

**Mental Health Services Act:
Community Services & Supports**

HOUSING

Draft Report for Public Review
September 30, 2008

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

1400 Emeline Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

(831) 454-4170 FAX: (831) 454-4663 TDD: (800) 523-1786

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

LETTER FROM THE MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE ABUSE DIRECTOR

September 30, 2008

The Santa Cruz County Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services has prepared a draft plan of the Community Services and Supports (CSS) Housing component of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA/Proposition 63). This draft has been prepared according to instructions from the State Department of Mental Health's Mental Health Services Act Housing Program Application.

This Draft is available for public review and comment from September 30, 2008 to October 30, 2008. Call Alicia Nájera (the MHSA coordinator) at 831-454-4931 or Linda Betts (MHSA Administrative Assistant) at 831-454-4498 with your comments or feedback, email mhsa@co.santa-cruz.ca.us or write to:

Santa Cruz County Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
1400 Emeline Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Sincerely,

Leslie Tremaine
Director

BAY AVENUE SENIOR APARTMENTS

County Of Santa Cruz Division of Mental Health First Community Housing

MHSA HOUSING PROGRAM

Supportive Housing and Services Information

INTRODUCTION

First Community Housing, a non-profit housing development corporation, is proposing to purchase and rehabilitate the Silvercrest Apartments in the City of Capitola and convert it to a 109-unit affordable senior rental project. First Community Housing obtained federal tax credits and funding commitments from Capitola, State HOME and Proposition 1C funds and has requested that the County of Santa Cruz allocate MHSA funding to the project, which would involve setting aside 5 of the 109 units for MHSA eligible adults aged 55 and over. Acquisition of the property by the Developer is expected in August of with the support of the City of Capitola.

D.1 Consistency with Three-Year Program and Expenditure Plan

The proposed project is consistent with Santa Cruz County Mental Health's Community Services and Support (CSS) Plan that was developed with broad community stakeholder participation and that was approved by the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors and the State Department of Mental Health. Increasing housing capacity in a range of options was consistently identified as a priority for all planning committees--Housing, Adult System of Care, Transition Age Youth, Older Adults, System of Care, and Criminal Justice. The Housing and Supports Committee (Committee) prioritized the need to create permanent supportive housing with an emphasis on single units, both scattered throughout a particular development or in dedicated developments. The committee emphasized the importance of providing housing opportunities throughout the County.

Bay Avenue Senior Apartments brings together the City of Capitola, County Mental Health, the John Stewart Company and First Community Housing. The project will be an important element of the MHSA housing program in that it will provide five new permanent supportive housing units for MHSA eligible tenants who are over 55. The location in the City of Capitola is ideal for the target population and is an area that is underserved for permanent supportive housing. The permanent supportive housing units in the project builds on the active partnership developed as part of the Nuevo Sol project between the County of Santa Cruz and the John Stewart Company along with non-profit development partner South County Housing. Nuevo Sol utilized MHSA one-time funds and the Governor's Homeless Initiative resources to provide permanent supportive housing with integrated services to people with psychiatric disabilities who have been chronically homeless.

The CSS Plan increases access for Older Adults to an array of integrated services that support their ability to reside in their community of choice and reduce the negative effects of untreated mental illness. This proposal further supports that Plan.

D.2 Description of Target Population to be Served

The MHSA housing program at Bay Avenue Apartments will serve persons 55 years and older who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have a psychiatric disability. Experience indicates individuals served will have multiple challenges, including co-occurring addiction disorders and complex health issues. People in the MHSA target population often have frequent contact with law enforcement primarily as a result of untreated disabilities and lack of support systems. For many, psychiatric hospitalizations, hospital emergency room visits, and institutional residential living will be the only “treatment” they will have received. Most individuals will be receiving Social Security Income. Occupancy will be specifically limited to those whose income does not exceed 30% of the area median income.

In addition to the MHSA units, there will be 34 units available to target adults over 55 with chronic health conditions who will receive support services through the County’s In-home Support Services Program. Services coordination for all residents will be provided through Senior Network Services and funded through the property’s operating budget.

