

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

.....Speaking with one voice to meet the critical needs of people with mental illness

Supportive Housing: Promoting Recovery and Saving Tax Dollars

Position: The Kansas Legislature should allocate \$300,000 to the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS), targeting high-need areas to create supportive housing options for those discharged from inpatient mental health facilities. This will ensure stable housing for these individuals, leading to decreased re-admissions and decreased use of state hospitals. It will also save tax dollars and help vulnerable Kansans achieve recovery.

The Problem: In January 2013, there were 610,042 people experiencing homelessness in the United States, a 9% reduction from 2007. Kansas, however, saw a 27% increase in its homeless population during that time—a population that includes people living with a serious mental illness who end up in state hospitals, emergency rooms and jails. When discharged without stable housing, they are more likely to return for more treatment, or more time in jail. Without a stable home, people have trouble taking their prescribed medications, engaging in meaningful social activities, and remaining healthy. Kansas has not implemented a comprehensive plan to create supportive housing options for extremely low income persons, especially those who use costly medical services.

From 2007 to 2013, the United States experienced a 9% decrease in homelessness. Kansas saw a 27% increase in homelessness during the same time frame.

Why this matters: Recently, non-profit housing providers joined forces to address this gap in our mental health services system. They know that Kansas will continue to experience increased homelessness and hospital/nursing home admissions if it doesn't increase supportive housing options. They also know that permanent, supportive housing promotes recovery, saves money and addresses the problem of the revolving door to jails, emergency rooms and state hospitals. Tennessee, for example, has funded the Creating Homes Initiative (CHI) for 13 years, reducing the rate of hospital re-admissions by 95 percent. Tulsa has seen a 72% decrease in homelessness since a city-wide campaign to end homelessness began.

The bottom line: The Kansas state mental health hospital system is chronically over census. There are 11 Nursing Facilities for Mental Health that house over 600 persons, primarily with state general funds. If Kansas invests in safe, decent, affordable and permanent housing—and pays for appropriate services for frequent users of costly medical services—the state and local communities will experience fewer hospital admissions and incarcerations. Investing in high-need areas to provide housing for people upon their discharge from a state hospital is a good first step.

Need more information? Drill deeper into this issue on the back of this page.

The rest of the story about promoting recovery through supportive housing

The Governor's Behavioral Health Services Planning Council Subcommittee on Housing and Homelessness, Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition, the University of Kansas Office of Mental Health Research and Training, and numerous other state agencies, organizations and individuals agree that all Kansans benefit when they have safe, decent, affordable, and permanent housing. These organizations are committed to the creation of a statewide data-driven program that increases the housing options for people who frequently use costly medical services. They have conducted extensive research on other states and communities that have chosen to implement similar initiatives. Following are brief examples of a couple of those initiatives.

Tennessee Creating Homes Initiative (CHI): Funded and managed by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health, CHI has created over 8,700 new or improved housing options by leveraging over \$381 million dollars in federal, state, local, public, private, traditional and non-traditional funding sources since 2000. As a result, the re-admission rate to state hospitals decreased by 95%.

Building Tulsa, Building Lives Campaign: Tulsa built a broad coalition to market and to solicit other businesses and private investment funds to improve Tulsa by ending homelessness. The Mental Health Association in Tulsa, who is a member of this campaign, reports that 91% of formerly homeless individuals who entered its affordable housing program have not returned to homelessness.

Kansas can benefit significantly from supporting a similar initiative already in existence in our state. Kim Wilson Housing, Inc., the Mental Health Association of South Central Kansas and Prairie View, Inc. have partnered to create **Homes Within Reach (HWR)**. HWR was created because the state has failed to invest in developing affordable housing options for extremely low income persons. HWR is a compilation of successful and time-tested campaigns and initiatives, such as those above that will increase quality affordable housing options for people with mental illness and other disabilities in communities statewide.

HWR Vision

Kansas must create and expand affordable, safe, permanent, and quality housing options in communities across the state for people with mental illness.

HWR Mission

To assertively and strategically partner with local communities to educate, inform and expand quality, safe, affordable and permanent housing options for Kansans with mental illness.