

# Office to Prevent and End Homelessness

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LOB #158:

## **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES**

### **Purpose**

The two primary components of supportive housing services are transitional housing programs and permanent supportive housing. Transitional housing programs provide clients with housing and supportive services for up to two years. During the two years, the clients work with case managers and the goal is for the client to achieve independent living by the end of the program. Permanent supportive housing provides long-term, non-time-limited housing that has intensive supportive services for homeless persons where the head of household has been diagnosed with a disabling condition. This type of supportive housing enables those that are eligible to live as independently as possible in a long-term setting. Additionally, the County receives two grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. These grants are discussed in more detail in the Grant Support section of this narrative.

### **Description**

Through contracts with non-profit partners, the County operates the following supportive housing programs:

- **Mondloch I** – While traditionally called an emergency shelter, because of the intensive needs of these clients, Mondloch I is best described as supportive housing. It opened in 1978. It serves hard-to-reach individuals with severe mental illness and/or severe substance abuse who come primarily from the streets and have been unable or unwilling to participate in housing or supportive services. This program is temporary and the goal is to help the person become healthy enough to move to permanent supportive housing. It includes eight beds, one of which is dedicated to the County's adult protective services program. While the ultimate goal when working with any homeless clients is to facilitate client's successful transition to more permanent housing, working with this population is different than with those in traditional homeless shelters. Helping clients transition and to become comfortable with the idea of living indoors permanently so that they are in a safe place is a critical first step.
- **Mondloch Place** – Permanent supportive housing that includes 20 fully furnished efficiency rental units with onsite supportive services. All units are for chronically homeless with preference given to chronically homeless individuals that are deemed vulnerable during assessment.
- **Kate's Place** – Permanent supportive housing that includes six furnished townhomes with on-site services for six households with children.

Clients in permanent supportive housing programs are the most at-risk and often the hardest to serve. While they are at high risk, they are often also the clients that are the most challenging to engage in the system. The work required to get them to trust the system and engage in case management and accept services is intensive. The issues they face are multiple and complex including, but not limited to, significant mental illness, substance and/or alcohol abuse, chronic homelessness, involvement with the child welfare system. OPEH's non-profit partners have a strong commitment to serving this population. Without the benefit of this commitment, it would be challenging to meet the needs of this population and it is likely that many would remain unserved. OPEH staff works closely with providers and contract staff to ensure the programs meet the rigorous program and fiscal requirements. Staff do strategic work with the non-profit partners to foster good outcomes for clients across the system and the program's ability to meet required performance measures. OPEH staff convenes meetings with non-profit partners, other County agencies and clients to address and come to resolution on these complicated cases.

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While transitional housing programs are less cost effective options for moving households into permanent housing, there are specific populations (e.g. people fleeing domestic violence, youth aging out of foster care, transitioning 18 to 24 years old) that are best served using this model. Given the lack of resources and/or experiences of these populations, they need housing assistance and support services to become self-sufficient but are not necessarily in need of a permanent supportive housing program. Therefore, it is appropriate to maintain some transitional housing in the homeless services system.

### **Benefits**

As detailed in the description, clients in permanent and supportive housing programs face many complicated issues and, as a result, are often the hardest to serve. Providing permanent supportive housing lessens the burdens on and costs in other human service delivery systems. Studies have indicated that this type of housing is associated with significant reductions in emergency room visits, hospitalizations, shelters, sobering centers, and jails. Further, because of the vulnerability of the individuals that need this type of housing, they are most at-risk of dying on the streets if not housed.

Families in permanent supportive housing programs are also high risk and therefore the children involved in these programs are particularly vulnerable. These families are known to the child welfare system and if not for this housing option with its intensive supports many of these families would not be able to remain together because of the risk of child abuse and neglect. Also, the children might not receive the developmental supports they receive in the program.

### **Mandates**

This Line of Business is not mandated.

### **Trends and Challenges**

Best practice indicates that the transitional housing model is not the most effective model in client outcomes or in cost efficiencies. HUD has also prioritized permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals. Therefore, OPEH has been working to reduce the number of transitional programs in the system. In recent years the County has built properties for individuals and families in need of permanent supportive housing; however, the need for this type of housing far exceeds those properties. Therefore, OPEH relies on partnerships with landlords in the community to secure rental units. This requires a great deal of client advocacy as it is very difficult and time intensive to secure community-based housing, especially given the limited number of housing units available for low-income households.

