

CASE STUDIES: Homelessness Prevention

Preventing and Reducing Homelessness Through Housekeeping Services and Mobile Community Outreach

Multnomah County Aging, Disability and Veteran Services Division

Multnomah County, OR

www.multco.us/ads

USAging highlights successful programs and partnerships to provide inspiration for AAAs and other community-based organizations to advance their work in homelessness prevention. Find more case studies at www.usaging.org/research.

In Multnomah County, OR, homelessness among older adults is increasing. The 2022 Point-in-Time count indicated that nearly 25 percent of people experiencing homelessness were age 55 and older, compared with 14 percent in 2013.¹ Multnomah County Aging, Disability and Veteran Services Division (ADVSD), the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serving the Portland area, operates several programs to support housing stability. Yet economic and demographic factors outpace local efforts. So ADVSD, in partnership with the Joint Office of Homeless Services (or JOHS, the county's Continuum of Care), has implemented two new programs to address this growing issue.

Preventing Homelessness Through Housekeeping Services

In 2022, the county commissioner requested a study to better understand the in-home care needs of older adults residing in rental properties and how to improve housing stability for this population. ADVSD and JOHS identified common risk factors and services needed to support older adults at risk of eviction from rental housing due to tenant contract violations of cleanliness standards. ADVSD and JOHS recommended a **program for no-cost light housekeeping services for low-income older adults who were identified as at risk for housing instability**. The County Board of Commissioners approved a one-year, \$75,000 pilot that will serve approximately 30 households. Eligible households must include an adult age 55 or older who had previously been chronically homeless.

The services offered under the housekeeping pilot program, conducted by ADVSD and its partner, **Northwest Pilot Project**, include cleaning, tidying possessions and support for pet care to help clients maintain compliance with their rental contracts. To further support aging in place, housekeeping services are, when possible, paired with other ADVSD programs such as bill paying, transportation and meal delivery. The goal for the pilot program is that at least 80 percent of participants will continue to be in stable housing six months after program completion.

Mobile Outreach to Support Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness

For older adults currently experiencing homelessness, with the support of JOHS, ADVSD leads a homeless mobile team. The team meets clients where they are—in the streets or shelters—to evaluate older adults for long-term services and supports (LTSS), including housing-related supports, assistance with benefits access and provision of other wraparound support. Using Metro Supportive Housing Services funding, ADVSD hired four team members who have culturally diverse backgrounds and experiences. These mobile team members

¹ Multnomah County Aging Disability and Veteran Services, Joint Office of Homeless Services. 2023. FY 2023 Budget Note. https://multnomah.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=3&clip_id=2674&meta_id=166178.

use the JOHS's homelessness management information system, which provides valuable data on the current landscape of homelessness in the county, to track housing outcomes. Data coordination is essential to enhance service coordination and increase access to services. The ADVSD-JOHS collaboration also works with the public housing authority, Home Forward, for access to housing vouchers prioritized for this specific population.

Additional AAA Services That Support Housing Stability

The housekeeping services pilot and the mobile team partner with ADVSD's other programs to support housing stability and reduce homelessness. In addition to information and referral/assistance and options counseling supports, the AAA also provides the following:

- **Housing navigator**, funded by Medicaid, that helps consumers overcome barriers to securing housing, such as finding housing, completing rental applications or advocating with landlords on behalf of tenants.
- **Safety net program**, funded by the county, that helps meet financial obligations that contribute to housing instability such as unpaid medical expenses, utility bills and rent.
- **Care transition program**, funded by the Older Americans Act and health system contracts, in which case managers follow up with participants after a hospitalization to assist with discharge orders, address housing stabilization needs and connect consumers with LTSS to help prevent rehospitalization.
- **Embedded hospital intake specialists**, funded by health system contracts, provide Medicaid financial determination and LTSS to housed and unhoused individuals in the hospital needing services after discharge.

Advice for AAAs

ADVSD has found success with the following strategies to advocate and build support for the AAA's expanded role in homelessness prevention and response:

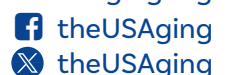
- Use data from the AAA, CoC and other community sources to make a case for the need;
- Intentionally link service and funding proposals to local and state policy priorities to end homelessness;
- Propose programs that build on current supportive services and expertise from the Aging Network;
- Coordinate with housing partners so that all agencies are ready to collaborate and implement the proposals; and
- Remind partners that the AAA is serving the same people that they are. The community organizations have a common goal and different strengths to best contribute to the overall solution.

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Leaders in Aging Well at Home

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