



Programs Providing Supportive Housing in Rural Eastern Kentucky

Below are two examples of programs successfully providing services to the long-term homeless in rural eastern Kentucky. Program descriptions are written from interviews with key staff members. This is a companion piece to [Rural Supportive Housing: The Kentucky Example](#).

Kentucky River Community Care

Phil Harden, Billie Bolling

“Everything at Kentucky River ties together, and we feel we’ve had great success because of that. Folks seem to want to stay, for the most part, when they have housing. They seem to enjoy the housing, and that makes it a lot easier for us to provide services.”

Kentucky River Community Care (KRCC) is a community mental health center located in the mountains of eastern Kentucky. As described in the profile on [supportive housing in small towns and rural areas](#), most services to homeless persons are provided through mental health and substance use service providers. As the only community mental health center in an eight county region, KRCC is no exception to this typical progression from service provider to supportive housing owner, property manager, and service provider. KRCC has been serving the community for over 25 years and completed its first permanent supportive housing project in 1994. Today KRCC has 41 units of permanent housing for singles and families in four locations, much of it housing the formerly long-term homeless population. The four projects include a 17-unit building, a 16-unit building, and two smaller projects comprised of duplexes

Most KRCC supportive housing referrals come from mental health service providers, perhaps through a therapeutic rehabilitation day program. Once a case manager determines that a client is in need of housing, an application is completed. An application review committee then tries to place the client on the waiting list for the best location given the client’s needs and the location of their friends and family members living in the area. KRCC estimates that at least 80 percent of their clients have lived in the area their entire lives.

KRCC has had difficulty locating suitable sites for construction of supportive housing because many sites lack basic utilities such as sewer and water service. Additionally, sites must be close to the supportive services tenants will need to access, and have accessible transportation. The need for new construction is demonstrated by the waiting lists for each of their supportive housing locations. KRCC expects to begin construction soon on three more duplexes, and continues to be concerned about the lack of affordable housing for the people it serves.

<http://www.krcnet.com>

Hazard Perry County Community Ministries and Hazard Perry County Housing Development Alliance

Gerry Roll, Scott McReynolds

“Have a strong service provider and owner/ manager [collaborative]. It’s difficult for the tenant to understand how you can be their friend and their enemy at the same time.”

and

“Build pretty buildings!”

Like KRCC, Hazard Perry County Community Ministries (CM) and Hazard Perry County Housing Development Alliance (HDA) are located in Hazard, Kentucky. CM got into the field of supportive housing through its work with families. CM provides area residents with early childhood programs, youth programs, assistance accessing health services, and general family support services. CM began developing homeownership and rental housing to meet the needs of their clients, eventually spinning off HDA as a separate organization. Today the two organizations together own three rental supportive housing projects.

CM and HDA get most of their referrals for housing from CM’s emergency shelter, with a few coming from a local spouse abuse shelter. Their most recent collaboration has focused on serving those with the most needs—individuals who have been homeless for the long term. The result is High Street Apartments in the town of Hazard. This 10-unit SRO serves both men and women on the former site of an old burned-down building. Building the project on the site of this local eyesore helped CM gain community support for and awareness of its housing work. There is a demand for more units, but this was the largest number of units feasible on this site, which was one of the very few options available given the lack of flat, buildable land in the area. Typically 80 percent of the units in the building are filled with people with a chronic mental illness, development disability, or substance use, who are also at or below 30 percent AMI.

Tenants at High Street Apartments have had many successes, but not without challenges. One former tenant is now a homeowner (thanks to HDA’s work building affordable homes) and another tenant will move into her own home soon. Other tenants have not been as successful and have been evicted from the housing. While services are voluntary for tenants, the project has experienced challenges and increased evictions related to tenants who have harmful relationships with drugs, especially prescription drugs. CM offers a continuum of housing and service options; evicted tenants often move to CM’s homeless shelter or to a detox facility.

CM and HDA see many advantages to existing as totally separate entities. By having services and ownership/property management separate, they ensure that both the building and the tenants have independent advocates. By focusing only on housing development, HDA has been able to make a diverse contribution to the area’s affordable housing stock, as opposed to just the supportive housing they would have focused on if they were part of CM. Additionally, existing as separate organizations allows each to leverage resources from the other, which is especially helpful when applying for outside funding.

<http://www.hpccm.org>

<http://www.housingdevelopmentalliance.org/>