



**Collaborative(s):** Chronic Collaborative

**Driver:** Accelerating Housing Placements / Preventing Long-Term Homelessness / Housing Retention

**Strategy:** Gather and Target Housing Resources

**Bright Spot(s):** The Gulfport / Gulf Coast CoC works in tandem with local Community Mental Health Centers to provide mental health care and housing stabilization services to chronically homeless individuals and formerly homeless individuals with disabilities.

**Community Name:** Gulfport / Gulf Coast CoC, MS

**Contact(s):**

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**Problem You are Trying to Solve:** Without the appropriate level of mental health and housing stabilization services, formerly chronically homeless individuals can fall out of housing.

**Description of the Bright Spot for this Change Idea (Bottom Line Up Front):** The Gulfport / Gulf Coast CoC works in tandem with local Community Mental Health Centers to provide mental health care and housing stabilization services to chronically homeless individuals. The original intent of this work was to address the gap in the care of individuals with mental disabilities who transitioned from institutional to community-based mental health care. The initiative has become more robust over time, and now plays a key role in both addressing and preventing chronic homelessness in the community.

**Implementation Process:**

As Gulfport / Gulf Coast CoC works to sustain functional zero for its veteran population and reduce the number of veterans actively experiencing homelessness, the community is also highly involved in a push to end chronic homelessness. The Gulf Coast initiative to end chronic homelessness benefits from a strong partnership with area Community Mental Health centers and other partners to provide mental health care, house chronically homeless individuals, and provide housing

stabilization support to housed individuals. This initiative is still in its early stages, but provides a template model and implementation framework that other communities working to end chronic homelessness may find useful. Learning as they went, the Gulf Coast team realized that housing stabilization support that worked separately but in cooperation with mental health treatment was a key component to housing chronically homeless individuals and ensuring their long-term housing stability. The Gulf Coast team is testing this innovative model for working with chronically homeless individuals by ensuring that all work is aligned and specific in terms of what each provider's role is as the individual is settling into housing. Staff serving individuals through this work target individuals who previously cycled in and out of hospitals, and those moving from institutional care to community based care but may need extra support in doing so. While the partnership with area Community Mental Health Centers supported by Olmstead funding is still in its early stages and does not yet have any final results, Gulf Coast did notice a period of accelerated chronic housing placements over the spring and summer of 2016 (see chart below).

#### **Resources Needed for Implementation:**

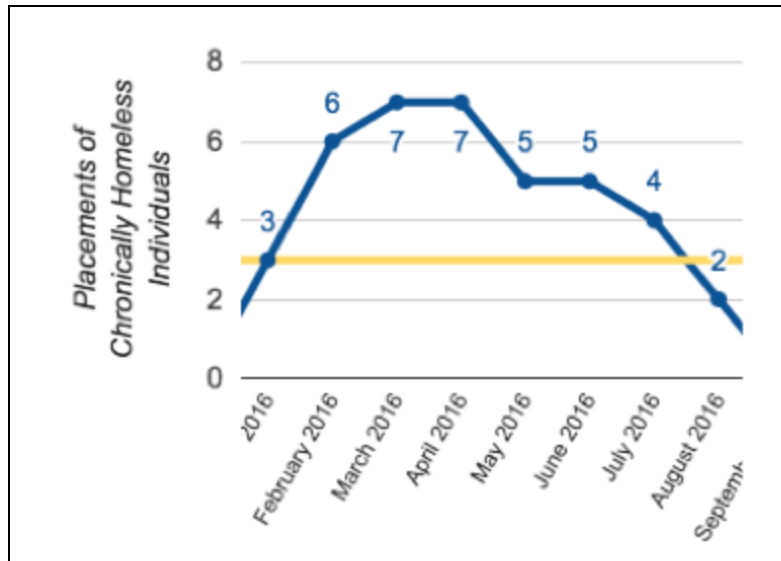
This Bright Spot originated from the Mississippi Olmstead legal case, which meant there was some urgency at the state level to address issues of individuals with mental disabilities. At the beginning of implementation, the State legislature allocated funds to support local landlords and the community mental health system. While it was always thought was that CoC partners would be a supportive piece of the puzzle, it became clear that a key piece of funding implementation was missing. The Gulf Coast team advocated to restructure the funding so that dollars would also flow through the CoC. This allowed the CoC to provide rental assistance and housing stabilization similar to how ESG funding is structured, but for a longer length of time, allowing those who are living with mental illness more time to work towards recovery and stay stably housed. Under the current implementation structure, rental assistance is offered as a bridge from homelessness for up to a year. For those who need long-term help, the Gulf Coast team works closely with housing authorities to to end the year-long bridge resources as a replacement mainstream resource begins (such as a long-term voucher).

#### **Failing Forward Moments:**

Though the work is still in its early stages, the leadership spearheading this initiative has already made key improvements to the delivery and funding structure of its services. As the Gulf Coast team tested out their collaborative model with the local mental health system, they realized they needed to make sure there were also resources dedicated to housing stabilization. They tweaked the program to add housing stabilization staff that work in cooperation with, but separate from the mental health treatment delivered at the Community Mental Health Centers. As the model continues, they continue to make improvements and enhancements to better serve chronically homeless (and formerly homeless) disabled individuals.

**Measures, Outcomes and Evidence of Effectiveness:**

CoC collaboration with Community Mental Health Centers and housing stabilization staff allowed Gulf Coast to accelerate their housing placement rate of chronically homeless people in 2016:



**Adapting to Other Contexts:**

The Olmstead legal case and subsequent funding is limited to the states and territories directly involved. However, the innovative model of staffing and deep level of collaboration with the community mental health care system that Gulf Coast has crafted as a result of the case may be replicable in other communities nationwide. Though it is still in its pilot phase in Gulf Coast, the concept of partnering mental health care with a housing stability framework - doing what it takes to keep people supported and in housing - may be an important insight for those working to end chronic homelessness.

**Bringing the Leadership Along:**

Gulf Coast partners working to end homelessness found that it was critically important to encourage and support each other through a collaborative, team-style leadership structure. They realized that they were each carrying a piece of the solution to ending homelessness, and that strong leadership in their community really means holding each part of the solution up every step of the way while working together toward the shared aim of ending chronic homelessness.