

Cynthia Stuart, Communications Director
Supportive Housing Network of New York
New York, NY

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING For Homeless, Disabled, and Very-Low-Income New Yorkers

2007	
New York – Total Homeless Persons	62,601
Homeless Persons Per 10,000 Population	US: 22 NY: 32
<i>Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness</i>	

Description:

Supportive housing is permanent affordable housing with on-site services that helps low-income people with histories of homelessness, mental illness, or some other barrier to independence live independently in the community. First developed to serve the needs of people living with mental illness, supportive housing has been developed in New York City for more than 30 years and now helps a wide range of individuals and families across the State, including seniors at risk of homelessness, youth aging out of foster care, grandparents raising grandchildren, people in recovery from alcoholism or substance abuse, people with HIV/AIDS, families, and veterans.

Supportive housing is a common sense solution to the often complex problems that the homeless population faces, offering people a decent, affordable place to live, together with easy access to whatever support services they need to stay housed. Services are designed to flexibly meet individual tenants' needs "where they are" and are tailored to address residents' barriers to stability. While on-site services differ from residence to residence, they are organized around the principle of preventing relapse into homelessness—including case management; assistance with benefits, education, and employment; access to healthcare, addiction counseling, psychiatric care, and crisis management; and help with daily living skills. For example, a residence for grandparents raising grandchildren in the Bronx provides services and physical features (e.g., faucets that prevent scalding and cord pulls for emergency assistance) for children as well as for seniors.

Common characteristics of supportive housing models include:

- Tenants have leases or lease-like agreements;
- Tenants pay no more than one-third of their income for rent;
- Services are not mandatory—tenants may not be evicted simply because they refuse services;
- Residences feature common spaces to help tenants build social networks; some models provide meals;

- Most supportive housing units (90 per cent) are designed for single occupancy and usually provide tenants with modest efficiency apartments; and
- All supportive residences are owned and operated by nonprofit agencies with City, State, and/or Federal funding and oversight.

Supportive housing can be developed by either for-profit or nonprofit entities, but must be owned by a nonprofit organization. Since supportive housing provides housing and services, some owner-organizations prefer to partner with service organizations rather than play the triple role of landlord, property manager, and service provider themselves, while others prefer to perform all three functions "under one roof."

While New York State has one of the largest homeless populations in the nation, there are homeless individuals and families in all states; and supportive housing models are increasingly being built across the country as the most effective means for addressing the housing and service needs of these populations. Various programs that make up the Steward B. McKinney Act (Shelter Plus Care, Supportive Housing, and Single-Room Occupancy Program) are the primary sources of Federal funding for supportive housing options. In addition, across the country, states and cities provide additional resources, mostly to fund support services. New York City and the State lead the nation in funding supportive housing.

There are more than 39,000 units of supportive housing statewide, 25,000 of which are in the five boroughs of New York City. Nearly half (48 per cent) of the supportive housing units in New York City are set aside for individuals living with mental illness. Statewide, approximately ten per cent of supportive housing serves families with children. Slightly more than half of the State's total units are in 'single-site' locations—multiunit residences that are developed specifically to house formerly homeless and low-income families and individuals. The remaining 49 per cent are "scattered site" units— individual apartments or single-family homes rented by nonprofits to house homeless and near-homeless individuals and families, which are visited regularly by teams of professionals to ensure tenant success.

Dozens of studies have been conducted nationwide of both single- and scatter-site supportive housing (most for people with mental illness) attesting to its effectiveness in keeping very vulnerable people housed, healthy, and integrated with the wider community. As a result, both forms of supportive housing have become the nation's preferred response to ending chronic homelessness, and funding for supportive housing has dramatically increased.

A factor in single-site (or congregate) supportive housing's success lies in the *quality* of the housing offered. As a result, the nonprofits that design and develop supportive housing work to ensure it both "fits" the surrounding neighborhood and is the nicest building on the block. A recent study by New York University's Furman Center on Real Estate and Policy found that, over the past 18 years, property values nearest supportive housing residences rose slightly over the norm.

Benefits:

For older adults:

- Supportive housing provides the independent living environment older people want combined with whatever supportive assistance they need.
- The inclusion of common spaces promotes socialization.
- Supportive housing can provide an intergenerational living environment for those older people who need such an alternative (such as grandparents who have custodial responsibility for grandchildren) or who prefer to live with a variety of age groups.
- Older people are physically and emotionally threatened in homeless shelters; supportive housing provides a safe, secure living environment for aging individuals.

For people with disabilities:

- Supportive housing was and is designed specifically to meet the varying needs of people coping with chronic disabilities, including mental illness, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, etc.