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## Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
<b>LOB #158: Supportive Housing Services</b>			
<b>FUNDING</b>			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$257,125	\$254,477	\$277,900
Operating Expenses	499,461	521,125	615,106
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$756,586</b>	<b>\$775,602</b>	<b>\$893,006</b>
General Fund Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund</b>	<b>\$756,586</b>	<b>\$775,602</b>	<b>\$893,006</b>
<b>POSITIONS</b>			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	3 / 2.6	3 / 2.6	3 / 2.6
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>3 / 2.6</b>	<b>3 / 2.6</b>	<b>3 / 2.6</b>

## Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Percentage of people that remain housed in permanent supportive housing or exit to other permanent housing at the end of the year	92%	96%	93%	93%	93%

The trends in the Supportive Housing program outcomes are positive and reflective of the high quality of services provided by nonprofit organizations serving this particularly vulnerable population, as well as the coordination and leadership provided by OPEH.

Families and individuals served in Supportive Housing programs are the most challenging to house and keep housed. They are typically chronically homeless and come to the programs with a host of barriers to stable housing, including extremely low- and/or fixed incomes, chronic health conditions and serious mental or physical disabilities. Without providing supportive services, paired with housing that is affordable, this high-risk population would likely cycle in and out of shelter and continue to suffer in poor health, often dying at a disproportionately early age.

However, as the outcomes of the program demonstrate, the program is effective in assisting clients in maintaining housing stability with over 90 percent of the people served remaining in housing at the end of each year. The success of the program depends on well-trained staff that specialize in serving clients with specific needs, such as mental health treatment and securing housing that is appropriate. Successful examples include the County-constructed and nonprofit-operated, Kate's Place and Mondloch Place.

The program's success is most often restricted in the efforts to secure a sufficient number of supportive housing units. Multi-family construction on a single-site is not always possible so often program providers need to utilize rental housing in partnership with flexible landlords and property management companies. Using scattered-site properties is not ideal as rental prices continue to rise, vacancies are low and the delivery of services across the County at multiple-sites is inefficient.

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## Grant Support

Grant support is primarily received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD). The following three grants are awarded to the County and managed by OPEH:

- **Emergency Solutions Grant:** Funding provides direct services in homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing activities (e.g. utility payments, rental payments, security deposits) through the housing relocation and stabilization services that are provided by the community case managers and the Housing Locators Program contracted through several nonprofit organizations. The program year 2015 award totaled \$385,886. A 50 percent Local Cash Match is required; therefore, total funding available for this program totaled \$771,772.
- **Community Housing and Resource Program:** Funding assists homeless families in making the transition from living in shelters to permanent housing. The program offers 28 units for victims of domestic violence families and various supportive services. The program year 2016 award totals \$813,644 which includes \$373,837 in Local Cash Match. This grant is awarded as part of the Continuum of Care program discussed below.
- **RISE (Reaching Independence through Support and Education) Supportive Housing Grant:** Funding provides 20 units of transitional housing and support services for families through a partnership of private nonprofit organizations and County agencies. The program year 2016 award totals \$543,588 which includes \$67,000 in Local Cash Match. This grant is awarded as part of the Continuum of Care program discussed below.

OPEH has been designated as the lead County agency and manages all aspects of the Continuum of Care (CoC) program. Funding is awarded annually by HUD with the intent of developing a continuum of services to enable homeless families and individuals to move toward stable housing. Both County agencies and Fairfax County non-profit organizations receive funding through the CoC program; however, OPEH is the lead County agency responsible for the management, oversight, and compliance with HUD regulations of all funding awarded through the CoC program. Funding currently totals more than \$7.6 million. The number of projects the CoC funds can fluctuate each year depending on federal priorities and funds available. Currently the funds support 27 projects which are sponsored by 14 non-profit organizations and County agencies. The projects include transitional and permanent supportive housing programs for individuals and families, as well as one planning grant. These projects currently support 373 individuals and 95 families who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness in the community. There is a 25 percent Local Cash Match or in-kind requirement for each CoC project that is awarded funding.