

2011 NCSHA Award Nomination
Ohio Housing Finance Agency



OHIO HOUSING
FINANCE AGENCY

Special Needs Housing: Combatting
Homelessness

Permanent Supportive Housing
Investors Collaborative

Douglas Garver, Executive Director
Sean Thomas, Director of Planning, Preservation
and Development

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Guiding Philosophy: Housing First

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) tenants are individuals or families who are at risk of homelessness or institutionalization, or have experienced homelessness in the past. Many of these individuals have recognized physical or mental disabilities which are serious and long-term, and therefore pose significant obstacles to their housing stability. PSH clients are provided access to a comprehensive and flexible array of voluntary services and supports responsive to their needs, accessible where the tenant lives if necessary, and designed to obtain and maintain housing stability. However, the PSH model recognizes the primacy of basic shelter and amenities. These services are voluntary and cannot be mandated as a condition of admission to housing or of ongoing tenancy. Ohio's model for PSH reflects an evidenced-based model that has been extensively researched over the past 15 years and has been determined to: (1) consistently achieve highly successful outcomes for PSH tenants; and (2) be cost effective when compared with the costs of homelessness and/or institutionalization.

Introduction

The Investors Collaborative, established in 2010, is an effort among state agencies to maximize the effectiveness of policy and funding for permanent supportive housing. Through this collaborative, state agencies are unified in a consistent effort to increase the availability of PSH in Ohio, pursuant to the goal adopted by the Interagency Council on Homelessness and Affordable Housing (the Council) to create an additional 6,000 units of PSH in five years. This integrated collaboration model will allow members, who include the Ohio departments of Aging, Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services, Development, Job & Family Services, Mental Health, and the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), to take a holistic approach to meeting the Council's target. Jointly creating a coherent statewide direction and more predictable policy solidifies the state as a better partner to local development teams in the production of PSH communities.

The Collaborative functions under a guiding philosophy of innovation and creativity toward the goal of development of PSH. This movement toward more integrated collaboration is driven by multiple factors. First, many state agencies consider meeting the needs of vulnerable, homeless individuals as part of its departmental mission. Additionally, more frequent communication among state agencies on the targeted topic of PSH offers the opportunity for a deeper cross-agency understanding of available programs, policies and resources that support those missions that, if connected properly could augment one another.

Through closer state partnership, the Collaborative seeks to reduce the administrative burden which currently rests on local teams developing PSH. Developing PSH communities often requires leveraging funding from multiple sources and state agencies, with each agency requesting separate applications and requirements and making independent funding decisions. Meeting these requirements and assembling the proper combination of funding sources demands a great deal of time and expense on local development teams. By committing to

increased communication among state agencies, the Collaborative is able to shoulder some of the administrative burden of compiling applicable funding sources and reducing duplicative application requirements.

Membership in the Collaborative is open to state agencies and offices which have financial and/or policy interests in the production and support of PSH. As noted above, current membership includes:

- Ohio Department of Aging
- Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services
- Ohio Department of Development
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
- Ohio Department of Mental Health
- Ohio Housing Finance Agency

The Collaborative recognizes that development of PSH is a complex process. In some cases, the barriers to entry into PSH development for smaller and more rural localities can be significant, resulting in these areas remaining underserved. The Collaborative is committed to assisting these teams in reaching the necessary capacity to adequately meet the PSH needs in these areas. This commitment, however, will not inhibit or impede the production of PSH in areas where critical capacity is currently sufficient.

Members of the Investors Collaborative agree to abide by the following requirements and processes. Each member will:

- Submit to the Collaborative each year an inventory of all available resources in real dollars that are either targeted toward PSH or available to it.
- Inform the Collaborative of all PSH projects funded by each department, regardless of need for interagency funding.
- Contribute functional expertise to Collaborative discussions and to technical assistance efforts for local teams on behalf of the Collaborative.
- Inform the Collaborative of any proposed policy or program changes within individual agencies pertaining to PSH prior to implementation to promote integration into the statewide system from their initiation.

Goals:

The Collaborative is committed to pursuing the following goals through increased interagency communication and policy integration:

- *Consolidate application and reporting requirements* – The Collaborative will make all reasonable efforts to streamline the process of application and compliance reporting by reducing requirements which call for duplicative information and effort on the part of local development teams.
- *Align language and policies around PSH* – All members of the Collaborative have agreed to uphold the PSH Policy Framework. Moving forward, the agencies must better align policies for implementing the framework, including but not limited to setting policies priorities for each funding cycle. Such alignment will give local teams more insight into the state's current funding priorities and increase opportunities for leveraging funding from multiple sources based on interdepartmental consensus.
- *Extend PSH development to underserved areas* – By offering guidance and assistance to lower-capacity development teams, the Collaborative will assure PSH development in areas which were previously not competitive for funding.

- *Engage with local teams at the earliest possible point in the development process* – Earlier communication between the state and local teams is the most effective way to ensure priorities of both groups align at the time of funding. Though the Local State Partnership Model also asserts that the Collaborative cannot be responsible for making initial contact with local groups, the Collaborative must remain accessible and responsive.
- *Assist in the development and maintenance of a Five-year Vision Document* – The state will develop a Five-year Vision Document which will project the policy priorities of the state for the next five years on a rolling basis, based heavily on local stakeholder input. The Collaborative will assist in this process.
- *Compile comprehensive funding packages for sustainable PSH development* – With all major state funders of PSH at one table, the Collaborative is able to develop funding packages that satisfy all aspects of funding for a PSH development including capital, services and operations. Accounting for all of these aspects will promote the long-term success of each development.
- *Create leveraging charts for each new PSH project* – The Collaborative will produce leveraging charts for each individual project, as well as an annual cumulative chart, to demonstrate the financial effectiveness of the collaboration.