$PENDING MONEY IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES:

NAMI www.nami.org
The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a growing concern: More than 600,000 people in the United States live on the streets. At least 2.3 million adults and children will experience a period of homelessness at some point every year. In 2003, requests for emergency shelter have increased in 88% of cities according to a large survey. On average, homeless people are without shelter for six months. An average of 30% of requests for shelter go unmet annually. In 56% of surveyed cities, homeless people have been turned away from shelters.

At least one-third of the homeless population has a mental illness.

- Mental illness and the lack of needed services as well as substance abuse and the lack of needed services are the second and third most frequently sited reasons for homelessness, respectively.
- Nearly 55,000 homeless people access substance abuse and mental health services on any given day.
- In every state Supplemental Security Income (SSI) fails to cover the Fair Market Rent for a one-bedroom apartment.

Homeless people with mental illness suffer more than other homeless people.

- Homeless people with mental illness remain homeless longer than the rest of the homeless population.
- People with mental illness are disproportionately represented in the chronically homeless population.
- Homeless people with mental illness encounter more barriers to employment, are in poorer physical health and have more contact with the legal system than homeless people without mental illness.

Permanent supportive housing is key to helping homeless people with mental illness.

- Only 5-7% of homeless people with mental illness require institutionalization; 95-98% could live in the community.
- 80% of people who are given the chance to live in supportive housing stay at least one year.
- Supportive housing for people with mental illness reduced: emergency room visits by 57%, hospitalizations by 58%, detoxification services by more than 80%, and public mental health residential program facility use by 100%.
- Supportive housing reduces the use of public services, saving an average of $16,282 annually.

Chronic homelessness: Approximately 200,000 homeless people are chronically homeless. The chronically homeless population is comprised of individuals who remain homeless for at least a year or have had four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

The chronic homeless population uses public services heavily: The chronically homeless consume 50% of the days of shelter provided by assistance programs. The chronically homeless also rely heavily on costly services for health care rather than preventive care, which is less costly to provide.

With appropriate investment in permanent supportive housing, chronic homelessness for people with mental illness can be ended within the next decade. This would result in savings of billions of dollars for states and communities by relieving the burden currently placed on emergency rooms, various social services and the criminal justice system.