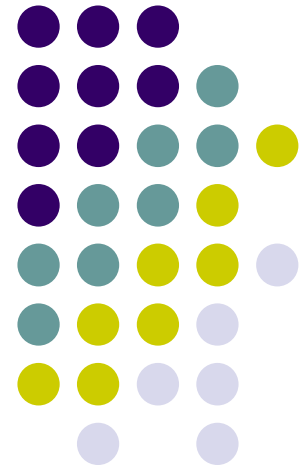


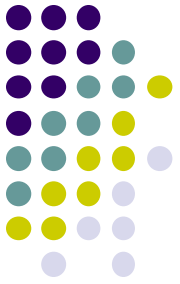
Blending homeless populations into traditional Low Income Housing Tax Credit Properties

12/12/2014 Combating the Rise in Homelessness
New England Housing Network Annual Conference

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Community Housing of Maine



Targeting people who are homeless for the longest periods of time:



Maine's emergency homeless shelters have begun a new initiative that focuses on housing long term stayers.

The City of Portland is very active in this approach.

Targeting people who are homeless for the longest periods of time:



“Long term stayers” refers to individuals with long histories of homelessness as categorized by staying in a shelter or place unfit for human habitation for 180 nights or more. In FY 2013, 2,166 unduplicated people stayed at least one night at Oxford Street Shelter, Portland’s largest emergency homeless shelter. Of the 2,166 people, 116, or 5% were long term stayers.

FY 2013			
Length of Stay	Total	%	Cumulative %
1 – 3 Days	679	32%	32%
4 – 14 Days	506	23%	55%
15 – 60 Days	537	25%	80%
61 – 179 Days	328	15%	95%
180 – 273 Days	70	3%	98%
274 – 365 Days	46	2%	100%
Total	2,166		

FY 2012			
Length of Stay	Total	%	Cumulative %
1 – 3 Days	696	33%	33%
4 – 14 Days	494	24%	57%
15 – 60 Days	555	27%	84%
61 – 179 Days	254	12%	96%
180 – 273 Days	42	2%	98%
274 – 365 Days	37	2%	100%
Total	2,078		

Targeting people who are homeless for the longest periods of time:



Although long term stayers make up a relatively small percentage of those who stayed at Maine shelters, this population consumes the large majority of beds on a given night.

Each night at Oxford Street Shelter (Maine's largest shelter), approximately 130 beds are available for those in need. Of the 130 beds, 116 are taken up by the 5% of people staying at the shelter night after night for half of the year or longer. This leaves just 14 beds for the remaining 2,050 people who pass through over the course of the year. By housing Portland's long term stayers, shelter capacity will increase for those needing to pass through temporarily and homelessness can be ended in the City of Portland.

But where will they be housed?

Blending homeless populations into traditional Low Income Housing Tax Credit Properties



Large, single-purpose Housing First buildings concentrate single populations – perhaps overly so. They can also become tangled up in “NIMBY” battles.

Scattered site Housing First units are often less effective in concentrating supportive services.

Recently, Community Housing of Maine, a non-profit supportive housing developer has locally pioneered an Housing First inclusion model that seeks to address both issues.

The model attempts to blend about one-third chronically homeless populations with two-thirds non-homeless populations in larger housing developments.

Blending homeless populations into traditional Low Income Housing Tax Credit Properties



Danforth on High is a 30 unit LIHTC development at 81 Danforth Street in Portland, restricted to people at or over age 55.

When the building was leasing, Community Housing of Maine (owner) had expressed hope to both Preservation Management (property manager) and local service providers that some of the referrals into this newly available housing would be long term stayers from local shelters.

Ultimately, 10 individuals with a collective 50 years of bed nights at Oxford Street Shelter had moved in to the new development. Two individuals were homeless for at least 17 years before moving in.

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This housing model has three distinct benefits:

1. Tenants are fully integrated into the community life of the building and surrounding area;
2. It is likely that other community members in the building and surrounding area have no idea that some of their neighbors may have been homeless in the past, removing all stigmas associated with homelessness; and
3. Services can be effectively and efficiently concentrated and delivered to the cohort of individuals living in supportive housing within the building.

Because this housing model is built on providing service providers a place to place clients and provide supportive housing for them, this model is less expensive than single purpose buildings and, therefore, easier to replicate.

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Through research, it was discovered that a total of twelve (12) long term stayers secured housing in Danforth on High. One of these residents passed away only two months after securing housing—he died safe, secure, and reported being happy with his housing. One other resident was asked to leave the property due to lease violations—he worked with local service providers to secure housing in a different development. Recently, a long terms stayer from Oxford Street Shelter filled this vacancy. Today, a total of eleven (11) former long term stayers reside in Danforth on High.

Eight (8) former long term stayers agreed to participate in a study. In order to be eligible, each participant must have met the following criteria:

1. Stayed in a shelter or place unfit for human habitation for 180 nights or more in the one year prior to entering Danforth on High; and
2. Moved in to Danforth on High directly from long term homelessness.

