

# LHH's "Assisted Living" vs. "Supportive Housing" Debate

In 1999, voters approved rebuilding Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center (LHH) with 1,200 skilled nursing beds, and 140 assisted living beds. City officials acknowledged in 1999 that "assisted living has become more in demand for the elderly, disabled adults, persons with chronic illnesses, and others because it promotes independence and provides personalized care to meet a resident's needs."

In August 2000, the Board of Supervisors accepted a \$693,750 grant from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) titled "Laguna Honda Assisted Living/Housing Seniors Project" to study what type, and the number, of housing to construct at LHH. The grant noted:

"There is currently a shortage of assisted living for low-income elderly and disabled adults in San Francisco. As a result, some long-term care consumers may fail in their community or be inappropriately placed in a skilled nursing facility because it is the only place where they can receive assistance with activities of daily living, (i.e., bathing, eating, dressing, etc.). ... Assisted living on the campus of Laguna Honda is part of a comprehensive effort by the City and County to appropriately respond to the various long-term care needs of its population. Assisted living is a critical component of the Department of Public Health's (DPH) efforts to delay or avoid placing individuals in skilled nursing facilities."

In 2006 DPH formed an Assisted Living Workgroup to help guide implementation of the HUD study. The Assisted Living Workgroup is comprised of staff from LHH, DPH, the Mayors Office of Housing (MOH), hand-picked members of the Mayor's Long-Term Care Coordinating Council (whom he appoints), and a handful of community-based service providers. The Corporation for Supportive Housing, NBC Development Corporation, and two Service Employee International unions also have members on the Assisted Living Workgroup.

The April 10, 2006 minutes of the Assisted Living Workgroup noted that the population to be served and types of services needed had to be determined *before* deciding which type of housing — *licensed* "assisted living" vs. *unlicensed* "supportive housing" — to construct. (As of March 2007, the population to be served and type of services needed remain unanalyzed.) But the June 19, 2006 minutes of the Assisted Living Workgroup asserts a decision has been made to build supportive housing. So what's the difference between the two housing models?

Assisted living is licensed care, primarily for people over the age of 65 and people with disabilities, who need extensive long-term assistance with two or more activities of daily living. Supportive housing is a national concept developed to provide housing with minimal assistance on site for people who are homeless; supportive housing involves tenancy rights. The two constructs are completely different, but LHH officials and Supervisor Sean Elsbernd are trying to pass them off as interchangeable when not synonymous, which (obviously) they are not.

**Table 1: Community Alternatives vs. Skilled Nursing Beds**

Dept.	Type of Placement	# of Units	Mix
DPH	Unsupported residential	1,415	
DPH	Supportive residential	5,961	
DPH	Residential mental health	883	
		<b>8,259</b>	<b>8,259</b>
MOH	New Construction Completed	849	
MOH	New Units Under Construction	231	
MOH	New Units in Pre-Construction Planning	764	
		<b>1,844</b>	<b>1,844</b>
	<b>Subtotal Community Alternative Placements</b>	<b>10,103</b>	<b>92%</b>
DPH	<b>Skilled Nursing Care "Institutional" Placements</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>8%</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10,966</b>	

**Table 2: Mayor's Office of Housing Construction**

Type of Placement	# of Units	Mix
Supportive Housing for Homeless	559	<b>56%</b>
Rental Housing Low-Income Seniors	245	<b>25%</b>
Rental Housing Low Income Families	191	<b>19%</b>
Rental Housing for Disabled Persons	0	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>995</b>	

All data in this report was obtained through public records requests.

***"Neither DPH nor the Mayor's Office of Housing have built any assisted living units for seniors and people with disabilities, and no new rental housing for disabled people has been developed, either."***

As Table 1 demonstrates, Mayor Gavin Newsom's track record developing housing through the Mayor's Office of Housing (MOH) has been problematic. Of 849 reportedly "new" housing units already constructed using MOH-acquired funding, 458 (54% of the total) were built in Fiscal Year '04-'05. Only 270 (32%) new units were constructed in Fiscal Year '05-'06, and only 121 (14%) units are planned for Fiscal Year '06-'07, suggesting the Mayor's performance is slipping. The majority (54%) of the 849 units were supportive housing, and the remaining 46% were rental units reserved for families. No rental units were built for seniors or singles, and *no assisted living units* for seniors and people with disabilities were built. Table 2 shows the same trend for the 995 units now under construction, or in pre-construction planning<sup>1</sup>, and *no rental units are being dedicated to people with disabilities*. The City operates no assisted living placement locations for low-income or medically-indigent San Franciscans, who are now being shipped out-of-county if their care needs become too great; in the process, they are disenfranchised from San Francisco residency and separated from family, friends, and support networks.



The HUD grant to determine the type and quantity of senior housing to build that must conclude by August, is now three months behind schedule. LHH's Executive Administrator, John Kanaley, has told members of the public they will not be invited to attend Assisted Living Workgroup meetings. A public meeting scheduled for March 2007 to deliver the first of two draft reports regarding the assisted living project wasn't held, and the first draft report won't be presented publicly until May. A second public meeting and second draft report were scheduled for May. To ensure a transparent public planning process is actually conducted, the Health Commission has an ethical responsibility to get this project back on schedule by holding two public meetings, not one, before June prior to a July Health Commission hearing.

<sup>1</sup> Of the 995 units in pre-construction planning, the 1500 Page Street project is for a so-called "new" 52-bed supportive housing project for the homeless; DPH recently sold this address, which had formerly been a board-and-care facility for people with psychiatric disorders needing long-term care. This calls into question whether this is "new" housing or "replacement" housing, calling into further question how many of the Mayor's housing initiatives can rightly be called "new" given closure of other community-based settings.