

NCSHA/NASMHPD Partnership

Bringing Housing and Mental Health Communities Together

**Memorandum of Understanding
Between
The National Council of State Housing Agencies
And
The National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors**

2006

INTRODUCTION

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) expresses the commitment and plans of the National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA) and the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) to establish a professional partnership to strengthen their common efforts to promote, facilitate, and support the provision of affordable permanent housing for low- and extremely-low income persons with mental illness and disabilities (“Supportive Housing”).

On August 22-23, 2006, representatives of seven state housing finance agencies (HFA) and seven state mental health agencies held a Housing and Mental Health Summit in Washington, DC, to discuss state efforts to coordinate housing and mental health services. They were joined and assisted by representatives of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA), the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC), and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH).

The Summit promoted a better understanding of common interests and helped participants outline an action plan for working together to advance them. At the end of the Summit, the state housing and mental health officials present resolved to pursue a strategic alliance between the two organizations and their members to promote the advancement of Supportive Housing. This MOU outlines the mission of that alliance, the Summit’s findings relevant to the alliance, and an action plan for advancing the alliance’s mission.

MISSION

- The mission of NCSHA is to advance through advocacy and education the nation’s State Housing Finance Agencies’ efforts to provide affordable housing to those who need it most.
- The mission of NASMHPD is to reflect and advocate for the collective interests of State Mental Health Authorities and their directors at the national level.
- NCSHA and NASMHPD enter into this MOU to pursue a strategic alliance to promote the advancement of Supportive Housing

FINDINGS

During two days of discussion at the Summit, the participants agreed to the following findings and principles:

- Affordable housing is a critical element of mental health recovery and treatment.
- Mental health treatment and recovery are critical to housing stability.
- The delivery of affordable housing to persons with mental illness and disabilities is improved when state housing and mental health agencies collaborate effectively.
- Successful models of state housing and mental health agency collaboration exist, but are not widely used in many states.
- These successful models take a variety of approaches.
- Barriers exist that impede the successful collaboration of housing and mental health officials, including lack of communication, separate funding streams and delivery systems, and state and federal laws and regulations that reduce flexibility.
- Barriers also exist that impede separate and coordinated efforts to deliver supportive housing to persons with mental illness and disabilities, including lack of funding, state and federal laws and regulations that reduce flexibility, and community opposition to developments and facilities that provide supportive housing and services for persons with mental illness and disabilities.
- There are substantial unmet needs for affordable supportive housing for persons with mental illness and disabilities.
- State housing and mental health agencies share responsibility and each have access to resources for promoting, facilitating, and supporting efforts to provide Supportive Housing.

ACTION PLAN

- Based on information gathered at the Housing and Mental Health Summit, NCSHA and NASMHPD agree to take the following steps to further this partnership:
 - Share information at national conferences and other meetings on the need for state housing and mental health agency collaboration and how to replicate and build on successful collaboration models.
 - Consider how to raise awareness of the need for Supportive Housing, including how to overcome community opposition with positive images and more effective communications techniques.
 - Develop materials to help state housing and mental health agencies collaborate more effectively.
 - Identify common federal legislative and regulatory priorities and develop a strategy for advancing them.
 - Continue to work with NGA, CSH, TAC, and NAEH—and other organizations as appropriate—to advance our common objectives.

- Report at least annually to their respective Boards of Directors of the progress made pursuant to this MOU, any changes that may be appropriated and anticipated next steps.
- Based on information gathered at the Housing and Mental Health Summit, state housing and mental health agency representatives agreed that state agencies should consider taking the following steps to further this partnership:
 - Develop specific goals for the provision of Supportive Housing which are tied to the extent feasible to state, regional, or local efforts to address identified Supportive Housing needs of persons experiencing homelessness and that reflect the issues, needs, and resources in their state. Work together to address financial barriers by identifying how resources can be combined and used more effectively.
 - Identify common state legislative and regulatory priorities and work together to advance them.
 - Explore the possibilities of increasing financial support from private foundations, including support of critical research and promising models.
 - Dedicating staff, within their mission, scope, and resources, to fulfilling the goals of this memorandum, including the possible assignment of full-time staff dedicated to and responsible for coordinating state housing and mental health agency collaboration.

PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

- NCSHA and NASMHPD agree to appoint staff to support this partnership and help coordinate their organizations' and members' efforts to implement this MOU. The initial appointees of each organization are:
 - David Miller, Senior Policy Associate, NASMHPD
 - Grant Ellis, Legislative and Policy Associate, NCSHA