

## TRANSITIONS TO HOUSING STUDY BRIEF

Suzanne Wenzel, Harmony Rhoades, Ben Henwood, and Eric Rice recently conducted a study to understand the changes that homeless adults in Los Angeles experience as they enter and live in permanent supportive housing (PSH). They interviewed 421 homeless adults moving into PSH in LA County about their health, quality of life, safety, social networks and access to services. The goal: to learn how local policies and services available through PSH shape the transition from homelessness to housing.

These findings will inform strategies for reducing health risks and enhancing quality of life for PSH residents, and help housing and social service providers improve this significant life transition.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Before entering housing:

- Residents were homeless for an average of six total years in their lifetimes
- 98% reported at least one chronic physical or mental health condition, and 90% reported two or more chronic conditions
- 96% reported owning a cellphone



#### After entering PSH, residents experienced:

##### Increased:

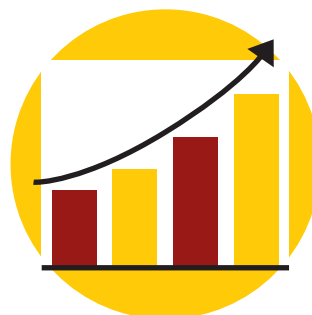
- Self-rated quality of life
- Self-rated physical health

##### Decreased:

- Recent incidents of physical assault\*
- Connections with service providers
- Social network size
- Utilization of HIV prevention services

##### Consistent:

- Sexual activity without protection\*\*
- Substance use (most commonly tobacco and marijuana)



#### Residents stated their primary goals as:

1. Relocating to different housing/neighborhoods
2. Finding employment
3. Pursuing education
4. Nurturing social relationships
5. Improving physical and mental health



#### Retention Rate

Most participants (95%) who moved into PSH remained in housing one year later. Those who moved out cited safety concerns, eviction for failure to pay rent, or a desire to be closer to family. 11 participants passed away after moving into housing.

\* The rate of sexual assault decreased for women, though they still remained at some risk for sexual assault, even within PSH.

\*\* Residents with friends or other connections who practiced unsafe sex behavior were most likely to report sexual risk behavior.

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

Survey topics included:

- Demographic characteristics
- Cell phone and internet use
- Housing
- Violence and personal safety
- Service utilization
- HIV prevention education
- Health
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Mental health
- Sexual behavior
- Substance use
- Incarceration history
- Perceived discrimination
- Life goals
- Social network composition and behavior

### 1. Interview - Single Homeless Adults

- Baseline interview before moving into PSH
- Follow-up interviews at three, six, and 12 months after move in date
- Participants recruited from 26 community agency partners in LA County, including housing and supportive services organizations



### 2. Interview - Agency Staff

- Focus groups with front-line agency staff to learn about policies and procedures regarding health care access, housing policies, substance use, safe sex discussions and education and staff training
- Individual interviews with supervisory staff to discuss placement in PSH units, integrated health and additional services, substance use policies and STI risk, prevalence and programming



### 3. Ethnographic Shadowing

- Four-hour individual routine observation with participants who had lived in PSH for at least three months
- Participants selected based on risk behavior change from baseline to three-month mark, location of PSH, gender and place in interview timeline



### 4. Findings Focus Groups with Agency Staff and PSH Residents

- Separate focus groups with agency staff and longer-term residents (two+ years) to discuss primary and preliminary findings and aid interpretation

### Data Sample Overview

Single Homeless Adult Interviews	Agency Staff	Ethnographic Shadowing	Findings Focus Groups
Baseline: 421 Three Months: 405 Six Months: 400 12 Months: 383	Front-Line Staff: 11 focus groups Supervisory Staff: 15 one-on-one interviews	Shadowings: 27	Agency Staff: six focus groups PSH Residents: six focus groups