

# OPENING DOORS

2014  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



## *Mission Statement*



TO HELP PEOPLE WITH MENTAL  
DISABILITIES DISCOVER AND  
ACHIEVE THEIR HOPES AND  
DREAMS FOR A MEANINGFUL  
LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY.

## *Vision Statement*



TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH THE CONTRIBUTIONS  
OF THE PEOPLE WE SERVE.

## *Guiding Principles*



NEVER FORGET WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO  
BE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS  
ADMIT MISTAKES & GROW FROM THEM  
ENHANCE TEAMWORK THROUGH CLEAR, OPEN & HONEST COMMUNICATION  
BE SERVANT-HEARTED IN ATTITUDE & ACTIONS  
CONSTANTLY SEEK TO PROMOTE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS  
HONOR, VALUE & RESPECT OTHERS  
LEAD BY EXAMPLE  
DISCOVER WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO OUR CUSTOMERS  
KEEP ALL PROMISES

# Break Barriers, Open Doors

Inclusion means much more than recognizing needs. People with disabilities strive to be acknowledged as whole people, with gifts, frailties, needs and aspirations. As a community, we must build relationships and change ourselves to enable this inclusion to develop. Although there have been significant advances within our society over the years in access and services for people with disabilities and their families, so much more work needs done.

At Transitional Services, Inc. (TSI), we have opened doors and worked to increase persons served social inclusivity. Our Permanent Supported Housing (PSH) Program, launched over seven years ago, has been instrumental in this critical cause. Safe, affordable housing directly increased the opportunities and choices for individuals in the program, especially with employment and continuing education. Their success is often attributed to our “housing first” approach. Our belief is that few gains can be achieved if one is homeless or couch surfing.

This crisis situation leads to immediacy, not choices. Interestingly enough, our PSH program, combined with persons served success, has contributed greatly to our landlords’ satisfaction. Without our stock of landlords willing to serve those with disabilities, we would not experience such success. These

partnerships have been a key piece to our current extraordinary outcomes. Once the person served breaks the barrier of homelessness or unstable housing, so much more can be experienced. To date, TSI boasts a 3% eviction rate and a four-year community tenure rate—some of the best outcomes for a PSH program in the country!

These successes have bred more success to us as an organization. Most recently, we were awarded the opportunity to serve more in PSH. Currently, we have a new commitment to serve Transition Age Youth. We look forward to the chance to break more barriers for this unique population, thus opening more doors to social inclusion.



**Victoria A. Livingstone,**  
M.S., C.A.S.  
Chief Executive Officer





The saying goes... “when a door closes, another will open.” Unfortunately, this statement is not always true for individuals with psychiatric disabilities. A closed door can often remain closed due to such things as stigma surrounding mental illness, fixed limited income and difficulties getting enough support to live successfully in the community. TSI recognizes these ongoing concerns, but we also see opportunities for those we serve on the other side of those doors. TSI has been opening doors for people for over 40 years. We are proud of that history and will continue it with even more opportunities in the future.

In 2006, the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program was initiated to provide safe and affordable housing for people with psychiatric disabilities. Clients in the program are guaranteed housing as long as they pay rent and adhere to the terms of their lease. PSH’s goal is to move individuals into housing of their choosing that will have a permanent subsidy through Section 8. The Program also focuses on teaching and preparing to be a good tenant. Housing Support Specialists work with their clients to research communities where they desire to live, develop an understanding of the importance of paying rent and utilities on time, household upkeep, understanding a lease and how to be a good neighbor.

PSH has housed 156 individuals in 2014 with five evictions. TSI works to prepare clients to be good tenants through our partnerships with numerous landlords throughout Allegheny County. We not only provide housing, but we work to build stronger communities. TSI works with landlords and clients through two types of programs:

## BRIDGE SUBSIDY PROGRAM (BSP)

- Tenants are required to pay 30% of their monthly income toward rent, and PSH program pays the balance, based on fair market value.
- The program provides contingency funds for security deposits, unpaid utility bills and select household furnishings and supplies for individuals who are not able to do so on their own.

