

Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

194 WASHINGTON AVENUE, ALBANY, NY 12210, SUITE 415
Working to ensure available and accessible mental health services for all New Yorkers



Glenn Liebman, *CEO*

Janine Dykeman, *Chair of the Board*

Legislative Issue Brief

Housing

Background

Safe, decent and affordable housing is a critical component of recovery from mental illness, and is foundational in a person's life for establishing stability and independence. Access to good housing is a fundamental problem for many people with psychiatric disabilities. The limited supply of very-low-income housing, the rising cost of rental market housing and discrimination leave these individuals with few, if any, choices for appropriate housing.

The Governor's 2008/09 Executive Budget includes important provisions that will help meet some of the critical need for housing. MHANYS wholeheartedly supports these initiatives, but the real scope of housing need remains anyone's guess, making plans for meaningful long term solutions elusive. Although all would agree that actual housing need exceeds currently proposed remedies, there remains no reasonable measure to direct policymaking and prioritize the use of finite resources. A comprehensive and rational approach for addressing the need for mental health housing will ultimately depend on some means of estimating the true scope and nature of this problem.

Issues/Recommendations

Expanding Housing Opportunities

Issue: A sound housing policy and plan for people with psychiatric disabilities should be informed and directed by a realistic understanding of the true need. Tracking the number of people with mental illness who are in need of appropriate housing seems like a reasonable place to begin. Maintaining a registry of housing need is not merely a means of assessing volume, but would provide invaluable information about where housing is needed and in what format.

Recommendation: Support legislative language that would direct the development of a meaningful method of assessing the real housing need for people with mental illness through a Housing Wait List Bill.

Issue: Immediate need for expanded housing. As we work toward a more rational means of identifying and targeting the true housing need for people with psychiatric disabilities, there remains a very real and immediate need for present-day access to housing.

Recommendations

- Support the addition of 2,000 new units of housing in the Governor’s budget—a mix of residential and supported housing;
- Support the Governor’s new Housing Opportunity Fund Initiative and advocate for a discrete housing provision for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

Adult Home Reform

Issue: As we move to a system of housing that more closely aligns with people’s supportive needs and recovery, we must continue to dismantle and reshape the adult home system of the past. We cannot lose sight of people with psychiatric disabilities who still live in adult homes that are ill-equipped for fostering health, safety and independence.

Recommendations

- Support the Governor’s proposal to purchase and convert 100 existing adult home beds to supported housing for people with psychiatric disabilities;
- Advocate for additional funding for independent case managers in adult homes
- Increase ENABLE funding for adult homes and focus the initiatives on residents’ priorities
- Insure that 25% of all new housing geared for people with psychiatric disabilities is specifically earmarked for adult home residents.