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Quality of Life for Former Long Term Stayers

Interviews conducted with eight (8) former long term stayers now residing in Danforth on High revealed significant increases in the quality of life for these eight individuals. Overall, these individuals showed improvements in health and wellbeing, sense of community, and self-esteem compared to their experiences while homeless. The results are as follows:

Health and Wellbeing

- 7 out of 8, or 87.5%, felt physically healthy.
- 6 out of 8, or 75%, felt mentally healthy.
- 7 out of 8, or 87.5% felt safe where they lived.
- 8 out of 8, or 100%, felt that they had a stable place to call home.

Sense of Community

- 7 out of 8, or 87.5%, felt as though they were part of a community.
- 6 out of 8, or 75%, were able to participate in positive or productive activities in their surrounding community.
- 8 out of 8, or 100%, had trusting relationships with people.
- 7 out of 8, or 87.5%, knew where to go for help when they were having a problem.

Self-Esteem

- 8 out of 8, or 100%, felt a sense of pride in where they lived.
- 8 out of 8, or 100%, were proud of their achievements.

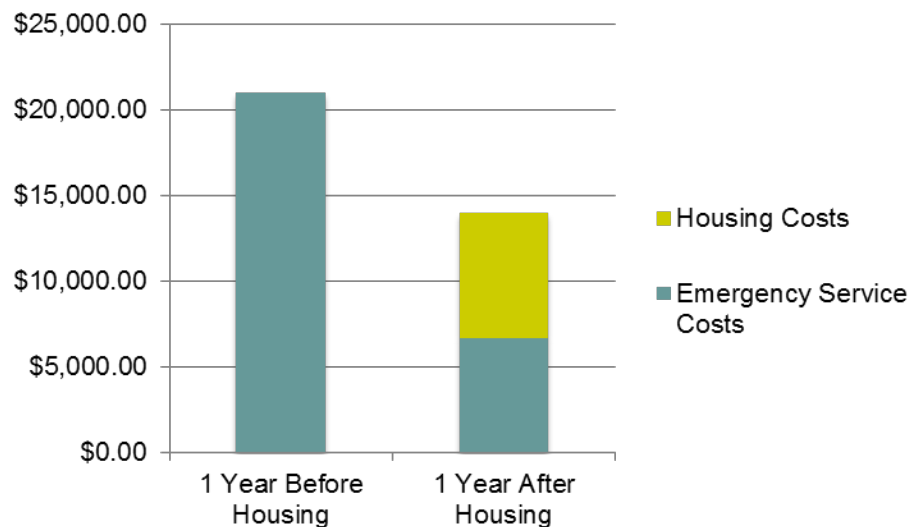
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Cost of Housing and Emergency Services Consumed by Former Long Term Stayers

Research revealed that, for eight long term stayers now residing in Danforth on High, this inclusive housing model:

- Reduced the total cost of housing and emergency services they consume by **33%**;
- Reduced the total cost of ambulance, police, and jail services by **85%**;
- Reduced the total cost of emergency health care, detoxification services, and mental health care by **55%**; and
- Produced average **annual cost savings of \$7,044.77** per person (for housing and emergency services combined).



Findings:



This research strongly implies that the integration of permanent supportive housing into larger, multi-purpose housing developments serves as an effective model for housing people with long histories of homelessness. By housing long term stayers with this inclusive housing model, property owners and service providers are able to significantly transform the lives of those experiencing long term homelessness while simultaneously bringing significant cost savings to the service delivery system.

It is important to note, however, that there is still work to be done on this housing model so that it can better increase the quality of life for the entire population of the building.

Quality of Life for Other Residents Living in Danforth on High

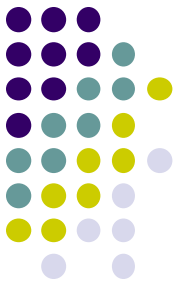
Interviews conducted with nine (9) residents of Danforth on High who did not meet the criteria for former long term stayers (their neighbors) showed mixed results. Generally, there seemed to be mixed results for safety and stability, mixed results for sense of community, and positive results for pride in housing. Some of that was timing because the one problematic resident had just moved out.



Conclusions:

Housing long term shelter stayers in Housing First inclusion units has three distinct benefits:

1. Significant cost savings to the service delivery system;
2. Ability to concentrate supportive services so that individuals experiencing long term homelessness can lead happy, productive lives; and
3. Increased availability of beds at emergency homeless shelters for individuals and families needing to pass through temporarily. This reduces the need for overflow shelters or turning people away.



Conclusions (continued):

Many different housing models are needed in order to meet the wide variety of needs of those experiencing long-term homelessness. Maine's first effort housing long term shelter stayers using a blended or inclusive approach provided two important lessons:

1. With supportive services, many individuals experiencing long-term homelessness are able to live successfully amongst diverse populations in large, multi-purpose buildings.
2. When moving long term stayers into Housing First developments, it is important to leverage the power of existing relationships with service agencies in order to connect the tenants' to sufficient preventative, community-based supportive services.

The lessons learned from this research suggest that replication of this model across the state of Maine and elsewhere would allow similar positive results.



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