



Transitions-Mental Health Association

Inspiring hope, growth, recovery and wellness in our communities

Housing Now

In 2014, TMHA launched *50Now*, a collaboration with the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo (HASLO) and the County of SLO Department of Social Services. *50Now* is a strategic attempt to address chronic homelessness head on, by identifying the 50 most vulnerable homeless individuals in the County, placing them in permanent housing, and providing behavioral health treatment, case management, and other services that will help them stabilize and maintain their housing. TMHA provides the fiscal responsibility and programmatic expertise to ensure the successful achievement of the proposed projects goals and objectives. Client outcomes have been overwhelmingly positive, and the Board of Supervisors has renewed and expanded the program multiple times. Currently, Housing Now serves 85 clients.

What Is *Housing First*?

“Housing First” is a different philosophy altogether, based on the principle that only with a secure living environment can health and life stability occur. As many states across the country adopt this approach, they not only find that it is remarkably successful on an individual basis, but it saves local governments money. As a recent article in *The New Yorker* observes, “Homeless people are not cheap to take care of. The cost of shelters, emergency-room visits, ambulances, police, and so on quickly piles up... A Colorado study found that the average homeless person cost the state forty-three thousand dollars a year, while housing that person would cost just seventeen thousand dollars.”

Who Is Eligible for the Program?

Working in conjunction with the Department of Social Services, the Housing Now staff and other community stakeholders use a Vulnerability Index tool (VI-SPDT) to identify chronically homeless persons who are the most at risk of dying on the streets and then prioritize them for supportive housing. Some of the variables taken into account are: more than three hospitalizations or emergency room visits in a year, aged 60 or older, HIV+/AIDS, and co-occurring psychiatric, substance abuse, and chronic medical conditions. HASLO provides Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers so these clients can be placed into permanent supportive housing.

