to complete nearly all of their objectives. One major challenge was encountered during the implementation process when the organization's Asset Manager resigned. This vacancy slowed the process of creating an Operations manual, but also reinforced for the agency how important it is to have policies and procedures in written format, which encouraged the organization to move forward with the

project. SHC-NM has since filled the vacancy and is working on completing the manual with their new staff. Maintenance policies have been drafted, and a new Accounting Policies and Procedures manual was sent to the Board for final approval.

Another significant achievement was the implementation of new accounting and property management software (MIP and OneSite), across the organization. Previously, the organization had different data elements being provided by each of their property management organizations in different communities. Investing in the software has enhanced SHC-NM's ability to do consistent data tracking, grant reporting, and implement good accounting practices with internal controls, across all properties.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Rapid growth requires having standardized, clear policies and procedures for all partners.** As an owner, operator and developer of supportive housing in communities across New Mexico, the SHC-NM engages multiple for-profit property management companies to manage some of their properties. They found that each of these organizations had different resident screening standards and processes, which prompted them to develop a standardized resident screening policy that could be used across all SHC-NM properties.
- **Identifying areas of strength and success is encouraging to staff.** SHC-NM found that completing the Quality Assessment Tools helped highlight some of the areas where SHC-NM was already doing well, and gave the agency an opportunity to reflect on its success. As they said in their final report, "Although we identified areas in need of improvement, the completion of the Quality Assessment Tools also highlighted some of our strengths. SHC-NM learned that the physical environment and tenant access to housing and services are areas that we average fairly high scores on. Completing these tools gave us the opportunity to reflect on areas where the agency has developed to a standard that we can be proud of."
- **Making the time for quality improvement work can be challenging, but is essential.** The Grants Manager expressed that while it was sometimes challenging to fit quality improvement activities into staffs' busy schedules, that ultimately not doing the work would have had multiple negative impacts on the organization's day-to-day operations.

RESOURCES

- [SHC-NM Fiscal Policies and Procedures](#)

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PROFILE #7: TEMENOS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Houston, Texas

INTRODUCTION TO THE GRANTEE

The Temenos Community Development Corporation was founded in 2005 to help revitalize a struggling area of Houston by promoting low-and-moderate income housing for individuals seeking to end homelessness and make progress toward sustainable independent living.

The inaugural project for Temenos CDC was the Knowles-Temenos Place Apartments, which provides permanent housing for formerly homeless men and women. It houses forty-three (43) single individuals in efficiency-style apartments and provides residents with employment, educational and case management services. Tenants include individuals with a wide range of personal experiences including veterans, persons recently released from prison, and persons who are HIV-positive.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Temenos CDC's quality-improvement activities focused on *Dimension #6: Tenant Rights, Input, & Leadership*. Specifically, Temenos invested time and resources to create and implement a new Resident Council. Goals for the Council included: facilitating expanded tenant input regarding operational issues and service needs; facilitating the involvement of tenants in decision-making processes for necessary physical site improvements; and assisting tenants to access training to strengthen their leadership and community development skills.

STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES

Temenos was able to successfully establish a [Resident Council](#) at the Knowles-Temenos Place Apartments. The intention of the Resident Council is to address general concerns of tenants, provide an opportunity to receive feedback from tenants and maintain an open line of communication between tenants and staff.

The Council's first task was to help to improve the building's [outdoor space](#). The Council members worked with the contractor to select landscaping features and provided input regarding the design of a new gazebo. Now that the gazebo is built, the Council is planning a "painting party" to complete the project. The Council is also coordinating a volunteer schedule among residents to ensure that the courtyard is well-maintained. The Council also designed and hosted numerous social events, including a Barbecue, Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas Dinner, a New Years Eve party and a Super Bowl party.

Executive staff meet with the Resident Council monthly to hear tenants' issues and concerns, and provide some administrative support to the Council, such as purchasing food and supplies for events planned by the Council. Staff have been gratified to find that the Resident Council members have a number of skills that have supported some organizational events *not* initiated by the Council, such as the project's One Year Anniversary event.