## PROJECT-BASED LEASING

- Assists people with troubling legal or credit issues that would currently prevent them from being eligible for subsidized housing.
- Tenants sublease designated apartments directly from the program until they are eligible to apply for Section 8.
- The program provides contingency funds for security deposits, unpaid utility bills and select household furnishings and supplies for individuals who are not able to do so on their own.



# Omar

Looking back just three years ago, Omar is amazed at how far he has come. It was then he had just entered into services with TSI at one of our Community Rehabilitation Residential (CRR) locations. About six months later, he was referred to the Permanent Supportive Housing program and began working with his Housing Support Specialist, Joyce Snyder.

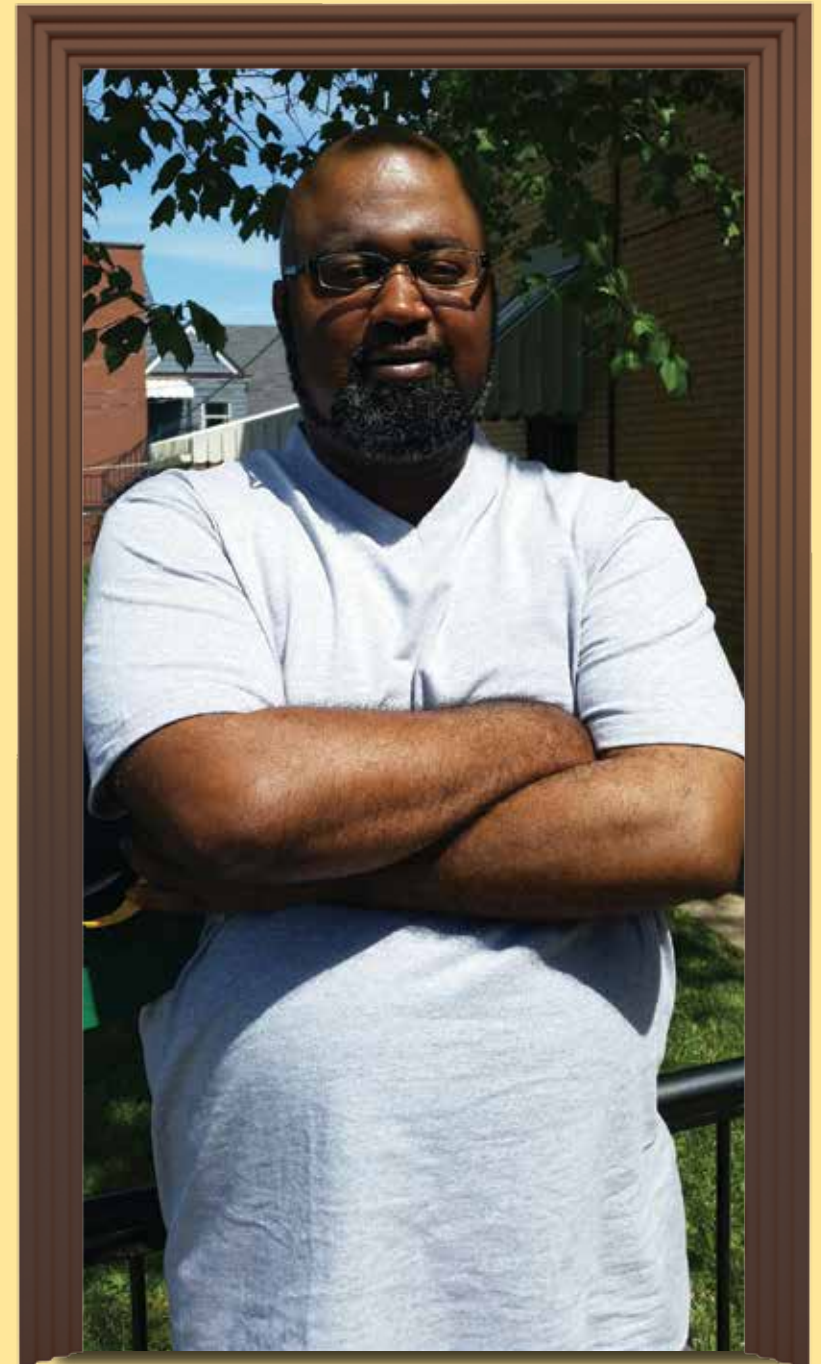
“Before I entered into the program, I was homeless and ran with the wrong kind of people,” cites Omar. “I relapsed many times and was hospitalized a lot,” Omar says of his life before.

