

Housing Preferences Survey Report

Presented by



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November 2005

AHCI is a contract agency for the Allegheny County Department of Human Services' HealthChoices Program.

About HealthChoices and AHCI

HealthChoices, Pennsylvania's managed care program for Medicaid, provides physical health care and behavioral health care services to both children and adults. The goals of Pennsylvania's HealthChoices program are to improve:

- Access to services;
- Quality of care;
- Continuity of the care provided in a multi-system environment; and
- Coordination and distribution of finite Medical Assistance resources.

Under HealthChoices, Allegheny County contracts with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to implement the behavioral health services portion of the program. Allegheny County has delegated responsibilities for managing the behavioral health program to two other organizations:

- The County contracts with Community Care Behavioral Health Organization (Community Care) to manage behavioral health services for the HealthChoices program.
- Allegheny County also contracts with Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc. (AHCI) to carry out the County's oversight and monitoring responsibilities required under the HealthChoices program.

This report is one of a series published by AHCI as part of its oversight and monitoring responsibilities. All AHCI reports can be downloaded from our Web site at www.ahci.org. For more information or additional copies of this report, please visit our Web site, contact us by phone at 412-325-1100, or email eheberlein@ahci.org.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the effort to develop a county-wide Permanent Supportive Housing Strategic Plan, the County Office of Behavioral Health asked Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc. (AHCI) and the Consumer Action & Response Team (CART) to conduct a housing preference survey in early 2005. The survey was developed to gather feedback from three groups: consumers at Mayview State Hospital, consumers living in structured and supervised residential facilities in the community, and residential facility staff.

The survey collected information about housing, neighborhood preferences, and the types of supports consumers would need to live in the housing of their choice. The results were analyzed to determine the most preferred/appropriate:

- Types of housing (e.g., apartment with roommate(s), apartment without roommates, etc.)
- Housing characteristics (e.g., proximity to transportation, apartment size, etc.)
- Neighborhood characteristics (e.g., geographic location, cultural characteristics, etc.)
- Behavioral health supports (e.g., doctor/nurse visits, help taking medications, etc.)
- Other supports (e.g., finding apartments/roommates, financial support, etc.)

Results show that the three groups share a high level of agreement regarding the types of housing to which consumers should have access. However, the opinions of the three groups diverged when it came to other housing issues. In particular, consumers at Mayview State Hospital were much less likely than the other two groups to indicate the need for many behavioral health supports and other forms of post-discharge assistance. While the surveys provide little direct insight into the reasons behind the group differences, the differences among the groups warrants further exploration.

Results of the surveys were used to develop the County's Permanent Supportive Strategic Plan and will continue to be used to inform decisions related to the County's supportive housing initiatives.

*“Researchers and practitioners have demonstrated repeatedly that people with disabilities and other people with special needs can live successfully in homes of their own in the community. To succeed, they need decent, safe, affordable, and accessible housing that also provides access to the array of community-based supports and services they want and need to live as independently as possible. This type of housing is now commonly referred to as **permanent supportive housing**.”*

**-- From the Allegheny County
Permanent Supportive Housing
Strategic Plan**

SURVEY FORMAT AND DISTRIBUTION

A total of 375 surveys were completed by consumers and program staff. Three separate surveys were developed:

- **Survey targeting consumers in Mayview State Hospital (MSH Consumer Survey):** A 14-question survey measuring the housing preferences of consumers currently on the hospital's discharge tracking list.¹
- **Survey targeting consumers living in CRRs and LTSRs (CRR/LTSR Consumer Survey):** A 33-question survey measuring the housing preferences of consumers living in non-hospital residential facilities that combine housing with a structured program and on-site staff supervision. This survey was intended to gather input from consumers residing in the County's full-care Community Residential Rehabilitation (CRR) and Long Term Structured Residence (LTSR) facilities.²
- **Survey targeting residential program staff (Staff Survey):** A 5-question survey measuring the opinions of CRR and LTSR staff regarding consumers' housing options.

Consumers trained to perform survey interviews administered the housing preference surveys to consumers at Mayview and CRR/LTSRs. The consumers administering the surveys were employed by Allegheny County's Consumer Action & Response Team (CART). The interviews took place in consumers' current locations in a one-on-one setting, with survey administrators reading the questions to participants and recording responses.

To gather staff input, surveys forms were mailed to the CRRs and LTSRs. Staff were asked to complete one survey for each consumer residing in the facility and return the completed surveys in a self-addressed stamped envelope.

On each survey form distributed to program staff, respondents were asked to identify which consumer's housing needs was being considered. In this way, it was possible to identify which consumers had completed the survey and had a corresponding survey completed by staff. Of the 206 surveys collected from consumers living in CRRs and LTSRs, 40% had matching staff surveys returned. In some cases, staff members completed surveys for consumers who chose not to participate in the survey. Of the staff surveys returned, 21 did not have corresponding consumer surveys.

¹ The discharge tracking list includes all consumers who have participated in a hospital discharge conference. These conferences may be arranged by the consumer, the consumer's family or other advocate, or members of the consumer's treatment team. During the conference, stakeholders discuss and determine if the consumer is ready to be discharged from the hospital. Though they will all be included on the discharge tracking list, not all consumers who participate in a discharge conference will be considered discharge ready.

² In full-care CRRs, consumers live in an apartment with another consumer, or in a group home setting. At least one trained staff member is on-site at all times. Full-care CRRs with a geriatric focus were not included in this survey. LTSRs provide consumers with serious and persistent mental illness a residential treatment program featuring more intensive supports and a more structured environment than CRRs.

Table 1 shows the number of individuals asked to participate in the survey and the number of responses. The response rate is calculated by dividing the number of respondents by the total number of eligible participants at each facility.