To assist the council in their new role, members of the committee were sent to leadership training courses in Houston. Temenos also created a draft "handbook" to help guide the implementation of the Council. It was intended to help provide the 'vision' for the Council and to outline the Council members' roles and responsibilities. It is Temenos' goal to revise and hone this document, so that it can be used in to inform similar Councils in future affordable housing projects that are planned by Temenos CDC.

Temenos leadership staff report that the Resident Council has given tenants a sense of ownership and has helped to build a sense of community among the tenants.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Clearly define the role of the Resident Council.** Temenos provided a vision and a clear description of the role of tenants, within their draft document, "The Process of Building Our Resident Council", provided below.
- **Support tenants in identifying meaningful projects to work on.** The beautification of the courtyard at Knowles-Temenos place was an ideal opportunity to get tenants' input on an issue that impacted all of them, and provided a focus for their initial meetings as a group. Now that the Council is well underway, other projects have been identified by the tenants themselves.
- **Keep the Resident Council's responsibilities manageable.** Temenos staff were initially concerned about overwhelming the tenants with too much responsibility before they'd had a chance to develop leadership skills, and also wanted to make sure that the Council's activities did not distract them from participation in services offered at Temenos. Since the Resident Council was new, they deliberately provided more staff support to the Council in its early stages, with the clear intention to turn over more responsibility for planning and managing events and projects, to the tenants as they build capacity.

RESOURCES

- [The Process of Creating Our Resident Council](#)

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CSH strives to take a “continuous quality improvement” approach to our own work, and through delivery of our technical assistance services, we encourage other organizations to do the same. We believe that even the very best organizations can identify areas where they’d like to improve. After all, until as an industry we can successfully house every tenant, there is still more to learn about how to best serve and house people who experience multiple barriers to housing stability. Therefore, we encourage supportive housing providers to borrow the phrase, “*Quality improvement is a journey, not a destination.*”

That said, it is clear that some organizations have more capacity than others to continually improve their programs. Throughout the Assuring Quality Initiative, CSH observed that organizations with strong quality assurance and improvement practices often have similar practices. Typically, these organizations:

- *Invest time in quality improvement activities.* It’s easy to get distracted with day-to-day issues that need urgent attention. However, organizations that take the time to step back to look at the big picture are able to implement improvement strategies that improve their day-to-day operations, and tenant outcomes. Several grantees commented they were glad that receiving the grant “forced” them to take the time to engage in quality improvement activities.
- *Invest organizational resources in quality improvement activities.* While not every organization has the resources for a full-time (or even part-time) Quality Assurance Coordinator, most organizations have at least some capacity to support quality-oriented work. Investing in infrastructure, such as electronic records systems, data bases and software programs, can also elevate an organization’s ability to provide high quality supportive housing.
- *Create clear accountabilities and timelines for quality related work.* One organization strongly suggested making the implementation of quality improvement activities at least one person’s clear responsibility. It was also noted by CSH staff that grantees who had stronger staff “buy-in” with regards to quality improvement typically had created *more roles for more staff* to play, each with clear responsibilities and deadlines.
- *Learn from other organizations.* Whether it was borrowing examples of policies and procedures from another organization, bringing in a consultant to hone a process, sending tenants and staff to trainings, or getting input from their own staff and tenants, each of the grantees demonstrated a willingness to learn from others, and to incorporate constructive suggestions into their own organizational practices.
- *Identify important questions.* SHC-NM asked themselves, “What are the steps we need to take to ensure that our property management activities are in line with the (high) quality of our properties?” Human Solutions asked themselves, “What are the consequences of our policies on our tenants?” MHSA asked, “What is the key determinant of successful services delivery?” This ability to ask sometimes difficult questions is something that every organization can achieve, regardless of their resources.
- *Scale quality improvement activities to the capacity of the organization.* Grantees’ projects varied widely in size and scope, depending upon the particular circumstances and resources of each organization. CSH suggests that supportive housing organizations “start where they are at.” Starting small by updating a few policies or offering a few staff trainings is perfectly acceptable for organizations with limited resources. Over time, implementing “small” projects will build the capacity of the organization to take on more ambitious projects.

