

SOMERSET HOME FOR TEMPORARILY DISPLACED CHILDREN TRANSITIONAL/ PERMANENT HOUSING MODELS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS (YOUTH 18-21)

Note: The HUD definition of “transitional housing” is “residency for less than two years” and the definition of “permanent housing” is “residency for more than two years”.

Note: Program models worthy of further consideration have been identified with a double asterisk.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING MODELS

****Transitional Living Group Homes**** – Transitional living group homes are supervised living arrangements in a group home setting. Older youth may be part of a behavioral health system (Passages) or child welfare/homeless youth system of care (Whitney House, My Place).

Issues: Somerset Home as had great success with this model. This is the most expensive model but offers the most robust service (case management, independent living services, psychotherapeutic services and security. Tight fiscal times make it unlikely in the near term to see programs funded at this level. It may be possible to use the “shared home” model described below to expand these types of programs and keep staff costs down. The MIPH/Highland Park program have elements of this type of programming.

****Supervised Apartments**** – A supervised apartment building is usually owned by an agency that houses youth in separate apartments and is supervised by live-in/overnight staff or security.

Issues: This program model is used by a number of programs we have visited and helps control issues such as neighborhood relations and security including guests, parties, smoking and other substance abuse. All of the programs we have visited have provided supportive services (life skills education, case management, psychotherapeutic counseling) in addition to security. The security can be provided by a live in counselor (MIPH/Highland park), security guards (LifeLink/Glassboro) or 24 hour security station (Camden Dreams/Camden).

****Subsidized Housing**** – Subsidy programs provide youth with a monthly stipend that can be used toward a self-chosen living arrangement, food and personal supplies, where youth follows certain agency guidelines.

Issues: DYFS currently provides a monthly stipend for independent living for youth who have no other resources which is currently \$40/week for food and \$45/week for housing. This is considered a program model but really should be a considered a funding strategy to be paired with one of the other program models.

Shared Homes – A shared home is a minimally supervised house shared by several young adults who take full responsibility for the house and personal affairs. Shared homes may or may not have live-in adults.

Issues: This is not a model that has not been widely used in New Jersey. However, the MIPH/Highland Park program has elements of this type of programming.

Live-In Adult/Peer Roommate Apartments – Live in adult/peer roommate (or mentor) apartments provide a situation in which a youth shares an apartment with an adult or student who serves as a mentor or role model. The apartment can be rented or owned by either the adult or the agency.

Issues: This is not a model that has not been widely used in New Jersey.

Specialized Foster Homes – Specialized foster homes are homes where a youth is placed with a community family specifically prepared to provide training in independent living skills. Youth might exit the system from these situations and go directly to their own place without further community support.

Issues: This is a program model is not widely used for independent living in New Jersey.

Host Home – A host home is where a youth rents a room in a family or single adult's home, sharing basic facilities and agreeing to basic rules while being largely responsible for their own lives.

Issues: This model has been used successfully in Somerset County by another agency. The "Homesharing" program in Somerset County is a roommate referral program, matching those who have housing but are experiencing economic hardship with those who need housing. This program is not appropriate for all youth but offers an excellent option for some. Since there is another agency doing this program well, it does not seem likely that we would expend resources on re-creating this type of program.

Boarding Homes – A boarding home is a facility that provides individual rooms for youth and young adults, often with shared facilities with minimal supervisory expectations. This facility can be a YMCA or any similar single room occupancy (SRO) situation or a house opened to one or more boarders.

Issues: This is a program model is not been widely used for independent living in New Jersey.

Scattered Site Apartments – A scattered site apartment is an individual apartment, usually rented from a private landlord in which a youth is placed, usually alone, while in custody or care to experience independent living.

Issues: Somerset County rents are extremely high and generally out of reach for homeless youth. One bedroom apartments rent on the low end for \$600-\$800 per month. Housing costs can easily exceed \$1,000 per month and this is difficult if not impossible for youth to afford. This model works well in cities where rents are in the \$300-\$400 per month range.

PERMANENT HOUSING MODEL

****Single Room Occupancy Apartments**** (sink, microwave, refrigerator, bathroom, bed, sitting/living area) Key features of this program are that youth are leaseholders and get a key to their own residence. They may stay as long as they comply with the terms of the lease. There may be program rules built into the lease and the lease may be held by the agency or a third party.

Issues: SRO units are well suited to funding streams that are available for both capital and ongoing maintenance of housing. Section 8 (federal) and State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) project based certificates can be used to provide repayment of capital loans granted through federal tax credit programs, NJ Housing Trust Fund loans and a variety of other state (DCA, HMFA) and federal programs. The sample leases we have seen contain program requirements such as, no overnight guests, or 35 hours of work school or community service. While these are desired activities that may be required by program participants in other housing models, they may in fact infringe on civil liberties. The funding agency has to approve the lease document and may limit the terms of the lease. This is an issue of ongoing concern of programs who operate using this model. This type of model will also qualify for COAH (Council on Affordable Housing) credits which makes the development of these units attractive to all municipalities. For example, Bridgewater has recently been required to provide an additional 1,000 units of affordable housing by the state and they are seeking housing developers to assist them in meeting these goals. There is also a current issue where the State has curtailed the granting of “project based” SRAP certificates which may make it difficult to structure the repayment of loans to the Housing Trust Fund or other Department of Community Affairs or New Jersey Home Mortgage Finance Agency capital funding.

SUMMARY

It should be noted that youth (18-21) need a wide variety of community based housing options. There may not be one program model, but a variety of program models necessary to be fully responsive to the diverse needs of youth from our community.