



Housing

How can I research housing options for my loved one with SMI?

If you are able to assist your loved one in finding a place to live, consider what type of support is needed to help them maintain stability. There are multiple housing options that may include services and support.

If your loved one has a criminal record or needs housing using a Section 8 or other rent- controlled voucher, finding a place to live may have added barriers. If one is available in the area, a [Clubhouse International](#) accredited organization may be a place to seek guidance about how to work with landlords to navigate those concerns.

The Fair Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination in housing, including individuals with mental health, intellectual, or developmental disabilities. Landlords must honor requests from tenants/prospective tenants for accommodations due to any disability, including mental illness or the manifestation of symptoms of a mental illness, provided they don't interfere with other tenants in common areas of the complex. Unfortunately, not all landlords are aware of these requirements so it may be necessary to advocate for a loved one

whose rights are not being honored. It can be effective to make landlords aware of their requirements while making it clear that failure to comply will be noticed.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides a fact sheet with information about disability protections related to fair housing and how to file complaints. HUD supports a Discrimination Hotline: 1-800-669-9777 or 1-800-877-8339 (Federal Relay).

What if my loved one needs housing assistance?

[The National Housing Conference](#) maintains a list of federal programs to help people who are homeless or unstably housed. Specific programs are offered for certain populations, such as veterans, foster youth, people with HIV/AIDs, people in rural areas, and more. Review the list to see if your loved one might fit any of the criteria.

Policymakers and advocates have different opinions on the best approach to housing people with chronic and persistent mental illness. Some believe that settling people into housing first, and then offering treatment, is the best approach. Others argue that housing without integrated treatment is doomed to fail. While evidence is inconclusive on what approach is

the best to address homelessness and unstable housing, there is no question that the lack of housing with sufficient support to help those with SMI live well in the community is one of the most significant barriers to stability that people face.

What are some housing options for someone with SMI?

Here are a few general terms to understand when helping your loved one make decisions about what type of living situation will be the best fit:

- **Permanent supportive housing** is a long-term option for some individuals whose illness makes fully independent living unworkable throughout their lives. [SAMHSA provides a toolkit that includes evidence-based practices for permanent supportive housing.](#)
- **Transitional housing** is provided in some areas for people leaving a hospital who need more support temporarily as they move back into the community. You might ask a social worker at the hospital for information about transitional housing options in the area. You can also type transitional housing and your city/county/state into your browser to search for possibilities.
- **Board and care or group homes** may provide food, supervision, and someone qualified to dispense medication. Some have staff to assist with recreational activities. Check to see whether the facility is licensed. If licensed, check to see what state agency certifies their license and what training staff have received. Plan to tour the home and speak with residents to ensure a good fit before committing.
- **In-home services while living independently or with family** is another option. Medicaid pays for

[Home and Community Based Services](#)

for eligible people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, and/or mental illnesses. This benefit might be provided by a trained caregiver or a family member who is acting as the caregiver. Note that some states have different names for in-home support services. Your state's Medicaid management agency can provide further information about how to apply.

- **Single room occupancy** means living independently within a community facility. Much like a dormitory, residents may have their own rooms and share communal kitchens and lounges. Some SRO facilities are supported by HUD, the federal [Department of Housing and Urban Development](#). Amenities vary depending on how the structure was built or renovated from something else, such as a former hotel. You can contact your local public housing agency to inquire about SRO programs in your area.

Additional resources

[American Residential Treatment Association](#) provides a list of private, long-term facilities across the United States for a range of people with psychiatric conditions, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and mental illness combined with substance use disorder. Many can be very expensive. Some take insurance, but not all insurances cover the entire cost. These are not locked facilities.

People with a documented treatment history might get help from a SAMHSA program called SOAR, which stands for [SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery](#). SOAR increases access to Social Security disability benefits for eligible children and adults who are experiencing or at risk of

homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or co-occurring substance use disorder. SAMHSA supports an interactive map to help you find a [SOAR program in your state](#).

A federal grant program called [PATH](#) — Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness — is an option to help individuals with SMI who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. PATH funds homeless outreach but does not provide housing subsidies. Search for a PATH program in your state by typing Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness

followed by your state name or initials.

Innovation and problem-solving are needed to address the enormous unmet housing needs of people with SMI. In May 2020, two passionate advocates, both mothers of children with SMI, published a white paper: [Housing That Heals: A Search for a Place Like Home for Families Like Ours](#).