



# THRIVE FRAMEWORK

*Improving Lives*

*Fostering Equitable & Inclusive Communities*

*Transforming Systems*

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clearer than ever that each person's ability to thrive is inextricably linked to the overall health of our communities. We have an opportunity now to truly create a society that ensures that all people, especially those who have been marginalized or discriminated against, have a home in the community and the support they need to thrive. As we seize this opportunity, we must act boldly to undo structural racism and take an anti-racist approach to creating the policies and programs that will lead to thriving and equitable communities.

CSH is deeply appreciative of the individuals and organizations across the country that took the time to participate in focus groups over the last year about what thriving looks like and the factors that make it easier or harder to do so. We recognize that thriving looks different for each individual and family, and we particularly appreciate the opportunity for the CSH Thrive Framework outlined in this document to be informed by people with lived expertise. We also know that this Framework is not an endpoint, but rather a starting point that will continue to be refined on an ongoing basis through dialogue with people, organizations, and communities.





# FROM CRISIS TO STABILITY

Most people who need housing with supports are in crisis – they may be experiencing homelessness or housing instability, be subject to discrimination and racism, recently discharged from institutional settings with nowhere to go, or have few ways to access the resources they need. Being in a state of crisis is antithetical to thriving because it prevents healing and recovery. Focus group participants talked about their experiences with homelessness, addiction, childhood trauma, and racism as challenges to be overcome on their journey to thriving. One participant described the experience of trying to thrive as a person of color by saying, “It’s like you got a boot on your throat, there is a pressure that is institutional.” Another described it as, “The system was never designed to help us—especially black people, we always have to fight—we have to keep fighting.” We cannot talk about thriving without talking about the over representation of people of color in all the vulnerable and at-risk populations CSH serves. Anti-racism must serve as a driving force as we work to undo structural racism and develop deliberate policies and programming to produce and sustain equitable outcomes.

Participants also described what it feels like to begin to move from crisis to stability with examples such as being in a safe space, having a roof over your head, and just being able to breathe freely. The foundation of thriving is stability, and central to that is safe and affordable housing aligned with desired services in the community. Stability can include any number of factors: participating in mental health, recovery, employment or other services, having a daily routine, feeling in control of life and connecting to a community.



# FROM STABILITY TO THRIVING

Once an individual or family feels some measure of stability, they can more fully pursue the markers of thriving that many stably housed people take for granted: better health, community inclusion, a sense of positive progress, the power to make meaningful choices, and economic opportunity. While not everyone has all of these at the same time, having many of these markers while working on others is a key indication of thriving. Focus group participants talked about this with examples like taking power back, building relationships with friends and families, making choices and being independent, and helping others. Many of the descriptions shared a common theme of positive forward momentum such as blossoming, growing, and having a purpose. Supportive housing can and should be a platform for success that serves as the beginning, not the end, of a journey for individuals and families.





# FROM INDIVIDUAL TO COMMUNITY: FOSTERING EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES THAT ENABLE PEOPLE TO THRIVE

Although thriving looks different for each individual and family, the common thread is the extent to which it is fostered by the overall health of the surrounding community. Thriving communities are built by ensuring that everyone has the healthcare, food, economic opportunity, education, child care, civic engagement and outdoor space that we all need to be healthy and make meaningful progress in our lives. At the center of this is safe and affordable housing aligned with supports that help people connect to health, human, and economic services in the community.

Thriving communities can unlock a broad range of positive impacts. CSH divides these impacts into four core areas that help to describe what thriving communities make possible for those who are part of them. Defining the impact we hope to achieve is important, but we must also follow through by clearly defining our goals and evaluating our results. This includes both the use of measures that help review progress on an ongoing basis as well as developing partnerships to design and implement robust evaluation. Across all these efforts, data must be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and LGBTQ+ identity in order to guide decision making to advance equity.



## OPTIMAL HEALTH

Having optimal health means that people have the information and care that they need to manage and improve their health. It means working together as communities and systems to improve the quality of care and to reduce disparities in health access and outcomes. Most of all, it means that people can live long and healthy lives, free from trauma, with ongoing access to responsive care.

## POWER AND PROGRESS

Power and progress focus in on what matters most to each individual and family. People thrive when they have a positive sense of progress in their lives. And they feel empowered when they can make meaningful choices about their own lives and the systems and services in which they participate.



Part of the experience of being marginalized due to race, homelessness status, gender, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ status, or disability is a profound feeling of disempowerment. Thriving communities elevate the voices of those with lived expertise, looking to them to lead efforts to develop programmatic solutions and inform funding decisions.

## COMMUNITY INCLUSION

At its core, housing aligned with services is focused on ensuring that all individuals have the opportunity to be an ongoing part of their community of choice. Thriving communities focus on improving neighborhood quality, increasing affordable housing, ensuring that people cycling between the streets and institutions for lack of suitable alternatives are able to choose a safe affordable home with the supports they need to thrive. Community members feel a sense of belonging and emotional connection, nurture relationships, and actively participate in community organizations and activities.



