

# Permanent Supportive Housing

PSH is affordable housing linked to mental health, addiction, employment, and other support services. PSH targets individuals and families who experience extreme poverty and have complex service needs. PSH provides comprehensive, intensive services that address the root causes of long-term homelessness (addiction, mental illness, chronic disease and disability).

## The following elements define a supportive housing unit

---

The unit is available to and intended for, a person or family whose head of household who has ...

chronic conditions that are at least episodically disabling, such as mental illness, substance abuse, and other chronic health issues\*

AND

---

been homeless for long periods of time, or experienced repeated stays in the streets, emergency shelters, or other temporary settings, often cycling between homelessness and hospitals, jails, prisons, or other emergency systems.

---

The tenant household ideally pays no more than 30% household income towards rent and utilities, and never pays more than 50% of income toward such housing expenses;

---

The tenant household has a lease (or similar form of occupancy agreement) with no limits on length of tenancy, as long as the terms and conditions of the lease or agreement are met;

---

The unit's operations are managed through an effective partnership among representatives of the project owner and/or sponsor, the property management agent, the supportive services providers, and the tenants;

---

All members of the tenant household have easy, facilitated access to a flexible and comprehensive array of supportive services to help them achieve and sustain housing stability.

---

Service providers actively engage tenants in on-site and community-based supportive services, but participation in such supportive services is not a condition of ongoing tenancy.

---

Service and property management strategies include effective, coordinated approaches for addressing issues resulting from substance use, relapse, and mental health crises, with a focus on fostering housing stability.

\* Other substantial barriers to housing stability (e.g., domestic violence, trauma, or history of out-of-home placements) usually accompany these.

## Housing Design

Supportive housing opportunities can be created in a variety of ways to meet the needs and preferences of tenants as well as the community. Broadly speaking, there are three primary approaches to creating the housing, each of them with their own benefits and challenges. Communities should determine the appropriate balance of these three housing models and ensure there are options that meet varying needs and promote tenant choice. The three strategies include:

**Scattered site housing** - apartments are identified and secured in buildings across a neighborhood or community. Landlords of these buildings lease units directly to tenants or master lease units to a supportive housing provider, who then sublets to supportive housing tenants.



**Mixed tenancy housing** - supportive housing is interspersed – or a limited number of units are set-aside - within broader affordable housing and/or mixed use and mixed income housing.



**Single site housing**, in which a majority of tenants – and in some projects all tenants- are people with histories of homelessness, disability (although not necessarily the same one) and/or chronic behavioral health conditions. Housing is located in the community and in proximity and with access to community services and activities.

**To clarify what PSH is, it makes sense to describe what PSH is not**

**PSH is NOT...**

- Residential treatment program
- Transitional housing
- Permanent housing WITHOUT service availability
- Licensed community care
- Skilled nursing facility
- Institutional care

# Housing First

Housing First, at its very essence, means providing housing, first, to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. A number of public and private not-for-profit agencies address housing first from the programmatic and policy levels.

According to HUD the core features of Housing First in the context of permanent supportive housing models are as follows\*\*:

## Few to no programmatic prerequisites to permanent housing entry

- Including requirement to follow treatment regimens

## Low barrier admission policies

- Policies should screen in prospective tenants based on need, and not screen out (i.e. denying housing due to credit or criminal histories)

## Rapid and streamlined entry into housing

- Flexible application processes and shortened wait periods between housing application and entry are good examples of making sure access is appropriate for the prospective tenant

## Supportive services are voluntary, but can and should be used to persistently engage tenants to ensure housing stability

- Practices such as Motivational Interviewing and Stages of Change help support engagement

## Tenants have full rights, responsibilities, and legal protections

- Housing First is about permanent housing, which includes the full spectrum of tenant protections that go along with that.

## Practices and policies to prevent lease violations and evictions

- Alcohol use, in and of itself should not be considered a lease violation. There may be actions related to alcohol use/abuse that have the potential to lead to eviction, but the use itself is not a reason to file.

## Applicable in a variety of housing models, single and scattered site

**PSH and Housing First are well-researched interventions. Numerous studies point to their efficacy of ending chronic homelessness in a cost effective manner.**

**CSH maintains links to these and related research here:**

<http://www.csh.org/supportive-housing-facts/evidence/>

\*\* More information available here ([www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-First-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Brief.pdf](http://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-First-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Brief.pdf)), including links to research, best practices, and tools to help implement Housing First