Help End Chronic Homelessness by Creating a Medicaid Supportive Housing Services Benefit

Ensure that services for people living in supportive housing can be paid for with Medicaid

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Homelessness & housing instability is harmful to people’s health.

Housing instability and homelessness exacerbate health problems and too often prevent individuals from accessing the health services they need to recover. At the same time, ill health can lead to homelessness and housing instability. Providing housing and services to people living with complex and chronic health problems will allow them to stay off the street and in a healthy home. Supportive housing is an evidence-based solution that helps people experiencing homelessness attain both housing stability and improved health outcomes.

What is Supportive Housing?

Supportive housing is an affordable home combined with comprehensive primary and behavioral health services. This research-proven model reduces utilization of costly emergency, inpatient, and crisis services, while improving health outcomes. Affordable housing with resident services is not supportive housing. Supportive housing provides a more specialized level of care. People living in supportive housing usually have a long history of homelessness and often face persistent obstacles to keeping their home, such as a serious mental health illness, chemical dependency, physical disability, or chronic medical condition.

Medicaid expansion can help end homelessness.

Prior to the Affordable Care Act, many chronically homeless adults, including those residing in supportive housing, were not eligible for Medicaid or had barriers in applying. Nearly all homeless persons are, by virtue of their incomes, eligible for Medicaid, including ones already living in supportive housing.

If a Medicaid Supportive Housing Services Benefit was created, then supportive housing providers could bill Medicaid for supportive services provided to eligible residents. This would allow more chronically homeless people to access services, improve the integration of behavioral & health care, and would help individuals with severe and chronic health issues stay off the street and live in a healthy home.

What is the legislative solution?

Medicaid can and should pay for supportive housing services. The state needs to take action to request this amendment to the state’s Medicaid plan and make a modest investment of state Medicaid dollars.


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