

Strengthening and Scaling Supportive Housing

CSH Operational Challenges Survey Results

We must act quickly to address the challenges facing supportive housing providers in order to meet the urgent need for more units.

Research has repeatedly proven that supportive housing works to end homelessness and reduce the unnecessary use of institutional settings. It is a solution centered on providing people with what they actually want (housing + services), which is also a cost-effective and streamlined approach for systems. Yet, more than 1 million people who need supportive housing are still living on the streets and in institutions today. **There is an urgent need to preserve and scale supportive housing, but to do so we must also address the significant operational challenges providers are currently facing.**

To better understand these challenges and how supportive housing providers view them, **CSH recently conducted a survey** and received **more than 500 responses from 44 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico**. Nearly 35% of respondents have operated supportive housing for 25 years or more.

Providers have done heroic work to support people in crisis, but increased demand and inconsistent funding have created **significant organizational strain**. Organizations are struggling to hire, retain, and provide adequate compensation to staff. Skyrocketing costs for utilities, insurance, and other operational costs are shrinking already thin margins and making it difficult to do needed repairs to buildings.

Services are underfunded and misaligned, leaving people without the support they need to thrive. **The survey responses make it clear that, collectively, we must act quickly to strengthen the supportive housing field.**

This report walks through the challenges that were elevated by respondents and concludes with ideas about solutions. To learn more about the industry survey and share your own ideas, visit www.csh.org/industrysurvey





Supportive services are critical for quality supportive housing, but lack of funding and coordination means that people struggle to access them.

Services aligned with housing can help people move into and sustain a home of their choice. Unfortunately, there is not enough funding for services that support tenants in sustaining housing or for clinical services such as those for behavioral health. Further, the lack of integrated, or even coordinated, systems means that people struggle to access the supports that they need when they need them. In our survey, approximately 3 out of 4 respondents rated funding for tenancy support services and meeting the increasingly acute service needs of supportive housing tenants as significant challenges. Each row below shows the % of total respondents who said a given challenge was with very much or somewhat of a challenge for them.

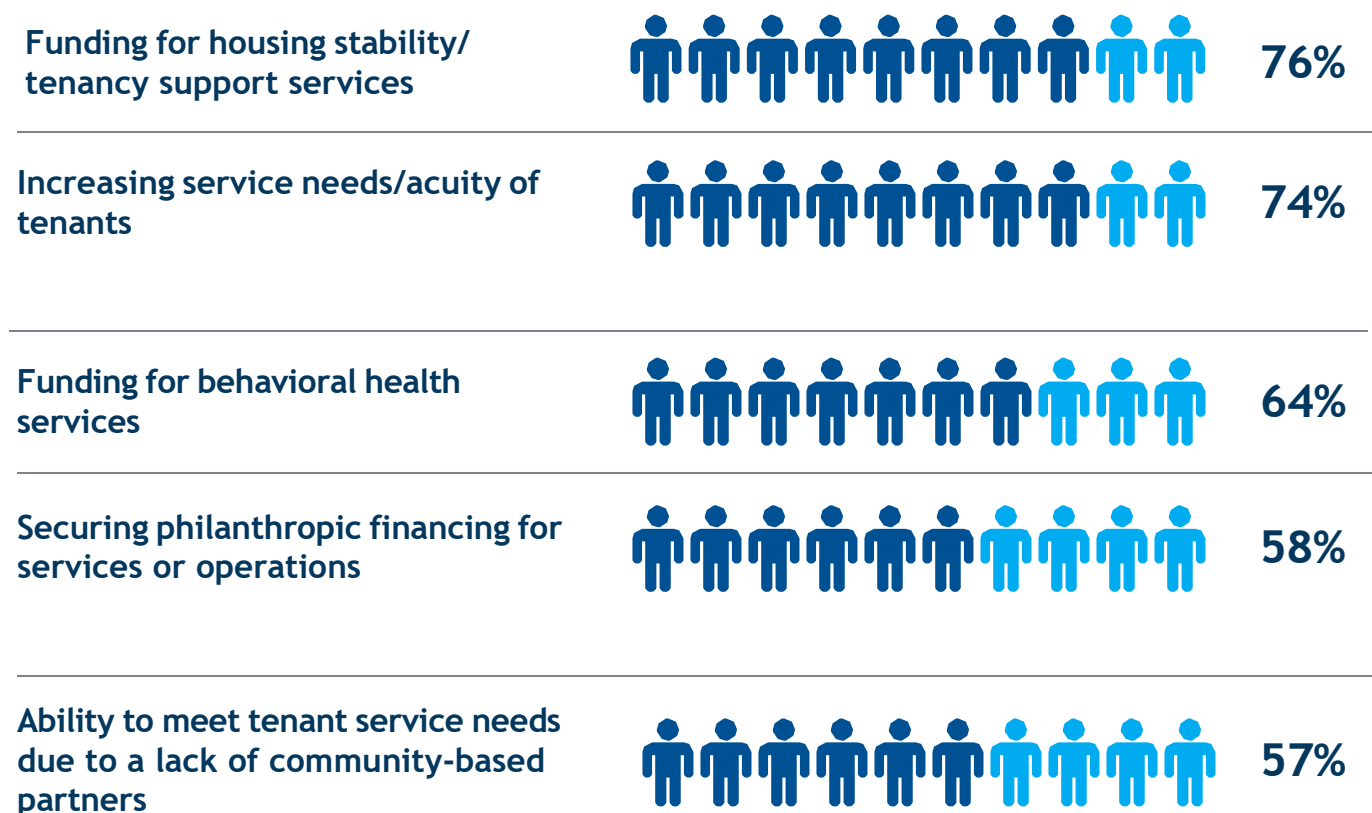
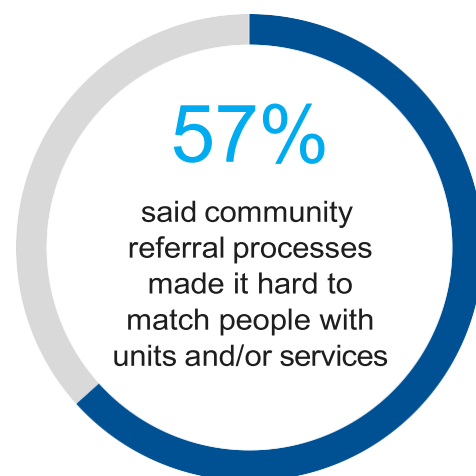


