

Department of Mental Health
TRANSMITTAL LETTER

SUBJECT Access to Housing		
POLICY NUMBER DMH Policy 511.1	DATE JUN 10 2005	TL# 73

Purpose. To ensure that consumers are informed about supported housing options and are provided an array of options that meet minimum requirements for housing. Further, the purpose is to set forth standards that require providers to arrange for the provision of supports in the consumer's residence.

Applicability. Although access to supported housing is available to all consumers, this policy applies to DMH enrolled adults with serious mental illness and children or youth with serious emotional disturbance; to the following DMH certified providers (core services agencies [CSAs], Community Support subproviders, Assertive Community Treatment [ACT] specialty providers, Community-Based Intervention subproviders); to the Mental Health Authority; and to Saint Elizabeths Hospital and acute care hospitals (see Section 10a and 10b on discharges and transfers).

Policy Clearance. Reviewed by affected responsible staff and cleared through appropriate MHA offices.

Implementation Plans. A plan of action to implement or adhere to this policy must be developed by designated responsible staff. If materials and/or training are required to implement this policy, these requirements must be part of the action plan. Specific staff should be designated to carry out the implementation and program managers are responsible for following through to ensure compliance. Action plans and completion dates should be sent to the appropriate authority. Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (COTRs) must also ensure that contractors are informed of this policy if it is applicable or pertinent to their scope of work. *Implementation of all DMH policies shall begin as soon as possible. Full implementation of this policy shall be completed within sixty (60) days after the date of this policy.*

Policy Dissemination and Filing Instructions. Managers/supervisors of DMH and DMH contractors must ensure that staff are informed of this policy. Each staff person who maintains policy manuals must ensure that this policy is filed in the **DMH** Policy and Procedures Manual, and contractors must ensure that this policy is maintained in accordance with their internal procedures.

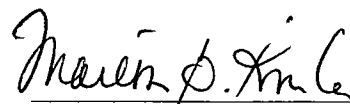
*If any CMHS or DMH policies are referenced in this policy, copies may be obtained from the DMH Policy Support Division by calling (202) 673-7757.

ACTION


REMOVE AND DESTROY

INSERT

NONE



Martha B. Knisley
Director, DMH

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH	Policy No. 511.1	Date JUN 10 2005	Page 1
	Supersedes		

Subject: Access to Housing

1. **Purpose.** To ensure that consumers are informed about supported housing options and are provided an array of options that meet minimum requirements for housing. Further, the purpose is to set forth standards that require providers to arrange for the provision of supports in the consumer's residence.

2. **Applicability.** Although access to supported housing is available to all consumers, this policy applies to DMH enrolled adults with serious mental illness and children or youth with serious emotional disturbance; to the following DMH certified providers (core services agencies [CSAs], Community Support subproviders, Assertive Community Treatment [ACT] specialty providers, Community-Based Intervention subproviders); to the Mental Health Authority; and to Saint Elizabeths Hospital and acute care hospitals (see Section 10a and 10b on discharges and transfers).

3. **Authority.** The provision of this support is guided by the Mental Health Service Delivery Reform Act of 2001; Title 22A DCMR, Chapter 22, Standards for Supported Housing for DMH Consumers; Title 22 DCMR, Chapter 34, Mental Health Rehabilitation Services Provider Certification Standards (MHRS); Dixon Court Ordered Exit Criteria, dated December 12, 2003; and the Final Court Ordered Plan, dated April 2, 2001.

4. **Background.** Currently, approximately 10,000 adults with serious mental illness are enrolled for mental health services in the District of Columbia. It is estimated that up to 2,000 of those enrolled are in need of safe affordable and decent housing. There are many more enrolled adults who have experienced extended stays of many years in congregate community residence facilities who desire more independent living options.

DMH is adopting the best practices of many other jurisdictions that have implemented the "supportive housing" approach for mental health consumers. In 2002, DMH began implementation of a comprehensive housing initiative including the development of affordable housing, consumer choice and individualized supportive services. Beginning in FY 2005, DMH implemented a new initiative to ensure that all contracted group home providers maintain an increased level of individualized rehabilitation activities to assist consumers with moving to more independent living settings. DMH is also in the process of implementing its Housing Business Plan that delineates the strategy for the development of up to 2,000 new affordable housing units over the next 5 years. Strong formal partnerships with DC housing agencies play a key role in housing expansion. Agency housing partners include D.C. Housing Authority, D.C. Housing Finance Agency and D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development.

5. **Policy.**

5a. DMH is committed to promoting choice, affordability, and quality in housing for all enrolled consumers with serious mental illness or serious emotional disturbance who want more independent living. For children and youth, parents or guardians must act on their behalf on issues related to housing, as needed and appropriate.

5b. Certified providers shall begin providing supported housing services within five (5) business days of the consumer's request for supported housing.

5c. All certified providers may, when available, access bridge (temporary subsidy) and permanent housing resources, and shall:

- **Provide** any enrolled consumer with serious mental illness or serious emotional disturbance, including those who are homeless, with access to housing options and, when available, assistance with securing housing of choice;
- **Refer** consumers only to housing that meets the standards established in all applicable federal and District laws and regulations including, but not limited to, 14 DCMR, Subtitle A, Chapters 1-12.
- **Provide** and/or arrange all housing supports needed to assist the consumer in obtaining housing and once they have been placed, in maintaining their housing through provision of MHRS services;
- **Comply** with the DMH rule Standards for Supported Housing for DMH Consumers, Title 22A DCMR, Chapter 22, to assure a safe and healthy living environment;
- **Comply** with the terms of any housing agreements and procedures as established by DMH;
- In accordance with the "housing first" approach, **not require** any enrolled, homeless consumer to accept treatment or maintain treatment compliance before commencing with securing housing (see DMH Policy 511.2); and
- **Designate** a Housing Liaison for the CSA to serve as the central point of contact with the DMH Housing Division and as coordinator of CSA housing resources, requests and compliance.

