

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)¹

Purpose: To provide answers to commonly asked questions about the Unified Supportive Housing System.

1. What is the Unified Supportive Housing System (USHS)?

The Unified Supportive Housing System is a collaborative effort managed by The Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Board of Franklin County (ADAMH), the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) and the Community Shelter Board (CSB). The Osteopathic Heritage Foundation is the primary funder of the Unified Supportive Housing System along with the Battelle Memorial Institute, ADAMH and CMHA. These partners are working together with other agencies in the community that include health providers, housing providers, shelters, and outreach providers.

The goals of the system are to:

- * Ensure more efficient and targeted use of supportive housing through a centralized eligibility determination, prioritization and placement system.
- * Promote efficient use of community resources for supportive services through a unified services payment model.
- * Promote recovery and support community re-integration through a centralized utilization review system and “move-up” assistance.

At full implementation the Unified Supportive Housing System will include over 1600 units of supportive housing that are currently in Franklin County.

2. Why was it created?

The development of USHS was identified as a community need during the Rebuilding Lives Updated Strategy process for better coordination between the mental health and shelter systems whose clients often utilize the services of both systems. USHS is a strategy to be implemented under the new Rebuilding Lives plan. The Unified Supportive Housing System seeks to make the process of accessing housing in the community faster and easier for clients. With only one application to fill out to apply for entry into any of the 1600 units of supportive housing, and a centralized screening and eligibility of applicants, the process becomes more efficient for the client, the housing provider and the agency that is working to find housing for the client.

3. How will it be developed?

Characteristics of USHS will be tested through the implementation of three pilot projects in the community. Two of these pilots are housing pilots and the third is a utilization review and move up pilot.

Pilot #1

Planning	March to July 2008
Implementation	August to Dec 2008

¹ Answers are subject to change as the Unified Supportive Housing System develops.

Evaluation July 2008 to March 2009
Community Housing Network's Southpoint Place

40 Family Units (two, three, and four bedroom town homes)

- * 6 units are for families from CHN's Wicklow PSH program, which is closing (vacancies will be filled with Rebuilding Lives eligible families)
- * 15 units are for families that meet Rebuilding Lives eligibility criteria
- * 19 units are non-Rebuilding Lives units

40 Single Adult Units (studio apartments)

- * 25 units have HUD chronic homeless eligibility criteria
- * 15 units are for those transitioning out of ADAMH affiliated institutions

This pilot will test the centralized screening and eligibility, unified service payment, and parts of the application process.

Pilot #2

Planning Jan to March 2009
Implementation April to Dec 2009
Evaluation April 2009 to March 2010

Utilization Review and Move Up

This pilot will test a utilization review tool and incentives for encouraging clients to move out of supportive housing into less service intensive housing. Clients who are able to move out of service intensive housing will be offered assistance to move with some provision of interim services to facilitate a smooth transition. This assistance may include housing identification, move-in assistance, and landlord advocacy. Participating housing providers will test a utilization review tool to assess clients' needs.

Pilot #3

Planning Sept to Dec 2009
Implementation Jan to June 2010
Evaluation July to Sept 2010

National Church Residences' Commons at Buckingham

100 Single Adult Units

- * 50 Rebuilding Lives units
- * 50 non-Rebuilding Lives units

This pilot will test the open referral system and a vulnerability assessment tool as part of the application process and will continue to use centralized screening and eligibility, unified service payment, and one streamlined application.

4. Who does USHS serve?

The Unified Supportive Housing System intends to serve single adults with disabilities and families in which at least one adult is disabled. Disabled persons may also be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless including those who are exiting institutional settings (treatment programs, hospitals, correctional institutions).

5. What are the eligibility criteria for the USHS units?
 - a. Eligibility varies by housing program and is often set by financing conditions (e.g. tax credits and federal regulations). All eligibility requirements will be cataloged and will inform the placement of clients into units. USHS would use the eligibility requirements of each program to determine whether a client may be eligible for a unit at that program. The actual admission decision will rest with the housing provider not USHS.
 - b. Eligibility for the system requires that clients in USHS units be disabled. The system serves disabled persons. These disabled persons may also be homeless, at risk of homelessness, and/or transitioning out of ADAMH affiliated units.

6. What will be needed for the formal application for housing in USHS?

The formal application is being designed to include six components: Brochure, ROI, Checklist, IOI, Vulnerability Assessment, and Documentation (Disability, Rebuilding Lives/HUD Chronic Homelessness, Income, and Identity).