With the assistance of PSH’s Renter’s School, Omar said he learned the importance of having a lease and how to pay his rent on time. He also developed a sense of pride in keeping his apartment clean and relates how it affects his mental health. He worked with Joyce to find an apartment in a neighborhood that was close to his family, which he located immediately. Shortly thereafter, he moved in. Omar shared that if he had tried to do this on his own, he would have been denied because he had a bad rental history. “The PSH program worked with me to expunge charges on my record, and I cleaned up my credit by establishing a payment plan and following through on making payments. He went on to say, “PSH gave me a chance to have my own place when nobody else would.”

Omar has lived in his apartment since November 2013 and says he is the happiest that he remembers being in a long time. He feels a sense of security and safety and takes pride in the fact that he has a place to call home. Having this security has impacted his recovery in a positive way because, as he relates, “it causes me to want to keep my home, so I have to keep working on my recovery.”

## Opened Door #1

By following the rules of the PSH program, I will be able to remain in my apartment.





# Blair

Blair is a building manager with Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC). He has been with OPDC for four years, and OPDC has partnered with TSI for five years. OPDC currently works with six tenants who receive support from PSH. Some tenants have received their Section 8 subsidy, while others are receiving subsidy from TSI.

Blair stated that this is his first experience working with people with mental illness. “PSH staff has helped me to learn about mental illness. Partnering with TSI has been a good experience. When a tenant has an issue in their apartment,” which he stated is not often, “the PSH staff are readily available to support the person through resolving the issue.”

In Blair’s experience, 95 percent of the tenants receiving support through TSI truly appreciate having their own space and respect the property and buildings. He said that when tenants see him at one of the buildings, they thank him for the opportunity to live there. Blair was happy to state that he has never had to evict a TSI tenant and has never had any issues with receiving rent payments.

Blair stated that it has been a pleasure to work with TSI, and he always knows they will be there for support. “Making the choice to partner with the PSH program was a calculated risk that has worked out well. People who have mental illness don’t always have a lot of housing options, and they are fortunate to have the opportunity to work with TSI.”

Advice that Blair would give to a landlord who is on the fence about partnering with TSI is that “they are getting a good tenant with a built-in support system. TSI is able to see if the person is in need of assistance and is ready to help when a need arises. This program teaches people how to be the best tenant they can be.”



## Opened Door #2

By building relationships with landlords, individuals remain in permanent housing.

*Program clients are able to continue in their recovery when they have permanent, safe, affordable housing. They are afforded other opportunities such as returning to or completing educational goals, joining community organizations, securing stable employment and, oftentimes, connecting or rebuilding relationships. The success of PSH paves the way for other programs and services that TSI can pursue in the future to meet the needs of individuals with mental disabilities.*



### Opened Door #3

The success of one program leads to other opportunities, programs and life-changing events.

## Russ

Russ has been partnering with TSI for eight years. He learned about the Permanent Supportive Housing program from a fellow landlord who had received a flyer advertising a need for landlords in Allegheny County. Russ immediately called TSI and set up an appointment to have his apartment inspected. Since he began working with TSI, he has rented to eight tenants through the PSH program. Five of these eight have achieved their goal of receiving a Section 8 Voucher, and three continue to receive subsidy from TSI.

Russ is a retired special education teacher of 33 years. He stated that working with people who have disabilities comes naturally to him. When a new tenant comes to the building, he immediately introduces himself to begin building a trusting relationship. He stated that he does not want people to fear him because he is in a position of authority.

