

# Connecticut Supportive Housing Demonstration Program Evaluation Report Highlights July 1, 2002

The Connecticut Supportive Housing Demonstration Program was initiated in June 1992 by the State of Connecticut and the Corporation for Supportive Housing. Between 1993 and 1998, the program financed the development of 281 units of affordable, service-enriched rental housing for homeless and at-risk populations, many of whom were coping with mental illness, histories of substance addiction, or HIV/AIDS. This demonstration also evaluated the success of the program, to determine whether the supportive housing model that had already been tested on a large scale in New York City and Chicago would work in the mid-sized cities and smaller communities of Connecticut.

A 2002 program evaluation, conducted by an independent evaluation team including researchers from The Center for Mental Health Policy and Services Research of the University of Pennsylvania Health Care System, found that supportive housing created positive outcomes for tenants while decreasing their use of acute and expensive health services. In addition, property values in the neighborhoods surrounding the supportive housing have increased or remained steady since the projects were developed. ***In short, supportive housing is a cost-effective use of Connecticut's resources to build healthy homes and communities for homeless and at-risk persons and families around the state.***

Some of the major findings from this third and final report of the program evaluation include:

## Tenant Characteristics

- 444 people entered the housing as tenants in the nine Demonstration Program housing developments between June 1996 and February 2001.
- 351 tenants responded to an initial survey prior to the end of February 2001. These surveys revealed the following:
  - 34% of the surveyed tenants are women, 66% are men
  - Average age on entry into housing is 43 years
  - 78% were homeless at some point in their lives
  - Only 38% had lived independently in the time immediately before entering housing***In the two years prior to entry into the housing:***
  - 23% spent some time in jail or prison
  - 38% had been hospitalized for health reasons
  - 39% received mental health treatment
  - 34% received detox services
  - 29% were employed

## Medicaid Data

Evaluators looked at Medicaid records to identify tenants' service utilization during the two years before and the three years after entering the housing. For the 126 Medicaid-eligible tenants who entered the housing and stayed in the housing for three years, the study found that they:

### ***Decreased their utilization of restrictive and expensive health services:***

- 71% decrease in the average Medicaid reimbursement per tenant using medical inpatient services.

### ***Increased their usage of less expensive ongoing and preventive health care:***

- These included services such as home health care, outpatient mental health and substance abuse services, and medical and dental services
- The number of tenants using medical or behavioral health outpatient services also increased after entering the housing, showing a peak at one year into their tenancy

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### **Tenant Outcomes**

Tenants who entered supportive housing prior to January 1998 and stayed housed for at least three years reported the following at the time of their 36-month survey:

- High levels of functioning: 89% reported becoming more independent; 90% said they performed the activities of daily living 'very well' or 'ok'.
- 83% reported their health as good to fair
- Levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the housing and services are high.
- Tenant income increased: average income increased from \$500 to \$639 monthly
- Two-thirds of tenants reported being employed or in education and training programs
- The majority of tenants in the sample see their current housing situation as desirable for the present, but also as a stepping stone to another type of living situation. Only a third of the surveyed tenants said they planned to live in their building permanently.

### **Project Financial Stability**

This portion of the study analyzed the financial stability of the nine housing projects, all of which had been in operation for at least 30 months as of February 2001: Liberty Commons in Middletown; Hudson View Commons and Mary Seymour Apartments in Hartford; Crescent and Fairfield Apartments in Bridgeport; Colony and Atlantic Park Apartments in Stamford; Cedar Hill Apartments in New Haven; Brick Row Apartments in Willimantic. Key findings of the analysis include:

- All nine projects are financially stable; seven of the nine are exceeding their original operating projections.
- Occupancy rates are high—vacancy rates range from only 1% to 12%.
- Turnover rates are low, ranging from 7% to 21%, indicating that property management has been able to keep tenancy stable and the flow of rental income steady.

### **Impact on Property Values and Economic Benefits**

Evaluators analyzed sales of commercial buildings in each of the projects' immediate neighborhood, including apartment, retail and office properties, that occurred from just prior to the completion of the supportive housing projects (1996-1998) to the March 2002. They found that:

- Neighborhood property values increased for eight of the nine projects:
  - The neighborhood surrounding Mary Seymour Apartments in Hartford experienced a five-fold increase in property values.
  - Property values doubled in the neighborhoods of Liberty Commons in Middletown, Crescent Apartments in Bridgeport, and Cedar Hill Apartments in New Haven.
  - Property values increased by more than 30% in the neighborhoods of Hudson View Commons, Colony Apartments, Brick Row Apartments, and Fairfield Apartments.
- Where property values were highest (Atlantic Park Apartments in Stamford), neighborhood property values remained stable.
- The majority of neighbors and nearby business owners report that neighborhoods look better or much better than before the projects were built.\*
- Development of the projects yielded \$72 million in direct and indirect economic and fiscal benefits to Connecticut communities.\*

Copies of the evaluation report are available through the Corporation for Supportive Housing, 129 Church Street, Suite 815, New Haven CT 06510, or through our web site at [www.csh.org](http://www.csh.org).

*\*This data is contained in the October 1999 report.*