

Introduction

Introduction – Supportive Services Program Manual

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA, or the Agency) initiated its Supportive Services Program (SSP) in subsidized housing for elderly residents in 1988. The Agency's efforts were funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as part of an initiative to demonstrate that services could be provided efficiently and appropriately to allow older residents to age in place and delay institutionalization. The program that resulted from this initiative is called the Senior Supportive Services Program (Senior SSP).

Since 1988, this Senior Supportive Services Program has grown to include 79 participating Section 8 elderly sites across the Commonwealth that offers a combination of services and activities for their residents. These 79 sites have a signed Participation Agreement with the Agency agreeing to provide services for residents.

In addition to the Section 8 elderly sites, there are many other developments within the Agency's portfolio that provide services for residents including developments funded through the Agency's PennHOMES and Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs.

In 1991, the Board of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency established the Family Supportive Services Program (FSSP) in PHFA-financed properties to enhance the ability of low-income families to meet their lease obligations and to improve their quality of life.

The Supportive Services Program goals are to:

- Preserve the Agency's affordable housing stock for low-income populations.
- Increase the ability of residents to uphold their lease obligations, such as paying rent on time, taking proper care of the unit, and ensuring quiet enjoyment of the property for all residents and surrounding neighbors.
- Promote effective partnerships between housing providers, property managers, and service providers to improve a development's operating costs over time, benefiting future residents, and ultimately, the community at large.
- Support efforts and services that enhance a resident's quality of life, build healthy communities, and stabilize families in need.
- Enhance the quality of life of elderly residents, enabling them to age in place and maintain their independent lifestyle.

The Housing Services Department of PHFA (the Department) is charged with monitoring sites for program compliance and providing technical assistance in order to improve and enhance services to residents. This Program Manual is intended to assist owners, managers, service providers, and developers of Agency-financed housing. It outlines Supportive Services Program requirements and provides guidelines for program development and enhancement.

In this manual, general principles delineated in the “Introduction” and “Developing a Supportive Services Program” chapters apply to both existing and proposed developments, regardless of type of financing. The subsequent chapters describe requirements for specific supportive services programs. At the end of each chapter there are also sample tools that may be modified in response to the particular conditions of your housing development.

Program Philosophy

Supportive services, or service enriched housing, involve the integration of a social service system into the ongoing operation and management of low-to-moderate income housing.

The resulting supportive environment contributes to a stable resident population and decreased management costs. Secondary benefits include improved maintenance within apartments, improved relations between management and residents, and increased resident satisfaction. These benefits have resulted in protection of property values through improved unit maintenance, a more stable resident population, and the increased marketability of service enriched housing.

The Agency’s SSP relies on three basic principles:

- Voluntary participation – Services are not mandated, nor are they bundled or packaged in such a way to force residents to purchase or accept services they do not want.
- Universal availability – Services are available to all residents without eligibility requirements.
- Resident input – The services provided and the service delivery method are determined, in part, by resident needs and interests.

Because sites are encouraged to tailor services to the specific needs and interests of the resident population, supportive services programs may vary considerably between sites and over time. However, most resident needs and interests involve the following broad service categories:

Senior Developments	Family Developments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities, education, and recreational opportunities • Health services and screening • Housekeeping and errands • Nutrition • Service Coordination • Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities, education, and recreational opportunities for adults and youth • Job training and development • Life skills, including household maintenance, parenting, and budgeting • Resident organizing and leadership opportunities • Service Coordination • Community outreach and building

Training and Technical Assistance

One of the Housing Services Department's primary functions is to act as a catalyst for information exchange. The Department edits a periodic newsletter, *Service Connections*, and a monthly electronic news service, *Quick Connections*. An electronic Bulletin Board has also been established to benefit staff of service enriched housing.

In addition to the information services offered, the Department coordinates a variety of training and instructional sessions for service and housing professionals.

1. Objectives

The objectives of the SSP training programs are:

- To improve the ability of on-site service staff and managers to provide appropriate, high quality supportive services for residents of their properties.
- To enhance access to community and regional services and programs.
- To create a network of housing professionals able to assist each other in their quest to provide service-enriched housing.

2. Training Formats

The Department provides training in three different formats each year. Together with its site monitoring process, the Department's conference, workshops, and forums allow for technical assistance ranging from individual consultation to a state-wide conference with several hundred in attendance.

- The annual Housing Services Conference allows participants to choose from a wide variety of topics and multiple training tracks, including issues impacting property and site managers and service providers for both senior and family properties.
- Regional Professional Development Workshops are daylong sessions that allow a single aspect of service-enriched housing to be examined intensely.
- Supportive Services Forums are opportunities for staff from within a common geographic region to develop relationships with each other, exchange information, and learn about service options and developments in their area.

3. Mentoring Opportunities

The Housing Services Department encourages the development of mentoring relationships to assist new on-site supportive services staff in their role as service coordinators. The Agency's Housing Services Representatives can provide information and help link new service coordinators with experienced professionals in their geographic region.