Russ feels it is important to give people the opportunity for housing because people need to be compassionate and realize it is not a perfect world. "People can receive support and training to improve their situations. Some people are afraid of the unknown, but they need to realize that everyone needs a place to live." Russ appreciates the help and support that TSI provides to him and to the tenants.

Russ stated that a few of his tenants that receive support from TSI had other opportunities arise since they secured permanent housing. One tenant has had a stable job for three years. Another tenant is going back to school and has been active and ambitious about improving his life. Other tenants have become comfortable in their living space and are doing well.

We asked Russ what he would say to a landlord who couldn't decide if partnering with TSI is for them. "I would explain to them that the PSH staff are competent, a great support and will help in any way. Section 8 guidelines tell a landlord exactly what needs to be done to complete a yearly inspection." He stated that most landlords have a fear of the unknown, but if the landlord builds a trusting relationship with the tenant they will be good tenants and respect the property and rules."

# Programs & Services

*Transitional Services, Inc., provides an array of housing and support services designed to meet the needs and preferences of individuals who have mental health or intellectual disabilities.*



## **GROUP HOMES**

Provide a family-like environment, with private bedrooms, shared living spaces and group meals. Through a caring and stable environment, individuals can learn daily living skills and receive support through 24-hour staffing.

## **SUPERVISED APARTMENTS**

Provide settings that offer more independence and privacy combined with the support of 24-hour staff availability. In programs serving individuals with psychiatric disabilities, most individuals have their own apartments, while a few have roommates. All apartments in the intellectual disabilities programs are shared, but individuals have separate bedrooms.

## **SUPPORTED LIVING PROGRAMS**

Offer both community and HUD congregate living options. Community Supported Living Programs help individuals find permanent housing in the community of their choice and provide in-home supports to assist individuals with keeping their chosen living environment while fostering their recovery. Congregate Supported Living offers permanent housing in individual apartments within a single HUD building. There is more staff support available than in our Community Supported Living Programs but less than in the Supervised Apartments.

## **PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

Part of Allegheny County's "housing as home" strategic plan, makes available 150–160 units of permanent housing to individuals who have psychiatric disabilities. The program helps identified individuals to secure housing in the community of their choosing and maintain tenancy. The program provides support and education to service users, providers and landlords on housing related matters, and connects individuals to needed financial, advocacy and legal resources. People are not required to participate in psychiatric services to keep their housing, although they are encouraged to use services.

## **FAIRWEATHER LODGE**

Offers a living arrangement designed specifically for persons with psychiatric disabilities who wish to live independently and be active members of their community. The living arrangement is most beneficial to individuals who may not be able to afford things like rent, food, transportation and utilities on their own, but could do so with the help of other housemates. Lodge members share in the day-to-day experiences of running a home and a business. They create their own "house rules" and manage their own activities and work responsibilities. Assistance is provided only as requested or needed.

## **CLINICAL CONSULTATION & EDUCATION**

Education, training and support to staff and persons served on a variety of clinical and recovery-oriented issues.

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORTS PROGRAM**

Peer specialist services, training and activities that support wellness and recovery, improve job readiness and provide life enrichment experiences.

## **BEHAVIOR SUPPORT**

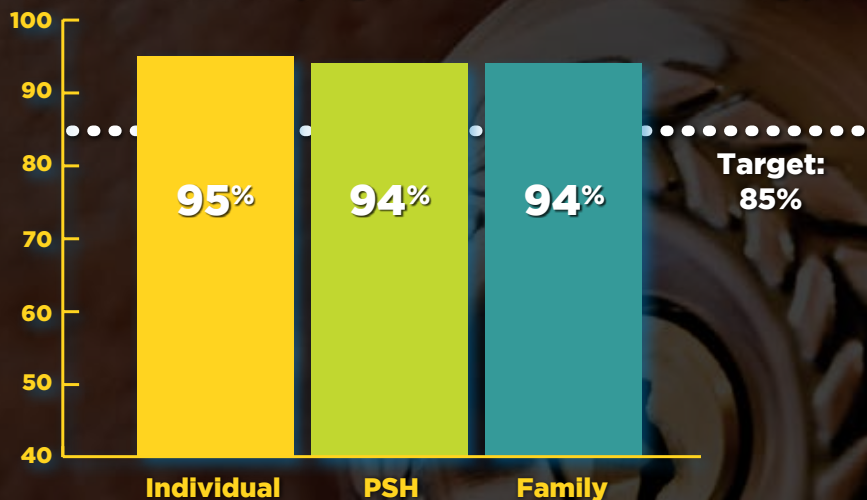
Provided to individuals with intellectual disabilities or families in need of additional support and intervention who are served by any residential or community provider.