Table 1

| | Consumers / staff members ³ | Number of respondents | Total number of residents in the category | Response rate |
|----------|---|-----------------------|---|---------------|
| Survey 1 | Consumers in Mayview State Hospital | 60 | 80 | 75% |
| Survey 2 | Residents of CRR full-care apartments | 130 | 202 | 64% |
| | Residents of CRR full-care group homes | 42 | 61 | 69% |
| | Residents of CRR full-care group homes with a Mental Illness and Substance Abuse (MISA) focus | 17 | 19 | 89% |
| | Residents of LTSRs | 17 | 32 | 53% |
| | Total: consumers living in non-hospital residential programs | 206 | 314 | 66% |
| Survey 3 | Program staff of CRR full-care apartment facilities | 83 | 202 | 41% |
| | Program staff in CRR full-care group homes | 20 | 61 | 33% |
| | Program staff in CRR full-care group homes with a Mental Illness and Substance Abuse (MISA) focus | 0 | 19 | 0% |
| | Program staff of LTSR facilities | 0 | 32 | 0% |
| | Total: staff of non-hospital residential programs | 103 | 314 | 32% |

³ Program staff were asked to fill out a survey for each consumer living in the CRR/LTSR facility. One staff member was able to complete surveys for more than one resident. Therefore, the number of residents is used to calculate the response rate, not the number of staff members.

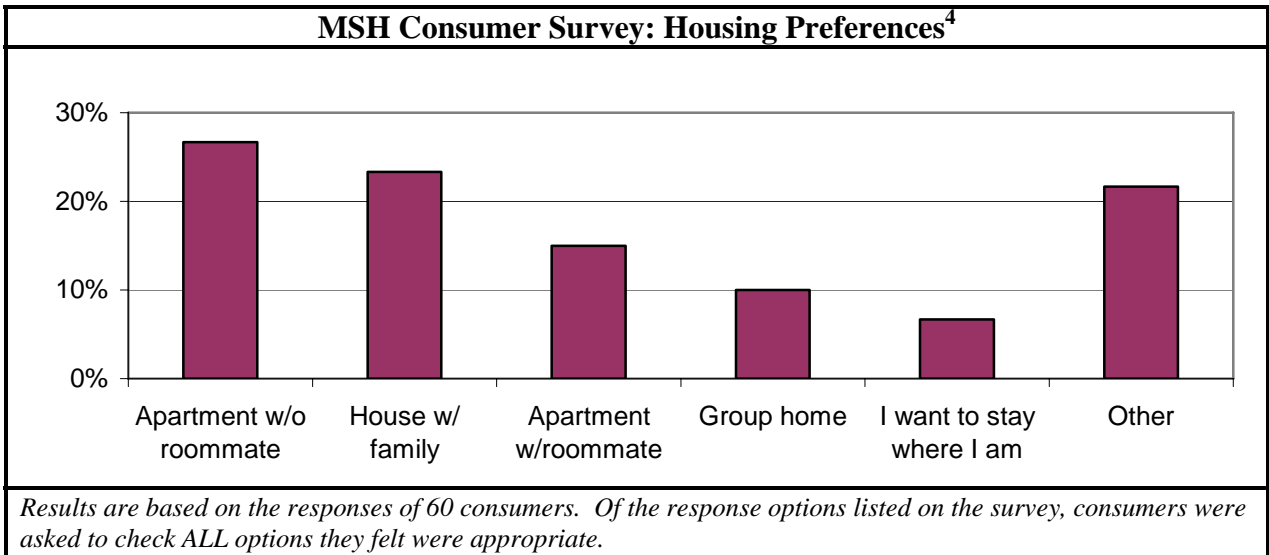
CONSUMERS IN MAYVIEW STATE HOSPITAL

The first survey focused on the housing preferences of consumers in Mayview State Hospital. Of the 80 consumers on the discharge list, 60 chose to participate in the survey. These consumers had a mean length of stay of 3 years. In other words, consumers had been at Mayview State Hospital, on average, for the past 3 years.

Housing Type

To identify the type of housing consumers preferred, consumers were asked: “Where would you choose to live if the choice was completely up to you?” Chart 1 illustrates the percent of consumers who indicated a housing type preference, by category.

Chart 1



The chart shows that many of the survey participants in Mayview State Hospital (38%) indicated a preference for apartment living (apartment by myself or apartment with a roommate).

The option allowing participants to describe “other” housing preferences also received a high percent of responses. Many of the respondents used this option to describe living arrangements similar to those listed in the survey, but with more detailed information. For example, two respondents described their preferred housing options as, “Group Home called Thess Hall” and “South Park Apartment.” Several respondents stated a desire to live independently in a house, as opposed to an apartment.

⁴ The group home category includes the following survey options: house with staff and no more than six people, house with a few others but no staff.

It is interesting to note that the preferences expressed in the survey tended to favor housing which was much less restrictive than the recommended residential facilities (LTSRs, Personal Care Homes, etc.) listed in many of the consumers’ discharge plans.

Housing Characteristics

To provide more detail on the types of housing consumers would like to live in, the survey included the question, “What will be important about where you live when you leave the hospital?”

Provided with a list of eight options and an additional space to list other characteristics, consumers were asked to mark all the options they felt were important. Table 2 ranks the options from those receiving the highest percent of positive responses to those receiving the lowest percent.