6. Definitions.

6a. Supported housing – Service, supports and less than 24-hour supervision that helps consumers obtain and/or maintain safe, decent affordable and permanent housing that is their home; services improve residential stability and community tenure and help consumers fulfill their rights and responsibilities as tenants. Included are DMH consumers living in an apartment or home and/or consumers receiving rental subsidies where in-home supports are provided.

6b. Serious Mental Illness (SMI) or Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) - Persons with SMI or SED as defined in DMH Priority Populations Rule, Title 22A DCMR, Chapter 12.

6c. Standards for Supported Housing for DMH Consumers, Title 22A DCMR, Chapter 22 – is a rule issued by DMH which establishes minimum requirements for all housing (other than licensed community residence facilities) that receives support from the DMH, including access to housing support services for consumers, financial support for housing, and related support services.

7. Responsibilities for Mental Health Authority (MHA).

7a. MHA Office of Programs and Policy (OPP). OPP shall:

- (1) **Inform** providers of the availability of bridge/permanent subsidies for housing, including the "housing first" approach.
- (2) **Provide** training for all providers on housing resources and provide access to required housing application/forms.

(3) **Monitor** compliance to ensure that all providers abide by related housing procedures for the various housing programs.

(4) **Utilize** quality improvement information from a variety of sources, including but not limited to; consumer satisfaction surveys, Community Services Review results; routine oversight and monitoring activities that are specific to consumer access to supported housing in determining if MHA supported housing objectives are being achieved.

(5) **Work** to maintain a stock of affordable housing to be used for this purpose.

7b. The Office of Accountability (OA) shall monitor provider compliance based on the requirements in the Standards for Supported Housing for DMH Consumers and the MHRS rules. OA shall work in conjunction with the Office of Programs and Policy (OPP) to review, analyze, and take appropriate actions on findings related to this policy.

8. **Procedures for Accessing Housing Resources.**

8a. **Certified Providers shall:**

(1) Within five (5) business days after consumer request and/or the need for housing is identified, **submit** a completed Application for Subsidized Housing to the Housing Division, OPP, to apply for a DMH housing subsidy for the consumer when determined appropriate. The application and **all** of the forms included in the Housing Subsidy Application package provided by OPP must be completed and forwarded to the Housing Division.

(2) **Provide** a minimum of at least three (3) housing options from which the consumer may choose after receiving notification of subsidy availability and approval from the Housing Division, OPP.

(3) **Inform** the consumer that he/she has choice in the type of housing (i.e., independent, group) and neighborhood in which to reside, etc., within his/her means and housing availability.

(4) **Conduct** the required housing inspection and assist the consumer through the leasing process and with the move-in once the consumer selects housing.

(5) **Inform** the consumer that he/she will be placed on a waiting list by OPP if housing or a subsidy is unavailable.

(6) **Make** a concerted effort to assist the consumers in identifying other housing options not provided by DMH when none are readily available through DMH.

8b. **MHA Office of Programs and Policy.**

(1) **Review** the Application for Subsidized Housing from the certified provider, make a determination of the consumer's eligibility for housing subsidy; and approve the application where appropriate.

(2) **Notify** the provider within 5 to 7 business days after receipt of the application that a unit is available and that the application has been approved, or of other disposition when applicable.

(3) **Place** the consumer on a waiting list if housing/resources are not readily available and contact the provider in the future when housing becomes available.

9. **Specific Guidelines for All Certified Providers.** All certified providers must:

9a. **Implement** the required activities in this policy.

9b. **Implement** program specific policies and procedures to access housing resources.

9c. **Monitor** and support consumers as they practice good tenancy as a part of overall recovery and inform them of their rights and responsibilities related to tenancy.

9d. **Comply** with requirements for home visits in accordance with the specific subsidy program guidelines.

9e. **Ensure** that all requirements in the MHRS standards on providing Community Support and ACT services to consumers are also followed.

10. **Treatment Plans, Discharges, and Transfers.**

10a. Certified providers and St. Elizabeths Hospital (SEH) shall ensure that housing needs are consistently addressed in treatment plans, progress notes, and in discharge plans, as applicable.

10b. Certified providers shall work with SEH and acute care hospitals to identify housing plans and other service needs prior to discharge of the consumer. Providers shall ensure that housing needs for all homeless consumers they serve are addressed prior to discharge from any hospital/institution consistent with the "housing first" approach articulated in this policy (see Section 5c above).

10c. Certified providers shall coordinate actions with each other to identify housing plans and other service needs when the consumer transfers between CSAs consistent with the "housing first" approach articulated in this policy.

11. **Tracking Supported Housing Services.** Information on supported housing services provided to consumers will be tracked electronically through eCura. Providers shall enter specified information on a quarterly basis. DMH shall provide information and training to each provider on these requirements.

12. **Inquiries.** Responsibility for this policy rests with DMH Office of Programs and Policy. Questions related to this policy should be addressed to OPP at (202) 671-2900.

13. **Related References.**

1. DMH Policy 511.2, Providing Housing and Services to Homeless Consumers
2. Title 22A DCMR, Chapter 22, Standards for Supported Housing for DMH Consumers
3. DMH Priority Populations Rule, Title 22A DCMR, Chapter 12
4. Title 22 DCMR, Chapter 34, Mental Health Rehabilitation Services Provider Certification Standards (MHRS);
5. DMH (MHRS) Provider Manual

Approved by:

Martha B. Knisley
Director, DMH

Martha B. Knisley
(signature)

June 10, 2005
(Date)