

**OUTCOME EVALUATION
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTED HOUSING
VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH**

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There is general consensus that adequacy of housing, along with related low socioeconomic status is one of the most powerful factors affecting health and housing status. Numerous studies have documented the fact that individuals with poor or no housing use hospital emergency rooms as their point of contact with the medical system and tend to have longer hospital stays. It has also been found in previous studies that providing individuals with safe, secure, affordable housing linked to supports has a positive impact both on mental health, physical health and individual well-being and stability.

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) has undertaken a number of studies to determine the impacts on emergency room visits and hospital stays when individuals with a serious and persistent mental illness are provided with supported housing.

A study completed in 2002 looked at the impact of supported housing on 96 individuals in Vancouver. The study examined the number of days in hospital in the year prior to being in supported housing and the year following. The findings showed while there was no significant change in the overall number of admissions into hospital; there was a considerable overall reduction (36%) in the length of stay from almost 4 days per admission prior to supported housing to under 2.5 days in the year after. The total reduction in bed days in hospital was 251 days. There was a significant reduction (34%) in the number of admissions related to mental health and an increase (18%) in admissions related to physical health. It is believed that the increase in admissions for health reasons relates to better health care and appropriate health interventions.

A study completed in January 2006 studied 263 individuals across the VCH who entered mental health supported housing in 2003 and 2004. The study compared their emergency room visits and hospital bed use in the one-year prior to entry to supported housing and one year after. The results support both the previous local studies and those done in other jurisdictions. The number of emergency room visits was reduced by 38 visits from 118 in the 1-year pre-supported housing entry to 80 in the year post- supported housing – a reduction of 32%. The hospital bed days were reduced from 2,927 to 1,270 days – a reduction of 1,657 days or 56.6 %. The reduction in bed days represented a 52% reduction (1,323 days) related to psychiatric problems and 86% (344 days) related to medical issues. There were 52 less hospital admissions and the average length of stay was reduced from 21.8 days to 15.5 days .The overall reduced utilization represented an annual decreased hospital bed use of 4.5 hospital beds.

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