

# Stable Homes, Brighter Futures

## Year 1 Evaluation Highlights



### About Stable Homes, Brighter Futures

With support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the W. M. Keck Foundation, and the California Wellness Foundation, the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) launched the *Stable Homes, Brighter Futures* initiative in August 2012, a three year demonstration project to evaluate the supportive housing model to young adults, 18-24 years old that are homeless or at risk. Through this initiative, CSH provides support to five grantees and their partners to serve up to 191 young adults (also referred to as TAY, transition age youth) residing in 17 housing developments located throughout Los Angeles County. The initiative contributes to a broader systems-level effort to:

- Increase the capacity of organizations in Los Angeles County to develop and operate high-quality supportive housing for TAY in areas of high need.
- Create a safety net of housing and services for TAY that includes health, mental health, education, and employment.
- Collaborate with government agencies and partner organizations to secure adequate and coordinated public funding mechanisms.

### About the Evaluation

CSH partnered with Harder+Company Community Research (Harder+Company) to document the experiences and outcomes of young adults in supportive housing as well as the unique challenges, strategies, and promising practices employed by service providers and property managers. The evaluation seeks to generate and share lessons and findings that can inform program improvement, systems change efforts, and the broader field.

### Year 1 Evaluation Highlights

This brief highlights some key findings collected from the beginning of the initiative to January 2014.

**As of January 2014, a total of 160 TAY were housed and provided supportive services.**

Preliminary baseline data (N=116) show that:

- 55% were male.
- 22 was the average age at enrollment.
- 51% identified as being homeless prior to moving into supportive housing.
- 74% reported challenges with mental health
- 40% were former foster youth.
- 80% were unemployed prior to supportive housing.

**TAY experienced an improved sense of well-being and stability.** For most TAY, their primary goal was to obtain housing, and reaching this goal provided them with an immediate sense of security. One TAY noted that this housing opportunity helped him *“not worry about where I’m going to lay/rest my head at night”*, and another TAY added, *“I have my own place for the first time and I do not have to worry about being homeless.”*

- 95% felt that their current housing contributed to their well-being.
- 71% stated that their mental health symptoms were not bothering them as much.
- 75% reported that their physical health has improved.



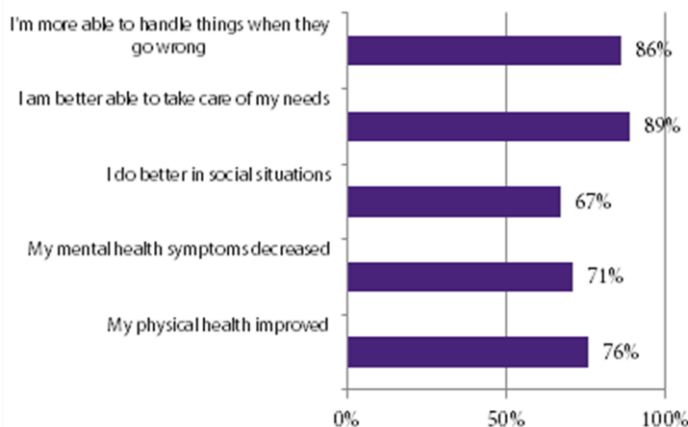
**It takes time for TAY to engage in supportive services and build trusting relationships with providers.**

Providers expressed concern that TAY may not be taking full advantage of available services and seemed to lack interest or motivation in supportive services. This initial lack of motivation or interest can be explained by what some providers call a “stabilization” period. Providers have appreciated that this process is normal, and expressed the importance of giving TAY the room to breathe by providing them with the choices to willingly accept the support offered to them when they are ready.

*“[I want] my support service worker to always be there for me even when I’m not ready, but just staying available for me” (TAY Participant)*

**TAY have gained confidence in their ability to live independently but still struggle with finances:** Several TAY mentioned that what they like best about living in supportive housing was that they have the “freedom” to live independently and have responsibilities. When asked about attending to basic living needs, 90% of TAY agreed feeling more capable of taking care of their daily needs. However, given that nearly 80% of participants were unemployed at the time of enrollment, challenges making ends meet comes as no surprise. TAY seemed to prioritize paying rent and made sacrifices when it came to other essential needs. Some of the **top challenges** for TAY identified by service providers were **money management** (e.g., moving in/out costs), **basic life skills** (e.g., setting up utilities, hygiene), and **finding employment**.

**TAY Gain Confidence & Independent Living Skills**  
(N=46 TAY)



**There is need for provider training and capacity building.** Many providers identified organizational challenges they face in serving TAY, such as the lack of capacity and training. One provider noted, “*Our challenges are mainly in the area of capacity. The housing retention work is more crisis-oriented than we expected as well.*” Not all providers were prepared to deal with some of the challenges presented by TAY (e.g., physical aggression between tenants, acute mental instability). Lack of preparedness had more to do with lack of training and understanding the needs of TAY population. Limited funding to staff the appropriate number of case managers was another noted issue among providers.

**Providers refined practices and implemented new strategies.** Overall, providers felt their agencies made several programmatic changes, including using new assessment tools, implementing new strategies and modifying program structures. For example some have incorporated the use of new assessment tools after learning what other agencies have been using. Providers have also developed creative ways to keep TAY engaged.

Changes in Policy & Practice (N=16 providers)	
Program Changes	Percent Endorsed
Modified program practices	56%
Implemented new strategies to work with TAY	56%
Incorporate new tools (e.g., assessment)	44%
Modified structure of PSH program	44%
Changed program policies	25%
Changed agency policies	19%

**Funding TAY in supportive housing has not been a priority.** Although there has been limited funding and resources for supportive housing across all populations (adults, families, youth), stakeholder interviews suggest that there has not been a priority placed on how to allocate state or local dollars to housing TAY in supportive housing in particular. According to stakeholder interviews, without the pressure to appropriately allocate and leverage existing resources, there will continue to be limited units available for TAY and even fewer service dollars to match.