Scale to Stability: A Framework for System Transformation

Supporting Participants with High-Acuity Needs

THE CHALLENGE

Supportive housing is serving residents with increasingly complex needs, including serious mental illness, substance use disorders, complex medical conditions, functional impairments, and co-occurring behavioral health needs.

While housing systems have successfully expanded access for people with the highest needs, staffing models, service structures, and funding have not evolved at the same pace.

WHAT IS HIGH ACUITY?

High acuity is not a diagnosis.

It describes the intensity of support a person needs to maintain housing stability, safety, and well-being. People with high-acuity needs often require:

- Intensive and frequent engagement
- Cross-system care coordination
- Behavioral health support
- Healthcare integration
- Flexible, ongoing services

High Acuity in Los Angeles County

In Los Angeles County, high-acuity residents often experience overlapping challenges across multiple systems, including:

🏥 Healthcare
🧠 Behavioral health
💊 Substance use treatment
🏠 Housing
⚖️ Criminal, legal, & crisis-response

Examples include people who:

- Frequently use hospitals or crisis services
- Experience serious mental illness or substance use disorders
- Have complex medical conditions or functional impairments
- Face recurring housing instability despite ongoing services
- Require intensive coordination across multiple public systems

WHY THIS MATTERS

The challenge is not the people being served.

The challenge is that supportive housing providers are increasingly serving residents with high-acuity needs without corresponding increases in staffing, service capacity, workforce supports, and funding.

THE HIGH ACUITY PILOT

PROPOSED SOLUTION FRAMEWORK

Service Delivery Standards & Accountability

Deliver services consistently, effectively, and at the level participants need.

- Consistent service standards
- Evidence-based practices
- Acuity-driven caseloads

Workforce Development, Supervision & Culture

Build and sustain a workforce equipped for high-acuity supportive housing.

- Training, coaching & mentorship
- Trauma-informed supervision
- Career pathways & retention

Cross-Sector Coordination & Integration

Connect housing, healthcare, behavioral health, and social services.

- Shared referral pathways
- Housing-healthcare integration
- Intermediate levels of care

Contracts, Policy & Financing Reform

Align funding and contracts with the realities of high-acuity care.

- Sustainable service funding
- Outcomes-based contracting
- Flexible continuity funding

Learning, Community & Storytelling

Build understanding, connection, and accountability.

- Tenant-led community building
- Lived expertise & storytelling
- Public education & awareness

Participant-Centered Practice & Voice

Keep participant choice, dignity, and self-determination at the center.

- Choice & self-determination
- Participant leadership
- Meaningful outcome measures

BOTTOM LINE

The challenge is not that supportive housing serves people with the highest needs.The challenge is that funding, staffing, services, and systems have not evolved at the same pace as participant needs.

The High Acuity Pilot would align housing, healthcare, behavioral health, and supportive services to help people with the most complex needs remain stably housed and thrive in their communities.

Scan the QR code to read the full report.