- a. The Brochure explains what supportive housing is and what options are available.
 - b. The Release of Information (ROI) is a legal document that is necessary in order to be able to share protected health information (PHI) and other client information within the system; without a signed ROI, clients cannot be processed.
 - c. The Checklist details what should be included in a client packet and what order these documents should be in.
 - d. The Indication of Interest (IOI) form collects basic demographic information and all other minimum information related to eligibility.
 - e. The Vulnerability Assessment captures a client's current health and living situation and is an indicator for the client's priority for housing.
 - f. The Documentation that is needed for applications includes Disability documentation, Rebuilding Lives and/or HUD Chronic Homeless documentation, Income verification, and identity verification. Disability documentation can be either a signed Certification of Disability form or a printout from SSDI verifying receipt of benefits. Rebuilding Lives and HUD Chronic Homeless documentation is the completion of the Rebuilding Lives and HUD Eligibility Form and associated eligibility verification. Some documentation may be "in process" during the application phase, but must be fully complete at the time of admission and move-in.
7. What kind of disability documentation is needed?
 - a. Certification of Disability form signed by licensed physician
OR
 - b. Print out from the Social Security Administration (SSA) verifying receipt of disability benefits

8. In which stage of development is the vulnerability assessment?

The vulnerability assessment has not yet been developed. Several assessments from other communities have been reviewed. The assessment will be developed in the coming months and will include input from provider agencies, clinical staff, health organizations, etc.

9. How long can clients stay in USHS housing?

Length of stay will vary by client. Supportive housing providers and the Unified Supportive Housing System seek to encourage all clients to reach the greatest level of independence that they are able to reach. Some clients may live continuously in Supportive Housing, which is to be expected. Supportive Housing is necessary for those who need assistance. An annual assessment will be conducted for each client to assess the level of services needed and the client's readiness to move up to greater independence. For those who are ready to move on to other housing, USHS intends to facilitate that move to more independent housing. It is anticipated that the turnover rate will reach 26% when the system is fully implemented. Each supportive housing provider will determine how to best work with its respective tenants.

10. What type of supports will clients receive?

As with eligibility and length of stay, the supports a client receives will vary based on the supports offered at each housing program and the various needs of the clients. There will be housing of different support levels available in the Unified Supportive Housing System.

11. Since the services will be partially financed through Medicaid dollars, will clients be turned away if they are not Medicaid eligible?

No, clients will not be turned away if they are ineligible for Medicaid. Housing providers will establish admission criteria. It is expected that most housing providers will continue to serve clients with varying resources. Funding from different sources varies across supportive housing sites, including Medicaid funding.

12. Can a client transfer from one housing unit within the system to another without losing homeless status?

This will vary by supportive housing restrictions. Clients are no longer considered homeless per federal regulations if they are served in supportive housing, therefore, they would not be able to move to another Rebuilding Lives or HUD homeless unit. Unit transfers to non-Rebuilding Lives units would be a viable option.

13. Can clients indicate which side of town they would prefer to live on?

Yes, this is a part of the Indication of Interest form in the Client Preferences section. Clients will be able to indicate any special needs and preferences that they have for their housing. Clients are also able to reject any unit for any reason.

14. Who will develop the tools for evaluating the system as compared to current practices?

The evaluation of the pilot programs will be conducted by an outside evaluator. They will assess current practices and evaluate the USHS pilots. The evaluation reports would be issued in phases and would be publicly available.

15. Where will data on clients be stored?

All clients who are housed within the Unified Supportive Housing System will have their client information entered into Columbus ServicePoint (CSP). All housing providers within the system will enter tenant information into CSP.

16. Usually under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you cannot ask anyone to confirm or provide documentation of his disability. How are you able to do that for this system?

The Americans with Disability Act is applicable to employment (Title I), state and local governments providing activities, services and programs regardless of whether federally funded (Title II) and private entities that operate public accommodation (Title III). Regulations under Title II indicate that nothing prohibits "a public entity from providing benefits, services, or advantages to individuals with disabilities, or to a particular class of individuals with disabilities beyond those required by the ADA [that in general prohibits discriminatory treatment]." Thus when an agency is providing specialized services to persons with disabilities, it is permissible to specifically identify the disability and require documentation of disability as a condition of receiving services. The Release of Information contains all the necessary disclosures to be able to collect, retain and share this information with those agencies providing supportive housing services to the disabled.

17. Are "holds" (housing provider requests that client be put on hold for a short amount of time and then be referred back to the housing provider for placement) allowed in the system?

Clients who are eligible for placement in a unit and are forwarded to the housing provider may not be ready to commit to a unit. Clients may reject units for any reason. After client and/or housing provider rejection, clients return to the eligible pool of applicants and will be placed in the next available appropriate unit. The housing provider will be sent a new client who is eligible and appropriate for that unit.

18. Does the case manager remain with the client throughout the system even if the client moves?

The case manager may remain with the client as he moves through the system if he is a community based case manager. If the case manager is tied to a particular housing program, the client will be working with a new case manager at his new housing unit.