



National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals (GBHI) Program: Frequently Asked Questions

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What is GBHI?

The Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals program awards grants across the U.S. to improve the treatment of mental health and substance use disorders for those experiencing homelessness. These grants go to community-based public and private nonprofit organizations that provide substance abuse services and mental health treatment for homeless individuals.

Supportive housing programs often apply for these funds because coupling housing with these support services has proven to help chronically homeless individuals secure and maintain housing and pursue recovery. This combination improves chronically homeless people's access to and retention in treatment for mental illness and substance use problems, while reducing the amount of time they spend cycling through hospitals, jails, shelters, and the streets.

Which federal agency oversees GBHI?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the federal Department of Health and Human Services administers the program.

Specifically, the Center for Mental Health Services and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment within SAMHSA coordinate to establish the grant criteria and administer grants.

Is there legislative language guiding implementation?

Yes. Within the Public Health Services Act, which includes all SAMHSA programs, under section 506 there is brief legislative language authorizing the GBHI program. This language must be reauthorized at the same rate as all SAMHSA programs. Its current authorization expired September 30, 2004; however, GBHI, along with all SAMHSA programs, have continued to be funded. It is unclear when Congress will reauthorize SAMHSA but the programs are expected to continue operating.

What is the funding level?

In 2006, Congress provided \$44 million. GBHI is authorized at 'such sums as necessary'.

How is this program funded?

The program is funded through two lines in the federal budget. One is called Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals (GBHI) and resides in the Programs of Regional and National Significance account of the Center for Mental Health Services within SAMHSA. The second is called Treatment Systems for Homeless (TSH) and resides in the Programs of Regional and National Significance of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment within SAMHSA.

In FY 2006 the funds were allocated as follows:

- \$9.6 million is in GBHI
- \$34.4 million in TSH

This creates some confusion. Because most of the money is in the TSH line, this is sometimes the more common name for the program and is the name used when the grant announcement is released. However, the legislative language titles the program GBHI. The important point is that there are two separate funding lines and SAMHSA has discretion, within the legislative guidance, to administer both accounts.

Who can currently receive funding?

Community-based public and private nonprofit entities

This includes:

- county governments
- city or township governments
- federally recognized tribes
- state recognized tribes
- urban Indian organizations
- tribal organizations
- community-based nonprofit organizations (including faith-based organizations)
- community-based state entities, such as state colleges, universities and hospitals, that propose to provide services under this announcement to the community. States are not eligible to apply

The legislative language gives preference to organizations with experience providing substance abuse and mental health services to homeless individuals, programs that providing housing for individuals in treatment or recovery, or agencies serving youth and veterans. Approximately one-third of current grantees are permanent supportive housing providers.

What types of services are eligible to be funded?

GBHI grantees provide a variety of treatment and recovery services including mental health services, substance use treatment, transportation, employment training, general case management, general health care, life skills and other wraparound services that are often not available from Medicaid or other mainstream services.

How many years is each grant award?

Grant awards can last no longer than 5 years. Each year when the grant announcement is released, SAMHSA defines the grant period. In the last few years, this has been 5 years.

How much money does a program typically receive for a grant?

In 2006, awardees could request a maximum of \$400,000 per year for 5 years. In addition, SAMHSA provided one year supplemental grants which totaled \$4 million. The maximum awarded for these grants was \$200,000.

Why is GBHI important?

Providers have a high demand for this program because mainstream health, welfare, addiction, and mental health programs often do not adequately serve homeless people. Mainstream programs often have categorical restrictions that impede the ability to fund or coordinate the full range of health, housing, and support services required to adequately help homeless people, particularly those who have co-occurring mental illnesses and substance abuse problems. Grants through the GBHI program help supportive housing and homeless service providers assemble programs that meet the complex needs of their clients. The integration of appropriate mental health and substance abuse services with housing greatly increases opportunities for chronically homeless people to get and maintain stable housing and pursue recovery.

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