



Housing Policy

- It is difficult to improve health and control costs when people lack safe, stable places to live.
- A safe place to sleep, and to store and prepare food, helps people stay healthy.
- Housing and supportive services [can](#) reduce avoidable hospital visits, control [costs](#), and improve health for people experiencing homelessness.
- Supportive housing [helps](#) vulnerable families stay together and helps students stay in school.
- Keeping homes free of lead, mold, and pests help people stay healthy and avoid costly emergency room visits.
- Connecting housing to safe walking, biking, and transit routes helps people get to work, school, and medical appointments.

| Resources and policy tools | What state agencies can address housing |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States produce Qualified Allocation Plans (QAPs) to guide the awarding of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to developers. States can award QAP points for including healthy housing features or otherwise aligning with state health and housing goals. • State Health Improvement Plans often include health and housing goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State housing finance agency • State housing authority • Medicaid housing liaison • State building inspector/division of code enforcement • Department of public health |

State Policy Options

Supportive housing. States can develop supportive housing programs that combine rental subsidies with wrap-around services to help people stay stably housed. Programs can take a [housing first](#) approach, where people experiencing homelessness are housed without any preconditions, such as sobriety or committing to participate in services.

Affordable housing development policies. States can [award](#) developers additional points on their [Low-Income Housing Tax Credits](#) (LIHTC) [Qualified Allocation Plans](#) for designing properties with health in mind, such as building in walking or biking routes or spaces for exercise or cooking classes. [States](#) can also encourage cities and towns to require developers to [set aside](#) housing units for lower-income residents or supportive housing populations.

Healthy housing programs. States can use home improvement loans and grant programs to help low-income homeowners make their homes safer and [healthier](#) by improving insulation and heating, and reducing lead paint, pests, and mold.

Aligning resources and policies across agencies. States can encourage greater communication and collaboration between public health, Medicaid, and law enforcement to improve data sharing, surveillance, and targeting of interventions.

This document is part of NASHP's [Upstream Health Priorities for New Governors Toolkit](#). Explore the entire toolkit [here](#). <https://nashp.org/toolkit-upstream-health-priorities-for-new-governors/>

Evidence and Resources for State Leaders

| Policy | Resources | Notes |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Supportive housing | The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), Supportive Housing & Healthcare Utilization Outcomes State of the Literature , 2018 | Studies show housing and services reduces hospital utilization for some populations. |
| | National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP), Braiding Funds to House Complex Medicaid Beneficiaries: Key Policy Lessons from Louisiana , 2017 | In Louisiana, the state Medicaid and housing agencies work together to administer a supportive housing program that has shown a reduction in Medicaid acute care costs. |
| Affordable housing | CityHealth rates cities on their affordable housing and inclusionary zoning policies. | Evidence suggests that inclusionary zoning increases access to quality affordable housing. |
| | Urban Institute interactive tool, The cost of affordable housing: Does it pencil out? | For every 100 eligible households, there are only 35 affordable rental units. |
| | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Health Impact in Five Years Interventions (HI-5), Financial supports for low-income homeowners to ensure safe and habitable homes | The EmPOWER Maryland Low Income Energy Efficiency program is administered by the state department of housing and community development. Minnesota’s Rehabilitation Loan/Emergency and Accessibility Loan Program is administered by the state’s housing finance agency. |
| | Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) produced a list of state and federal grant programs to support healthy and energy efficient homes. | |
| Other housing resources | National Governor’s Association (NGA), Housing as Health Care: A Road Map for States to Leverage Housing Interventions that Improve Health Outcomes and Reduce Costs | This interactive resource contains a primer, road map, and list of acronyms. |
| | NASHP, State Strategies to Improve Health through Housing Services | This table lists examples of state initiatives to improve health through housing, including their funding mechanisms, such as Medicaid waivers, Medicaid Accountable Care Organizations, social impact investments and Medicaid health homes. Other NASHP health and housing resources are here . |