Table 2

| MSH Consumer Survey: Important Housing Characteristics | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| Rank | Requirement | Percent of positive responses |
| 1 | Being in a safe neighborhood | 78% |
| 2 | Having a place that is nice and kept up well | 33% |
| 3 | Being near family or friends | 28% |
| 4 | Being near transportation | 22% |
| 5 | Having people of my culture or background around me | 20% |
| 6 | Not having too many rules | 15% |
| 7 | Having a roommate | 13% |
| 8 | Being in a community near a treatment provider | 8% |
| 9 | Other | 8% |

Results are based on the responses of 60 consumers. Of the response options listed on the survey, consumers were asked to check ALL options they felt were appropriate.

Like people without a mental illness, most of the consumers in the state mental hospital (78%) indicated a safe neighborhood would be an important characteristic of future housing. Additionally, many consumers felt it would be important to be close to transportation, family, and friends.

Consumers were also asked of the place(s) that they had lived and liked the most, “What did you like about it?” Participants often described proximity to family members and the independence associated with their previous housing situations. For example:

- “Being with my parents”
- “Being with my wife”
- “I could come and go as I pleased”
- “I didn't have to follow others’ rules”
- “It was mine... I was my own boss”

Neighborhood Characteristics

According to the survey, the location of potential housing opportunities is of central concern to residents. Consumers often indicated they would prefer to live in safe neighborhoods offering public transportation options and would like to live near family and friends.

To pinpoint specific areas, the survey asked participants to list the neighborhoods in which they would like to live. Almost all respondents listed areas of Allegheny County. The following table shows the neighborhoods that were most often named by consumers as preferred housing locations.

Table 3

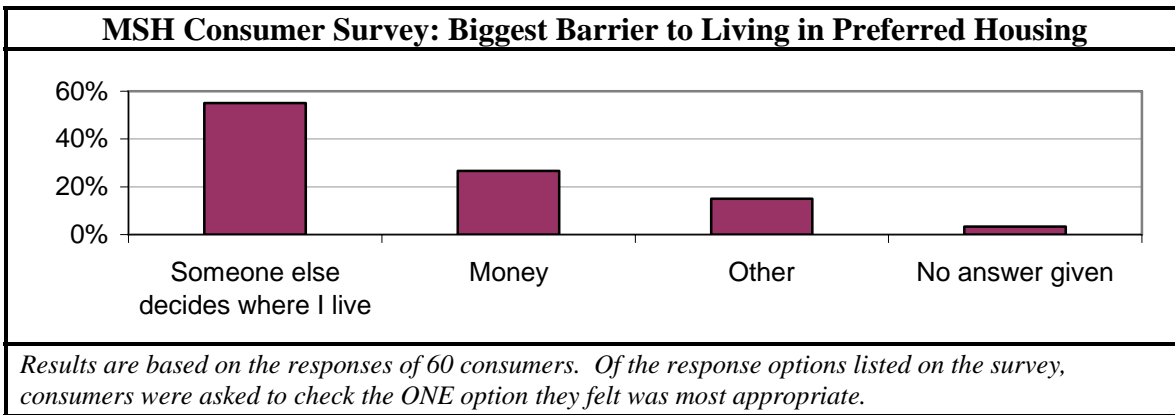
| MSH Consumer Survey: Preferred Neighborhoods | |
|---|---|
| Neighborhood | Percent of Consumers Listing Neighborhood as Preferred Housing Location |
| East Liberty | 13% |
| Shadyside | 7% |
| Oakland | 7% |
| McKeesport | 5% |
| Wilkinsburg | 3% |
| Other neighborhoods throughout Allegheny County | 38% |
| Areas outside of Allegheny County | 5% |
| No area preference listed | 23% |
| <i>Results are based on the responses of 60 consumers. Consumers were asked to list as many neighborhoods as they felt appropriate.</i> | |

The greatest concentration of preferred neighborhoods was located within the City of Pittsburgh. In particular, many consumers would prefer to live in the city’s eastern neighborhoods. The choices of other consumers varied widely among neighborhoods throughout Allegheny County.

Barriers to Achieving Preferred Housing

The survey also included a question regarding issues consumers perceive as potentially preventing them from living where they would like to live. Chart 2 illustrates consumers’ responses.

