



Supportive Housing Providers Are Working During this Pandemic to Protect the Lives of Vulnerable Illinoisans

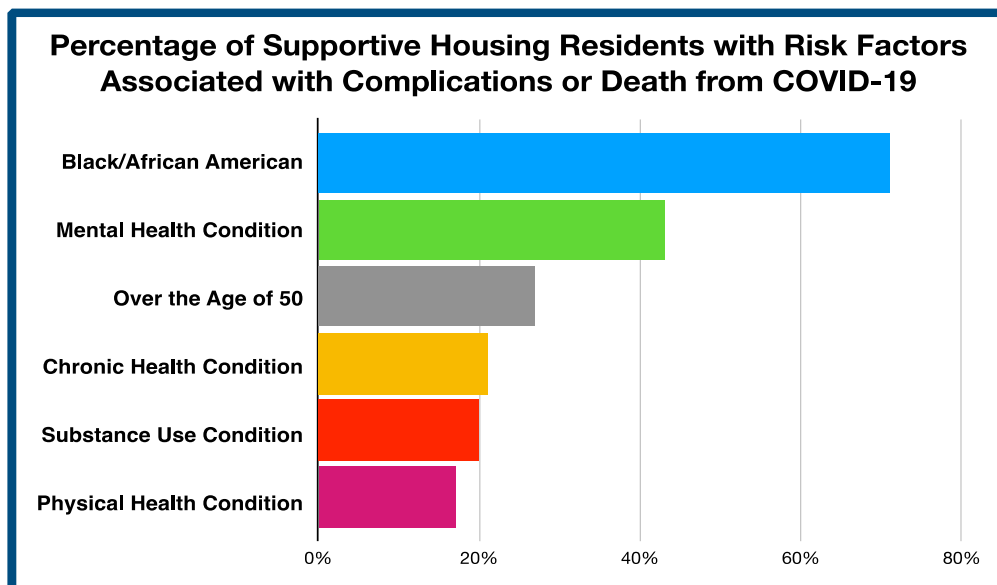
Any Reduction to State Funding for Supportive Housing Services Would Devastate the Lives of Illinoisans and Severely Burden Local Governments

Supportive housing reduces homelessness and unnecessary institutionalization in Illinois, while improving quality of life for vulnerable men, women and children, reducing demands on local first responders, and saving state and local taxpayer dollars. During this COVID-19 pandemic, supportive housing providers literally are protecting lives.

We recognize the state's fiscal challenges are mounting. But any reduction in funding or delay in contract payments for supportive housing services in FY 2021 would lead to increased homelessness in communities across the state, an outcome that, particularly as this state continues its efforts to contain COVID-19, could elevate the risk of serious illness and death for supportive housing residents.

Even a 5% reduction in funding during FY 2021 would eliminate or otherwise compromise the services of an estimated 1,050 to 1,350 Illinoisans. A 10% cut would stop or reduce services for an estimated 2,100 to 2,700 people. These are individuals with disabilities, people who have experienced homelessness, veterans, families with minor children, and youth. They are Illinoisans experiencing mental health conditions, substance use conditions, and domestic violence. This population includes multiple categories of individuals at higher risk of complications or death from COVID-19.

The FY 2020 budget authorized \$41,796,900 for supportive housing services. A substantial reduction of this sum, or delay in contract payments, would prompt the elimination of staff, a reduced scope and frequency of services, and increased caseloads for remaining staff. Providers would lack the capacity to serve new households experiencing homelessness, housing instability, or a health crisis due to COVID-19.



In State's Battle Against COVID-19, Supportive Housing Providers Have Re-Engineered Operations, Incurred New Costs & Lost Revenue

Illinois supportive housing providers are bolstering the state's response to COVID-19 by serving residents and reducing, to the degree possible within the scope of our resources, the state's homeless population. Diminished state funding would result in reduced services and, as a consequence, an increased risk that these individuals return to homelessness, require emergency services and/or hospitalization, spread COVID-19 to others, suffer serious illness and possibly also death.

Supportive housing operations since the start of the pandemic have been modified to emphasize remote and limited in-person contacts. Some staff have been furloughed. Other staff took on new and necessary aspects of case management to keep clients safe, including transporting clients, and picking up groceries and prescriptions. Providers incurred unbudgeted expenses for personal protection equipment, cleaning supplies, increased travel, and technical assistance for remote capabilities. Amid restrictions on social interaction, major fundraisers – a key source of revenue for providers – were cancelled. Several providers have reported an increase in requests for services including mental health, substance use, and domestic violence – as well as difficulty, with scarcer resources, meeting new community needs brought on by the pandemic.

Providers across Illinois, serving an estimated 17,869 men, women and children with supportive housing services, operate at or near capacity. Future staff layoffs or furloughs, or even the closing of entire programs, would cause serious disruption to human service networks. If they are lost, relationships and capacities developed in regions and communities over years and decades cannot be quickly re-established even if funding returns.

Supportive Housing Saves Taxpayer Dollars, Attracts Matching Funds, Reduces Stress on Local Government & Helps Ensure Compliance with Consent Decrees

Supportive housing is affordable housing paired with wrap-around, person-centered supportive services. Illinoisans not able to access supportive housing services are more likely to reside in nursing homes or state institutions – alternatives that are far more expensive for Illinois taxpayers – or on the street, where they may stress the resources of local emergency rooms, police and other first responders, and jails, increasing costs for local taxpayers. Supportive housing services:

- Reduce recidivism.
- Include wrap-around services such as supported employment and are tied to GED and other educational programs.
- Promote economic access, equity and opportunity through decent, safe, affordable housing; mainstream benefits; and opportunities for supported employment.
- Ensure access for individuals with disabilities to mental health and substance use treatment, HIV/AIDS care, and preventative health, vision and dental care – all of which would not be readily available to a person who is homeless.

Dedicated state support for supportive housing services also helps the state generate matching funds from the federal government and helps ensure compliance with federal consent decrees that require the availability of community-based housing options for individuals with a disability or mental illness.