



Office of Mental Health

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ANN MARIE T. SULLIVAN, M.D.
Commissioner

MARTHA SCHAEFER
Executive Deputy Commissioner

July 29, 2015

Dave Putney MS, CRC, LMHC
Director of Community Services
Monroe County Office of Mental Health
1099 Jay St., Bldg. J Suite 201 A
Rochester, NY 14611

Dear Mr. Putney,

The Office of Mental Health [OMH] is committed to the investment in community-based housing services that will assist individuals with serious mental illness who are referred from Central New York Psychiatric Center (CNYPC) Pre-Release Services. The 2015/2016 Enacted State Budget authorizes funding for the development of up to 200 units of Supported Housing which have been allocated to counties based on prison population discharge data. The number of housing units for Monroe County is 10 units. These housing units are part of the OMH Forensic Housing Initiative, which provides support to participating housing providers through access to: enhanced services funding; dedicated mental health parole officers; and specialized staff training through the Academy for Justice-Informed Practice, focused on education and skills required for working with a justice-involved population. Staff training opportunities include but are not limited to: understanding violence and staff safety; understanding the criminal justice system; supporting mandated clients including working with parole; trauma-informed care for justice-involved individuals; reducing recidivism and promoting recovery; the clinical impact of incarceration; and first person perspectives on the experience of incarceration to recovery. The OMH Forensic Housing Initiative also offers targeted technical assistance upon request and convenes quarterly meetings with all funded providers and stakeholders to discuss cross-systems coordination challenges and to share information regarding program resources for the target population.

HOUSING ELIGIBILITY

The Supported Housing units developed through this award are designated for individuals with serious mental illness who meet the following criteria:

- Individuals who suffer from a serious mental illness (see Attachment A for OMH definition of serious mental illness);
- and
- Are presently living in a New York State prison and will be returning to their community and who would otherwise be homeless.

Note: Individuals may or may not be on parole.



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REPORTING AND REFERRALS

Referrals to these units will be made through each county's Single Point of Access (SPOA) system. Within ten business days of the receipt of the referral package, a disposition must be made as to whether or not the individual is accepted for housing. Following the disposition, the decision must be shared with the referring entity. During the referral process, a Video Tele-Conference (VTC) should be scheduled, if possible, to facilitate dialogue between the provider and client. At least 80% of all referrals made to a provider must be accepted and admitted to the program. Agencies awarded these units will be required to maintain accurate reporting of all admissions and discharges through OMH's Child and Adult Integrated Reporting System (CAIRS), and adhere to any requirements OMH may subsequently develop. SPOA will provide reports to OMH and the Forensic Housing Initiative contractors. The reports include status/outcome of the video teleconference interviews and housing placement information (including any move out information).

The Supported Housing units available through this initiative are designated only for individuals meeting eligibility criteria as described above. Individuals from the target population may be placed directly into Supported Housing or providers may use this new Supported Housing capacity for persons currently residing in more service-intensive OMH-funded residential programs. The vacated units in the service intensive programs are filled with the targeted populations. Such plans are referred to as "backfill" arrangements. If an agency intends to backfill, preference will be given to those agencies that have a continuum of OMH housing.

If an individual from the target population residing in one of these OMH funded Supported Housing units moves, the vacated unit must be filled by another referral from CNYPC. If the agency chooses to backfill and the individual in the backfill bed moves to another level of OMH housing, the agency does not need to fill the vacated bed with the target population. The CNYPC designation will remain with the individual as long as they remain in OMH housing. However, if the individual in the "backfill" unit leaves for any reason OR is re-incarcerated or hospitalized, the unit must be filled by another person from the target population.

Supported Housing is long-term permanent housing. Residents of Supported Housing can remain in the housing as long as their clinical and financial circumstances render them eligible and allow them to meet their responsibilities as a tenant. Supported Housing is not lost during acute hospitalization, incarceration, or upon termination of parole supervision, and there are no program attendance requirements from the Supported Housing provider. However, parole may have program attendance requirements with which residents must comply. Residents of Supported Housing are tenants and will have the same rights and responsibilities as any other tenants in New York State.



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COLLABORATIVE INTERACTIONS

Central New York Psychiatric Center (CNYPC) Pre-Release Services provides extensive discharge planning to assist in the transition from prison to community. Pre-Release Services, in collaboration with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), applies for entitlements such as Social Security, Medicaid, the Medication Grant Program, and housing, and arranges post-release appointments with mental health clinics, including PROS programs. Some participants may have an Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) order.

Pre-Release Services works in tandem with the providers and the participants, based on the participants' needs. Participants will be released from prison with a two week supply of psychiatric medication and a prescription for an additional two week supply. Until entitlements are in place, psychiatric medication may be provided by the Medication Grant Program.

In addition, OMH operates several prison-based reentry and in-reach programs for individuals with serious mental illness returning to the community, including the Community Orientation and Reentry Program (CORP) at Sing Sing Correctional Facility and the Safe Transition and Empowerment Program (STEP) at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. OMH reentry programs provide enhanced programming including evidence-based interventions, as well as in-reach to inmate patients from community providers three months prior to release, to establish connections and ease their transition into the community. STEP also provides transitional case management to participants three to six months post-release.

Agencies must work with their OMH Field Office, OMH Division of Forensic Services, CNYPC, Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), and their local County Department of Social Services to target appropriate housing for this population, identify appropriate housing locations, develop coordinated discharge/admission plans, and identify /provide services and supports to ensure successful transition into the community. When applicable, Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) /Parole should be included in on-going SPOA meetings to help facilitate the transition of individuals.

PLAN AND MONITORING

We ask that your County work with providers and parole to develop a plan for the allocation of housing units and implementation of the plan requirements within your County. This plan must be submitted to OMH by August 28, 2015. This plan must include the role of SPOA and the role, if applicable, of the State Civil hospital, to assist with the transition of individuals from prison to Supported Housing.

OMH will be monitoring and evaluating the allocation and implementation of your Supported Housing plan on a quarterly basis. Upon review, if performance standards are not met, an action plan to rectify deficiencies will be put into place including possible reallocation of units to other providers. Some factors for underperformance may include, but are not limited to: failure to develop housing within approved time frame, failure to accept appropriate referrals at a rate of 80%, the inability to find Supported Housing apartments, or the inappropriate



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retention of residents in existing housing capacity. Your County will work with the Field Office to provide notification to any provider where reallocation of housing units is warranted.

Upon the determination of which agency(s) will receive an award, please submit a plan of allocation and implementation to Kevin Cotter at NYS OMH, 44 Holland Ave, 7th Floor, Albany, NY 12229 or via email at Kevin.Cotter@omh.ny.gov, with a copy to the Field Office, Christopher.Marcello@omh.ny.gov and Division of Forensic Services, Wendy.Vogel@omh.ny.gov After such plan has been approved by OMH, implementation should commence.

Please contact me at 519-474-5191 with any questions you may have.

Thank You,

Moira Tashjian, MPA
Director, Bureau of Housing Development & Support

cc: Kevin Cotter
Kelly Hansen
Toni Lasicki
Christopher Marcello
Christina Smith
Lori Schatzel, LMSW
Wendy Vogel, MPA