Chart 2

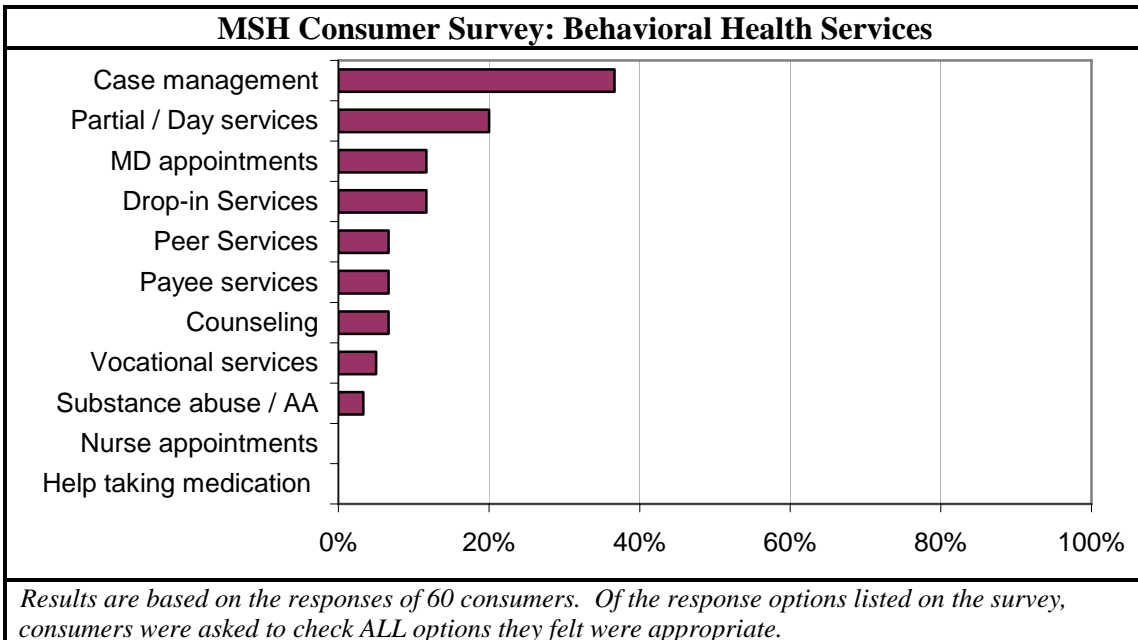


More than half of consumers (55%) in the state mental hospital felt the greatest barrier to moving into and maintaining the housing situation of their choice was that others would decide where they would live. Money was seen as another potential problem. Over 25% of the consumers surveyed felt money would be the biggest obstacle in living where they would like to live.

Behavioral Health Supports

An important component of the permanent supportive housing strategic plan involves the provision of services to consumers to help them maintain housing in the community. To ascertain the types of services consumers would like to receive and which would help them be successful, respondents were asked a series of questions about behavioral health services and other needs. Chart 3 shows responses to the question, “Which of these services do you think you would need if you moved to a place of your choice?”

Chart 3



Overall, few consumers thought they would need access to many of the services listed in the survey if they were to move into their preferred housing. Twenty-three percent of consumers felt they would need none of the services listed. Additionally, only 22% of consumers felt they would need more than one of the services listed.

Of the behavioral health services, case management received the highest percent of positive responses, with 23% of respondents indicating they would need such services if they moved into their preferred housing. None of the consumers indicated a preference for appointments with a nurse or help taking medication.

Other Supports

In addition to questions about behavioral health services, consumers were asked, “What assistance do you think you would need to live where you want to live?” Table 4 illustrates consumers’ responses.

Table 4

| MSH Consumer Survey: Types of Assistance | | |
|--|---|-----|
| Learning how to ... | Budget | 52% |
| | Clean an apartment/house | 18% |
| | Cook | 18% |
| | Know when I need help and how to ask for help | 12% |
| | Take the bus | 8% |
| | Handle conflicts | 7% |
| | Deal with landlord/tenant disputes and legal rights | 5% |
| | Make friends with neighbors | 2% |
| <i>Results are based on the responses of 60 consumers. Of the response options listed on the survey, consumers were asked to check ALL options they felt were appropriate.</i> | | |

While half of the respondents indicated they would need help learning how to budget, consumers indicated they would need few other forms of assistance.

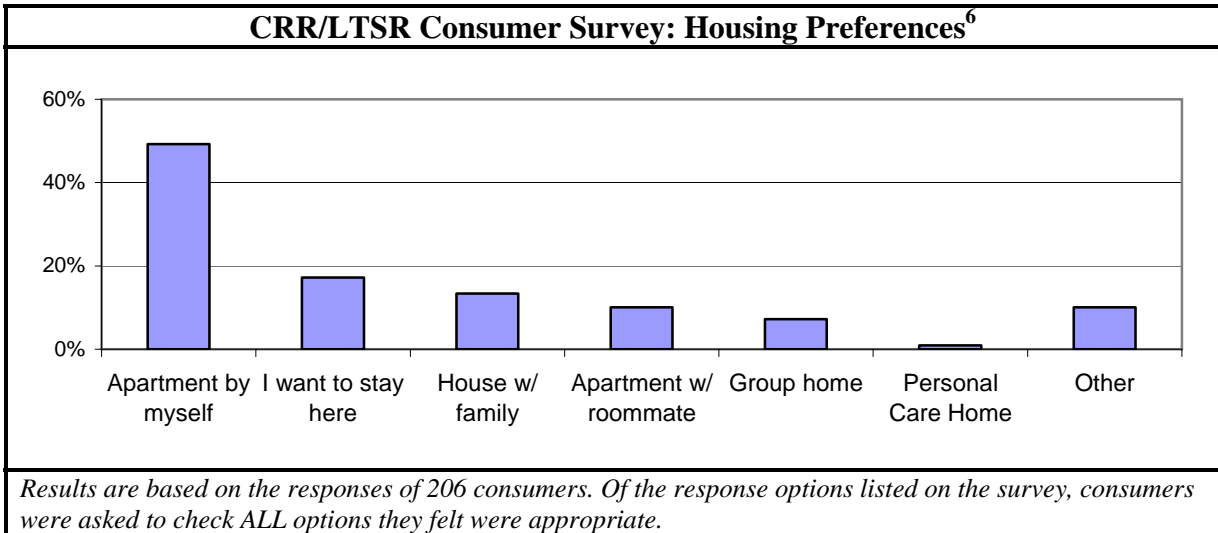
CONSUMERS LIVING IN NON-HOSPITAL RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

Two additional surveys focused on the housing preferences and needs of consumers currently living in CRRs and LTSRs⁵. In many ways, the results of the CRR/LTSR consumer and staff surveys were similar to the results of the survey for consumers in Mayview State Hospital. However, CRR/LTSR consumers and staff were more likely to indicate a preference for various behavioral health services and housing supports.

Housing Type

Consumers living in CRRs and LTSRs were asked, “If you could live anywhere, where would you choose?” Chart 4 illustrates the percent of consumers who indicated a housing type preference, by category.

