

Safe Havens:

*A briefing on the program's critical role
in saving lives and ending homelessness*

November 8, 2021

Hosted by:

Representative Sabadosa, Representative Malia, and Senator Comerford

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**Representative Sabadosa
1st Hampshire**

**Representative Malia
11th Suffolk**

**Senator Comerford
Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester**

Organizational co-sponsors:

Eliot



MAMH

Massachusetts Association
for Mental Health



Pine Street Inn
Ending Homelessness



Housing Subcommittee of the State Mental Health Planning Council

Western
Massachusetts
network to end

homelessness



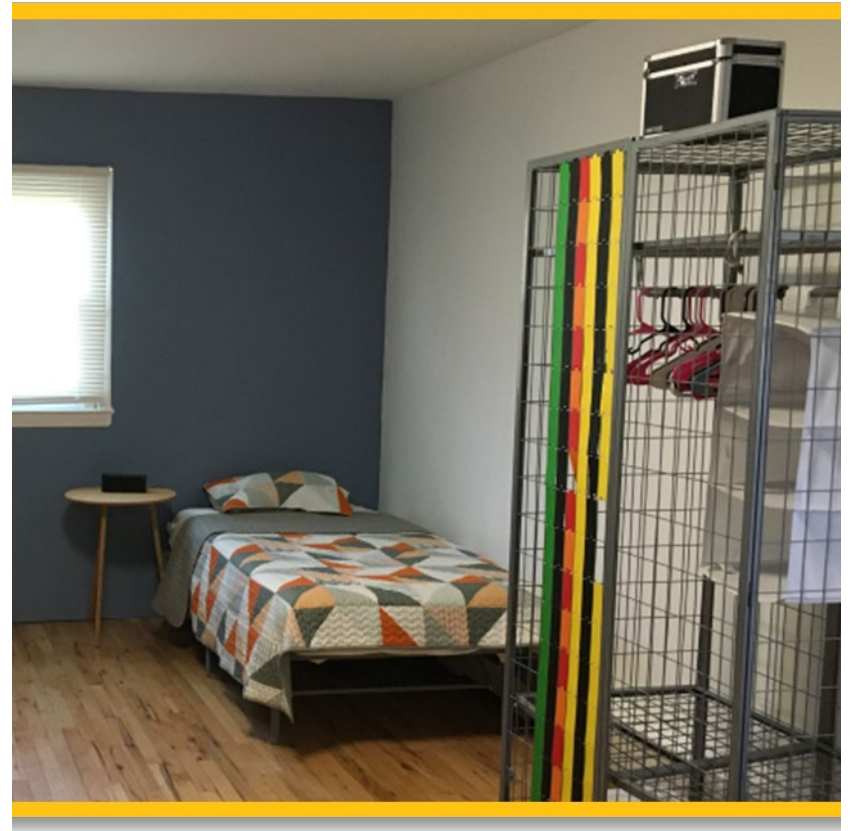
What are Safe Havens?

- Safe Havens are a **Housing First, supportive housing model** that provide an alternative to shelter placement.
- They are designed to serve hard-to-reach individuals who are chronically unhoused and often have disabling mental health and substance use conditions.
- These individuals are not well served by the shelter system, often due to past histories of trauma and safety concerns.
- **No treatment demands are placed on Safe Haven clients**, but individuals are expected to eventually transition to permanent housing and engage or reengage in treatment.



What are Safe Havens?

- Programs include private rooms, bedding, and meals, and provide hygiene products.
- Programs also provide services including:
 1. Help in securing benefits;
 2. Assistance completing housing applications and creating a housing plan;
 3. Self help groups, medication management, and linkages to appropriate mental health and substance use programs;
 4. Social supports and community re-entry skills; and
 5. Crisis intervention services, as needed.



- The average length of stay for individuals in Safe Haven programs is 24 months or less.

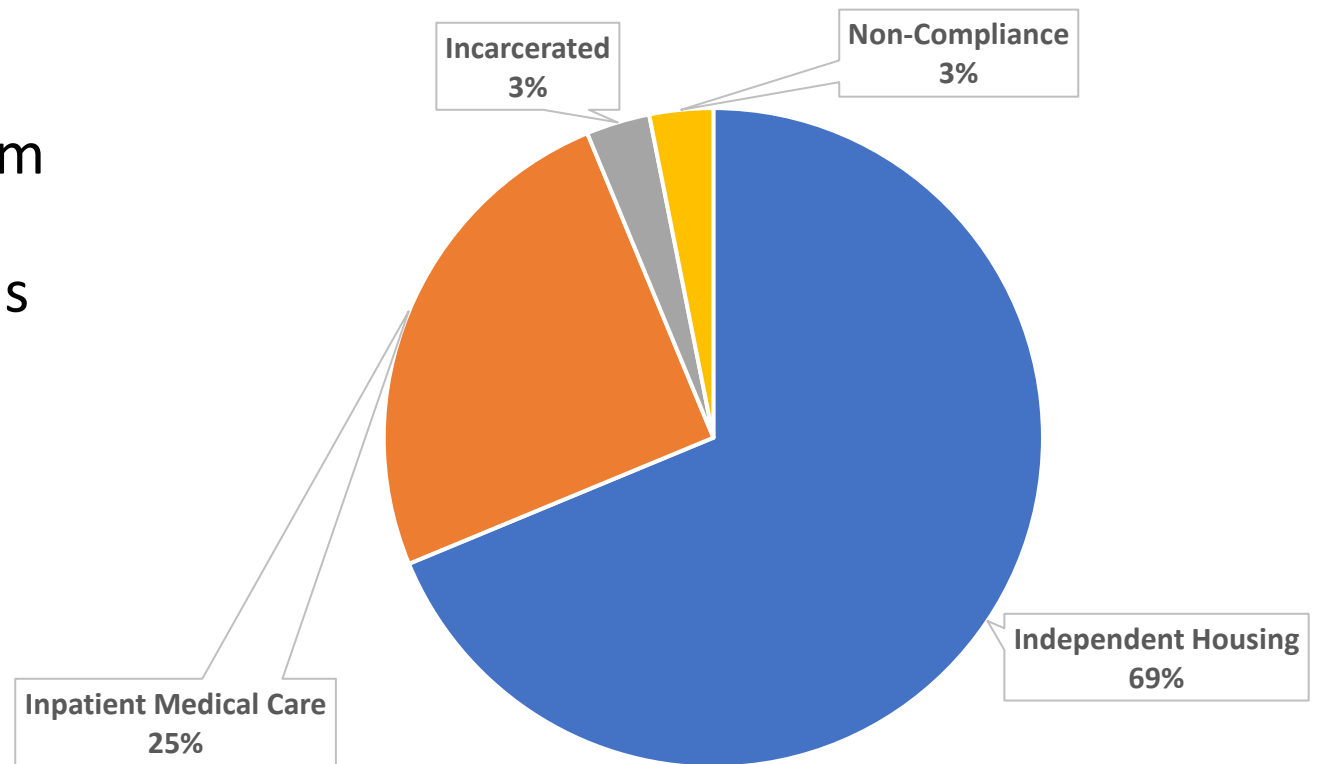
Individuals Served by Safe Havens Programs

