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## **Rapidly Growing Serious Mental Illness Population Requires Effective Housing Before Costs Spiral**

Publication calls for 3,000 new units over four years using proven effective models

PHOENIX, AZ — A major new report on housing for persons with serious mental illness calls for 3,000 more housing units and at least 10 new assertive treatment teams by 2012 to address current and projected demand before treatable persons end up on the streets, in emergency rooms and in jails.

*Gray Land: Housing for People with Serious Mental Illness in Maricopa County* projects that the population with serious mental illness (SMI) will increase from approximately 19,500 people today to 25,800 by 2012. It also details the population's access to 6,150 housing units today.

"We fully realize the state is facing a budget deficit," said Roger Hughes, SLHI Executive Director and one of the authors of the report. "But if we shortchange our most vulnerable citizens now, the social and economic costs of dealing with these issues in the years ahead will be an even heavier burden."

Produced in partnership with the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC), a Boston-based firm specializing in state behavioral health research, *Gray Land* provides an in-depth analysis of the SMI housing situation in Maricopa County and outlines evidence-based best practices in other parts of the country that can be applied here.

"Some housing providers here are already applying these new models," said Hughes. "What we need are more creative, long-term partnerships between the state, the county and the providers to leverage the assets we already have."

"Last year Arizona spent nearly \$184 million in housing and support services to help this population. Clearly we want to get the best return for that investment: more persons in the right settings and the best chance for independent success," said Hughes. "That's the goal."

The complete *Gray Land* report is available online or from SLHI. St. Luke's Health Initiatives is a Phoenix-based public foundation focused on Arizona health policy and strength-based community development. It has published over 60 reports on various health care and community health topics in Arizona.

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