Figure 1: Percent of respondents rating the topic as a significant challenge, services

Supportive housing providers face significant challenges with both flow into and out of their units.

Community referral processes (often called Coordinated Entry Systems) can **delay rent-up of developments** resulting in increased number of vacant units and related financial losses. Nearly **3 out of 5 respondents** said that they faced **significant challenges related to how community referral processes** (such as Coordinated Entry or Public Housing Authority processes) match potential clients with available units/services.

While many tenants stay in supportive housing indefinitely, others would like to move on to affordable housing. However, lack of affordable housing in the community can make this nearly impossible. In our survey, **nearly 3 out of 4 respondents** called out the **inability to move people on to other affordable housing options due to lack of available units or move-on vouchers** in the community as a significant challenge. Nearly 20% said this was one of their top 3 challenges.



Notable Quotes

The Coordinated Entry System just isn't very coordinated.



Two-thirds of survey respondents called out funding for operations and property management as a significant challenge, and 20% said it was a top three challenge. In many properties, the cost of utilities and insurance has outpaced operating funding, depleting reserves, and causing financial stress.

Greater than 50% of respondents also said that significant property related challenges were:

- ✓ Funding for operations and/or property management
- ✓ Increases in the cost of utilities
- ✓ Funding for necessary repairs or upgrades to aging buildings
- ✓ Increasing insurance premiums
- ✓ Not enough front desk staff or other safety related support



Notable Quotes

All we want is for our rate to reflect the cost of keeping our businesses open. Our cost of doing business keeps rising faster than our rate increase. That is not sustainable.

Lack of overall funding for operations and property management, coupled with skyrocketing costs of utilities and insurance premiums, is straining supportive housing providers.





Hiring, retaining, and adequately compensating staff is an ongoing challenge.

Insufficient funding across the board for organizations involved in providing supportive housing means that, too often, they are **not able to prioritize adequate compensation**. The result is that, in some cases, staff working in supportive housing themselves experience the trauma of economic insecurity.

Staff on the front lines working directly with people living in supportive housing often experience the most significant challenges in remaining in these critical positions. As with much of the nonprofit field, **supportive housing organizations struggle to both hire and retain qualified staff**. The lack of staff retention negatively impacts relationship building with tenants and can lower overall housing quality.

Two-thirds of respondents said that hiring and retaining staff was a significant challenge, and nearly two-thirds likewise said that caseload numbers were increasing due to staffing or funding constraints.



Notable Quotes

We are asking some of the most challenging folks to receive services from some of the lowest paid workers, which is not new for this world, but it is hard to see.

The supportive housing field is facing significant challenges, but together we can develop and implement solutions.

Our survey results concretely show that **the supportive housing field has been doing too much with too little, for far too long**. Any one of these issues alone would cause stress for an organization, and the reality is that providers are facing most of them simultaneously. Yet the need to address rising homelessness and housing insecurity grows ever more urgent. **We must act now to shore up and preserve existing supportive housing in order to have the best chance of increasing overall supply.**

CSH is committed to facing the challenges that must be addressed in order to preserve and scale supportive housing, **but we need your help**. On this page are a few ideas of potential solutions, but we need your help to expand and prioritize them.

Provide federal matching funds to states to **create flexible housing subsidy pools** for supportive housing.

Raise or remove the cap on project-based vouchers.

Transform Coordinated Entry so that it quickly connects people to available units and the right level of services.

Advocate for additional funding for operations, management, and services.

Align federal and state requirements related to eligibility for services, such as Medicaid.

Offer matching funds to states that commit to **creating operating reserve funds**.

Create **emergency financial support** for PSH portfolios to address **insurance premiums**.

Streamline administrative and reporting requirements across funders.

Align rates for supportive services with true costs.

Increase state or local incentives to landlords who are willing to accept tenants with vouchers.