# Outcomes

## STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION

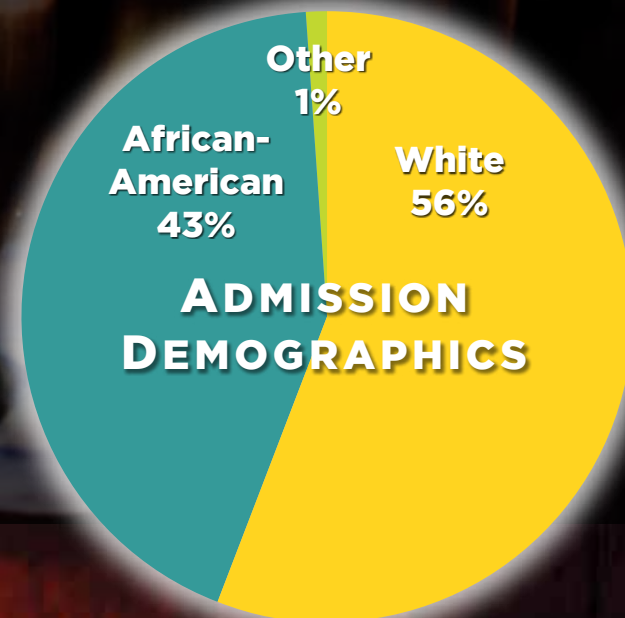
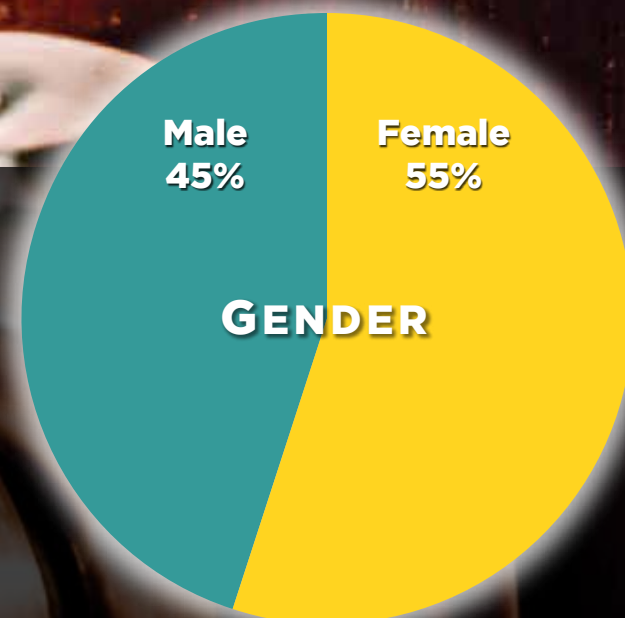
Individuals served and their families/significant others, are satisfied with the programs and the services being provided