D.3 Tenant Selection Plan

The MHSA Tenant Selection Plan for Bay Avenue Apartments reflects the shared values and mission of this collaborative supportive housing project to serve persons 55 years and older with person centered supportive services and affordable housing. The selection process is based on the premise that all people have a right to housing, that Santa Cruz County is committed to ending homelessness and that applicants will be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. The Tenant Selection Plan has been developed through collaboration with the Santa Cruz County Division of Mental Health (County Mental Health), the lead supportive services provider; the John Stewart Company, the property manager; and First Community Housing, the project developer.

Referrals

Potential tenants for the five MHSA-funded units must be referred to the John Stewart Company through the County MHSA Housing Coordinator or designee. Any person who contacts the project directly will be directed by the property management staff to contact the MHSA Housing Coordinator for certification of eligibility and subsequent referral to the project.

County Mental Health, the MHSA service provider at this project, will work with other providers in the community to identify eligible applicants. County Mental Health will use culturally competent efforts to reach out to and engage members of the target population, including those among unserved or underserved ethnic communities and other minority populations, and will utilize a variety of proven outreach strategies to recruit residents for the permanent supportive housing. The County Mental Health

Older Adult Team, a Full Service Partnership team, serving individuals 60 and older with mental illness and complex medical problems, will most likely be the primary service provider given the targeted age group, although referrals may come from other County Mental Health teams as well. All referrals will be persons who receive services through the County's System of Care, and they will have had an assessment by the Access team or the Older Adult Team to ensure that they meet the target population criteria. Referrals to the System of Care may come from other service providers or the broader community. Examples may include Adult Protective Services, a doctor's office, concerned family member or individual seeking assistance from County Mental Health.

In addition to accepting individuals reached through direct outreach methods, County Mental Health will accept referrals by other mental health service teams, including the Puentes team (an FSP that targets the chronically homeless with psychiatric disabilities); the South County (SCA) team, which serves the south part of the county; and the Recovery Team, serving the north part of the county. Referrals may also come directly from the Access Team and from psychiatrists and therapists who are seeing clients not currently open to a team. Other sources of referrals will include but not be limited to law enforcement; local shelters, food programs and other nonprofit and government agencies that provide outreach and services to people who are homeless; hospitals, mental health facilities and other health care providers; local veterans' agencies; religious organizations; ethnically and linguistically diverse community-based organizations; and self-referrals. Referrals who are not open to county mental health services will need to be assessed by Mental Health Access Team or the Older Adult Team, to ensure that they meet the MHSA target population criteria and that they meet Bay Avenue Senior Apartments criteria.

Program Eligibility

Consistent with the CSS Plan and the MHSA definition of target population and the restrictions of the project, eligible tenants must be older adults, age 55 and over, with untreated or under-treated major mental illness, many will also have medical problems. Other factors contributing to MHSA eligibility include:

- Functional impairments due to an untreated or under-treated mental illness that prevents engagement in meaningful activities and inability to remain in housing.
- Frequent incarceration or psychiatric hospitalizations due to untreated or under-treated illness.
- Special consideration will be given to the ethnically and culturally un-served/underserved populations among the homeless and mentally ill, especially in the Latino communities.

Santa Cruz County's MHSA Housing staff will provide documentation for qualifying mental illness and homeless status. The documentation process for mental illness may include verifying an eligible diagnosis through access to County-held records of diagnoses determined in jail or the County Mental Health Treatment Center or other mental health service programs. If there is no documented history in the County records, County Mental Health will arrange for assessment and diagnosis by a clinician or psychiatrist through its own staff.

Potential tenants status of being homeless or at risk of homelessness will be verified by the County MHSA Housing Coordinator, who will obtain written verification from the staff

of a transitional housing facility, emergency shelter, other shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, or institution that provides temporary residence for individuals intended to be hospitalized. If a homeless applicant is coming directly from the streets or other place not meant for human habitation, the verification may come from staff of an outreach, service or other organization that has assisted the applicant in the recent past. In the rare event that third-party verification cannot be found, the applicant or supportive services program staff may prepare a short statement about the person's previous living situation for the applicant to sign.

