

# HOUSING FIRST WORKS:

## Permanent Supportive Housing Evaluation Report Findings



MARCH 2021

Report prepared by Public Sector Consultants on behalf of Community Rebuilders

Full report available at [communityrebuilders.org/PSHreport/](https://communityrebuilders.org/PSHreport/)

Funding for the full evaluation was provided by an Invest Health grant through Spectrum Health Healthier Communities.

**Community Rebuilders aims to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring.** Many of our housing programs are based on the permanent supportive housing (PSH) model which offers long-term rental assistance and support services.

**Homelessness is first and foremost a housing crisis and can be addressed through the provision of safe and affordable housing.** That's why we use a Housing First approach. We are "consumer ready" – participants do not have to address other problems, such as mental health issues, or complete treatment services prior to being housed. Sobriety and criminal history do not prevent participants from successfully connecting to housing.

This evaluation follows **47 households** in Kent County served by Community Rebuilders PSH programs. This number is a small sample of the many individuals and families we work with.

Since accessing Community Rebuilders services, **all 47 households** have obtained stable, safe, affordable housing.



Heads of evaluation households are...



Median age  
**51**



### HOMELESSNESS IS NOT PROPORTIONATE

More than one third of people experiencing homelessness in Kent county are Black or African American – though only 10% of the Kent County population identifies as Black or African American.

Participating households had:

- History of homelessness
- Limited incomes
- One or more serious physical or mental disability

**53%**

had experienced **four or more** episodes of homelessness

**\$733**

was the median **monthly income**

**88%**

were **chronically homeless** at program entry

**30%**

had **three or more** disabilities

# Permanent Supportive Housing Solutions

We seek to find permanent housing for individuals and families and keep them housed long-term. This provides households a stable platform that leads to other gains in quality of life – improvements in health, income, employment and more.

## 1. Promoting Housing Stability

When an individual or family is referred for services, we help them secure safe and permanent housing as quickly as possible. Households experiencing chronic homelessness are identified through a coordinated entry process that ensures those with the greatest level of need are given priority access. Households have self-determination to select a unit that fits their needs in the private rental market.

Across all Community Rebuilders programs, **97.6% of households remained in PSH or exited from the PSH program into permanent housing.**

### QUALITY & SAFETY

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has established criteria for safe, decent and sanitary housing. Every PSH unit must meet these criteria before a household moves in as part of annual reinspection.

93% of evaluation survey respondents **strongly agreed or agreed** that the PSH program helped them obtain such housing of their choosing.

### AFFORDABILITY

Housing is considered affordable when an individual or family spends no more than 30% of their income on housing. Gross monthly rent of PSH units leased by evaluation households aligns with surrounding areas – indicating that PSH units are of standard quality.

Tenet portion of monthly rent for evaluation households was a **median of \$88.**

#### MEDIAN GROSS MONTHLY RENT

City of Grand Rapids  
**\$925**

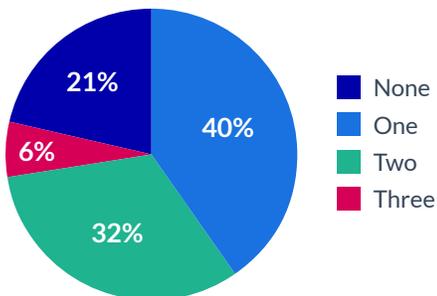
Kent County  
**\$899**

Evaluation household units  
**\$817**

## 2. Connecting Households to Supportive Services

PSH programs help households make use of community-based resources such as healthcare, food assistance and employment. Services are provided by agency partners to help households achieve and maintain housing stability. They are voluntary to obtain housing – however, most households choose to take part.

### NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL SERVICES ACCESSED



### RATES OF ACCESS



**95%**  
Food assistance



**27%**  
Case management



**14%**  
Mental healthcare

**3-5%**  
accessed:

- Healthcare
- Dental care
- Workforce development
- ELS
- Family services
- Child education assistance



**Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is a proven solution to dissolve homelessness.** Community Rebuilders is a HUD Best Practices Award recipient, and our approach has served as a model for communities across the country.

# Improvements in Household Wellbeing

## BY THE NUMBERS

Community Rebuilders uses the LifeWorks survey to measure indicators of wellbeing over time. Heads of households rate their circumstances across several domains on a scale of 1 (“in crisis”) to 5 (“empowered”) – once during program entry and again after being housed or another significant life change.

### ✓ Increased income

Ensure that households receive all the benefit income for which they are eligible

**38%**

of households had positive change in monthly income

Households were more likely to receive income from SSI/SSDI at follow up compared to program entry

SSI 40% ➔ **47% receiving**

SSDI 19% ➔ **23% receiving**

#### LIFEWORKS (AVERAGE RESPONSES)

	On entry	Follow up
Employment status	1.48	<b>2.03</b>

NOTE: We aim to help participants obtain employment whenever possible, but this is not a primary focus given participants' disabilities.

### ✓ Improved health and access to healthcare

Promote good physical and mental health that comes with access to having a safe and affordable place to live

**53%**

of households reported improvement in disabilities and physical health

**28%**

of households experienced improvement in mental health

**51%**

of households improved their healthcare coverage

#### LIFEWORKS (AVERAGE RESPONSES)

	On entry	Follow up
Disabilities & physical health	3.06	<b>3.68</b>
Mental health	3.94	<b>4.08</b>
Substance use	4.74	<b>4.87</b>
Health insurance	4.22	<b>4.86</b>

### ✓ Increased access to food and transportation

Help households obtain quality food and affordable, satisfactory transportation – both are key social determinants of health

**51%**

of households improved their access to food and means to prepare it

**50%**

of households improved their access to transportation

#### LIFEWORKS (AVERAGE RESPONSES)

	On entry	Follow up
Food	2.46	<b>3.22</b>
Transportation	3.12	<b>3.85</b>

### ✓ Greater overall wellbeing and high customer satisfaction

All LifeWorks survey scores are added together and averaged to obtain an overall score of household wellbeing

#### LIFEWORKS (AVERAGE RESPONSES)

	On entry	Follow up
Overall	3.51	<b>4.09</b>

“I am secure in my housing. I know that I can call and get resources. I can communicate better and can share my thoughts when I want to. I am a lot better mentally and I am more settled.”

PSH PARTICIPANT