

# Supportive Housing: Solutions to Homelessness





# Who We Are

The Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance (MHSA) is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization **working to end homelessness among individuals through advocacy and the development of housing solutions.**

For more than 30 years, MHSA has been a policy driver and a catalyst for change. Partnering with nearly 100 community-based agencies across the state, MHSA has sparked innovation, reimagining the traditional emergency shelter system to **create permanent housing offering essential wraparound services and accessible health care.**



# What We Do

**1.**

**Advocacy and Policy work**

**2.**

**Funding and Technical Assistance**  
– to providers and communities

**3.**

**Innovation** - launch, test, and manage models, in partnership with member agencies

**4.**

**Convening** – member agencies, partners to learn, collaborate, network

# What is Supportive Housing?



Supportive housing **combines affordable housing with services** that help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy and dignity.

# Who needs Supportive Housing?

As of November 2024

Total Homeless Households:

13,770

At most about 30% of households need this most expensive, intensive intervention



90%

Individuals



10%

Families



## “Chronic”

Homeless long-term with disabling conditions

2,240 people



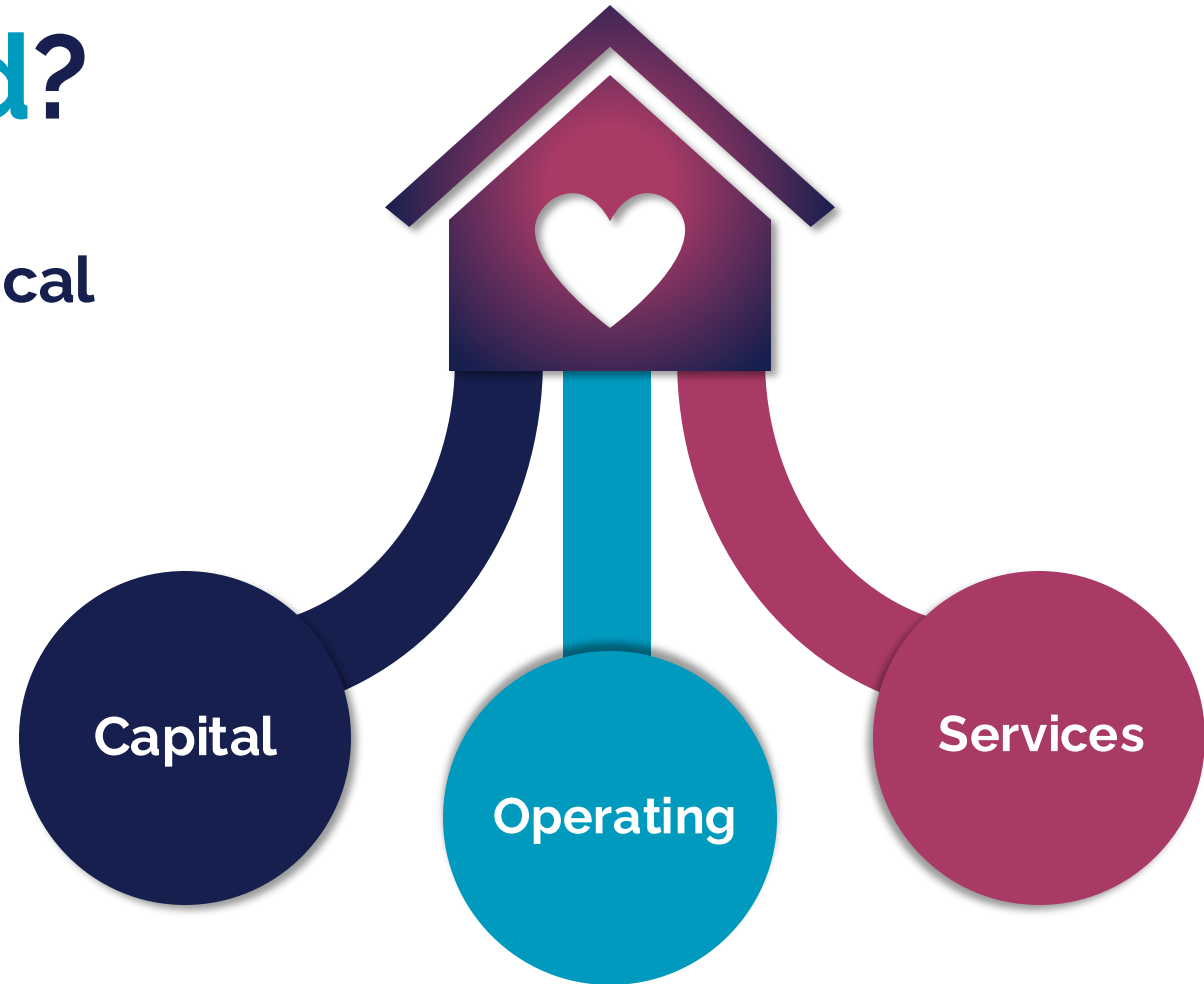
## “High Acuity”

Disabling conditions and episodes of homelessness

2,180 people

# How is Supportive Housing Funded?

May use **federal, state, and local sources** – public and private



# Impact of Supportive Housing

Reports from two statewide supportive housing initiatives: Pay For Success (PFS), Home and Healthy for Good (HHG)

