



Housing for People with Behavioral Health Disorders in Milwaukee County

presentation for the
Supportive Housing Commission

April 2008

Background

In 2007, amidst increased public attention to the issue of safe, and decent housing for people suffering from behavioral health disorders, Milwaukee County contracted with the Planning Council to

- Understand the perceptions and impressions of practitioners and experts and
- Review research on evidence-based practices

The Planning Council for Health and Human Services, Inc., is a non-profit organization serving Southeastern Wisconsin as an independent resource for information, education, research, and consulting on community issues.

Interviews with Professionals and Practitioners

Who did we talk to?

- 20 Professionals and Practitioners including representatives from:
 - Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division (BHD)
 - City of Milwaukee, DCD
 - Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee
 - Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee
 - Continuum of Care
 - HUD
 - BHD Targeted Case Management and Community Support Program Providers
 - Advocates
 - Landlords and Property Managers, and
 - Service Providers.

Prominent Perceptions and Themes from Interviews

- **Supply**
- **Consumer Choice**
- **Coordination and Partnerships**
- **Housing Development Technical Assistance**
- **Funding**

Prominent Perceptions and Themes from Interviews

Supply:

- ❑ The Housing Continuum requires greater variation to accommodate various levels of independence.
- ❑ The greatest needs are at the more independent end of the continuum.
- ❑ There is a long waiting list for Section 8 vouchers and many remain “unspent.”
- ❑ Reaction was mixed to the new congregate developments.

Prominent Perceptions and Themes from Interviews

Consumer Choice:

- ❑ Choice suffers because the more independent options are in such short supply
- ❑ Professionals may underestimate ability of clients to live in a more independent setting
- ❑ Some case managers make housing choices for their clients and
- ❑ There is a lack of information about available housing.

Prominent Perceptions and Themes from Interviews

Coordination and Partnerships:

- ❑ Case managers and property managers should function as a team.
- ❑ According to landlords, "Some case managers are very inaccessible."
- ❑ The housing issues of this population can be addressed successfully only through ongoing discussion, planning and collaboration among all appropriate stakeholders.

Prominent Perceptions and Themes from Interviews

According to Developers:

- ❑ The biggest issue is “complexities involved in developing housing for this population”
- ❑ It would be helpful to have a “single point of entry” for developers where technical assistance would be available.

Prominent Perceptions and Themes from Interviews

Funding:

- ❑ reduce dependency on dwindling federal funds.
- ❑ Increase use of HODAP* and programs that provide security deposit and first three months rent.

*Housing Organization and Direct Assistance Program

Case Manager Interviews

What are case management tasks related to housing?

- ❑ Case managers identified a variety of housing-related activities as being routine in their jobs.
- ❑ Some described their role in these activities as assisting consumers with activities
- ❑ Others described themselves as performing these activities without much input from consumers.

How do you screen and assess for housing needs?

Case managers uniformly reported that, to their knowledge, there is no established tool through which housing needs in general may be evaluated.

What tools do you need to better assess housing needs of clients?

- ❑ A Network of case managers to discuss options;
- ❑ Relationships and experience with landlords;
- ❑ Money to purchase services to support housing;
- ❑ HODAP money for security deposit and first rent;
- ❑ County-sponsored list of eligible and interested landlords;
- ❑ Time to discuss and review options with consumers;
- ❑ Increase in Section 8 vouchers.

Is there an adequate supply of housing types and services?

- ❑ Supply of **independent housing** is limited if one is selective about the landlords and housing stock.
- ❑ There is a lack of “**mid-range**” housing arrangements, more supportive than independent apartments but less supportive than group homes.
- ❑ **Group homes** said to be more desirable with on-site programming.
- ❑ Need more **SRO (single room occupancy)** and **supervised apartments**. with on-site management and food.

Evidence-Based Practices

Milwaukee is not alone.

“The lack of decent, safe, affordable, and integrated housing is one of the most significant barriers to full participation in community life for people with serious mental illness.”

Source: Report to the President's New Freedom Commission, 2004

Evidence-Based Practices:

- **Housing First Model**
- **“Blended Management”**
- **Special Populations**

Housing First Model

- ❑ Bypasses the traditional shelter-based model and moves a person directly to permanent supportive housing.
- ❑ *Pathways to Housing* in New York City is one of the best known “Housing First” models.
- ❑ This approach may challenge case managers who prefer to focus on clinical issues.

Is Housing First effective?

Major Findings from Pathways evaluation

Housing First models lead to:

1. Higher rates of housing retention.
2. No increase in the use of alcohol and drugs despite the lack of abstinence requirement.
3. Equal success in addressing mental health issues despite the fact that services are not required as a condition of tenancy.

“Blended Management”

- Property managers and case managers work together as a team.
- *Mercy Housing* in Chicago is credited with development of this approach.
- *Deborah’s Place* in Chicago created a Director of Supportive Housing position to bring together property management and resident services functions.
- At *Union Hotel, Seattle*, property managers have MSW degrees and responsibility for both case management and property management aspects of the program.

Model Programs

For re-entry populations

St. Andrew's Court in Chicago is a model program offering permanent supportive housing for men exiting prison. St Leonard's Ministries provides individualized case management to help each resident successfully adjust to life after incarceration.

Model Programs

Section 8 subsidies

The Alliance Apartments in Minneapolis have 124 efficiency apartments. 100 of the apartments carry HUD Section 8 subsidies.

Information

Tennessee Housing Within Reach has a website that includes consumer housing options, TennCare, case management, Peer Support Centers, developer information and frequently asked questions.

Resources on Evidence-Based Practices in Supportive Housing

- ❑ *Toolkit from the Corporation for Supportive Housing and National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.*
- ❑ *Toolkit from SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) will be developed in 2008.*
- ❑ *A Compendium of Housing Models that Meet the Needs of Persons with Co-Occurring Disorders*

Possible Next Steps

- ❑ Look into ways to expand consumer choice.
- ❑ Respond to case manager request for improved protocols and information sharing.
- ❑ Recommend ways to improve case manager/landlord relationships.
- ❑ Investigate the extent to which evidence-based practices are currently being employed in the local housing system.
- ❑ Expand the housing continuum to accommodate greater variation in needs.