



## Spotlight: **Philadelphia, PA.**



**VetoViolence®**

In Philadelphia, city policies and programs closely tie housing to health, in recognition that housing loss often coincides with behavioral, physical, or mental health problems. The city's housing and homelessness policies and programs are guided by a "housing first" approach that recognizes the central role that housing plays in overall individual and family stability and well-being.

### Summary

"Housing first" is the idea that only once people are housed can they begin to stabilize their lives, think about and plan the future, seek and hold a job, sustain recovery from substance misuse, and live a healthy life. Housing is therefore a foundation for improving access to many social determinants of health. This approach corresponds with child abuse and neglect prevention strategies that recognize housing stability as a core protective factor for children and families.

### Coordinating Services

Coordinating services between agencies has also been critical in connecting the city's "housing first" policy to the other benefits available to residents of affordable housing. As an example of this holistic approach, the city's Department of Behavioral Health closely collaborates with the Office of Homeless Services to ensure supportive housing that homeless individuals and families can access a range of non-housing supports and services, including crisis intervention; case management; and help with mental health, substance abuse, and addiction challenges.

### Philadelphia: Meet Families Where They Are

"We do our best to make sure the services follow the person. We have an average 90% success rate with supportive housing in preventing a return to homelessness and have seen that number go as high as 97% retention for families."

—Liz Hersh, Director of Homeless Services, City of Philadelphia

### Building Public-Private Partnerships

The city also has a robust network of public-private partnerships to coordinate housing and other services for low-income residents. Many different institutions and organizations are involved to help address the scale and complexity of housing instability. The local nonprofit ACHIEVEability develops and manages affordable housing in Philadelphia as part of a wider set of services and supports that it provides low-income families. Other services include finance, education, parenting, and personal development assistance. The City of Philadelphia and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are among its key funding partners.

Another example of public-private partnership is the Healthy Rowhouse Project, which helps low- and moderate-income residents improve the conditions of their homes to protect their health, prevent them from being displaced, and ensure they are healthy in their homes when there are habitability concerns.



**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

## **Program Impact**

This network of partners has grown over time. Since 2014, ACHIEVEability has partnered with Mission First Housing to improve its capacity to develop and manage affordable housing. Mission First initially began as a joint venture between the City of Philadelphia, HUD, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and is now a full-service, nonprofit affordable housing organization that houses more than 4000 people in over 3300 units.

## **Continuing the Work**

These examples show how policies promoting housing stability can contribute to efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect. Moreover, connecting supportive services with housing can foster supportive family environments and social networks for children and their families and help address problems such as parental stress, social isolation, and substance misuse.