



Supportive Housing Innovations

The Melville Act¹ authorizes a new and innovative Section 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA) option to promote the creation of integrated permanent supportive housing (PSH) units for people with disabilities. While no state has yet implemented the new 811 PRA option, TAC has worked with several states² during recent years to design and implement cost-effective systems-level PSH initiatives that include several key features that led to the supportive housing innovations in the Melville Act.

Key features of these states' approaches consistent with provisions in the Melville Act include:

State-Level Housing/Human Service Partnerships

The supportive housing is created through a formalized partnership that involves at a minimum the state housing agency and the state health and human services agency. While local partners – including housing developers and human service providers – are critical to the implementation of PSH, primary funding for the affordable housing and support services comes through state agencies. These state-level partnerships are critical to leveraging mainstream affordable rental housing development for people with disabilities, while ensuring those most in need can access the newly created housing units. These partnerships also ensure that tenants are linked with appropriate services and supports funded with Medicaid and other community-based service resources.

The 811 PRA option requires that a partnership between the state Housing Finance Agency (HFA) and the state Health and Human Services (HHS) Agency that oversees or administers the State Medicaid program be formalized in a written agreement. This agreement must specify:

- The PSH target population;
- Methods of outreach and referral; and
- Appropriate supportive services that will be made available to PSH tenants.

Target Population

A formal targeting policy is established by the state, ensuring the most vulnerable people with disabilities' needs are met through the newly created supportive housing. This type of population targeting strategy guided by state policy can serve several priority populations - including people who are homeless and people leaving institutions - within one PSH system rather than needing several population-specific projects targeted to different subgroups.

¹ "The Melville Act" is the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2010, which amends Section 811 of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act to improve the program under such section for supportive housing for persons with disabilities.

² These states include: North Carolina, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Pennsylvania.

Integrated Project-Based Approach

The supportive housing units created are project-based as opposed to tenant- or sponsor-based and therefore have long-term use restrictions. The units are also highly integrated – meaning they are located in affordable housing developments that include households without disabilities, and no more than 25% of the units in a development may be ‘set-aside’ for people with disabilities. This integrated PSH approach is consistent with the preferences of many people with disabilities and with federal community integration principles. Furthermore, the housing leverages state HFA administered programs like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, which means that the units are in new, high-quality and well-managed rental housing properties, including barrier-free and accessible units, that must meet federal and state HFA requirements.

Subsidies to Ensure Affordability

The supportive housing units have some type of project-based subsidy so that tenants generally pay 30 % of their income for rent, making the housing affordable to people with disabilities receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Tenancy Rights & Voluntary Services

Consistent with evidence-based permanent supportive housing (PSH) principles, all supportive housing tenants have leases and full tenancy rights consistent with local landlord/tenant laws. While supportive services are highly available and accessible to supportive housing tenants, they are voluntary and not a condition of their living in their housing unit.

System for Outreach/Referral & Tracking Unit Availability

New methods of outreach and referral are created to successfully identify and refer prospective tenants to supportive housing units owned by developers in a timely and efficient manner. A system for tracking all available supportive housing units – including new units coming on-line as well as “turnover” units – is also established to ensure that owners continue to meet their supportive housing commitments. Existing agencies – such as regional governmental or nonprofit agencies called Local Lead Agencies (LLAs) - are often designated by the state to provide this new outreach/referral and unit tracking ‘infrastructure’ at the local level.

For More Information

For more information on the Section 811 PRA option and case studies of these states’ PSH approaches, go to <http://811resourcecenter.tacinc.org>