Individuals housed in supportive housing through HHG and PFS: **2,200+**

Service providers across the state: **25+**

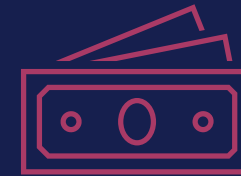
\* *"The findings from this study demonstrate the effectiveness of a housing and supportive services program in reducing total health care utilization and costs for medical and behavioral health services provided to chronically homeless MassHealth members."*

[Link to BCBS of Massachusetts Foundation study](#)



**85%**

Of tenants stay stable in their homes **more than a year**



**\$5,267**

Average annual healthcare **savings per housed individual**, even while accessing "significantly more" outpatient mental health services \*

# Fully Investing in Supportive Housing **Benefits Everyone**



Homeless shelter numbers drop,  
fewer people are living on the streets



Hospitals can devote more  
emergency care to emergencies



Police can devote more time  
to community safety





# Supportive Housing is already part of the fabric of our communities.

There are 9,500 units in MA.



Boston & Cambridge: 3,800

Western: 1,450

Cape Cod: 200

Metro North & West: 1,900

Central: 750

South East: 1,400

*Approximate Counts*

# Four Innovations to Add More Supportive Housing, Faster



Tenancy Support  
Services using  
Medicaid



Supportive  
Housing Pool  
Fund



Master  
Leasing



Modular  
Construction

# Tenancy Support Services Using Medicaid

## MHSA Innovation:

First-in-nation program launched by **MHSA & Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership**

## Medicaid Reimbursement:

Supports permanent supportive housing through **CSPECH**

## Program Milestones:

- ✓ **2005:** Pilot launched using **1115 waiver** (Medicaid flexibility)
- ✓ **2023:** Fully covered service
- ✓ Expanded beyond “chronic” to include **frequent healthcare users & behavioral health needs**

# Tenancy Support Services Using Medicaid

## Current Model – CSP-HI:

- Covers **any eligible person** moving into supportive housing
- Ongoing **Medicaid-funded** services for stability
- Core funding for supportive housing in Massachusetts

# Supportive Housing Pool Fund

## Policy:

**Added to Massachusetts 2024 Housing Bond Bill** – Affordable Homes Act (no funding yet, just policy framework)

## Funding Strategy:

Pools funding from government, foundations, private sources

## Key Benefits:

- Fills funding and service gaps
- Streamlines coordination across state housing, healthcare, service agencies
- Promotes cross-sector collaboration
- Includes data tracking

# Master Leasing

## Model:

Nonprofit **leases an entire property** from a property owner and then subleases units to people experiencing homelessness

## MHSA Innovation:

Using this model to **accelerate new housing development**



# Master Leasing

## Benefits for Developers:

- Multi-year lease agreements (5+ years)
- Tenant screening, evictions, and day-to-day management handled
- Support services integrated through partnerships or a combined entity



### Faster

Housing development in **18 months or less**



### Lower Cost

**No public cost** for development



### Population Fit

Supports those facing **rental barriers**

# Modular Construction

- **Modular Construction:**  
Volumetric – like Lego blocks
- **Micro-efficiency Units:**  
Small studio with bathroom, kitchenette
- **Infill Properties:**  
On a typical lot for a triple decker – 16 micro units
- **Modular Templates:**  
Speedy approval, cost-efficient design





# Worcester Community Housing Resources

- Repurposed motel to provide **90 units of supportive housing**
- Community garden, fitness room, ample green space
- Recovery coaches, mental health professional services
- Stores and services within walking distance



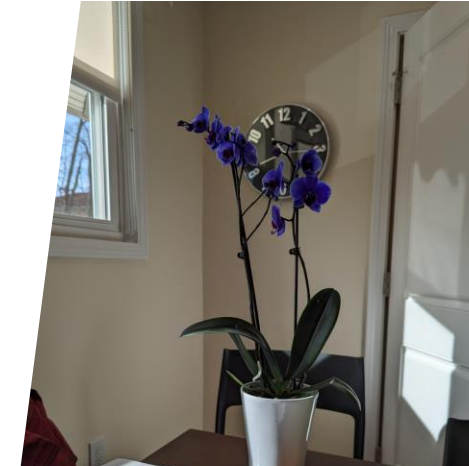
# The Chelsea Commons

- Partnered with Bay Cove Human Services and local landlord in Chelsea
- Renovated old YMCA building into **58 SROs & studios and on-site offices** for Bay Cove

Remodeled June 2022



# Women's Houses – Bay Cove & MHSA



Orchid House

- **11 units** in Chelsea plus Bay Cove Office on site
- First Move In February 2024



Marigold House



- **13 units** in Chelsea plus Bay Cove Office on site
- First Move In October 2023

# Meet Roy

“This is the best living situation I have ever had...

**This is where I am healing.”**

“I wake up **in a safe environment.**

I know there are people in the building who will keep me safe no matter what.”

*“Now every day is a bright sunny day.”*

*Slide content courtesy of the Supportive Housing Pipeline Coalition*