Chart 4



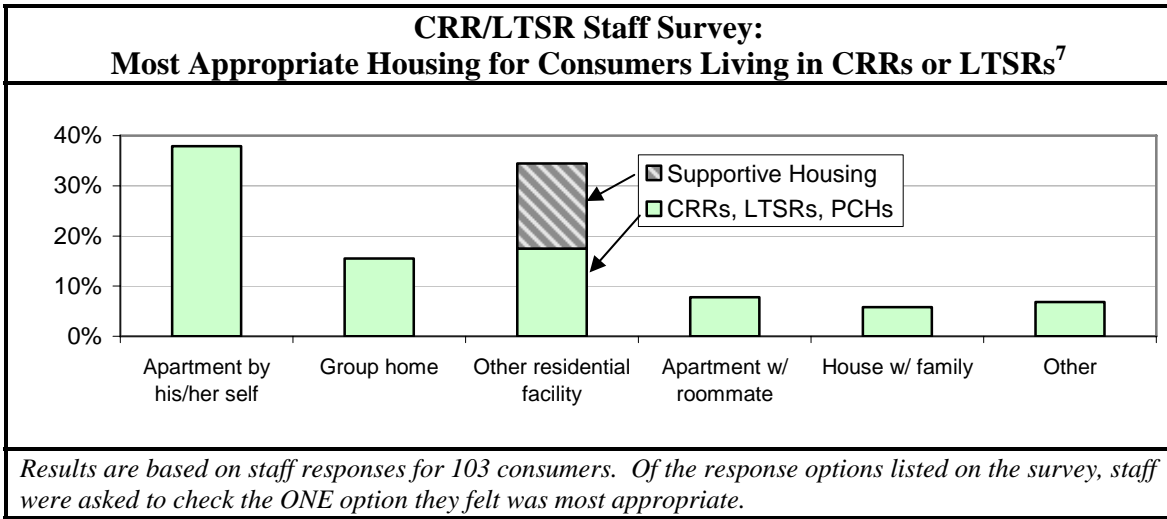
Of the consumers living in CRRs and LTSRs, 58% indicated they would like to live in an apartment (either alone or with a roommate). Additionally, 20% of those consumers living in CRR full-care apartments indicated they would like to stay in their current residence. Overall, some form of apartment living was the most popular housing type option for consumers living in non-hospital residential facilities.

The following chart illustrates CRR/LTSR staff response to the question, “What do you see as the next most appropriate place for this client to live?”

⁵ Community Residential Rehabilitation (CRR) and Long Term Structured Residence (LTSR) facilities

⁶ The group home category includes the following survey options: house with staff and no more than six people, house with a few others but no staff.

Chart 5



Though somewhat lower than the percent of consumers who indicated a preference for apartment living, many staff members felt that an apartment would be the most appropriate form of future housing for residents. Additionally, staff indicated a supportive housing arrangement would be the most appropriate option for over 17% of their current residents.

Housing Characteristics

To determine the types of housing characteristics consumers prefer, the survey included the question, “What are some of your requirements and/or needs for apartment living or the type of place you would like to live?” Since it was expected that consumers living in CRRs or LTSRs would have more recent experience living in the community than individuals residing in the state mental hospital, the list of housing requirements on the CRR/LTSR Consumer survey was more extensive than the list used in the MSH Consumer Survey. Table 5 shows the survey responses of consumers living in CRRs or LTSRs.

⁷ Other residential facility was included as a response option for this question. Staff members who checked this option were asked to specify the type of residential facility they felt would be most appropriate for the consumer. Staff responses included CRR, LTSR, PCH, and Supportive Housing. The group home category includes the following survey options: house with staff and no more than six people, house with a few others but no staff (this option received only one positive response).

Table 5

| CRR/LTSR Consumer Survey: Important Housing Characteristics | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------|
| Rank | Requirement | Percent of positive responses |
| 1 | Private bedroom, private bath | 67% |
| 2 | Located in a safe neighborhood | 66% |
| 3 | Located near a bus stop | 66% |
| 4 | Close proximity to _____ [left blank for consumer to fill in] | 39% |
| 5 | Having a roommate | 16% |
| 6 | Private bedroom, shared bath | 12% |

Results are based on the responses of 206 consumers. Of the response options listed on the survey, consumers were asked to check ALL options they felt were appropriate.

Many options received a high number of positive responses. In particular, it is clear that most consumers would prefer living arrangements in which a bedroom and bathroom would not be shared. Consumers also indicated several preferred neighborhood characteristics: a desire to live in a safe neighborhood with transportation available.

A number of consumers chose the option “close proximity to ____.” A recurring theme in these answers featured the importance of proximity to shopping areas, and grocery stores in particular. Thirty consumers mentioned shopping, stores, and/or grocery stores in their answers.

Other consumers listed proximity to such things as:

- Medical facilities
- Pharmacies
- Libraries
- Banks
- Laundromats
- Recreational opportunities

Neighborhood Characteristics

Consumers were asked to list the neighborhoods in which they would like to live. The following table shows the geographic distribution of consumers’ preferred neighborhoods.

Table 6

| CRR/LTSR Consumer Survey: Preferred Neighborhoods | |
|--|---|
| Neighborhood | Percent of Consumers Listing Neighborhood as Preferred Housing Location |
| Shadyside | 7% |
| Oakland | 5% |
| Squirrel Hill | 5% |
| South Side | 4% |
| East Liberty | 3% |
| McKeesport | 2% |
| Other neighborhoods throughout Allegheny County | 37% |
| Areas outside of Allegheny County | 6% |
| No area preference listed | 31% |