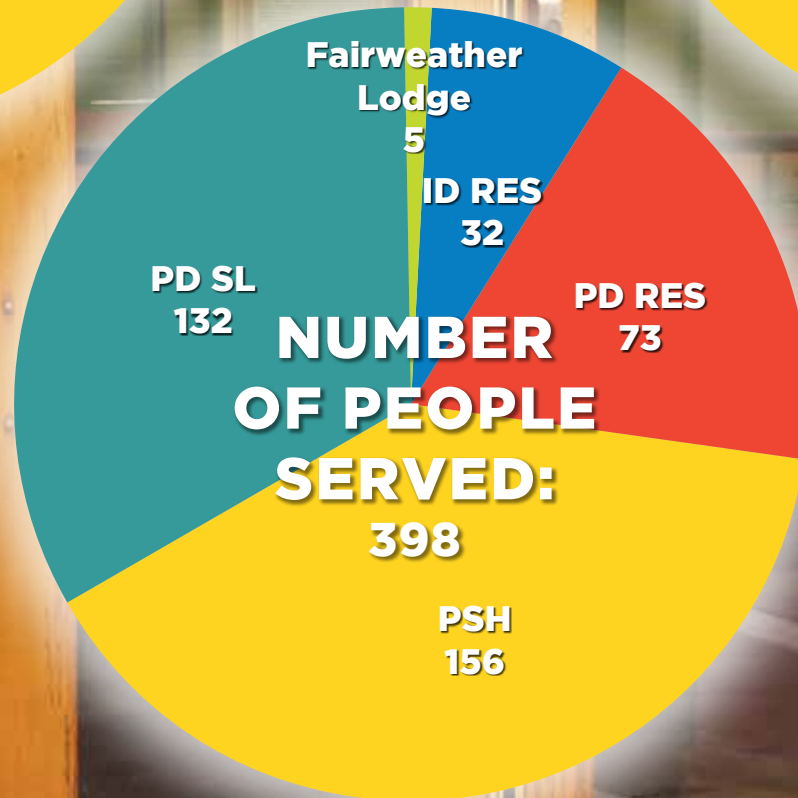
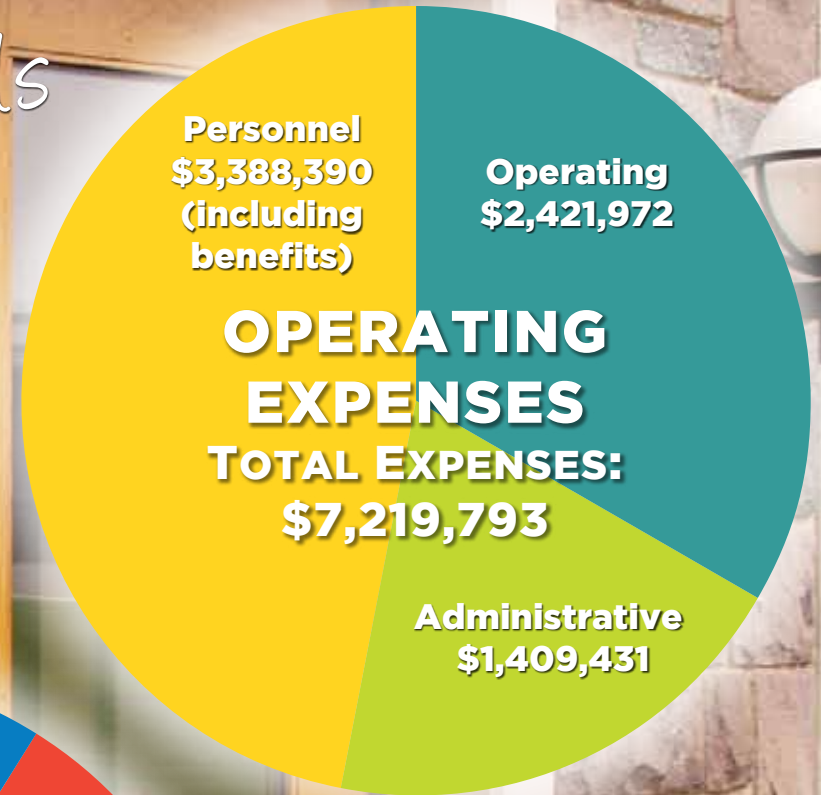
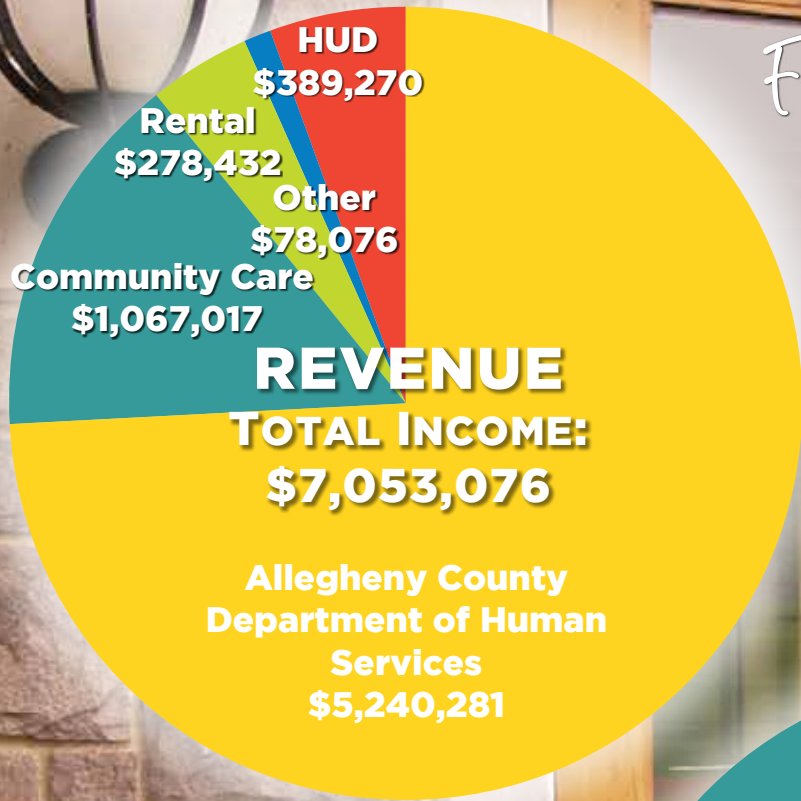
## ADMISSIONS - FY 2013/14

