



# MASSACHUSETTS HOUSING AND SHELTER ALLIANCE

INITIATING SOLUTIONS TO END HOMELESSNESS

## ***HOME AND HEALTHY FOR GOOD 4406-3010*** **Legislative Facts Sheet FY 08**

**Background.** The Home and Healthy for Good pilot program was included in the FY07 State Budget to measure the effectiveness of a Housing First model for chronically homeless individuals with severe health problems. For more than 20 years, this segment of the homeless population has received emergency care while living on the street or in shelter – locations that greatly limit the effectiveness of any treatment clinicians can provide. Indeed chronically homeless people are the highest end utilizers of MassHealth as these individuals have frequently turned to costly emergency rooms for care and for refuge.

**In conjunction with the Legislature, MHSA is working to test the hypothesis that providing housing and services to chronically homeless individuals through a Housing First model is less costly than managing their homelessness and health problems on the street or in shelter.**

In recent years, the Housing First model has emerged as an effective way to respond to homelessness. The Housing First approach places chronically homeless individuals in housing immediately and then follows up by coordinating access to mainstream services via an intensive case manager. The Housing First model differs from many past models in that it does not require a high level of compliance to rules and requirements of a program. Instead, it focuses on helping a person maintain his or her tenancy.

**Implementation.** MHSA is currently working with seven service providers across the state to place chronically homeless individuals into housing. As of April, more than 120 individuals have moved into housing. State funds have been used to pay for operational expenses or case management services. Aside from exploring the effectiveness of various housing models (congregate vs. scattered site, for example) MHSA is also looking to find the best funding mechanisms for Housing First programs.

**Results.** MHSA is working vigorously to collect not only demographic data, but cost and outcome data on the participants of the Home and Healthy for Good program. So far, the outcomes have been promising. Preliminary data was included in a March 1, 2007 report to the Legislature.

**Moving Forward.** MHSA seeks to expand the Home and Healthy for Good initiative and has already located several homelessness and housing agencies willing to participate. An increased capacity to house chronically homeless individuals could have a real impact on reducing shelter occupancy as well as the number of homeless individuals living on the street. It is also likely that the results of this initiative and the outcomes of its participants will lead the way to a more effective – and more cost-effective – way to respond to homelessness in the Commonwealth.