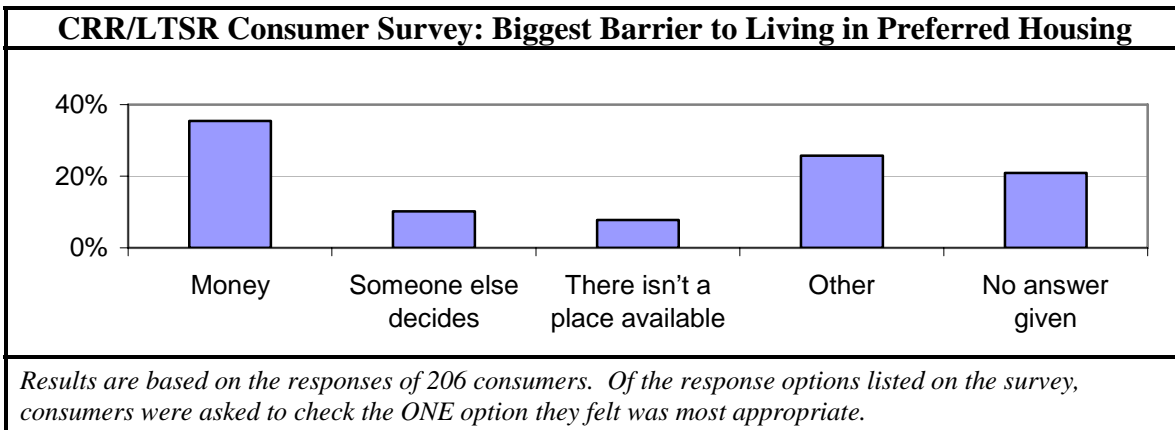
Results are based on the responses of 206 consumers. Consumers were asked to list as many neighborhoods as they felt appropriate.

Similar to the neighborhood preferences of the consumers in Mayview State Hospital, the greatest concentration of preferred neighborhoods for consumers residing in CRRs and LTSRs was in the eastern portions of the City of Pittsburgh. However, these consumers also indicated a preference for the suburbs located to the east and south of the city.

Barriers to Achieving Preferred Housing

The survey also included a question regarding issues consumers perceive as potentially preventing them from living where they would like to live. Chart 6 illustrates consumers' responses.

Chart 6

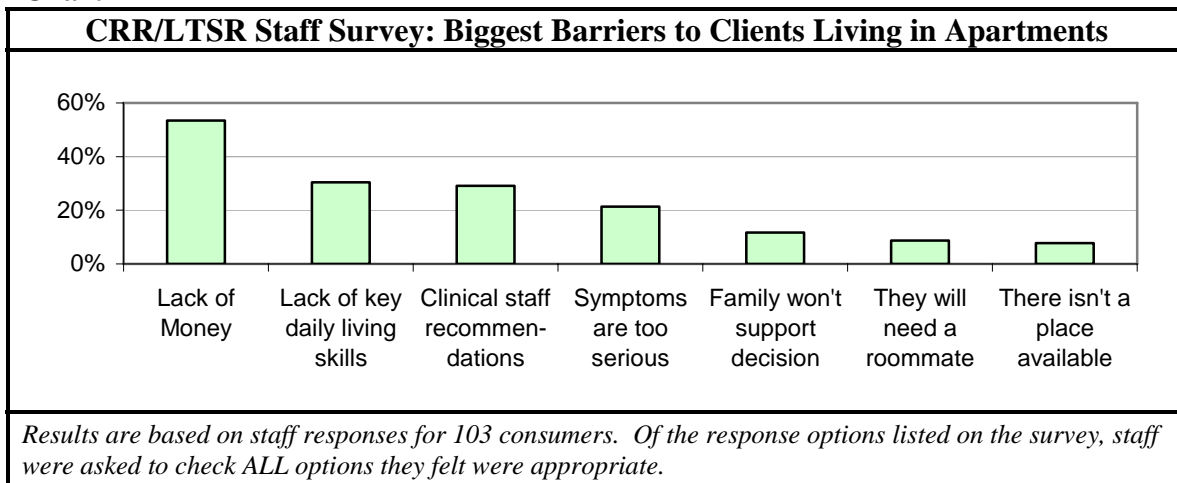


Consumers residing in CRRs and LTSRs were most likely to indicate money as the biggest obstacle in moving into and maintaining their preferred housing. This differs from consumers in Mayview, in that money was the second greatest concern for this group (the category “someone else decides” received the highest number of responses).

Some consumers felt other barriers prevented them from achieving their housing goals. Most often, these issues related to ineligibility for funding streams, required “completion” of current residential treatment programs, and behavioral and physical health problems. For instance, consumers may have not received Section 8 vouchers or may be court-ordered to complete the program in their current residential facility.

In a similar question on the CRR/LTSR Staff Survey, respondents were asked, “If this client wants to live in an apartment, what do you see as the barriers to that happening?” Chart 7 illustrates the responses to this question.