PROGRAM	CRR	SL PD	CH ID	ID CONG.	FWL	BS
# of Admissions	27	43	2	1	1	2
Average Age	35	43	29	20	61	21

CRR: Community Residential Rehabilitation | SL PD: Supported Living Psychiatric Disabilities  
 CH ID: Community Homes Intellectual Disabilities | ID Cong.: Intellectual Disabilities Congregate  
 FWL: Fairweather Lodge | BS: Behavior Support



# Financials



Thanks for being a

## DIFFERENCE MAKER.

Your name appearing here asserts that you believe and actively support our mission.

You are invested in our ability to positively change the lives of the individuals we have the privilege to serve. You endorse our efforts to improve our communities one life at a time. For this and all the ways you have supported us through the year –

## WE ARE TRULY GRATEFUL.

*While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of these records, we encourage readers to inform Keisha Becoate of any errors or omissions by calling 412-461-1322 x1249 or by e-mailing [kbecoate@transitionalservices.org](mailto:kbecoate@transitionalservices.org).*

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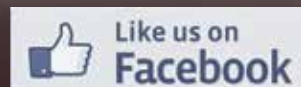
(Contributor Choice  
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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT PSH

- ◆ The average length of stay for a person in the PSH program for 2014 was 46 months.
- ◆ 98% of the clients housed continued their tenancy through 2014.
- ◆ The individuals receiving services are 94% satisfied with the supports provided by the PSH program.
- ◆ At the last landlord survey in 2014, landlords were satisfied 100% with the interactions with staff and the program.
- ◆ Low eviction rate of 3% for 2014.
- ◆ 49% of people receiving Section 8/ HUD funding have kept Housing Support Services with the program.
- ◆ Due to the success of the program, the funders have renewed the PSH contract for another 5 years.
- ◆ Based on the merits and the continued success of the PSH program, TSI was awarded a grant to expand the PSH program to provide housing to a specialized population of youth who are transitioning into the adult MH system. This is a Collaborative program that provides housing and mobile treatment services for transition age youth ages 18-25.

For more information, contact  
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## OFFICERS & MEMBERS 2014

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Transitional Services, Inc.  
is accredited by CARF for  
the following programs and  
services through December  
2015:

- \* *Community Housing*
- \* *Supported Living*
- \* *Community Housing: Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Adults)*
- \* *Supported Living: Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Adults)*

