

Chapter 1: Background and Overview

Background

Supportive housing is long-term, affordable and community-based housing combined with voluntary and flexible supportive services that help people who face complex challenges live with stability, autonomy and dignity. Supportive housing is a proven, cost-effective means of reintegrating chronically homeless and other highly vulnerable families and individuals with disabilities or other long-term physical health issues into the community by addressing their basic needs for housing and providing intensive supports that promote recovery and maximize independence.

A major goal for supportive housing programs is the ability to ensure housing stability for individuals with multiple, chronic, complex needs that are challenging to serve in other housing. Several studies of programs across the country indeed demonstrate the effectiveness of supportive housing for retaining tenants with very high needs, leading to decreased shelter use, reductions in acute care utilization, and improvements in health, behavioral health and other quality of life outcomes. However, while many individuals with severe disabilities may always require supportive housing, some tenants eventually reach a point in their recovery where they may be better served in a less intensive services environment. Once stable, tenants often wish to leave supportive housing in order to have more privacy, reside in a different neighborhood, move closer to family or work/school, or rent a bigger unit. Unfortunately, because most tenants continue to need housing assistance, many choose to remain in supportive housing.

In response to tenant desires and the need to build more supportive housing capacity, several communities are working with local funders and public housing authorities to develop Moving On or Moving Up initiatives that provide tenants who are able and want to move out of supportive housing with a rental subsidy and assistance transitioning to a new apartment. HUD has publicly provided strong support for Moving On but, to date, these initiatives operate on the periphery of supportive housing and only exist on a small scale through scattered pilots.



Why Promote Moving On?

The fundamental goal of Moving On is to promote the highest levels of independence and choice for tenants. Moving On is not just a program; it also is a larger movement to promote supportive housing

as a platform for tenant recovery and success; it is about empowering and supporting people with disabilities to willingly take steps forward and providing them with the supports necessary to live in the housing of their choice. For some that may mean moving to other affordable housing; for others it may mean remaining in supportive housing but working toward greater self-sufficiency and self-determination in day-to-day life. This issue is especially critical for supportive housing providers serving [Transition Aged Youth](#) and those exiting the foster care system. While non-time limited, these programs should be focused on offering housing as a foundation for a healthy and successful transition to a more independent adulthood.

While promoting tenant success and mobility, Moving On also increases the capacity of homeless systems and ensures that supportive housing is used to serve the most vulnerable individuals and families experiencing homelessness. In nearly every community with supportive housing, access to units is severely limited with waiting lists that often go out for several months. It is apparent that there are many high-need/high-cost individuals and families experiencing homelessness that could benefit from the intensive services provided in supportive housing than are available units. These shortages call for greater investment in both long-term housing subsidies and the construction or acquisition of more supportive housing units. However, in the context of shrinking housing resources and the urgency of need, communities also need to look at more efficient and cost-effective ways of creating new capacity in supportive housing through turnover in their existing stock. This approach is particularly critical for opening up space in congregate or single-site settings where the fixed costs associated with 24/7 staffing, shared community space, and on-site services (including therapy groups, gyms, and health services) are inefficiently expended on tenants that no longer need or want such services. Even with scattered site programs, finding “friendly” landlords that are willing to house individuals experiencing homelessness or other challenges are limited, so being able to turnover those units and use them to house chronically homeless individuals or families is extremely valuable.

It was only recently with the nation-wide implementation of [Coordinated Entry and Assessment](#) systems in mid-2014 that communities began using more systematic and data-driven processes for effectively targeting supportive housing to the most vulnerable individuals and families experiencing homelessness. A 2012 analysis released by USICH noted that only one-third of the country’s supportive housing units were occupied by persons experiencing chronic homelessness¹. Prior to this mandate, supportive housing providers generally received referrals from several community organizations, administered their own intake and assessment processes and based priority on a first-come first-serve basis, funding decisions or personal relationships. As a result of this legacy of

¹ Access analysis here: http://usich.gov/population/chronic/in_focus/

uncoordinated targeting, some supportive housing programs may have a backlog of tenants who are able and want to move on. For such programs, a Moving On initiative may help to free up a substantial number of units during the initial years. A 2007 survey of supportive housing tenants in New York led by the [Supportive Housing Network of New York](#) suggested that 40% of tenants were capable of moving on². While estimates vary, providers note that after this initial wave of move outs, anywhere between 5 to 10 percent of the tenant population in any given year may be ready to move on. This variation depends not only on the needs of the tenant population but also, as we discuss in the next chapter, the degree to which providers embrace an ongoing Moving On strategy and intentionally promote a service culture that maximizes tenant independence.

How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit was developed by CSH for use by supportive housing providers, Continuum of Care entities, public housing authorities, local/state government agencies and other organizations interested in developing a Moving On initiative in their community. The goal of the toolkit is to raise awareness about Moving On and to help organizations plan, develop, sustain and evaluate effective Moving On programs. This toolkit outlines the different phases and steps in the Moving On process and contains links to helpful resources, including descriptions of former or existing Moving On projects and practical tools or templates developed by implementing organizations. Many of these tools and tips were developed to fit the unique needs and objectives of certain organizations and may reflect local laws and policies. Organizations should go through their own process to develop policies and corresponding procedures that are appropriate locally and modify these documents as needed.

[Chapter 2: Guiding Principles of Moving On](#)



² http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/e9e96a83affb80593a_sqm6bpvhk.pdf