



**Bower Park: Transitional Housing & Integrated Outpatient Health Clinic:  
A New and Better Model to Serve Individuals with a Serious Mental Illness  
Who are Experiencing Homelessness**

**Project Description**

An innovative partnership between [Copa Health](#), [CASS](#), and [AHCCCS](#) to develop whole-person solutions for adults experiencing homelessness with a serious mental illness (SMI) designation, addressing immediate barriers to engagement, stabilization, recovery and permanent housing.

The collaborative project will provide services at a new transitional housing facility being built in downtown Phoenix at the northeast corner of 24th Street and Van Buren Street. The facility will provide transitional housing for up to 54 residents, as well as an integrated health care clinic open to the public. Initial capital funding for the project was approved by the Arizona State Legislature and supplemented with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Individuals with SMI have a higher level of need than can be fully addressed in large congregate shelter programs. Bower Park's transitional living model will offer a trauma-informed, smaller, and more easily navigable, facility with mental health support specialists onsite and specifically designed and tailored from the ground up to address the unique needs of this population. This project will demonstrate a new approach to the current best practices of combined housing and co-located health care, serving some of Arizona's most vulnerable citizens and supporting larger community efforts to address homelessness in Maricopa County.

**Why the need?**

Arizona has one of the highest increases of homelessness in the nation, this rise has been exacerbated by the pandemic due to job loss, rising rents, and a severe lack of affordable housing. In Maricopa County alone, there was a 34% increase in unsheltered homelessness from 2020 to 2022, rising to 5,029 people.

Adults with SMI are disproportionately impacted by chronic homelessness and make up nearly 20% of the homeless population. These individuals living in the streets rapidly experience deteriorating mental and physical health, are more likely to have adverse health outcomes, and be victims of crime. Tragically, this population also experiences disproportionately higher cycles of emergency rooms visits, inpatient stays and involvement with the justice system, all which are extremely costly to taxpayers and do not yield long-term positive outcomes related to the individual's health, housing stability or well-being.

Research shows that by implementing evidence-based interventions – such as supported housing, integrated health, and supported employment – those with SMI experience stabilization, manage symptoms, get jobs, and successfully pursue life goals, outcomes that reduce costs to taxpayers.

**Who will we serve?**

The transitional housing facility is expected to serve at least 100 adults with SMI each year. In addition to the 100 adults in the facility, the integrated clinic will be open to the community including, but not limited to, individuals in the nearby downtown 600-bed CASS shelter on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the 200-bed St. Vincent de Paul shelter on Washington Street, UMOM on Van Buren,

the new 200+ bed Sprung facility in South Phoenix coming this summer, and the 170-bed CASS Senior Temporary Housing facility also coming in the summer of 2023.

### **What we can expect?**

- ❖ Creation of a transitional facility for individuals being discharged from emergency rooms, inpatient, or other shelter settings.
- ❖ Reduction in the number of people discharged to homelessness or unstable housing.
- ❖ Reduction in the number of unsheltered homeless persons with severe mental health needs.
- ❖ Rehabilitative services for clients served in the transitional housing facility.
- ❖ Daily and convenient access to the adjacent fully integrated clinic addressing immediate needs related to psychiatric services, PCP medical care, nursing, and counselling services.
- ❖ Intensive focus on housing, health, employment, and community navigation using evidenced-based interventions.
- ❖ Measurable positive outcomes for individuals and reduced total medical spending, which will demonstrate a sustainable model for homelessness that can be replicated.
- ❖ Transitional housing for up to 100 adults annually, along with housing navigation and follow up support placed in permanent housing with measurable increases in housing placement and housing retention.
- ❖ Continuous evaluation and analysis of how to best serve a highly vulnerable population.

### **How much funding is needed?**

The program is expected to yield significant savings to the state and improved outcomes to individuals and the community it will serve. To ensure program efficacy there is a need to secure funding for critical needs, which are not covered through Medicaid or commercial insurance. To successfully launch this project, demonstrate outcomes and return on investment, the collaborative partners estimate need for:

- ❖ Operating budget of **\$2.8M** per year for the transitional housing facility directed to overnight staff, food, laundry, and security.
- ❖ One-time startup funds for furniture, equipment, pre-opening wages and the initial referral ramp-up period totaling **\$800,000**.

### **Who is Copa Health?**

Copa Health is a one-stop shop for the health and wellbeing of individuals with complex care needs, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, general mental health and substance use challenges, and persons diagnosed with serious mental illness (SMI). Copa Health is the largest operator of integrated clinics for individuals with SMI in Arizona and its core programs include housing, employment, counseling, and a vast array of physical and mental health services through its six integrated care clinic locations.

### **Who is CASS?**

CASS is Arizona's largest and most experienced homeless emergency shelter provider in Arizona. Core services include shelter, case management and extensive housing navigation and placement services. CASS' downtown adult shelter recently expanded from 470 to 600 beds, and the 150-bed family shelter in North Phoenix was recently renovated and added a family training and empowerment center.

