



**New York State Annual Action Plan
Public Hearing
June 2, 2011**

**Supportive Housing Network of New York
Maclain Berhaupt, State Advocacy Director**

Good morning. My name is Maclain Berhaupt, and I am the State Advocacy Director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York. The Network represents over 200 nonprofit providers and developers who operate over 43,000 supportive housing units throughout New York State.

Supportive housing – permanent, affordable housing linked to on-site services – is the proven, cost effective and humane way to provide stable homes to individuals and families who have difficulty finding and maintaining housing. The people we house and serve – people with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and other barriers to independence – are typically frequent users of expensive emergency services like shelters, hospitals, prisons and psychiatric centers. Because placement into supportive housing has been proven to reduce use of these services, supportive housing saves State taxpayers’ money, often far more than what was spent building, operating and providing services in the housing. This has been proven by dozens of peer-reviewed academic studies.

The Network appreciates the opportunity to participate in the development of New York State’s 2012 Annual Action Plan to address affordable housing and community development needs identified in its 2011-2015 Consolidated Plan and offers the following recommendations to be considered as part of the plan.

1. Establish a New York State Interagency Plan to End Homelessness

New York State provides a number of permanent housing programs that are described throughout the Consolidated Plan. Several State agencies, including the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), , the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and New York State Homes & Community Renewal (HCR) fund permanent supportive housing programs for persons with special needs.

Improved coordination of these State agencies and resources with local and federal agencies and resources would better meet the needs of homeless individuals and families, while drawing down additional federal resources and providing greater cost savings to the public. The Network urges the State to include in its annual action plan: the Establishment of a New York State Interagency Council on Homelessness that includes government partners, advocates and providers to coordinate the activities and resources of all State agencies that serve homeless individuals and families, modeled after the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. The council would be charged with developing a New York Statewide Plan to End Homelessness consistent with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' document, "*Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Preventing and Ending Homelessness.*" The plan would ensure that scarce State resources are directed to those most in need. It would also allow the State to incentivize localities to coordinate their local, State and federal resources in more effective ways that could improve outcomes, even if spending is not increased. The New York State Interagency Plan to End Homelessness should be integrated with the Consolidated Plan and target an increased amount of its federal resources toward ending homelessness including setting specific supportive housing production goals for the state.

2. Improve and Standardize Homelessness Data

Improved and standardized local homeless data collection efforts can better inform statewide policy efforts. Importantly, this would allow OTDA to submit a "Balance of State" application for approximately \$6 million of HUD Continuum of Care funding currently left uncollected each year by localities that do not have the resources to apply for federal funding on their own behalf.

3. Utilize Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds for Integrated Supportive-Affordable Housing

The *Housing Gaps Analysis* in the Consolidated Plan demonstrates that despite the considerable number of existing permanent supportive housing units in New York State, there is a substantial need for more. The plan indicates a statewide need for 12,187 additional permanent supportive housing beds for individuals and 8,252 beds for families. This documented need for additional permanent supportive housing resources reflects the local gaps analysis of over 30 Continuums of Care in New York State, representing all of New York State except a few very rural areas. Most experts believe this is a conservative estimate that does not take into account the need of thousands of housing-needy families and individuals with disabilities in New York who are inappropriately and unstably housed.

The estimates reinforce accumulating research that argues for using permanent supportive housing resources to facilitate quickly returning homeless individuals and families back to the community where they can receive the supports necessary to remain stably housed. A policy response centered on permanent supportive housing avoids bottlenecks in homeless services systems at the emergency shelter or transitional housing phases, enabling families and individuals to live in the community as self-sufficiently as possible.

To achieve this, the State should encourage that CDBG funds used in affordable or mixed-use development dedicate a percentage of the housing units to special needs populations defined by the NYS Homes & Community Renewal's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) to help fill this existing housing gap in permanent supportive housing units in New York State.

In addition, all block grant funding should be used in conjunction with local Continuum of Care Plans and their plans to end homelessness, thereby providing additional coordination and resources to meet those goals.

4. Continue Prioritizing HOME Funds for Supportive Housing

The New York State Homes & Community Renewal's use of federal HOME funds in its Unified Funding Round process is exemplary and should continue. By blending HOME with LIHTC, the State guarantees the highest level of oversight for these projects, which include supportive housing. At the same time, the presence of HOME capital dollars allow federal tax credits to house tenants with extremely low incomes, like those who need supportive housing. The Corporation for Supportive Housing estimates that HOME funds play a role in about 80% of supportive housing projects nationally.

5. Target Emergency Solutions Grant Funding to Proven Programs

As the McKinney-Vento Emergency Shelter Grant becomes the **Emergency Solutions Grant**, and HUD adds new resources, the state should target 100% of the new resources to prevention activities that have demonstrated success in lowering shelter census, and commit to redirecting an increasing percentage of the base ESG funds to prevention annually.

Conclusion

As stated in the Consolidated Plan, "there is a consensus of opinion among policymakers, governmental agencies, and providers that homelessness will not be alleviated solely by the creation of additional housing resources, but will also depend

upon the expansion of existing supportive services programs.” In order to fill the housing gap of permanent supportive housing and provide the supportive services needed with the housing, New York State should utilize the above resources to provide the most effective continuum of care for the neediest New Yorkers.

Respectfully submitted by:

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