

Supportive Housing

Housing interventions and residential supports reduce the need for institutional care

Many Alaskans with disabilities, including people with intellectual-developmental disabilities (IDD), behavioral health disorders, dementia, and traumatic brain injuries struggle to maintain safe, stable, and affordable housing without the necessary supports that allow them to live safely at home. Housing supports offer a 'leg up' for getting housing and maintaining a meaningful life in the community.

Without housing support services, vulnerable Alaskans are at higher risk for homelessness or being served in expensive emergency care, nursing homes, psychiatric hospitals, out-of-state residential care, or prison.

Housing Supports for People Who Experience Homelessness

The *National Alliance to End Homelessness* has identified that 41% of people who are homeless in the United States also experience a disability.¹

Alaska Mental Health Trust beneficiaries² benefit from housing supports that offer a safe place to live and the ability to obtain and maintain employment, access basic health-care, treatment and recovery services, and contribute productively in their communities. These interventions include:

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is a national model that combines affordable housing and community support services for Alaskans with disabilities experiencing housing barriers. PSH has proven to reduce the need for expensive emergency care

because tenant needs are accommodated with onsite supportive services, such as case management, treatment, and medical care. A 2018 report indicates that 43% of individuals with patterns of homelessness "are considered candidates for permanent supportive housing."³

Housing First is a national model operating in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, offering housing for people experiencing homelessness that does not require sobriety or participation in a treatment program. *Housing First* reduce the need for expensive emergency care because tenant needs are accommodated with onsite supportive services, such as case management, treatment, and medical care. A 2018 report from the University of Alaska indicates that in the six-month period after residents moved into Juneau's permanent supportive *Housing First* facility, there were 230 fewer emergency room visits from complex patients, 495 fewer police contacts from the same population, and 352 fewer nights supervising a person sleeping off alcohol intoxication.⁴

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) is an intervention informed by a *Housing First* approach that rapidly connects people experiencing homelessness through a tailored package of assistance that includes the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services. RRH serves veterans, families, and individuals, and reduces the instances of living in shelters or on the street.

Residential Supported-Living Services

Residential support services help Alaskans with disabilities participate in activities of daily living and be more independent and engaged in the community. These services might include personal care assistance to help with eating, bathing, and transportation; a group home with support staff who help with managing behaviors and carrying out therapeutic treatment goals; or assistive equipment that aids in making phone calls, paying bills, or managing medication.

Residential support services promote person-centered care for maximum autonomy, independence, and dignity. Services include:

In-Home Supports offer people in need with access to professional assistance from a direct care provider who comes to their home for daily assistance to make meals, assist with hygiene, life skills, transportation, and more.

Assisted Living Homes typically serve people who need daily medical intervention and/or regular assistance with daily living activities.

Group Homes offer daily support for residents who experience difficulty managing basic life skills, such as meals, finances, treatment, social skills, transportation, and accessing community activities.

What do Alaskan's need?

Access to housing and with support services improves lives, saves money and reduces the likelihood that people with disabilities will end up homeless or needing more expensive emergency or institutional services.

A 2015 report by the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE), indicated that people with IDD experience housing barriers that include: 1) lack of supportive housing services for people not eligible for housing waivers; 2) lack of transition services for youth exiting school; 3) vulnerability of clients and exploitation by landlords; and 4) lack of supported housing and support services for people not on waivers or who live in rural areas.⁵

Seniors who experience Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ARD) have fewer options for supportive housing. Costs for nursing home care can be prohibitive for families and waitlists are long. The state-run Pioneer Homes report long waitlists and 57% of residents needing advanced levels of care.⁶

The Trust and partner advisory boards support solutions that address these barriers and continued funding for programs that serve Alaska's homeless citizens, including:

Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) offering grants for emergency shelters, homeless prevention (such as rental and utility emergency assistance), housing vouchers, and rapid rehousing;

Special Needs Housing Grants (SNHG) for permanent supportive housing and long-term rental assistance for seventeen successful housing programs;

Human Services Community Matching Grants and *Community Initiative Matching Grants* providing funds to municipalities for programs that provide food, shelter, and domestic violence services.

The Trust and partner advisory boards support funding for housing and residential support services that help Alaskans with disabilities across the lifespan remain safe, stable and productive in their communities. ❖

¹ National Alliance To End Homelessness <https://endhomelessness.org/resources>

² Trust beneficiaries include people with mental illness, substance use disorders (SUD), intellectual-developmental disabilities (IDD), including fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD), Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ARD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

³ Pay For Success Feasibility Study: Initial Findings, Agnew::Beck, April 2018.

⁴ "Juneau Housing First Six-Month Pre/Post Service Usage Indicators of Wellbeing Comparison," Brocius, Heidi PhD, MSW; Erisman, Morgan MSW, MPH, October 30, 2018.

⁵ "Housing Barriers Report 2015," Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, 2015.

⁶ Alaska Commission on Aging Senior Snapshot: Older Alaskans in 2017-18.

For more information, go to: www.alaskamentalhealthtrust.org/jointadvocacy