



## Supportive Housing Research FAQs: How Effective Are Employment Services in Supportive Housing?

The National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients (NSHAPC), conducted in 1996, found that homeless individuals have low rates of employment and earnings. Only 20% of the clients surveyed were employed in jobs that had lasted or were expected to last more than three months, while another 27% were in less stable employment situations including temporary work and day labor.<sup>1</sup> For obvious reasons, homelessness is a barrier to steady employment. Once people find permanent housing, however, steady employment is a necessary component for achieving greater autonomy and a better quality of life.

The *Next Step: Jobs Initiative* was designed to promote employment among supportive housing residents. Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the project provided intensive employment services to 42 supportive housing projects in Chicago, New York, and the San Francisco Bay Area from 1996 to 2000. These projects served different segments of the homeless population, including those with severe mental illness, substance abuse problems, and physical disabilities. Abt Associates conducted a cost effectiveness study in nine of these sites, and found the following:<sup>2</sup>

**FINDING: Supportive housing residents participated in a wide variety of vocational services through the *Next Step: Jobs Initiative*.**

A majority of the supportive housing residents participated in services. Available services included prevocational activities such as GED preparations classes and ESL training, job development and placement, and both in-house and off-site employment and training opportunities. On average, 62% of the residents participated in some employment activity, 69% in job development and placement, 26% in on-site employment, 22% in on-site training, 24% in off-site employment and training, and 57% in training job retention activities.

**FINDING: The initiative increased earnings among supportive housing residents, but decreased income from transfer payments, including SSI, SSDI, general assistance, and VA benefits.**

The evaluators tracked income from earnings and public benefits on a quarterly basis for two years. They found that the *Next Step: Jobs* projects had a positive impact on earnings of between 12-22%. However, in part because of increased earnings, residents were receiving less of their income from public sources. Based on their analysis, income from SSI and SSDI decreased by 12-27% and income from general assistance and veterans benefits decreased by 25-36%.

**FINDING: Estimating over a five-year period, the initiative was found to be cost effective from the perspectives of residents and government.**

For supportive housing residents, the value of the program was estimated to be somewhere between \$1,471 and \$3,262 over five years, and the government saved somewhere between \$718 to \$1,752 per resident.

<sup>1</sup> Martha Burt, Laudan Y. Aron, Edgar Lee, and Jesse Valente, *Helping America's Homeless: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing?* (Washington DC: The Urban Institute Press, 2001), 76-7.

<sup>2</sup> David A. Long and Jean M. Amendolia, *Next Step: Jobs, Promoting Employment for Homeless People*. (Oakland, CA: Corporation for Supportive Housing, 2003).