

IN THE STATES: NEW RESULTS IN ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS AS MASSACHUSETTS HOME AND HEALTHY FOR GOOD INITIATIVE POSTS NEW DATA IN ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS AND SAVING TAX DOLLARS



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS. Home & Healthy for Good, Massachusetts' innovative Housing First initiative, "continues to lead the housing revolution in Massachusetts," stated Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance Executive Director Joe Finn, as he unveiled new data and results from the Commonwealth's strategy to move to a humane, efficient, and cost-effective solution to chronic homelessness. An evaluation of the Housing First program, with a focus on the cost per participant and projected cost savings in state-funded programs, is ongoing.

As of June 16, 2008, over 280 formerly homeless people have been housed across Massachusetts. Tenant retention stands at 82%. For the 239 participants who participate in the research study component, the annual cost per person, including the cost of housing and services, decreased from \$33,440 before housing to \$25,519 after housing placement, an annual savings to the state of \$7,921 per person. Most of these savings are a result of a drastic decrease in costly inpatient medical care, according to MHSa.

In the six months prior to entering housing, 239 participants accounted for 504 emergency room visits, 1,065 days in inpatient care, and 21,309 nights in emergency shelter. The use of these services decreased substantially following participation in HHG.

Mounting evidence from around the country that Housing First is a cost-effective and evidence-based practice that decreases the incidence of chronic homelessness led to Home & Healthy for Good. The Massachusetts Legislature passed line-item 4406-3010 in the FY07 state budget to fund a statewide pilot Housing First program for chronically homeless individuals. The state allocated \$600,000 to MHSa through the state's Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to operate the program. Investment in this program was increased to \$1.2 million in FY08, and has been level funded at \$1.2 million for FY09. This resource is used to fund a portion of the service or housing components for program participants, with the expectation that federal or

other state resources will be leveraged to finance additional needed service or facilities funds.

The Legislature requested an evaluation of the pilot program, with a focus on the cost per participant and projected cost-savings in state-funded programs. The new MHSa report describes the implementation of Home & Healthy for Good and updated findings from the evaluation of the program as of July 2008. The Boston Foundation recently announced a new investment in MHSa's advocacy initiatives for the Home and Healthy for Good strategy and its results.