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AHCA Expanding Mental Health Treatment Services

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Embarking on Governor DeSantis’ call-to-action to ensure people with serious mental illness and substance abuse disorders are connected to accessible and appropriate community treatment, Agency for Health Care Administration (Agency) Secretary Mary Mayhew announced that federal approval has been granted to allow the Agency to create a housing assistance pilot program as part of the Florida Medicaid program.

Secretary Mary Mayhew said, “Governor DeSantis and First Lady DeSantis are acutely aware that too many people with serious mental illness end up living on the streets, unable to have the peace of mind and protection a stable home can offer to those looking to rebuild their lives. When the basic need of a home for vulnerable Floridians isn’t met, poverty and homelessness become a never-ending cycle, robbing those most suffering among us of the opportunity to have stability and a sense of independence to achieve life-changing goals.”

The Agency submitted an amendment to the state’s 1115 Managed Medical Assistance (MMA) waiver, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approved the amendment request allowing the Agency to pay for flexible services for people with severe mental illness (SMI) or substance use disorders (SUD), including, but not limited to, temporary housing assistance. The Agency anticipates implementation of the pilot program by Summer 2019. The pilot program will operate in Pinellas, Pasco, Seminole, Orange, Osceola, and Brevard counties.

Secretary Mayhew further underscored the importance of this pilot program, “This pilot program will allow for more care coordination for recipients who need help transitioning into housing, education on the roles and rights of tenants, and crisis management with on-site intervention if needed. Just as we must ensure that recipients have access to quality medical care, we want to ensure that they have the tools necessary to establish and maintain a home.”

Eligible recipients will include MMA enrollees, aged 21 and older with SMI, SUD or SMI and SUD, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to their disability. The Legislature has appropriated \$10,000,000 annually for this initiative. The Agency will implement an enhanced capitation rate for participating Medicaid health plans.

The services that will be provided include:

- **Transitional housing services:** services that support an individual to prepare for and transition into housing. Examples include: conducting a tenant screening and housing assessment that identifies preferences and barriers related to successful tenancy,

developing an individualized housing support plan based upon the housing assessment that addresses identified barriers, assisting with the housing application process, and developing a housing support crisis plan that includes prevention and early intervention services when housing is jeopardized.

- **Individual housing and tenancy sustaining services:** services that support the individual in being a successful tenant in housing arrangement and able to sustain tenancy. Examples include: education and training on the roles, rights and responsibilities of the tenant and landlord; coaching on developing and maintaining key relationships with landlord/property managers; assistance in resolving disputes with landlords and/or neighbors to reduce risk of eviction; advocacy and linkage with community resources to prevent eviction; and coordinating with tenant to review, update, and modify their housing support and crisis plans.
- **Mobile crisis management:** intensive on-site intervention to recipients experiencing a behavioral health crisis provided by a team of behavioral health professionals who are available 24/7/365.
- **Self-help/peer support:** Person centered service promoting skills for coping with and managing symptoms while utilizing natural resources and the preservation and enhancement of community living skills with the assistance of a peer support specialist.

Payment for room and board, rent, or mortgage is prohibited. However, the plans may cover certain housing-related activities and services such as paying for one-time moving expenses, bedding, lighting, etc.

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The Agency for Health Care Administration is committed to better health care for all Floridians. The Agency administers Florida's Medicaid program, licenses and regulates more than 48,000 health care facilities and 47 health plans, and publishes health care data and statistics at www.FloridaHealthFinder.gov. Additional information about Agency initiatives is available via [Facebook \(AHCAFlorida\)](#), [Twitter \(@AHCA_FL\)](#) and [YouTube \(/AHCAFlorida\)](#).