For the wider community:

- Supportive housing is a cost-effective alternative—once tenants are stably housed, their use of a community's costliest services decreases significantly, thereby containing local budgets and saving tax dollars.
- Several key components of supportive housing assure that the overall physical building, as well as individual living units, remains in good condition over the long term, adding to the maintenance and value of a community's housing stock: (1) for each supportive housing development, there is on-going, solid involvement of a nonprofit agency dedicated to helping vulnerable people, and (2) services are specifically designed to address residents' barriers to stability.
- Supportive housing can be successfully developed in all areas of the State and in a variety of forms—from a single-family house in a rural or suburban setting, to individual apartments in large or small multiunit buildings in all geographic locations, to specifically designed large apartment buildings in urban areas . . . from rehabilitation of a 652-unit run-down tourist hotel in mid-town Manhattan to helping to renovate a blighted neighborhood in Utica through development of a three-apartment house.
- The person-centered service-provision in supportive housing flexibly meets the differing needs of a community's diverse homeless and near-homeless population.

- Supportive housing is an optimal permanent housing solution for a community's residents who have histories of homelessness or who need a measure of support in order to stay housed and healthy in the community.
- Supportive housing is an affordable option for low-income community residents.

Impediments or barriers to development or implementation:

- *Resources*—While funding for supportive housing has increased in response to evidence of its significant effectiveness, demand for such housing continues to significantly outstrip the supply. The recent economic downturn, including housing foreclosures, has increased the number of homeless families and individuals of all ages, including elderly people.
- *Development process*—Because developing supportive housing requires building capital and operating and service dollars, an individual development deal can require nonprofits to apply for, and report to a half-dozen funding sources.
- *NIMBYism (not in my backyard)*—Because supportive housing serves several vulnerable populations, siting a project can be controversial and challenging as neighbors are often fearful of the proposed tenants and voice their various concerns through the prism of fear of lowered property values.

While there is no "silver bullet" to overcoming neighborhood opposition, the Supportive Housing Network of New York has found that certain strategies and tools are often successful, including:

- Community education;
- Tours of existing supportive housing residences;
- Recommendations from neighbors of existing supportive housing residences.

Several education tools, including a power point presentation, video, and "Myths and Realities of Supportive Housing" are available on the Supportive Housing Network of New York Web site at: <http://www.shnny.org> under "What is Supportive Housing."

Resource—examples:

- The Lee is located at 133 Pitt Street, on the Lower East Side in Manhattan, New York. The development will provide affordable supportive housing linked to on-site social services for 263 residents, including homeless adults, young people aging out of Foster Care, and low-income individuals. Developed by Common Ground and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, The Lee is a winner in the New York City Department of Environmental Protection's 2005 Green Building Design Competition and is New York City's first LEED-certified (Silver level) "green" supportive housing development. Common Ground, 505 Eighth Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY, 10018, (212) 389-9300. <http://www.commonground.org/>.
- The GrandParent Family Apartments is located in the South Bronx, New York. Developed by West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing, with services provided by Presbyterian Social Services, the building provides housing

for fifty families in which grandparents are raising grandchildren. The building was the first residence providing supportive housing to this population and was the first supportive housing developed with the participation of the New York City Housing Authority. GrandParent Family Apartments provides comprehensive support services for grandparents—including individual and family counseling, language and computer classes, stress reduction workshops, and legal assistance—as well as services for the 93 grandchildren currently living there (2009). The building features a 'green' roof garden. West Side Senior and Supportive Housing, 2345 Broadway, New York, New York 10024; (212) 721-6032. Presbyterian Social Services, 2095 Broadway, Suite 409, New York, New York 10023; (212) 874-6633.

- The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) is a national organization whose mission is to help communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness. For profiles of diverse supportive housing projects around the country, see the CSH Web site:
<http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&PageID=422&C:\CFusionMX7\verity\Data\dummy.txt>.

Resources—written and web:

- Supportive Housing Network of New York: *What is Supportive Housing*—an excellent summary of the history of SRO's, homelessness, and supportive housing models in New York: <http://shnny.org/learn-more/history-of-supportive-housing/>.
- Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy (November, 2008), *The Impact of Supportive Housing on Surrounding Neighborhoods: Evidence from New York City*. NY, NY: New York University, School of Law and Wagner School of Public Service:
http://furmancenter.org/files/FurmanCenterPolicyBriefonSupportiveHousing_LowRes.pdf.
- National Health Care for the Homeless Council—web site links to an extensive list of publications documenting the impact of supportive housing on the health and well-being of homeless persons, cost-benefit analyses, and other resources:
<http://www.nhchc.org/resources/housing/>.
- "HOMELESS AND ELDERLY: Understanding the Special Health Care Needs Of Elderly Persons Who Are Homeless," *Health Center Program: Program Assistance Letter*, Health Resources and Services Administration, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services—excellent overview of many issues that distinguish the elderly homeless population:
<http://bphc.hrsa.gov/policiesregulations/policies/pdfs/pal200303.pdf>
<http://bphc.hrsa.gov/policiesregulations/policies/pal200303.html>.
- National Coalition for the Homeless—Fact Sheet #15 (June, 2008)—good overview of the issues surrounding homeless older people and causes of

increases among this subset of homeless people:

<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/Elderly.pdf>.

