

Housing and Mental Health

Stable housing is necessary for recovery. With so many people with mental illness living in poverty, finding and retaining affordable safe housing is difficult. A person living on SSI cannot afford any housing market in Minnesota.

According to the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation in their 2003 study, 52% of people with long-term homelessness have severe and persistent mental illness, and 24% have a dual diagnosis of both mental illness and chemical dependency.

The Bridges Program provides temporary support for people with serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI) while they are waiting to get on the federal Section 8 rental subsidy program. With Bridges, like Section 8, a low-income person with mental illness rents an apartment at the regular market rate and pays 30% of his/her income for rent. The program pays the balance. The goal of the program is to provide stability in the lives of its recipients.

Traditionally, Section 8 has served as reasonable housing for low income programs. In recent years, we have seen the waiting lists closed for all metro areas, with a two-year waiting list for the people that managed to get on the lists before they closed. Bridges serves as a vital program that is attempting to close the gap that leads to homelessness.

There is a great need for a variety of housing options such as adult foster care, supportive housing, and housing with services. Without affordable housing and the appropriate housing option, people with mental illness enter more costly programs and experience great personal loss.

The Mental Health Legislative Network Supports:

- Increase funding for the Bridges rental housing assistance program (HF 1096)

All these provisions are also contained in HF 196 and SF 148.