

# Reducing Homelessness



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## What is the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)?

In 2004, California voters resoundingly passed the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) to address the dire need to expand mental health services. Using MHSA funds, counties and community providers deliver mental health services in community settings and save taxpayer dollars by keeping people out of costly hospitals, jails, and institutions.

## Reducing Homelessness is an Important Priority

California has the highest rate of homelessness in the nation, with 360,000 people sleeping on the streets or in shelters on any given night. Individuals with mental illness are much more likely to become homeless than the general population. The MHSA establishes two central strategies to reduce homelessness for people with mental illness—providing wraparound service and constructing affordable housing units, many of which include supportive services.

### MHSA Full Service Partnerships are Decreasing Homelessness

A majority of MHSA funding is spent on a wrap-around service model called “Full Service Partnerships (FSPs).” FSPs target people of all ages with serious mental health needs who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Services not only include mental health counseling and medication, but also assistance with housing, employment, education.

FSPs are proving to decrease the number of days spent homeless for participants of all ages throughout the state. For example:

- Counties report that homelessness among transition age youth participants, ages 14 to 26, has decreased by between 85% and 100%, depending on the county.
- Counties report that homelessness among adult participants has decreased by 60% to 100%, depending on the county.
- Counties report that homelessness among older adult participants, age 60 and over, has decreased by 87% to 95%, depending on the county.



Polk Street Citizens Housing, San Francisco

### MHSA is Creating Permanent Supportive Housing Units

Under the MHSA, \$400 million is provided to an “MHSA Housing Program” to develop permanent supportive housing, including rental and shared housing, for people with serious mental illness. Support services are provided in addition to safe, affordable housing.

The MHSA funds are used to leverage other resources and increase the investment. As of March 2010, the MHSA Housing Program:

- Has a total leveraged investment of nearly one billion dollars (\$929.7 million); and
- Is building 2,781 units of supportive housing.

Local examples from around the state:

- *Daniel’s Village* in Los Angeles County provides permanent supportive housing for youth ages 18-28, some of which are aging out of the foster care system.
- *Belovida Senior Housing* in Santa Clara County focuses on older adults and offers supportive housing and a community to reduce older adults’ isolation.
- *Polk Street Citizens Housing* in San Francisco County (see picture on left) provides over 110 units of affordable housing and services for low-income older adults.
- *Folsom Oaks Apartments* in Sacramento County provides affordable residency and support services to families and adults with financial, mental health, and housing needs.

**Mental Health Services Act**  
CHANGING LIVES. INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES.

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