- W. Sermons and M. Henry (January 12, 2009), *Homelessness Counts: Changes in Homelessness from 2005 to 2007*. Washington, DC: National Alliance to End Homelessness. A report on changes in homelessness, by state, and among subpopulations, including an interactive, online map that features state profiles and the economic indicators (unemployment, poverty, housing affordability) most closely associated with homelessness. For full report: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2158>. For New York State homeless count: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2797>.
- J. Khadduri (Abt Associates, Inc.), D. Culhane (University of Pennsylvania), et al (July, 2009), *The 2008 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: <http://www.hudhre.info/documents/4thHomelessAssessmentReport.pdf>.
- J. Baumohl (editor) (1996), *Homeless In America*. Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. 19-chapter book describing various homeless sub-populations, including rural, elderly, veterans, families, African-Americans, Latinos, and persons with alcoholism, substance abuse, and mental disorders, as well as definitions and information on causes of homelessness and neighborhood challenges to developing housing for homeless persons.
- U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)—list and descriptions of HUD's homeless assistance programs under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Supportive Housing Program; Shelter Plus Care Program; Single Room Occupancy Program): <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/index.cfm>.
- The Stewart B. McKinney Act (U. S. Code, Title 42, Chapter 119—Homeless Assistance) (as of January 3, 2007). Full text of the Act: <http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/42C119.txt>.
 - Section 833 of the Act—Supportive Housing Demonstration Program: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/hudclips/acts/naha833.txt>.
- U. S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (March, 2008), *Inventory of Federal Programs That May Assist Homeless Families With Children*. Extensive information about 73 federal programs that serve homeless families with children: <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=6160&MIId=870&wversion=Staging>.
- National Mental Health Information Center, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services—web site provides information and links to resources and various federally funded programs for addressing homelessness:

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/orgs/HR2480.htm>.

- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Housing and Support Services—information on New York State's array of assistance programs for homeless persons, those at risk of homelessness, and low-income households. These programs are designed to prevent homelessness, provide shelter for homeless persons, construct supportive housing for homeless populations, and offer essential services to stabilize tenants' housing situations and increase their levels of self-sufficiency. Homeless assistance programs include the Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP), as well as a range of supportive services programs: Homelessness Intervention Program, Supplemental Homelessness Intervention Program, Single Room Occupancy Support Services Program, Emergency Shelter Grants Program, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Program, Supported Housing for Families and Young Adults Program, and the Operational Support for AIDS Housing Program. <http://otda.ny.gov/programs/housing/>.
<http://otda.ny.gov/programs/housing/programs.asp>.
- New York City Department of Homeless Services (Fall, 2008), "A Progress Report on Uniting for Solutions Beyond Shelter: The Action Plan for New York City," *Ending Homelessness in New York City*. Extensive information about the City's five-year action plan to address and reduce homelessness: http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/downloads/pdf/progress_report.pdf.
- New York / New York III Supportive Housing Initiative, an agreement signed by New York City and New York State to expand (by 9,000 units) the number and flexibility of supportive housing units for homeless New Yorkers. The program is being collaboratively implemented by thirteen City and State agencies including the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, State Office of Mental Health, State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, and New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Human Resources Administration, and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/dmh/dmh-housing-agreement.shtml>.
- National Alliance to End Homelessness—"a national nonprofit, non-partisan organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States through efforts focused on national policy, capacity-building assistance to communities, and education and research through the Homelessness Research Institute"; extensive information, resources, tools, and data: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/>.
- Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)—"a national nonprofit organization and community development financial institution that helps communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness": <http://www.csh.org/>. CSH provides its services through eight geographic hubs: California, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, and Southern New England.

- *CSH New York Program*: <http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?nodeId=89>. Since its inception in 1991, CSH New York has "committed over \$30,500,000 in 179 grants, 145 predevelopment loans and forgivable loans, and 243 consultant contract services to over 100 nonprofit organizations; has facilitated the development or rehabilitation of 5,454 units of supportive housing, with 2,177 in development and 3,277 operational; and has placed over \$51 million in gross tax credit equity in 16 New York City projects with over 1,332 units of supportive housing." *Tool Kit for Ending Homelessness*: <http://www.csh.org/resources/toolkit-for-ending-long-term-homelessness>.
- U. S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, a coalition of 20 federal government agencies, whose purpose is to coordinate the federal response to homelessness; assist state and local governments, advocates, service providers, and customers in creating effective local solutions to homelessness; and provide technical assistance and evidence-based innovation and best practice information to agencies at every level of government and to the private sector: <http://www.usich.gov/>.
 - United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, et al. (2010), *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, ten objectives and 52 strategies focused on preventing and ending chronic homelessness among veterans, families youth, children, and other individuals. U. S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, Washington, DC. http://www.usich.gov/PDF/OpeningDoors_2010_FSPPreventEndHomeless.pdf.
 - National Coalition for the Homeless: *Response to Opening Doors*: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/advocacy/nationalstrategicplan.html>.

Resource—technical assistance contact name:

- Supportive Housing Network of New York (SHNNY) represents more than 180 not-for-profit organizations in New York State that develop and operate more than 39,500 units of supportive housing. The Network provides advocacy, public education, technical assistance, training, and policy analysis.
247 West 37th Street, 18th Floor
New York, New York 10018
(646) 619-9640
Fax: (646) 237-8505
<http://shnny.org/>.