



**State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families**

**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Mike Carroll**  
Secretary

---

**DATE:** October 9, 2015

**TO:** Behavioral Health Managing Entity CEOs  
Mental Health Treatment Facility Administrators  
Regional Substance Abuse and Mental Health Directors

**THROUGH:** Wendy Scott, Director, State Mental Health Treatment Facilities  
Ute Gazioch, Director, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Office

**FROM:** John N. Bryant, Assistant Secretary  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SAMH)

**SUBJECT:** Housing Choice

---

The purpose of this memo is to provide clarification for all SAMH system partners about the Department's policy related to housing choice for persons with behavioral health needs. The Department's mission includes the charge, "to advance personal and family recovery and resiliency." As such, we work to ensure that individuals live in the most integrated housing environment of their choice. The goal is to assist individuals to live as independently as possible.

It has come to our attention that there may be confusion related to housing options for individuals served by the Department, specifically as they are discharged from a state mental health treatment facility (SMHTF). To clarify, there are a variety of housing options, including, but not limited to, Residential Treatment Facilities, Supervised Apartments, Adult Therapeutic Foster Homes, Room and Board homes (Hotel/Motels), and independent living settings where individuals may live.

The following guiding principles should be considered when assisting individuals to locate housing of their choice:

- Everyone deserves access to a safe, affordable, home.
- Competent individuals and legal guardians have choices about their living environment in the community.
- The resident's recovery team should help the individual determine the level of services and supports needed for community living.

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

---

Mission: Work in Partnership with Local Communities to Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

- Many individuals, regardless of their level of functioning, can live independently with Supportive Housing or Florida Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) team services if they are provided the frequency and intensity of services and supports needed to be successful. To allow for personal choice, persons should be provided with information about Supportive Housing, FACT team services and other services that support community living prior to any admission to or discharge from a SMHTF.
- If individuals go to facilities such as room and board homes, or supervised housing, the Managing Entity and their providers are responsible to ensure that the discharge placement is licensed for the type of housing or service they represent.
- Assisted Living Facilities (ALF) that serve any individuals who meet the definition of “mental health resident,” as defined in s.394.4574, F.S., must hold a Limited Mental Health license. However, people with mental illnesses can live in settings other than licensed ALFs.
- Individuals may not be discharged from a SMHTF to an unlicensed facility that requires a license. Section 429.08 (2), F.S., states that “it is unlawful to knowingly refer a person for residency in an unlicensed assisted living facility, to an assisted living facility which is under denial or has been suspended or revoked, or to an ALF that has a moratorium pursuant to part II of chapter 408.”
- Persons should not be discharged from a SMHTF to a homeless shelter. In the case of Court ordered three day discharges, the facility staff should work in collaboration with the Managing Entity and providers to take whatever steps necessary to avoid a homeless shelter placement.

Thank you for assisting persons with serious mental illnesses to live successfully in the home of their choice. Please let us know if you have any questions about this policy clarification.

cc: Regional Managing Directors  
Assistant Secretary for Operations