



Overview of Community-Based Mental Health Services

It is useful for all staff working in supportive housing settings to be familiar with the services for persons with mental illnesses that might be available within their community. Many communities offer some or all of the following services:

- **Assertive community treatment (ACT) teams** are designed to provide support and decrease the need for hospitalization for individuals with mental illness who may be highly vulnerable and/or reluctant to engage in services. Teams use an assertive outreach approach, with hands-on assistance provided to individuals in their homes and neighborhoods. Services are provided by multidisciplinary teams and include crisis intervention, medication monitoring, social supports, assistance with everyday living needs, access to medical care, psycho-educational supports to families and employment assistance.
- **Case management services** are provided by community-based or public agencies and vary in level of intensity. Case management should assist tenants in remaining psychiatrically stable and in living as independently as possible. Case management services include teaching daily living skills such as personal hygiene, cleaning, cooking, shopping, budgeting, communication and health maintenance; providing support in achieving/maintaining sobriety; taking medication as prescribed; and keeping appointments. Case management services can be tailored to assist a person in maintaining stability and/or provide rehabilitation services (i.e., teaching various skills), so that the individual can function more independently. These services can be mobile or located within a mental health clinic or other office location.
- **Mobile crisis teams** provide psychiatric crisis intervention services directly to individuals and families. In addition, staff members are available to provide interim supportive services to individuals who have been in crisis and are awaiting formal entry into an outpatient or residential psychiatric treatment program. Mobile Crisis Teams are usually linked to large hospitals and respond to crises in their area.
- **Outpatient clinics/programs** provide treatment designed to reduce symptoms, improve functioning, and provide ongoing support. Services include assessment, health screening and referral, counseling, medication therapy, medication education, symptom management, and psychiatric rehabilitation-readiness determination and referral.
- **Outreach teams** provide services to homeless individuals living in public spaces. These teams work to engage and build trust with individuals over an extended period. They often distribute food and make a variety of referrals, including linking individuals to services, shelters or housing.

