

To: Doris Estremera, Director, SMC MHSA
Members of the MHSARC Commission

The parents of **Solutions for Supportive Homes** (www.s4sh.org) wish to thank the Housing Task Force and the FSP Task Force work groups - representing families, clients, and providers - for their recommendations for improvements in these two areas.

And we are pleased that 34 MHSA units have already been allocated to affordable housing developers for projected completion by 2024-2025.

We agree we must meet the tremendous need for supportive homes for those who are currently unhoused. At the same time, we must call attention to a less visible but no less vulnerable population of adults living with mental health challenges: those who are being cared for by aging parents and are at *imminent risk* of homelessness when their family caregivers die. Our 2019 NAMI survey revealed 54 families who said they do not have sufficient resources to ensure the loved one they've been supporting can successfully survive in the community when they are gone. We believe there are many more. But unfortunately, while our county is careful to count the unhoused biennially to inform intelligent planning, there is no definition or count of those at imminent risk.

Steps to prevent these "invisibles" from adding to our county's homelessness burden would be:

1. Include those who are at *imminent risk of homelessness* in official counts and projections of supportive housing needs.
2. Allow those at *imminent risk of homelessness* to be eligible to apply for MHSA housing units.
3. Include families in needs assessments, goals, and service implementation for their children.
4. Assist aging parents in transitioning their adult children into supportive homes while they are still able.

The FSP Task Force and the Housing Task Force discussed the fact that **families are in need of services along with their adult children**. Families are on the front lines of care and have the day-to-day insight into needs that the clients may not recognize themselves due to their illness. Parent participation with service providers in assessing needs, setting goals, and implementing service plans is vital to the success of their children's treatment. And as aging mothers and fathers find themselves with diminished capacity, they need help, as their loved ones will have to build more independent living skills and look to someone outside of their family for their support. **Even within the constraints of HIPAA, we believe that we need to - and that we can - value and acknowledge the support that families are providing.**

As one observer reflected recently, "often the main difference between that homeless guy on the street and my friend's son is ... a mother. And when that mother dies, what you get is ... another homeless guy on the street."

We thank you for your continued diligence and partnership in our ongoing work to build the comprehensive system of mental health and mental illness care we all envision.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Shepard
President
Solutions for Supportive Homes

List of Parents and Families who wanted their voices heard:

Joan Dower	Diane Warner
Emily Chandler	Kathy Gilbert
Suzanne Moore	Melinda Henning
Jem Azucena	Joe Lanam
Nancy Gittleman	Leanna Harper
Karina Marwan	Mary Beau
Neil Hersh, PhD	Helene Zimmerman
Karen Shea	Rachel Day
Steve Beck	Ammi Rostin
Dorothy Christian	Scott Anderson
Linder Allen	