

MENTAL HEALTH HOUSING CONSORTIUM  
March 26, 2009 Meeting Notes  
RSN Panel Highlights

Seven RSNs were represented on the panel: Chelan/Douglas, Clark, North Central, North Sound, King, Pierce and Southwest.

Data tracking: Each RSN reported tracking the information required by the Mental Health Division on housing status. The point was made however that the issue is less what information is collected but rather what is done with the data by the RSN. It was suggested that the data dictionary may need “cleaning up” relative to housing and whether the 180 day or “as situation changes” requirements to report housing status is sufficient.

Housing Plans: The following RSNs reported having a housing plan in place – King, North Sound, Clark (draft) and Pierce (10 years old).

Collaboration with Homeless Planning: All RSNs reported being involved in their community(s)’ efforts to end homelessness and in some cases the Continuum of Care activities.

RSN-specific information and suggestions:

King:

- ✳ More “low barrier” or Housing First housing is needed
- ✳ Forensic Intensive Support Housing is being developed in connection with the Forensic Assertive Community Treatment program.
- ✳ Three landlord liaison/brokers have been funded with HGAP
- ✳ There are too few studio or one-bedroom rentals available
- ✳ RSNs and providers need help “managing risk” associated with providing housing for patients discharged from the state hospital who are convicted sex offenders or have a history of arson
- ✳ “Graduate” housing for those needing fewer services is needed
- ✳ King has developed and implemented a plan to reduce the number of clients in boarding homes and used savings to support permanent supportive housing
- ✳ HGAP funds have been used to assist people not on Medicaid with housing incentives, supports and medications

North Central:

- ✳ It is challenging planning housing for seven counties
- ✳ Most housing is “mixed use” across “populations”
- ✳ Because of fewer housing options the RSN pays other RSNs to house their clients

Southwest:

- ✳ More JRA youth housing is needed
- ✳ There should be a more “global” approach to housing whereby access to housing resources is not tied to the person’s primary county residence.
- ✳ Housing for those with poor tenant histories is needed
- ✳ Working with landlords that live out of the area or state is difficult and common in their region
- ✳ Availability of nursing homes that serve persons with dementia is an issue

North Sound:

- ✳ Serves 5 counties
- ✳ Significant need for more permanent supportive housing
- ✳ Shelter-Plus Care housing vouchers go unused due to too little housing
- ✳ Discretionary funding used to “attract other funding” and for landlord incentives will be ending due to budget cuts

Chelan/Douglas:

- ✳ Participation in the Supportive Housing Institute is proving to be very valuable
- ✳ The RSN directly finances housing for families and for youth “aging out” of foster care, provides some “bridge” housing for people leaving correctional facilities and is involved in master leasing of properties

Clark:

- ✳ Sees a need for better assessment of the individual’s housing needs
- ✳ Is working to change the housing continuum to emphasize permanent supportive housing
- ✳ HGAP funds are used to support Housing First models of scattered-site housing and a landlord outreach position
- ✳ The landlord outreach person holds quarterly provider/landlord coordination meetings
- ✳ A collaboration with Work Source, the RSN and other partners has discussed the value of using stimulus funds for Weatherization as both a training and employment opportunity for persons with mental illness and as a form of landlord incentive for landlords willing to rent to low income persons
- ✳ The RSN, providers and consumers are using Housing Connections a web-based affordable housing locator service managed by the 211 provider in the area, however mental health agencies that own housing tend not to list available units on the site, as other landlords do, because their availability is exclusive to their clients.
- ✳ The RSN housing lead also manages the County’s HGAP funding process

Pierce:

- ✳ The RSN is involved in the Washington Families Fund/Gates Foundation homeless initiative
- ✳ Housing leadership by provider agencies is important but not enough and more “peer run” leadership is needed
- ✳ We need to emphasize “asset building” to eliminate poverty among consumers – and is working in a coalition to advance that effort
- ✳ A major gap is the availability of permanent supportive housing