Chart 7

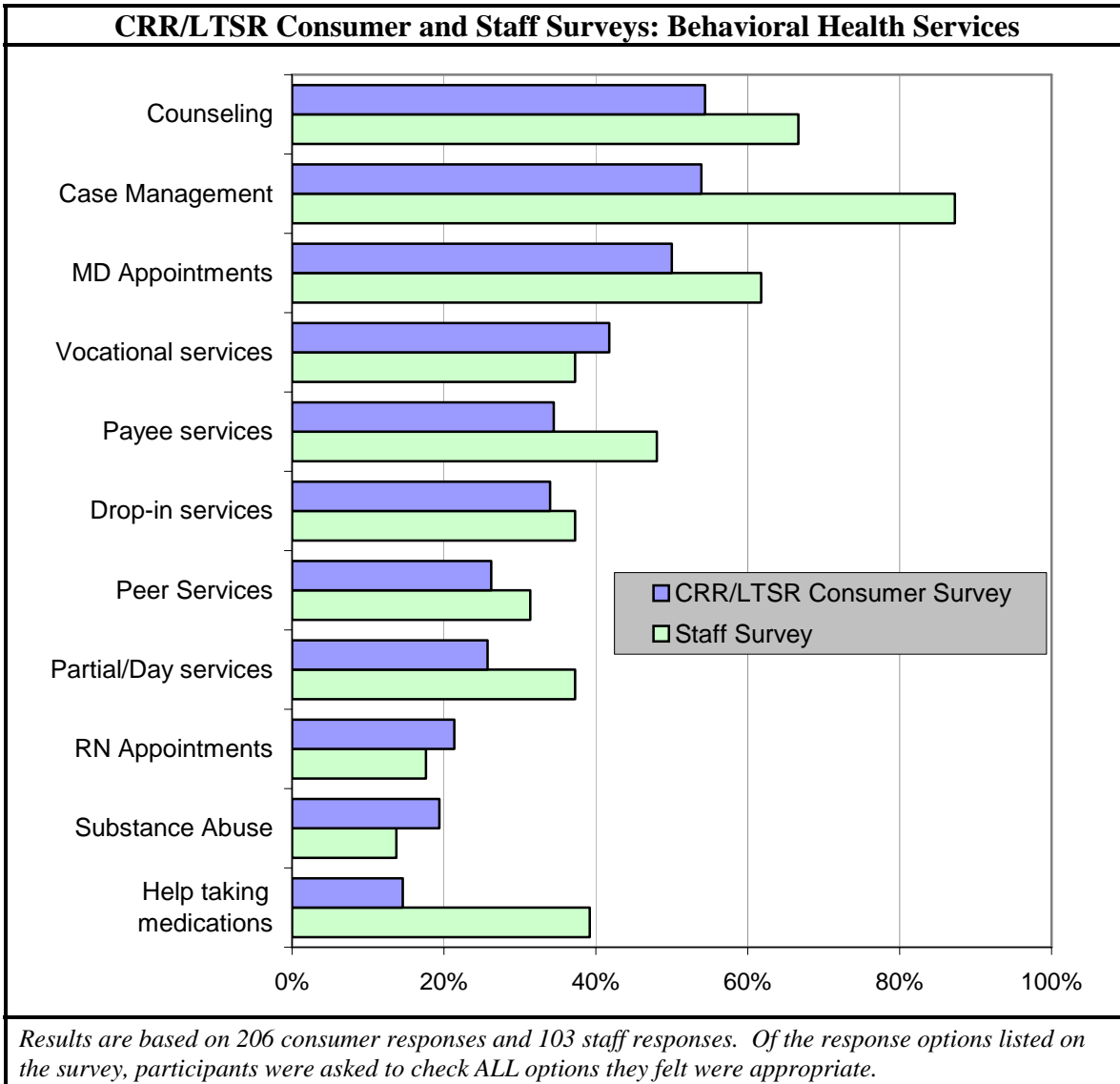


Like the CRR/LTSR consumers, staff felt that over half of consumers would be faced with financial challenges in moving into an apartment. They also indicated placement recommendations made by clinicians and a lack of key daily living skills would be barriers to consumers moving into and maintaining apartments.

Behavioral Health Services

Similar to the question included in the MSH Consumer Survey, CRR/LTSR consumers were asked, “Which of these services do you think you would need if you moved to a place of your choice?” Chart 8 illustrates the percent of consumers who indicated service preferences, by category.

Chart 8



Many participants in both groups thought access to a variety of behavioral health services would be important. In particular, case management services received a high number of positive responses. However, for many of the services (counseling, case management, psychiatric appointments, payee services, partial/day services, and help taking medications), staff were significantly more likely to feel the service would be necessary than consumers.⁸ On the other hand, more consumers than staff members indicated substance abuse services and appointments with nurses would be important.

Compared to CRR/LTSR residents and staff consumers in Mayview State Hospital (see Chart 3 on page 7), felt they would need few behavioral health services to live in their

⁸ Differences were statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level. When a finding is said to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level, there are less than 5 chances in 100 that the size of the difference reported in the analysis could have been observed by chance.

preferred housing. However, one of the limitations of the surveys is that they did not address why consumers and staff chose or did not choose certain answers. For example, it is unclear whether consumers had been dissatisfied with certain services in the past or whether long periods out of the community had affected the preferences of consumers in Mayview.

An additional aspect of the survey dealt with ways consumers would like assistance in learning to take more responsibility for their treatment. Survey results showed:

- 28% would like assistance developing coping skills
- 28% would like help learning to recognize their symptom triggers
- 20% would like assistance making it to behavioral health service appointments
- 17% would like help taking medication

