

SAN DIEGO COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mental Illness Stigma and Housing Discrimination Reduction Campaign

TRACKING SURVEY

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION: Home is where recovery begins. The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) launched *Housing Matters*, a countywide campaign to reduce the stigma and discrimination around homelessness and mental illness, and increase awareness, understanding and backing for supportive housing as a solution to these related issues. Opposition to supportive housing is usually based on inaccurate information and misperceptions. Experience with existing units shows that fears about how supportive housing will change a neighborhood are unfounded. Therefore, a major goal of the campaign was to increase both the familiarity with the term “supportive housing” and specifically what this term meant.

Supportive housing provides permanent housing units for people with psychiatric disabilities who have previously been homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. Typically integrated within a larger affordable housing development, supportive housing is not an emergency or temporary shelter or treatment facility. Tenants hold their own leases and are responsible for at least a portion of their rent. In addition to providing a stable living environment, supportive housing includes services that help tenants to remain stable, including counseling, job training, and substance abuse assistance.

To achieve the goals of the campaign, Cook + Schmid developed a strategic plan and best practices that called for implementing the following elements:

Audit	Website	Fact Sheets, FAQs, One-Pagers, Direct Mailers, etc.
Focus Groups	Presentations	‘Step into my shoes’ Interactive Booth
Baseline Survey (January 2010)	Documentary Videos (Supportive Housing Clients + Advocate)	Media Relations
Tracking Survey (October 2011)	Public Service Announcements	Media Buy
Branding	Development/Developer Outreach	

PURPOSE: In January 2010, a baseline survey of San Diego residents was conducted to establish statistically reliable benchmark measures of the public’s awareness, understanding, and opinions as they relate to supportive housing, persons with psychiatric disabilities, and associated issues. The benchmark findings helped shape the Housing Matters campaign. In October 2011, Cook + Schmid conducted a Tracking Survey to evaluate the success of the campaign and to measure the impacts of the campaign in raising public awareness of—and shaping opinions about—supportive housing in San Diego.

Key Findings

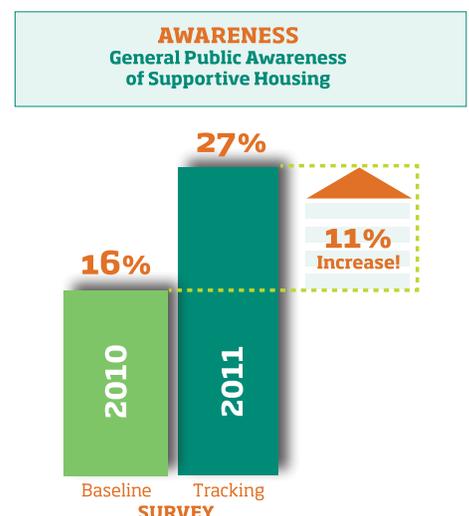
Did the campaign raise public awareness of supportive housing in San Diego?

Yes. The most pronounced effect of the public education campaign has been to raise the public’s awareness of supportive housing as a concept. Whereas 16% of the general public had heard of supportive housing in 2010, the campaign succeeded in increasing awareness to 27% as recorded in this tracking survey.

*11% increase over the course of 21 months

Did the campaign increase the public’s accurate understanding of supportive housing?

Yes. Among those who had heard of supportive housing prior to the interview, the percentage who were able to describe supportive housing correctly tripled between the baseline and tracking surveys in response to the campaign.

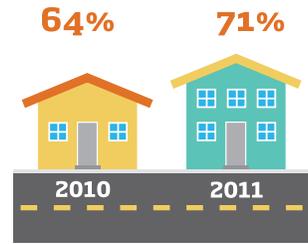


The term supportive housing means different things to different people, in the baseline survey, many respondents thought the term referred to housing assistance for low-income families as opposed to housing that is provided to people with psychiatric disabilities who have been homeless or are at risk of being homeless. Although a substantial percentage of the general public continues to have this misperception, the campaign has succeeded in improving the public's knowledge and understanding of the concept overall.

Did the campaign succeed in increasing public acceptance of supportive housing?

General support for the concept was so high in the baseline study (86%) that the campaign had little room to improve support for supportive housing in general (88%). Although the vast majority of residents support the concept of supportive housing, the true litmus test is whether individuals are willing to support having it in their neighborhood. From this perspective, the campaign was effective in improving the public's acceptance of supportive housing. Whereas 64% of San Diego residents in 2010 indicated that they would support having supportive housing for individuals with psychiatric disabilities within a half mile of their home, the post-campaign percentage was substantially higher at 71%.

ACCEPTANCE
SD Residents in Support of Supportive Housing Within 1/2 mile of Their Home



KNOWLEDGE
General Public's Ability to Describe Supportive Housing



In what respects has public opinion about supportive housing not changed?

The importance that San Diego residents place on reducing the homeless population and providing counseling, training and support services to the disabled, remained steady between the baseline and tracking surveys. For example, whereas 62% of residents rated reducing the homeless population as at least very important in 2010, the corresponding percentage in 2011 was similar at 64%. The perceived need for more supportive housing during this period also remained steady, with 65% perceiving a need for additional housing, 15% seeing no need, and 20% unsure.

DATA COLLECTION: The method of data collection was telephone interviews conducted during weekday evenings (5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.) and on weekends (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) between September 28 and October 2, 2011. It is standard practice not to call during the day of weekdays because most working adults are unavailable and thus calling during those hours would bias the sample. Interviews averaged 10 minutes in length.

NEXT STEPS: The findings in the Tracking Survey reached the academic standard of success and showcased the positive effects the *Housing Matters* campaign has had on increasing the awareness and support of supportive housing among residents in San Diego. While the mass media portion of the contract has come to a close, moving forward into year 3 of the contract, Cook + Schmid has developed several strategic projects to hone in on those areas where additional education and support is needed. The 'What is Supportive Housing' documentary video explains what supportive housing is, dispels the misperceptions around this highly successful service, and puts a human face on the issue by telling the stories of Alex, Carol and Hortencia, who are no longer living on the streets and now have a home. An interactive kiosk/booth will launch in December and will be available at county buildings, libraries, health clinics and special events throughout the region. Additional videos, PSAs and targeted community presentations and outreach tactics will all help reinforce the concept of supportive housing and help alter any misperceptions/discriminations associated with the service model.

For more information, please visit www.HousingMattersSD.org or by email at info@HousingMattersSD.org.

Housing Matters funded by the County of San Diego and produced by:

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