

# Executive Summary

This report addresses challenges faced by transition-age youth and young adults with mental health conditions as they try to find and maintain stable housing. This document was written specifically for program designers, administrators, and policy-makers, and others who are planning to develop or modify housing supports that are available to young adults. It may also be of interest to advocates and young people working to improve housing policy and program options for young people. The document is grounded in two critical considerations: 1) the current political and economic conditions that affect the availability of affordable housing also restrict the availability of living wage employment for young people and 2) information about the needs and preferences of youth and young adults with mental health conditions regarding how and where they live, spoken in their own voices.

Much of the research and commentary available about housing represents the experience of service providers with adults. The term “permanent and stable” when applied to housing means one thing to adults and has a different meaning for young people. A successful housing outcome for young adults may be six months or a year in length. There is no way to know what a successful housing outcome is without listening to the preferences of young people and involving them in the discussion. In this report, we highlight the thoughts of young adults who have mental health disorders or who have been in out-of-home care whenever possible.

After a brief introduction, the report provides a brief analysis of social, political, and economic issues that affect many young people as they search for independent housing. The third section of the report summarizes issues gleaned from first-hand accounts from young people with identified mental health conditions and interviews with youth who have been in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and youth who are or have been homeless. Section four examines the major housing options that are in use today and reviews research and evaluation results that are available about each option. Three options are highlighted as particularly relevant for young people: Transitional Living Programs, Host Homes, and Supported Housing. These three options demonstrate a range of structure, supervision, and housing readiness which is optimal for serving the widely ranging needs of young adults. Section four also includes a discussion of design issues relevant to all program options such as ways to fund rent supplements for participants. In the concluding section we provide discussion and recommendations about next steps in policy, programming, and research.