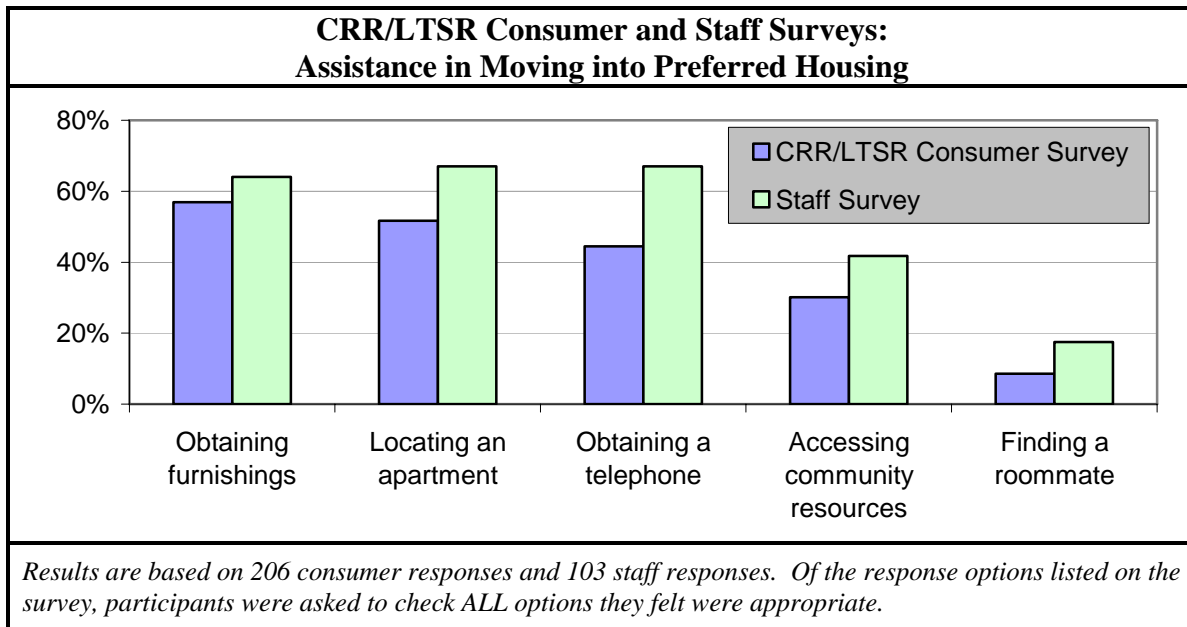
Other Supports

Consumers living in CRRs/LTSRs were also asked about the types of supports they felt would be necessary to move into and maintain their preferred housing. On the survey, participants were asked to respond to the following items:

- “I need assistance in the following areas.”
- “What are some of your needs for apartment living or the type of place you would like to live?”

Chart 9 and Table 7 illustrate survey responses about assistance/supports.

Chart 9



Consumers were most interested in assistance obtaining furnishings, locating an apartment and getting phone service. Staff were even more likely to indicate consumers would need assistance in these areas.

Table 7

| CRR/LTSR Consumer Survey: Other forms of assistance | | |
|---|---|-----|
| Learning how to ... | Budget | 35% |
| | Deal with landlord/tenant disputes and legal rights | 33% |
| | Make simple household repairs | 32% |
| | Handle conflicts | 30% |
| | Know when I need help and how to ask for help | 30% |
| | Cook | 21% |
| | Make friends with neighbors | 20% |
| | Clean an apartment/house | 12% |
| | Take the bus | 11% |
| <i>Note: Results are based on the responses of 206 consumers. Of the response options listed on the survey, consumers were asked to check ALL options they felt were appropriate.</i> | | |

Some consumers indicated they would like help in developing skills such as budgeting, dealing with landlord-tenant disputes, and handling conflicts. However, consumers were more likely to indicate a need for assistance in tasks associated with obtaining preferred housing (Chart 9) than in the skills listed in Table 7.

Consumers living in CRRs and LTSRs were more likely than consumers in Mayview State Hospital (see Table 4 on page 8) to indicate assistance in the above categories would be needed. The discrepancies observed in preferred forms of assistance are similar to those found in the behavioral health service preferences for the two groups of consumers.

CONCLUSIONS

The three surveys provided valuable insight into the housing preferences and needs of Allegheny County consumers. The sample of consumers and staff participating in the survey showed the following:

Preferred housing types:

- Many consumers would prefer to live in apartments.
- Staff believe some type of apartment would be the most suitable form of housing for many consumers. However, staff often described the importance of the apartment being part of a supportive housing program.

Housing requirements:

- Consumers would like to have housing that is located in a safe neighborhood.
- According to respondents, it is also important for housing to be located in an area in which stores, medical facilities, public transportation, etc. are available.
- Most consumers would prefer housing that offers a private bedroom and a private bathroom.

Location preferences:

- The most preferred neighborhoods are located in the eastern portions of the City of Pittsburgh. These neighborhoods include Shadyside, East Liberty, and Oakland.
- Some consumers would prefer to live in one of the County's eastern suburbs, such as McKeesport.

Barriers to achieving preferred housing:

- Consumers felt that there would be two major hurdles in consumers' achieving their preferred housing: believing that staff/clinician would decide where they will live and financial barriers.
- In addition to a lack of choice in deciding where they will live and financial constraints, staff indicated a lack of key daily living skills and psychiatric symptoms would be barriers for consumers in living in more independent housing settings.

Behavioral health services:

- Consumers and staff indicated a variety of behavioral health services would be necessary for consumers to live in the community. In particular, case management services was indicated by many consumers and staff
- Differences exist among the three stakeholder groups. In particular, MSH consumers' felt they would need access to fewer behavioral health services than was indicated by CRR/LTSR consumers. Meanwhile, staff indicated a large number of CRR/LTSR consumers would require services.

Assistance:

- The two groups of consumers differed in the number of other supports they felt would be necessary. Consumers in CRRs and LTSRs were more likely than consumers living in MSH to indicate a preference for most types of assistance.
- The assistance most often indicated as necessary by both sets of consumers was help in learning to manage financial resources.

In analyzing the data, it was interesting to find that significant differences sometimes existed between the groups. The data from the survey cannot explain what caused the differences in responses, particularly for the two groups of consumers. More exploration would be necessary to determine why preferences for behavioral health services and other forms of assistance differ for consumers in Mayview State Hospital and consumers living in CRRs/LTSRs.

While the surveys were limited in their ability to explain differences between the three groups of stakeholders, they proved quite valuable in illustrating the housing preferences of consumers in Allegheny County. The results of the survey were useful in developing the Permanent Supportive Housing Strategic Plan for Allegheny County. The surveys allowed consumers to describe many aspects of their housing preferences. By incorporating these preferences into the strategic plan's housing initiatives, consumers will have greater opportunities to realize their housing goals.