- Programs like Safe Havens are essential, enabling Outreach staff to serve individuals who are **chronically unhoused with significant behavioral health conditions**.
- These individuals are among the highest users of EDs, hospital beds, and emergency medical services, and have high rates of criminal justice involvement.
- Safe Havens are funded through the Department of Mental Health (DMH) but are not limited to DMH clients. Homeless Outreach and Engagement has always been a critical component of DMH services.
- Safe Havens provide a location to transition individuals from the streets, continue engagement, and facilitate access to services in a safe, non-threatening environment.



Safe Havens Success Stories

- Since 2016, the Safe Havens program in Westfield has served 38 people. Twenty-two (22) of these individuals have transitioned to independent housing, and only one (1) was discharged for non-compliance.



Tammy Isaacs

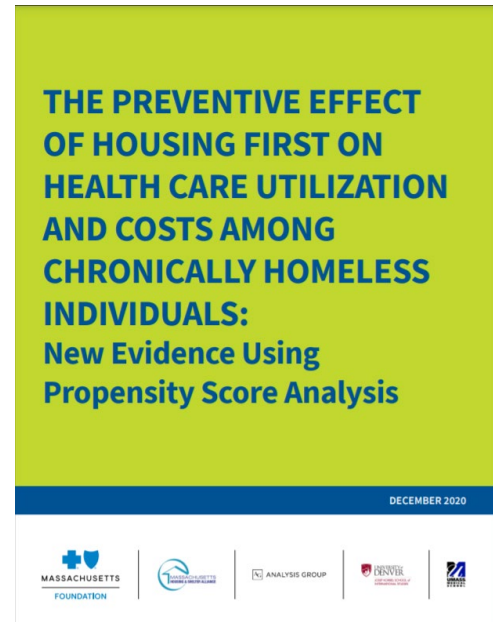
- Tammy Isaacs was homeless and sleeping outside for three years before she was referred to the Safe Haven in Westfield. The staff are helping her find the right apartment and support so that she can be successful in the community.
- “The Safe Haven has been a lifesaver for me.. I had never been welcomed like that before, not anywhere. The staff are tremendous, I love them. Being with Safe Haven and working with the staff has calmed me down so I'm not feeling like I have to be out on the street homeless. Instead, it feels like home. It feels like family.”



Safe Havens Success Stories

Findings from a 2020 study commissioned by the BCBSMA Foundation:

- Individuals enrolled in permanent supportive housing programs in Massachusetts have significantly lower total per-person per-year MassHealth costs compared to a similar group of chronically homeless individuals.
- Individuals enrolled in permanent supportive housing received more mental health services. However, the cost of higher utilization of mental health services was more than offset by the savings from lower utilization of inpatient and emergency department services, relative to a similar group of chronically homeless individuals.
- The study suggests that the preventive effect of permanent supportive housing may lead to a reduction in overall health care utilization and costs.



Current Safe Havens Programs (as of FY21)

Region	Programs	Bed Capacity
Greater Boston	7	60
Central Massachusetts	1	9
Western Massachusetts	1	7
Totals	9	76

- In FY21, DMH contracted with nine (9) programs with a state-wide capacity of seventy-six (76) beds.

- The Legislature invested additional dollars during the FY22 budget process so that DMH could procure more programs.
- DMH is currently soliciting bids for three additional programs – one in Western Mass, one in the Northeast, and one in the Southeast.

Increased Need for Safe Havens Programs

- In 2020, there were 1,459 adults (without children) who were chronically homeless in Massachusetts (HUD, Continuum of Care, 2020).
- The pandemic exacerbated the needs of many vulnerable populations because of the closure of shelter beds and an increased need for mental health and addiction treatment services.
- Expanding access to Safe Havens programs is vital to serve these individuals and offer them a pathway to supportive housing and treatment.
- DMH is committed to expanding these programs across the Commonwealth.
- Safe Havens programs are predominantly located in the greater Boston area today.
- **More funding is needed to achieve regional equity and meet need.**

The Massachusetts Association for Mental Health (MAMH) team is available for additional questions and to serve as a resource on the Safe Haven Program:

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