



SMHPC Housing Subcommittee Overview for Oct. 2023

Background Information

- The Housing Committee was formed in the fall of 2013 under the leadership of Tim O’Leary from Mass Assoc. for Mental Health and the late Dr. Dennis McCrory.
- The Committee is currently co-chaired by Jill Gichuhi, CCHW, Compass Helpline Director for NAMI MASS, Adrienne Cassidy, Director of Housing for Advocates, Inc. and Joe Finn, Ex. Dir. of Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance.
- The Committee includes representatives from DMH agencies, family members, peers, State housing agencies, ACCS Providers, advocacy agencies and DMH staff from across the State.
- Membership of the Committee has grown over the last two years. We currently have a mailing list just over 130 people.
- The Committee met 4 times in 2023. Our virtual meetings had between 25 to 40 people per meeting.
- On October 12th we will have our first In-Person meeting since pre-COVID. Senator Feeney will be a guest speaker to addressing the need for permanent supportive housing.

Highlights of the Housing Subcommittee

- **DMHRSP Advocacy:** The Housing Subcommittee, along with the tireless efforts of Mass Association for Mental Health, continuously advocated to increase the funding for the DMHRSP. Efforts were successful with a FY23 Budget increases bring the overall budget to \$34M housing over 2500 people.
- **Peer Support and Housing Workgroup:** 198 participants attended a Peer Housing Conference which resulted in an area resource toolkit being produced. The group is currently focused on a conference for Northeast and Metro Boston areas. Additionally, as a result from the Peer Housing Conference in January a draft proposal to request that DMH fund staff positions to help with Peer Support. The proposal includes a request for funding part-time positions in each DMH area focused on networking, outreach, and resource development.
- **Safe Haven Work Group:** Ongoing advocacy for additional safe havens has continued. As of March 2023, there are 14 sites and 113 beds, with new sites coming online in FY23. New Safe Havens are now in development in Northeast, Western MA, and Southeast. Committee advocated for additional \$3M for 6 new Safe Havens.
- **Dr. Sam Tsemberis, Ph.D. Presentation:** 66 people attended a presentation by Dr. Sam Tsemberis. Sam provided an overview of Housing First. He noted that people dealing with mental health symptoms or substance use should not be excluded from housing or making decisions about their lives. They are not impaired in knowing what their needs are and what they want from their lives. This is a principle of psychiatric rehabilitation.
- **Voted and approved a revised Mission & Vision Statement on August 17, 2003**

Mission Statement (revised August 17, 2023)

To promote decent, safe, affordable, and integrated housing for people in Massachusetts who are living with mental health conditions, including people served by the Department of Mental Health. This is accomplished through educational outreach to a wide range of stakeholders, research, planning, and advocacy that leads to increased access to existing housing resources and securing new resources to meet the growing need.

Vision Statement (revised August 17, 2023)

Housing is acknowledged as a basic human right in many circles. For individuals with mental health conditions, it should be considered an essential component in the recovery process. Experience demonstrates that multiple factors influence a person's recovery and well-being, some are less defined or understood than others; housing is one factor that is primary and undeniable.