## LIFELONG SUCCESS

The sense of progress that is part of well-being for many individuals includes making progress toward goals related to financial stability and educational attainment. Communities must work together to ensure that quality jobs and educational opportunities are available to citizens of all ages. This includes access to early childhood education, quality child care, and quality neighborhood schools. Further they should strive to address inter-generational poverty by promoting strategies for families to build financial literacy, income, and assets.





# FROM COMMUNITY TO SYSTEM: TRANSFORMING AND INTEGRATING SYSTEMS

Systems are a collection of structures, relationships, resources, knowledge and assets that operate, either formally or informally, to influence the lives of people and communities. When functioning optimally, such systems play a critically important role in supporting individual and community thriving. We highlight four common elements of highly functioning systems. Core to these common elements are their reliance on both equity and data as key drivers of change. With a focus on equity we seek to understand and transform the inequities built into systems. Data supports this analysis of systemic inequities and also the ability to continuously evaluate whether and to what extent implemented changes are making a difference.

## SHIFT FROM CRISIS TO PREVENTION

Transformed public sector institutional and crisis response systems prioritize choice and equity to ensure that everyone is able to live as independently as possible. This includes making meaningful choices about their own lives and the systems and services in which they participate. A streamlined, multi-sector approach would shift focus to prevention, coordination, and long term stability in the community, and would result in more equitable outcomes. Such an approach is even more important in times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic is bringing critically needed resources to provide temporary emergency shelter and meet immediate needs. It will, however, take a fully functioning cross-system approach to ensure that people can quickly and efficiently receive the care they need and then return to stable housing in the community with any ongoing supports needed to support them in thriving.

## INTEGRATED SERVICES AND DATA

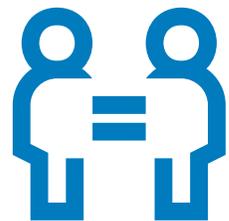
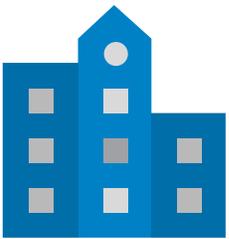
In normal times, systems such as jails, hospitals, shelters, and treatment programs are set up to meet urgent short-term needs often at the expense of long term solutions. Prioritizing immediate needs takes limited resources away from prevention efforts and the delivery of sustainable community-based services. This lack of a coordinated systems approach is not only inefficient, but can also result in poor and inequitable outcomes for highly impacted people that cycle between shelters, hospitals, jails, treatment programs, and the streets. Highly functioning systems integrate services and data in order to ensure responsive and effective service delivery, coordinate care, and promote quality of care.

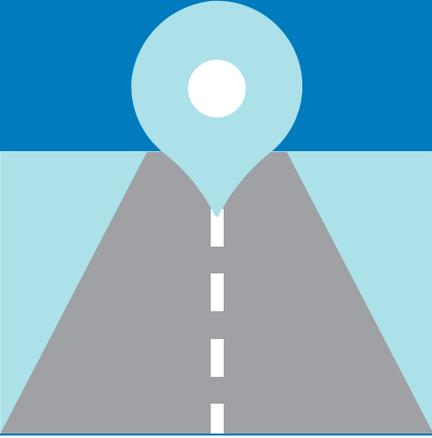
## ADVANCE EQUITY

Highly functioning systems actively work to identify and then eliminate, modify or replace inequitable institutional policies and practices. Advancing equity also includes the ongoing use of data to identify and address system disparities. Tools such as the CSH Racial Disparities and Disproportionality Index (“RDDI”) can be helpful in this process. The RDDI looks at 16 unique systems and measures whether a racial and/or ethnic group’s representation in a particular public system is proportionate to, over, or below their representation in the overall population (proportionality) and also allows for the examination of systematic differences between groups and geographies (disparities).

## MULTI-SECTOR INVESTMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the interrelationship between the housing, public health, justice and emergency management systems. It is estimated that there are at least 1.1 million individuals and families with disabilities and high needs exacerbated by extreme poverty that cycle between the streets and institutions for a lack of suitable alternatives in the community. This level of need cannot be met by any one system acting alone. Highly functioning systems collaborate to pool and align funding opportunities to ensure that scarce resources are focused on the people in greatest need. They also seek and advocate for opportunities to increase overall funding for housing aligned with services at the local, state and federal level.





# THE PATH FORWARD: THRIVING COMMUNITIES

We cannot secure public health when people cannot safely shelter in place and the only options are places where physical distancing is impossible, or the streets. Protecting the health of the most vulnerable people, is protecting the health of the community. Housing with access to needed services are critical public health infrastructure. The Thrive Framework is part of CSH's overall goal to partner across sectors to seize the opportunity to move away from triage, crisis and institutionalization toward prevention, health, and community.

Supportive housing is more than a model, a new building, another lease, or a singular reduction in a homeless count. We are advancing supportive housing as an approach for change that: leans in to address the root causes of inequity; breaks down silos; creates smarter and better-integrated systems; and builds more resilient communities.

This vision can only be achieved when all members of the community are seen as assets and are supported to reach their full potential based on their individual strengths, goals, and ambitions. We are calling for true integration of housing and services through a multisector approach that levels the playing field for people who have traditionally lacked opportunity and access. Together we can make America a safer, healthier, and more equitable place for all.

