

MN Housing Stability Coalition: Resident Perspectives on Distressed Multifamily Properties

December 2024

Methodology

- We held **4 resident focus groups**:
 - 44 racially diverse individuals (23 men, 21 women)
 - Living in 8 properties operated by affordable housing organizations
 - Average tenure in current home approximately 6.5 years
- Next, we held **4 conversations with housing providers** to reflect on resident experiences:
 - 14 senior management and executive leaders
 - 10 affordable housing providers represented
- This report is a summary of their **lived experiences**.

Key Takeaway

The key takeaway from resident engagement is that our **policy choices are demanding much more** of our nonprofit housing providers than was previously required, but **funding levels have not increased to cover the additional costs incurred**. The result is that organizations are being handed “a recipe for failure” in which they cannot possibly deliver well.

It has become clear that residents are paying the price.

Coordinated Entry

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Housing First Approach

Coordinated Entry is an approach required by the US Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) (and multiple other entities) for Continuums of Care, a HUD program that aims to promote community-wide efforts to end homelessness. Coordinated Entry prioritizes support for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness by level of demonstrated vulnerability.

Central to this approach is a **commitment not to screen people out of eligibility for housing assistance because of perceived barriers**, including, but not limited to drug or alcohol use and criminal background. Coordinated Entry is **Housing First oriented, meaning people are housed quickly, without preconditions or program participation requirements**. Housing providers may offer a variety of **voluntary services** to promote housing stability and wellbeing, following placement in a home.

Four Primary Themes

- Residents feel increasingly unsafe in and around their buildings, citing drug use and addiction as a primary contributing factor to crime and threatening behavior
- Inflation, paired with stagnant wages and public benefits, make it harder for residents to pay rent, which in turn impacts housing providers
- Disruptive behavior from other residents, many of whom appear not to be receiving services, fosters a belief that there is no or minimal accountability
- High staff turnover has resulted in a lack of relationship between residents and property management, which undermines trust and makes it harder for residents to navigate social support systems

Safety & Security

Residents feel increasingly unsafe in and around their buildings, citing drug use and addiction as a primary contributing factor to crime and threatening behavior

In Their Words: Safety & Security

“When I moved in, [mine] was a pretty quiet building—respectful people and whatnot. Now we get a lot more, and I know that everyone deserves a home, but we’ve got a lot of drug addicts who bring their homeless friends in, sleeping in the hallways, defecating in the stairwells, trash[ing] our building. And that’s going on in the neighborhood, as well...”

- Resident focus group participant

“I’ve had city councilors asking me what I’m going to do about security [and crime]. And, it’s like, that is not my job; I do not have a badge.”

– Nonprofit housing provider

Inflation & Rent Payments

Inflation, paired with stagnant wages and public benefits, make it harder for residents to pay rent, which in turn impacts housing providers

In Their Words: Inflation & Rent Payments

“Rent is still too high. Groceries are still too expensive; can’t afford to eat healthy. Food shelves are off the bus line, so they are not available.”

- Resident focus group participant

“[It’s] very hard to run [my] household on such [a] small amount of money. Everything is so expensive. After rent and phone, I have \$100 [a month] for necessities.”

- Resident focus group participant

Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior from other residents, many of whom appear not to be receiving services, fosters a belief that there is no or minimal accountability

In Their Words: Disruptive Behavior

“The change started around 2018, when the state’s focus kind of switched from sobriety and getting help, to Housing First – just getting people off the streets in the aftermath of COVID. Once the policies changed, it kind of trickled down...”

- Resident focus group participant

“[There are] a lot of people that are struggling with their addiction because of new people that moved in; they found it easier to crawl back into their old ways because now we have people in our building that are not only using, but selling. When it’s accessible, people tend to say ‘you know everybody else is doing it’.”

- Resident focus group participant

“There’s a number of folks that are struggling with their addiction, and [sobriety] is exactly what they want for themselves, but they need a plan to get there. [Public funders and government agencies] haven’t created a system that supports people coming out of a really dark place of [homelessness and addiction]...”

– Nonprofit housing provider reflecting on resident experiences

“The system is asking the end of the line operator of housing services provider to do way more and ... acuity is through the roof, mental health. We’re being asked with the same amount or less resource to deal with acuity that outstrips our capacity, but also in some cases our talent.”

– Nonprofit housing provider reflecting on resident experiences

Staff Turnover & Relationships

High staff turnover has resulted in a lack of relationship between residents and property management, which undermines trust and makes it harder for residents to navigate social support systems

In Their Words: Staff Turnover & Relationships

“I’ve noticed there’s been a lot of turnover in the workplace because a lot of people have decided to get jobs where they don’t have to deal with the stress that has been coming in since the state policies have changed.”

- Resident focus group participant

“Tenants have spoken loud and clear. They have a strong desire for community and the manifestation of some of the challenges of managing a distressed building undermines that.”

- Nonprofit housing provider reflecting on resident experiences

“This is the lived experience of the systems being inadequate to what they've been asked to do and support.”

– Nonprofit housing provider reflecting on resident experiences

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