Referrals to Permanent Supportive Housing

Applicants who qualify and express interest in Bay Avenue Senior Apartments will be referred to the John Stewart Company (JSCo). The partners involved with Bay Avenue Senior Apartments acknowledge the multiple processes involved and that navigating this process may be very challenging for the MHSA applicant. To that end the service providers are committed to assisting the applicant, if he/she so wishes, throughout and during each process.

Property Management Screening

JSCo will notify the MHSA Housing Coordinator when a unit at Bay Avenue Senior Apartments is expected to become available. The MHSA Housing Coordinator will refer suitable applicants for property management screening for the Bay Avenue Senior Apartments. Screening will include review of the completed application, credit report, and criminal history check. If necessary, with third-party income verification, review of landlord and/or other references will be considered.

County Mental Health, as the MHSA service provider at this project, will provide support during the screening process. This assistance may include helping the applicant to complete the required paperwork and accompanying the applicant during interviews with property management staff.

If landlord references are not available, three personal references, other than family members, will be requested. Required references can be provided by staff of a homeless shelter, other homeless service providers, social workers or others involved with the applicant in a professional capacity, together with as much information as possible about where the applicant has been living for the past 3 years. The landlord reference check is conducted to determine that an applicant has:

- Demonstrated an ability to pay rent on time and in full.
- Followed the rules and regulations.
- Kept his or her residence in a clean and sanitary manner.
- Kept his or her residence undamaged.
- At no time received a notice for lease violation(s).
- Behaved as a good neighbor and resident.

Waiting List

Property management will not keep a waiting list for the MHSA units. County Mental Health maintains a list of all clients in need of housing and will prioritize this list based

on interest in a particular location, on need as well as suitability for specific housing unit locations.

Initial Rent-up and Unit Selection

The project will maintain five units targeted for MHSA eligible tenants at all times. The MHSA units will not be fixed unit assignments, but may change upon turnover. The ability for the units to “float” throughout the project will enable property management to assign wheelchair accessible and adaptable units to residents who need them. Seventy-six existing residents will be relocated throughout the project during the construction period. Unit selection for the MHSA units will be done collaboratively with County Mental Health, the Developer and the Property Manager.

Notice of Decision, Reasonable Accommodation and the Right to Appeal

The Property Manager will provide applicants with written notification of acceptance or reason for denial after consideration of the credit and criminal background checks. All applicants will be given notice in the application package of their right to reasonable accommodation as well as their right to appeal screening decisions. They will also be given written notification of specific occupancy date or reason for denial after final processing. In the event of successful application for the housing, County Mental Health will be available to assist the tenant in making arrangements for and completing the move-in process.

All notices of denial will include information on the right to appeal and reminder notice of the right to reasonable accommodation for disability. A copy of any denial notice for MHSA-eligible applicants will also be sent to the County MHSA program. In such cases, the County Mental Health Quality Assurance unit may assist applicants in appealing the denials.

Fair Housing

This project will comply with all federal, state, and local fair housing and civil rights laws, as well as with all equal opportunity requirements during marketing, rent-up and ongoing operations. Specifically, the project is committed to requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VIII and Section 3 of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (as amended by the Community Development Act of 1974), Executive Order 11063, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Fair Housing Amendments of 1988, and legislation which may subsequently be enacted protecting the individual rights of residents, applicants, or staff.

The project will not discriminate against prospective residents on the basis of the fact of perception of their race, religion, creed, national origin, age, color, sex, blindness or other physical or mental disability, marital status, domestic partner status, ancestry, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, AIDS, AIDS-Related Complex, HIV, medical condition, height, weight, political affiliation or other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws.

The project will not discriminate against prospective residents on the basis of their receipt of, or eligibility for, housing assistance under any Federal, State or local housing

assistance program. While the Property will not discriminate against those using Section 8 certificates or vouchers or other rental assistance, applicants with such rental assistance must meet all eligibility requirements. The Property will work closely with legal counsel and regulatory agencies throughout the marketing and outreach process to ensure full compliance with all applicable requirements.

The project will also abide by the requirements of the Multifamily Housing Program and the State MHSA Housing Program, as well as the requirements of the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee, specifically related to evaluating applicant income eligibility, supportive housing, and special needs requirements solely on their merit without regard or consideration of any protected classes stated and enumerated above.

D. 3.a Tenant Referral and Certification Process

I. Application Process

Santa Cruz County's MHSA Housing Program is an integral part of our mental health services. All consumers receiving services are eligible for housing, including MHSA funded housing. If an individual is not open to services but would like to access MHSA housing units they would be first screened by the Access Team to determine that they qualify. Once this screening has occurred the person may request housing from our various housing options. Access to housing is either through a mental health support team or may be requested directly through the MHSA Housing Coordinator. The criteria for the MHSA Housing Program are (1) being homeless or at risk for being homeless and (2) meeting Santa Cruz County's adult target population criteria for mental illness. The Division of Mental Health or its designee will assess applicants for homelessness and at-risk of homelessness as well as mental health disability. Those clients who are MHSA Housing program-eligible will be certified and verification of homelessness or risk of homelessness, and mental health disability will be documented.

Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency currently uses an application that has been developed for its Shelter Plus Care Program, which they will adapt for MHSA funded projects.

A. MHSA Housing Program Eligibility

Homelessness

A person qualifies as being homelessness if they are moving from emergency shelter or transitional housing, or they are currently homeless, meaning that he or she:

- a. lacks fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence,
- b. has a nighttime residence that is a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill),
- c. has a nighttime residence that is an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be hospitalized, or

- d. has a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings

At Risk for Homelessness

To be considered at risk for homelessness an individual must be discharged from an institutional setting, including hospitals and acute psychiatric hospitals/health facilities, currently residing at a skilled nursing facility with a certified special treatment program for the mentally ill (STP), currently residing at a crisis and transitional residential setting, released from County jail, or temporarily living in a Board and Care facility upon discharge from one of the institutional settings cited above. In addition, an individual qualifies as at risk of homelessness that is currently receiving Santa Cruz County Mental Health Services and is at imminent risk for homelessness, defined as individuals or families becoming homeless within 14 days.

Adult Target Population Criteria for Mental Illness

To qualify adults must have a serious mental illness, such as Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorders, Psychotic Disorders, major depression, Bipolar disorder, Paranoid Personality Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder or co-occurring disorders (mental illness and substance abuse or mental illness and a developmental disability). In addition, eligible adults will have a significant impairment in an important area of life functioning; or a probability of significant deterioration in an important area of functioning; and the condition would not be responsive to physical health care.

Additional criteria for adults under the County's CSS program includes meeting at least one of the following criteria:

- i. Functional impairments due to an untreated or under-treated mental illness that prevents engagement in meaningful activities and inability to remain in housing,
- ii. Frequent incarceration or psychiatric hospitalizations due to untreated or under-treated illness,
- iii. Special consideration will be given to the ethnically and culturally underserved/underserved populations among the homeless and mentally ill, especially in the Latino communities.

B. Determination of Eligibility

Upon receipt of the application for certification, County staff will ensure that all the information is complete and/or request the referral source or the applicant to either explain the incomplete information or provide the missing information.

1. Certification of Diagnoses

County Mental Health will verify and certify the applicant has a qualifying disability by:

- a. accessing Santa Cruz County Mental Health held records of diagnoses determined in jail or other Santa Cruz County contracted mental health service programs,
- b. arranging for assessment and diagnosis by a licensed mental health clinician through its own staff where there is no documented history in County Mental Health records, or
- c. accepting a diagnosis provided by a treatment center or institution referring the applicant to the MHSA program.

2. Certification of Homeless Status

- a. To certify homeless status County Mental Health will obtain written verification from the staff of a transitional housing facility, or shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations for homeless individuals, an acute psychiatric facility which admitted the individual from homelessness, or a hospital or Santa Cruz County jail which admitted the individual from homelessness. If a homeless applicant is coming directly from the streets or other place not meant for human habitation, the verification could come from outreach staff, or an organization that has assisted the applicant in the recent past.

If unable to obtain third-party verification, the applicant or supportive services program staff may prepare a short statement about the person's previous living situation for the applicant to sign.

- b. To certify an applicant's status as at-risk-of-homelessness, County Mental Health will obtain written verification their imminent discharge from hospitals or health care facilities, crisis and transitional residential settings, Santa Cruz County jail, or Residential care facilities. Imminent risk of homelessness can be certified by a Santa Cruz County Mental Health service provider when the individual and/or family is at imminent risk of homelessness.

II. MHSA Housing Program Referral List

County Mental Health will maintain a list of potential residents of MHSA Housing. Potential residents will be informed of the housing programs for which they qualify and will be prioritized for appropriate units as the units become available. When a new unit in the MHSA Housing program is being rented up, or when existing units are expected to become vacant, the housing provider will notify MHSA Housing Coordinator of an available unit. MHSA Housing Coordinator will then notify the services teams of the type and size of unit that is available and request referrals of consumers who would qualifying be a good match to the community. In the event that multiple potential residents are interested who qualify and are at comparable risk of homelessness, they will be referred to management on a first come first served basis.

D.4 Supportive Services Plan

The supportive services plan is intended to support the individual in maintaining tenancy and to promote wellness, recovery and resiliency. Services are individualized, flexible, consumer-driven and voluntary.

Description of Services

Supportive services provided to residents in MHSA-funded units will be coordinated by the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services division of the County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency (County Mental Health). Service coordinators will take an individualized approach to assessment of tenants' strengths, needs and goals. Service plans will be developed in partnership with the tenant and will be consumer directed, utilizing a strengths-based, whatever-it-takes approach. The multidisciplinary staff will include service coordinators, consumers, psychiatrists, and licensed social workers.

While all services will be voluntary, a range of services will be offered to all MHSA-eligible tenants. The range of supportive services program will include move-in support; needs/strengths assessment; emergency assistance with food and clothing as needed; individual goal/service planning; assistance in accessing mainstream benefits, such as Social Security, In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) and the Multi-Purpose Senior Services Program (MSSP); case management; independent living skills development; transportation assistance; money management and financial education; health assessment, treatment and referral; addiction disorder treatment; employment services and opportunities; crisis intervention; leadership development; community building; and any other services as needed. Services will occur primarily on-site and occur with a frequency that is individually determined, but no less than weekly. Supportive services staff will also assist tenants in accessing County and other outside services as appropriate to meet all of a resident's needs. Assertive engagement focusing on developing relationship and trust shall be undertaken with those individuals who initially decline services.

Support and Assistance to Maintain Housing Stability, Wellness, Recovery and Resiliency

Employing a whatever-it-takes approach allows staff to identify what is needed to support the tenant in maintaining his/her housing. Initial needs often include the establishment of a steady income and assessment of physical and mental health. When indicated, applications for financial and health care benefits will begin as soon as possible. Further, the range of services described above shall be offered. A strengths-based approach that encourages and supports choice, empowerment and focusing on the strengths of the individual has proven successful in recovery, fostering resiliency and the promotion of wellness. Based on the tenants' wishes, employment opportunities and supports will be made available, including assistance with transportation, job coaching and any other items that will be important for the tenant to be successful. Educational supports will also be made available including tuition and financial assistance with books and supplies. In supporting tenancy retention, service staff will be available 24/7 to respond to crises or other tenant issues requiring this level of support. Working with the tenant and property management staff when behaviors have been identified that place the tenant at risk for potential eviction will proactively support both the tenant and property management in avoiding this outcome.

Tenant Engagement

Frequent, consistent service coordinator contact will support tenants in their transition from homelessness to housing stability. Recognizing the challenges of this transition,

the types and frequency of contact will be determined by where tenants are in their recovery. Examples include frequent yet non-threatening contacts to establish a supportive and trusting relationship for individuals in pre-contemplative stages, to supporting the individual by making available transportation to any appointments for the individual in recovery. Peer support staff will be critical links in assisting tenants to maintain housing. Service coordinators will also encourage consumers to participate in community programs such as the Wellness Center offered through the Mental Health Client Action Network (MHCAN). Finally, a strong working relationship between the service provider and property management is crucial to supporting the MHSA clients in maintaining tenancy. This relationship is described below.

Service Provider(s) and Property Management Relationship

A critical element of supporting tenants in maintaining housing is the communication and relationship between service providers and property management staff.

For tenants in MHSA-eligible units at Bay Avenue Senior Apartments, County Mental Health will act as the lead service provider. A County Housing Coordinator will provide a single point of contact for communications between County Mental Health and property management staff.

The roles of property owner, property manager and service provider will be clearly established in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by all parties. Regular meetings between property management and County Mental Health staff will be held, initially on a monthly basis and subsequently as needed. Release of Information forms will be presented to each client for signature in order to allow for maximum sharing of information. To address urgent housing issues, an interactive Problems/Issues form that provides space for the property manager's description of the issue and County Mental Health staff response with strategies for resolution will be shared by email. The form is for informational purposes only; no confidential material will be shared. When tenant behaviors place an individual at risk for eviction, property management staff will communicate with the Housing Coordinator and the issue will be discussed at the weekly service team meeting. With a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between service providers and property management, the goal of such communications will be to support housing retention for tenants.

D.5 SUPPORTIVE SERVICES CHART

Supportive Service	Target Population	Service Provider(s)	Service Location
Needs/Strengths Assessment	All tenants of MHSA-financed units	Santa Cruz County Mental Health coordinators	On- or off-site
Service Integration/ Coordination	All tenants of MHSA-financed units	Santa Cruz County Mental Health service coordinators	On- or off-site
Mental Health Support	All tenants of MHSA-financed units, as needed	Santa Cruz County Mental Health service coordinators	On-site /off-site as needed
Housing Retention Services	All tenants of MHSA-financed units	Santa Cruz County Mental Health service coordinators and peer facilitators	On-site
Community Building/Social Integration Support	All tenants of MHSA-financed units	Santa Cruz County Mental Health service coordinators, the John Stewart Co., and peers	On-site
Substance Abuse Counseling	All tenants of MHSA-financed units with substance abuse disorders, including co-occurring disorders	Santa Cruz County Mental Health service coordinators; County substance abuse programs; referral to treatment programs as needed	On-site /off-site as needed
Medical Care Access/ Coordination	All tenants of MHSA-financed units	Santa Cruz County Mental Health service coordinators; HPHP Coral St. Clinic and other community safety net clinics; primary care providers	On-site /off-site as needed
Employment Support	All tenants of MHSA-financed units	Santa Cruz County Mental Health service coordinators; Homeless Garden Project; Department of Rehabilitation Co-op; Community Connection; Volunteer Center; Grey Bears	On-site/off-site as needed
Dental Care Access/ Coordination	All tenants of MHSA-financed units	Dientes Dental Clinic; HPHP Health Care for the Homeless Oral Health Program	Off-site
Transportation Assistance	All tenants of MHSA-financed units	Santa Cruz County Mental Health service coordinators	On-site/off-site as needed; for off-site staff transportation or public transportation; Para-Cruz
Benefits Advocacy	All tenants of MHSA-financed units	Santa Cruz County Mental Health Benefits Unit	Off-site
Money Management/ Budgeting Skills	All tenants of MHSA-financed unit, as needed	Community Support Services Money Management Program through Santa Cruz Community Counseling Center	Off-site

Primary Service Provider: Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency-Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH)