

Department of Mental Health  
**TRANSMITTAL LETTER**

<b>SUBJECT</b> Providing Housing and Services to Homeless Consumers		
<b>POLICY NUMBER</b> DMH Policy 511.2	<b>DATE</b> JUN 10 2005	<b>TL#</b> 74

**Purpose.** To set forth a policy that ensures that enrolled, homeless consumers, as defined herein, are provided an array of options for housing; and to ensure that they are provided assistance with securing housing of choice regardless of their willingness to participate in mental health treatment and services.

**Applicability.** Applies to DMH enrolled, homeless adults with serious mental illness (SMI) and children and youth with serious emotional disturbance (SED); to the following DMH certified providers (core services agencies (CSA), Community Support subproviders, and Assertive Community Treatment specialty providers, Community-Based Intervention subproviders); to the Mental Health Authority; and to St. Elizabeths Hospital and acute care hospitals (see Section 10a and 10b below).

**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.

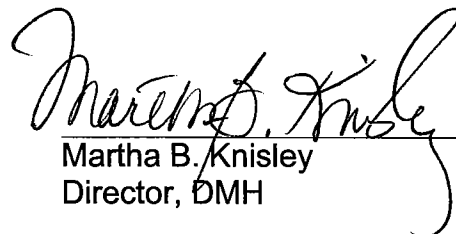
\*If any CMHS or DMH policies are referenced in this policy, copies may be obtained from the DMH Policy Support Division by calling (202) 673-7757.


**ACTION**

**REMOVE AND DESTROY**

**INSERT**

**NONE**

  
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Martha B. Knisley  
Director, DMH

<p>GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">★ ★ ★</p>  <p><b>DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH</b></p>	<p><b>Policy No.</b> <b>511.2</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b> <b>JUN 10 2005</b></p>	<p><b>Page 1</b></p>
<p><b>Supersedes</b> <b>NONE</b></p>			
<p><b>Subject: Providing Housing and Services to Homeless Consumers</b></p>			

1. **Purpose.** To set forth a policy that ensures that enrolled, homeless consumers, as defined herein, are provided an array of options for housing; and to ensure that they are provided assistance with securing housing of choice regardless of their willingness to participate in mental health treatment and services.

2. **Applicability.** Applies to DMH enrolled, homeless adults with serious mental illness (SMI) and children and youth with serious emotional disturbance (SED); to the following DMH certified providers (core services agencies (CSA), Community Support subproviders, and Assertive Community Treatment specialty providers, Community-Based Intervention subproviders); to the Mental Health Authority; and to St. Elizabeths Hospital and acute care hospitals (see Section 10a and 10b below).

3. **Authority.** 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.** The Washington region has an estimated 11,386 persons who were homeless in 2004. It is estimated that 71% of homeless individuals and 53% of homeless persons in families in the District have a mental illness or substance abuse. The District has committed key city agencies to a 10-year plan to end homelessness. DMH, in addition to the city-wide initiative, is required by both the *Dixon* Court-Ordered Plan and the Exit Criteria to aggressively address the needs of individuals who have SMI or SED and are homeless.

DMH is 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.

By implementing this policy, DMH endeavors to proactively promote a “housing first” approach that gets each consumer who is homeless housed and then works with them in that context—a system where consumers are “served in place” and there is “no wrong door” for them to find their way to housing and services.

5. **Housing First Approach Policy.**

5a. DMH is committed to promoting effective support and a welcoming approach to homeless consumers.

5b. DMH and DMH certified providers shall adopt the “housing first” approach (described in Section 5a-5c) when working with consumers who are homeless and consumers who are institutionalized but have no home to return to upon release. This approach gets each consumer housed and then

works with them in that context, and requires a long-term commitment in supporting the consumer towards stability and self-sufficiency---not rejecting them when problems occur.

5c. All DMH certified providers identified in Section 2 above are defined by this policy as “housing first programs”, and shall:

- Provide any homeless consumer access to options in housing and, when available, assistance with securing housing of choice; and
- Not require any homeless consumer to accept treatment or maintain treatment compliance before commencing with securing housing.

6. **Children and Youth.** The parents or guardians of homeless children and youth must act on their behalf for housing issues, as needed and appropriate.

7. **Definitions.**

7a. Homeless consumer as defined by this policy:

- (1) a consumer who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- (2) a consumer who has a primary nighttime residence that is
  - (a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
  - (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
  - (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; **and**
- (3) have an Axis I or Axis II mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorder that meets the definition of the DMH target population for serious mental illness (SMI) or serious emotional disturbance (SED). This definition also includes consumers who are institutionalized with no home to return to upon discharge.

7b. 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.

8. **Responsibilities for Mental Health Authority (MHA)**

8a. Responsibility for this policy rests with the Office of Programs and Policy (OPP) at MHA. OPP shall:

- (1) **Inform** providers of the “housing first” approach.
- (2) **Provide** training for all providers on the “housing first” approach and any unique billing requirements for implementing this approach.
- (3) **Work** to maintain a stock of affordable housing to be used for this purpose.

8b. 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 OPP to review, analyze, and take appropriate actions on findings as related to this policy.

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

9a. **Implement** the requirements of this policy.

9b. **Develop** and implement program specific policies and procedures to initiate and carry out the "housing first" approach, including specifically ensuring welcoming access to care for all homeless individuals.

9c. **Follow** procedures in DMH Policy 511.1, Access to Supported Housing which addresses procedures on accessing housing resources.

9d. **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.

9e. **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.

9f. **Comply** with MHRS Standards to assure that appropriate supports and services are provided to the consumer.

9g. **Monitor** welcoming acceptance to care and provision of access to housing options for homeless individuals to ensure compliance with this policy.

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.

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 Services to Persons Who are Homeless.** Information on services provided to homeless 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.

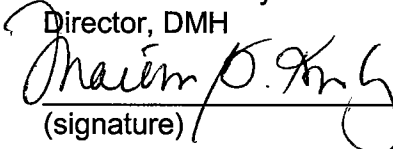
12. **Inquiries.** Questions related to this policy should be addressed to the Office of Programs and Policy (OPP) at (202) 671-2900.

**13. Related References.**

1. DMH Policy 511.1, Access to Supported Housing
2. Title 22A DCMR, Chapter 22, Standards for Supported Housing for DMH Consumers
3. DMH Priority Populations Rule, Title 22A DCMR, Chapter 12
4. DMH (MHRS) Provider Manual
5. Title 22 DCMR, Chapter 34, Mental Health Rehabilitation Services Provider Certification Standards (MHRS)

Approved by:

Martha B. Knisley  
Director, DMH

  
(signature)

6/10/05  
(Date)