

BUDGET: \$750,000-\$1.5 Million

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Behavioral Health and Housing

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The problem:

Safe, affordable housing is critically important to the independence of older adults. For individuals with limited incomes, senior living communities, including those operated by non-profits and subsidized by HUD, provide a sense of community with other residents, transportation, activities, and wellness programs.

While most residents thrive in these communities, a few residents have behavioral health issues that make community living difficult for themselves or other residents. With affordable housing being so important to maintain the independence of these individuals, it's important to address the behavioral health needs of those residents who need help. Staff work diligently to resolve the issues and try to avoid evictions because they know that a resident evicted from a HUD community is not allowed to move into another HUD community, and other affordable, safe housing options are extremely limited. Without access to other options, some of these individuals move into higher levels of care unnecessarily (such as personal care homes or nursing homes) and some become homeless.

A two-year pilot with a plan for sustainability is considered. Once funds are awarded, the managing agency could begin a program 60 days after a contract is executed, with a best estimate start time in the fall of 2020.

The model: Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)'s Area Agency on Aging partnered with a housing provider to pilot a project to provide behavioral health coaches for residents with behavioral health needs. With this project, the staff of the housing developments identified and referred residents with behavioral health needs. An ARC behavioral health coach met face-to-face with the residents, built relationships, and then assisted in getting the resident to clinicians for treatment. With the coach's support, residents made and kept clinical appointments and had other service needs (including transportation and nutrition) met.

What other states are doing:

We are not aware of any other states that have used this model. However, ARC has received national recognition for the success of its pilot project.

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What this funding would do:

This request could be expanded to serve clients in multiple sites across the state. We believe the Start-Up Cost will be \$180,000. (FTE Behavioral Coach & expenses -\$140K, administration \$20k, client support \$10k & clinical consultation \$10k). We recommend that a CO-AGE workgroup determine the scope of the project within a range of \$750,000- \$1.5 million.

With state funding, this service could expand to meet the behavioral health needs of older adults living in additional affordable housing sites in multiple locations. We recommend further pilots of this model in rural, suburban, and urban locations.

Any Opposition:

No known opposition; just competition for limited funding

Helpful Resources:

Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta-area housing providers who have participated, LeadingAge Georgia