- *Take a systems view.* As a housing providers' membership organization, MHSA took the opportunity to identify issues that are common across supportive housing organizations, which hopefully will lead to efficiencies with regard to staff training and other quality improvement strategies. Such organizations do not exist in every state, but supportive housing providers may still be able to join together with others to address shared challenges, and to collectively advocate for system changes that can help individual organizations improve quality. Groups engaging in these kinds of activities may find that *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* can be used to help educate funders and public agencies about what quality supportive housing is, and what it requires, both in terms of fiscal resources and regulatory support.

CSH hopes that *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* publications can be useful to supportive housing providers as they strive to improve their supportive housing, and notes that the use of these publications can be tailored to meet the needs of organizations with diverse needs and capacities. The AQUI grantees themselves used the Dimensions resources in a variety of ways. For example, SHC-NM found the Quality Assessment tools to provide such a useful review process that they completed four of the comprehensive Quality Assessment tools during the grant period, and plan to complete the rest this year. In contrast, Caringworks felt they were in alignment with the majority of the indicators, but created their quality improvement project to focus on just two (2) specific indicators of quality. MHSA used the Dimensions of Quality to inform interviews with organizations providing supportive housing around the state, and asked those organizations to complete a short tool regarding the "Key Indicators of Quality".

Similarly, some grantees created very detailed, specific quality improvement plans based on the Dimensions framework, while others simply incorporated strategies identified with the *Seven Dimensions* tools, into existing Quality Improvement Plans. What matters is that organizations are engaged in identifying issues of quality and strive to address those issues, not that specific actions or approaches are implemented.

CSH wishes to encourage organizations involved in the supportive housing industry to thoughtfully consider the lessons learned by grantees and to take the next step towards improving the quality of their own supportive housing. Some organizations may choose to replicate some of the activities undertaken by the grantees; others may try different strategies.

Some additional recommendations for organizations interested in enhancing their quality improvement activities include:

- Complete a Quality Assessment tool and create a corresponding Quality Improvement Action plan (both are available at www.csh.org/dimensionsofquality)
- Create a learning circle of peers to inquire into a particular issue or set of questions. Bringing in a paid or unpaid neutral facilitator, may be helpful to further such work.
- Visit other supportive housing programs – whether local or not – to gather new ideas and insights.
- Ask for - and use – tenant and staff input. What questions do they have? What gaps do they see?
- Tap into CSH's teams of experts. We offer fee-based products and services to help you implement the Seven Dimensions in your community. Email us at consulting@csh.org for more information.

The AQUI grantees achieved much with regards to their specific projects, but more importantly, laid a foundation for the future achievement of excellence within their organizations. CSH hopes that the willingness of the Assuring Quality Initiative grantees to openly and actively engage in quality improvement activities, will serve as inspiration for supportive housing providers across the nation.

ADDITIONAL CSH RESOURCES OF INTEREST

CSH's website, www.csh.org, provides organizations with access to a diverse array of tools, informational materials, publications, manuals, and sample documents to help communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness. If you have questions or comments regarding any of these resources, please contact CSH at info@csh.org.

The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing Publications

CSH developed *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* through dialogue with supportive housing tenants, providers, funders, and other stakeholders – and through involvement in successful supportive housing initiatives around the country. The *Seven Dimensions of Quality* are intended to provide a common framework for the supportive housing industry and to allow developers, property managers, service providers, and funders to assess the quality of supportive housing units and to make sound investments in high-quality supportive housing. CSH made available a set of three publications – all available at www.csh.org/DimensionsofQuality - to assist organizations to understand and implement *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing*.

Publications Web Page

CSH's Publications web page, available at www.csh.org/Publications, provides access to reports, studies, and manuals aimed at helping nonprofits and government develop new and better ways to meet the health, housing and employment needs of those at the fringes of society. There are currently more than 60 publications and manuals available, covering topics ranging from development to research and evaluation to strategies for creating systems change, almost all available for download in PDF form for free.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CSH invites supportive housing organizations and their partners to share their questions, learnings and information needs with us. Please email quality@csh.org or contact:

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