

There are ways to retain housing when someone is hospitalized

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Robert Frost said it well in his poem, "Death of the Hired Man." "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, They have to take you in."

Today people often lose their homes because they need to be hospitalized. The very solution to one problem creates another major problem. But this doesn't have to happen anymore. When people enter a hospital, their incomes often follow them to pay for the hospitalization, leaving little to cover the costs of maintaining their homes in the community. There are now two methods to pay for housing while people are hospitalized.

The first way, often not understood by care coordinators or consumers, is the federal policy to pay rent during medical and psychiatric crisis. This policy applies to all Section 8 and Low Income Public Housing, can call for recalculating hospitalized people's incomes. In federal housing subsidy programs, renters usually pay 30 percent of their incomes toward their housing. Then their incomes are used to pay for the hospitalization, they have less

or often no money left. Thirty percent of zero is zero.

Housing agencies are often not told that people have been hospitalized and, therefore, do not know to recalculate the income. Sometimes they need to be reminded that recalculation is mandated under these federal programs and is the responsibility of the housing agency.

The second way to pay for housing when people are hospitalized is the state-funded Crisis Housing Assistance Program that began late in 1995. This program is available to those for whom the above federal program does not apply. An individual is eligible for Crisis Housing Assistance if s/he 1) is not on a federal subsidy program; 2) has a serious and persistent mental illness; 3) has a low or moderate income by federal standards; 4) is expected to be hospitalized for less than 90 days; 5) has no other way to pay for housing; and 6) needs assistance in retaining current housing. This program applies to people who rent, own, have lot payments for mobile homes or who are paying in any way for their

own permanent and community-based housing.

The Minnesota Housing Partnership is under contract with the Mental Health Division to process requests and usually is able to make payments within a week.

Retaining housing for people who are hospitalized during mental health crises is not only cost-effective – it also reduced anxiety about losing one's home and having to start over.

If you would like additional information, please call Gary Travis at 651-431-2252; email: gary.m.travis@state.mn.us