

Recognizing an opportunity to address the issue of older adult homelessness and improve health, well-being, and independence, St. Paul's PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) and Bridge Housing are partnering to connect 63 homeless older adults with housing, medical, and social care. Bridge Housing provides affordable housing units, and St. Paul's PACE provides health and social services to adults that are older than age 55 and require a skilled level of care. St. Paul's PACE also leads the process of identifying and enrolling eligible individuals for this partnership, which not only involves ensuring eligibility for PACE but also for the affordable housing unit. Through integrating health and housing they strive to improve the physical and mental health, independence, and dignity of those served.

RESULTS

- Majority of residents housed in the units remained after one year (97%), in comparison to a national average success rate (80% to 85%).
- Reduction in hospital readmissions, emergency department visits, and inpatient stays (93%).
- Reduction in depression symptoms and increased independence for performing activities of daily living.

PACE Member:

"I am no longer on the street. I am getting medical attention. I have a nice, quiet place to live."

INSPIRATION

In San Diego, over 25 percent of the homeless population is aged 55 or older, accounting for the fastest growing segment of homeless individuals. Older adults that experience housing insecurity are more vulnerable to chronic disease, health complications, and behavioral health issues than older adults with housing. Though PACE was developed as a health plan dedicated to integrating health and social services for older adults in need of a higher level of support, housing costs have never been included in the program. St. Paul's PACE and Bridge Housing saw a significant opportunity to address this issue through integrating their offerings of health and housing.

ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

The partnership is between the St. Paul's PACE program and Bridge Housing. However, other community organizations have provided additional support, such as Father Joe's Villages - a transitional housing agency - that assisted in the identification of individuals eligible for the housing units.

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

By partnering with a community-based organization to fill 63 of their 240 housing units, Bridge Housing became eligible for additional government funding and tax credits. The first step in the partnership was going through this application process, which required St. Paul's PACE to provide a Memorandum of Understanding. Eighteen months later when funding was received, St. Paul's PACE signed an agreement committing to initially fill and maintain the 63 housing units with PACE members.

The two organizations learned from each other's expertise to address challenges and ensure that the needs of those served by the partnership are considered at every step. This has required frequent communication, as well as consistent meetings with the management group that Bridge Housing engages for the affordable housing property. The partners are also in regular communication with the homeless housing commission in the community for additional support in identifying issues and eligible individuals.

MODEL DESIGN

The partnership efforts began with St. Paul's PACE leading the process of identifying eligible individuals. They worked with other organizations in the community to find those in need and coordinate the transition process, which at times required extending stays in transitional housing units. This process also required creating new staff positions and programs to better meet the needs of the vulnerable population being served, which included intensive case managers and mental health assessments and programs. Significant planning occurred to prepare for the move-in and start of services for residents, such as preparing units with furnishings, equipment and food. A Supportive Housing Manager led the oversight of the move-in process. Regular meetings between the leadership of the two partners occurred throughout the development process.

Now that residents have moved into the units, St. Paul's PACE offers onsite weekly social work hours and coordinates recreational activities and programs each week, in addition to other PACE healthcare services.

FUNDING MECHANISM

Partnership services are primarily funded through the organization's traditional funding streams. For example, the housing provided by Bridge Housing is covered by government funds and tax credits, which were secured by Bridge Housing at the onset of the partnership. Partnering with a nonprofit organization provided an avenue for additional funding. Health and social services provided through the model are fully funded through the St. Paul's PACE program.

This partnership also relied heavily on donations to prepare each of the 63 units with furnishings. Local churches also provided ongoing support to the partnership through their outreach programs by providing food donations for new residents.

ST. PAUL'S PACE:

"This innovative partnership with low-income housing developers allowed us to intervene and provide these individuals with the all-inclusive support services they need to avoid returning to the streets."

LESSONS LEARNED

- It is necessary for organizations to learn more about each other to work collaboratively and successfully.
- It is important partners have the willingness to adopt new practices to address each other's needs. For example, St. Paul's PACE developed new intake criteria to ensure requirements set by the San Diego Housing Commission.
- There may be a need to hire and train staff, as well as develop new programs, to better serve individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues, as these individuals had not been traditionally served by the program.

FUTURE

Moving forward, the partners continue to meet regularly to ensure relationships are maintained and to seek additional ways in which they can better serve individuals. The partners also continue to look for ways to improve the enrollment process for getting prospective residents enrolled in PACE and eligible for the housing.

St. Paul's PACE has also been expanding their efforts to duplicate the model with additional low income housing providers. Father Joe's Villages will be providing a grant for housing of an additional 25 homeless older adults.