

SAFE HAVENS

Key Concepts

A Safe Haven is a form of supportive housing that:

- (1) serves hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illnesses who are on the streets and have been unable or unwilling to participate in supportive services;
- (2) provides 24-hour residence for an unspecified duration;
- (3) provides private or semi-private accommodations;
- (4) may provide for the common use of kitchen facilities, dining rooms, and bathrooms; and
- (5) in which overnight occupancy is limited to no more than 25 persons. A Safe Haven may also provide supportive services on a drop-in basis to eligible persons who are not residents.

For some persons with mental illnesses who have been living on the streets, the transition to permanent housing is best made in stages, starting with a small, highly supportive environment where an individual can feel at ease, out of danger, and subject to no immediate service demands. Safe Havens do not require participation in services and referrals as a condition of occupancy. Rather, it is hoped that after a period of stabilization in a Safe Haven, residents will be more willing to participate in services and referrals, and will eventually be ready to move to more traditional forms of housing. Safe Havens can serve as an entry point to the service system and provide access to basic services such as food, clothing, bathing facilities, telephones, storage space and a mailing address.

There are several factors to keep in mind when creating a Safe Haven program. These are:

Outreach

Safe Havens target the most difficult to serve chronically homeless population. Individuals who are chronically homeless tend to have mental illnesses or co-occurring disorders that make them inherently distrustful of people and programs.

Intake/Assessment

Certain information must be gathered about program participants to comply with HUD reporting requirements, and to assess client needs. However, clients may have a number of problems communicating important information to program staff, due to lack of knowledge, stigmatization, or mental health issues.

Engagement

The philosophy behind the Safe Haven model dictates that housing and services be delivered in a low-demand, coercion-free environment. Yet supportive services are crucial to achieving long-term housing and occupational stability for the target population.

EXAMPLES AND COMMON SOLUTIONS

Program	Lamp Community Drop-In Center & Safe Haven
Web Information	www.lampcommunity.org
Practice Used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 beds for homeless adults with chronic mental illness (and additional beds off-site) • The goal of the Community Model is to create a life-long community where members can find a sense of belonging and improve their wellbeing. The Community Model provides housing and services that are non-linear, voluntary, comprehensive, non-judgmental, and that meets consumers <i>“where they are at.”</i>

Program	Safe Haven – Mental Health Kokua (Hawaii)
Web Information	www.hud.gov
Practice Used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊖ outreach and case management ⊖ medical clinic with 24-hour on-call services ⊖ residential care home with 24-hour staffing ⊖ activity center for residents ⊖ outreach for clients and alumni • Provide short-term housing to outreach clients, in addition to the residential care home. <p>Furnish meals and plan activities for clients.</p>

SELECTED RESOURCES

Online Resources

National Alliance to End Homelessness

www.endhomelessness.org

Corporation for Supportive Housing

<http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=787&nodeID=87>

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

www.hud.gov

Goddard Riverside Community Center (New York)

<http://www.goddard.org/homeless/haven.htm>

Lamp Community

www.lampcommunity.org

HomeBase

www.homebaseccc.org

Publications

Bridgman, Rae (2002). *Housing Chronically Homeless Women: "Inside" a Safe Haven*, Housing Policy Debate, available at www.fanniemaefoundation.org/programs/hpd/pdf/hpd_1301_bridgman.pdf.

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