

HOUSING FIRST AND HEALTH

HOUSINGfirst

Permanent Supportive Housing in Cuyahoga County, Ohio

Housing First in Cuyahoga County is ending chronic homelessness through permanent supportive housing. The model provides housing first followed by support services – giving individuals independence and the support they need to integrate back into their communities.

The initiative's goal is to build permanent supportive housing apartments to end chronic homelessness in Cuyahoga County. To date, Housing First has 650 homes occupied or underway for single adults and 115 homes for families and young adults. Since Housing First began in 2006, the county has seen a 77 percent reduction in chronic homelessness.

Health Consequences of Chronic Homelessness

Homelessness and housing instability have major health consequences. People entering supportive housing tend to have high morbidity and mortality rates and carry a significant disease burden based on multiple risk categories, including homelessness, serious mental illness and addiction. Supportive housing improves access to quality health care by providing a place for service delivery and access to community-based social, mental health, substance abuse and medical care services.

Bringing Integrated Health Care to Housing First

In 2013, Housing First expanded to include Care Alliance Health Center, a nonprofit, Federally Qualified Health Center providing comprehensive medical and dental care services for people experiencing homelessness. Enterprise Community Partners secured a grant from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency to create a mobile health clinic. In partnership, Enterprise Community Partners, Care Alliance and FrontLine Service designed an integrated care model that enhances existing behavioral health services to provide physical and dental care in a mobile clinic staffed by a nurse practitioner and psychiatric nurse team.



Mobile Clinic Medical Assistant ready to drive the Mobile Clinic.

RESIDENT IMPACT

Charles was homeless for many years and struggled with severe mental illness. When he moved into a Housing First residence in 2013, he kept to himself, had a disheveled appearance and was receiving no psychiatric care for his mental illness. Charles was also at high risk for hospitalization because his diabetes was unmanaged and he had out of control blood sugars. Over time, as the mobile clinic team developed a relationship with Charles, he began receiving psychiatric care and he was prescribed several medications.

Today, the outlook is much brighter for Charles. He is well dressed, wearing a suit and tie, and frequently engages in conversation with others in his building. He is managing his diabetes more effectively, his blood sugars are within an acceptable range and he is taking his medications. He has met also with staff to reinstate his Supplemental Security benefits and is discussing employment options. Recently, Charles left the mobile clinic smiling and said, "Thank you" to the staff.

Mobile Clinic

The mobile clinic began visiting Housing First residences in January 2015. With the foundation of a safe, affordable home, residents receive help with quitting smoking, diabetes management, assistance in accessing specialists and other supportive health programs delivered right to their front door. On-site case managers support residents in achieving their health goals with one-on-one and community support.

Building a Community System

FrontLine and Care Alliance took additional steps to integrating primary and behavioral health care in their organizations. Enterprise Community Partners grant funds enabled FrontLine and Care Alliance to develop interoperability between their Electronic Medical Records.

Outcomes of the Initiative

Community after community has illustrated that supportive housing not only improves outcomes but reduces health care costs when targeted at high-cost utilizers. Since the launch of the Mobile Clinic, the integrated care team has:

- Served 330 unique clients
- Provided over 1,000 medical appointments
- Made 34 referrals to the Care Alliance dental department

Early results of the Mobile Clinic are showing both improved resident health as well as reduction in emergency room use.



Care Alliance and FrontLine Mobile Clinic staff.

Cuyahoga County Housing First Initiative began when Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland, in partnership with Enterprise Community Partners and the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services, convened 17 organizations to bring the permanent supportive housing model to Cleveland. While there are over 40 partners working together, operating partners include:

- **Enterprise Community Partners** – coalition leader
- **Cleveland Housing Network** – lead developer and owner
- **EDEN, Inc.** – property manager and co-owner
- **FrontLine Service** – lead service provider
- **Care Alliance** – mobile health clinic provider
- **Other partners** – Famicos Foundation, Louis Stokes VA Medical Center, Connections, AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland

