



Executive Summary

Background

Recognizing the growing need for affordable and supportive housing, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) leadership convened a diverse, broad-based group of stakeholders from across North Carolina in early 2021 to develop a Strategic Housing Plan (Plan); stakeholders included key NCDHHS housing staff, the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA), partner state agencies, and key community stakeholders. NCDHHS engaged the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC), a nonprofit consulting organization and nationally recognized expert in supportive housing, to support its statewide planning and implementation efforts.

Focus Population

NCDHHS and other state agencies, in partnership with NCDHHS' housing and services stakeholders, are committed to implementing the goals, objectives, and strategies of this Plan to help maintain, increase, and better utilize affordable supportive housing for people served by NCDHHS across the state of North Carolina. The focus population of the NCDHHS Strategic Housing Plan is people served by NCDHHS with a priority for people with disabilities who are served by or qualify for NCDHHS services. The focus population of the Plan includes people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and physical disabilities; people living in institutional settings or at risk of institutionalization; people who are elderly; and people who are disabled and experiencing homelessness (including children/youth) or at risk of homelessness. The state's *Olmstead* settlement agreement continues to put a particular focus for NCDHHS on people with serious mental illness (SMI) – working to ensure that people are able to live as independently as possible. NCDHHS' Transitions to Community Living (TCL) program, initiated in response to the settlement agreement, provides a sustainable model of offering integrated supportive housing for people with disabilities across the state. Of those served by the TCL program, NCDHHS has served 860 individuals with both SMI and I/DD.¹

Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is an evidence-based intervention designed to serve people with disabilities in integrated, community-based settings. PSH combines affordable permanent housing with access to voluntary, tailored support services to provide stable housing.

¹ This represents 11.6% of those served by TCL.

PSH is proven to show positive results such as reduced hospitalization and homelessness, and to improve behavioral and physical health outcomes.^{2 3 4} Consequently, the Plan focuses on PSH and sets forth goals, objectives, and strategies that will increase quality, access, and availability of PSH statewide. Because the focus of this Plan is people with disabilities with ongoing supportive services and PSH subsidy needs, it focuses on permanent supportive housing. However, in acknowledgment of the diverse housing and support needs of people with disabilities and the importance of offering an array of options to choose from, the Plan puts forth strategies for other nationally recognized models of housing as well, such as rapid rehousing⁵, and also standalone support services such as eviction prevention, housing navigation, and other tenancy supports. The Plan also highlights the need for evidence-based strategies such as progressive engagement.⁶

NCDHHS Strategic Planning Process

At the start of the planning process, NCDHHS leadership set forth the Plan's charge:

The plan will address the housing needs of individuals with disabilities, to include people with disabilities who are currently receiving or eligible for NCDHHS-funded services at the state and local levels, who are either experiencing homelessness, currently residing in congregate settings or at risk of entry into these settings.

This Housing Plan will provide a strategic guide to focus policy efforts and resource decision making in creating and maximizing community-based housing opportunities for identified populations over a five-year horizon.

The plan will build on existing Olmstead efforts within the NCDHHS (i.e., Transitions to Community Living and Money Follows the Person).

Beginning in May 2021, NCDHHS (with TAC's support) convened a diverse group of key stakeholders and NCDHHS staff — collectively known as the Housing Leadership Committee (HLC) — to offer broad-based, diverse leadership in developing the Plan. Based on its charge from NCDHHS leadership, the HLC developed a collective vision, mission, guiding principles, and strategy for the Plan's development. The HLC formed five workgroups to gain input from a variety of stakeholders. NCDHHS organized the workgroups around five goal areas; the goal

² Culhane, D. P., Metraux, S., & Hadley, T. (2002). [Public service reductions associated with placement of homeless persons with severe mental illness in supportive housing](#). *Housing Policy Debate*, 13(1), 107-163.

³ Larimer, M. E. (2009). [Health care and public service use and costs before and after provision of housing for chronically homeless persons with severe alcohol problems](#). *JAMA*, 301(13):1349.

⁴ Chalmers McLaughlin, T. (2010). [Using common themes: Cost-effectiveness of permanent supported housing for persons with mental illness](#). *Research on Social Work Practice*, 21(4):404-411.

⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2014). [Rapid re-housing brief](#).

⁶ National Alliance to End Homelessness (2021, June 4). [What is progressive engagement?](#) NAEH.org.

areas were identified through an environmental scan conducted by NCDHHS and TAC prior to the kickoff of the planning process. The five workgroups are:

- Increasing Housing Development (Development)
- Expanding and Improving Affordable Housing through Non-Development Activities (Non-Development)
- Improving and Increasing Supportive Services (Services)
- Enhancing Coordination among State Agencies Administering Housing Funding and Programs (Coordination)
- Increasing Partnerships across the State to Bolster Affordable Housing (Partnerships)

The HLC and workgroups met over the course of six months (late 2021 through early 2022) to set forth the Plan's vision and mission; to discuss strengths, challenges, and opportunities related to housing; and to develop objectives and strategies under each goal area.

With the support of the HLC, NCDHHS developed the following vision, mission, guiding principles, and equity statement:

Vision: Quality community-based housing, services, and supports needed for people with disabilities to thrive.

Mission: Develop a comprehensive five-year plan to eliminate barriers to housing and create quality affordable, accessible, and inclusive housing that supports the whole individual by improving services, funding, communication, and statewide coordination for the populations we serve.

Guiding Principles

- The Plan will provide a strategic guide to focus NCDHHS' policy efforts and resource decision-making in creating and maximizing community-based housing opportunities for people with disabilities.
- The Plan will focus on people with disabilities, including people with disabilities who are served by or who qualify for NCDHHS services.⁷

⁷ Including people with intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), physical disabilities, people living in institutional settings or at risk of institutionalization, people who are elderly, and people who are disabled and experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

- The Plan will have a cross-disability focus to include people with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness, living in an institution, or at risk of institutionalization.
- The Plan will cover a five-year implementation period (2024–2029).⁸

Equity and Inclusion: NCDHHS is committed to forming a broad, representative, inclusive Housing Leadership Committee (HLC) membership that incorporates a range of different perspectives and experiences, including people with disabilities, in planning and decision-making. During the implementation of the Plan, NCDHHS, with the support of the HLC, continues to be committed to reviewing progress to ensure that equitable outcomes are produced for NCDHHS' priority populations and all people with disabilities. NCDHHS will accomplish this by a periodic review of data and outcomes demographically as well as by accounting for qualitative feedback from people with lived experience and expertise.

Environmental Housing Scan

Prior to and in addition to convening the HLC and goal area workgroups, NCDHHS and TAC conducted an environmental scan of the housing needs of NCDHHS service populations across the state. The environmental scan included interviews and focus groups with more than 100 stakeholders from across the state and a survey that had more than 500 responses from people with lived experience, parents and legal guardians, and service providers. Information, data, and feedback provided in the environmental scan drove the focus and development of the goals, objectives, and strategies of the Plan. The Plan's five goal areas represent the priority themes from the environmental scan.

Strategic Housing Plan Overview

Drawing on feedback from the HLC and workgroups, as well as the environmental scan, NCDHHS sets forth the following objectives to maintain, increase, and better utilize supportive housing for people with disabilities in North Carolina over the next five years. The objectives and high-priority strategies are summarized by goal area below.

Development: *Increase access to and development of supportive housing.* NCDHHS' primary objective for this goal area is to support the creation of 3,400 PSH opportunities — through the construction of new units and through the rehabilitation of existing properties to provide new access to existing units. High-priority, short-term strategies include sustaining the HLC for

⁸ The Plan puts forth some longer-term strategies that may go beyond this timeframe based on available capacity and resources. These longer-term strategies are noted in the strategies section of the Plan.

ongoing Plan implementation support as well as conducting a PSH needs assessment and developing a statewide PSH framework.

Non-Development: *Increase the stability of households and increase efficient access to affordable supportive housing.* Strategies for this goal area include identifying and securing additional funds for rental assistance, leveraging and streamlining existing resources, lowering barriers to housing access, and improving the quality of existing housing. In addition, under this workgroup (and contingent on securing new resources), NCDHHS proposes to increase housing navigation, landlord supports and incentives, and eviction prevention services.

Services: *Provide quality housing support services statewide and support the development of training related to these evidence-based services.* Strategies for this area include identifying and leveraging funding streams to support pre-tenancy, transition, and tenancy support services, and increasing provider capacity and system infrastructure.

Coordination: *Explore the creation of a formal structure for accountability and strategy alignment across all state agencies.* Strategies include those related to the efforts of the Interagency Council on Coordinating Homeless Programs (ICCHP) as well as exploring the centralization of housing functions within NCDHHS.

Partnerships: *Increase coordination and partnerships at the state and local levels, leverage funding, and identify housing-related needs and system gaps across the state.* Under this workgroup, NCDHHS developed objectives and strategies that serve to increase partnerships and communication with housing providers and developers, Continuums of Care (CoCs), public housing agencies (PHAs), and all state-level departments involved in housing activities. Strategies include the development of formal partnerships between NCDHHS and localities to increase affordable housing options and leverage housing resources.

Within the five goal areas, there are 16 objectives with supporting strategies. From the strategy development sessions, NCDHHS identified several as short-term, high-priority strategies; these will serve as the priority areas for implementation in the initial years of the Plan.

Implementation

NCDHHS will publish and launch the NC Strategic Housing Plan in July 2024. NCDHHS, with the support of the partner state agencies and the HLC, will develop an action plan that outlines the priority strategies within each goal area for the first year of implementation. Supported by TAC, NCDHHS will convene workgroups to evaluate current capacity, identify additional resources, and support the implementation of these strategies. The HLC will continue to offer its expertise and leadership and will convene regularly to offer feedback and assess progress in achieving the objectives outlined in the Plan throughout the five-year implementation period.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services thanks everyone who participated in the development of this Plan. NCDHHS and the HLC are excited to launch the Strategic Housing Plan, which will move North Carolina forward with increasing community-based supportive housing. NCDHHS, the HLC, and the stakeholder network are committed to implementation of the objectives and strategies of this Plan and to increasing partnerships and understanding of common goals shared by leaders and policymakers in the services and affordable housing systems.

The full NC Strategic Housing Plan is available on NCDHHS' [Health Equity Portfolio](#) webpage. For more information on the NC Strategic Housing Plan and how you can get involved, contact NCDHHS at tclolmstead.housing@dhhs.nc.gov.