

# Georgia Housing Voucher Program

A housing program to support Georgians with serious mental health needs

## Housing is essential for Georgians' health and well-being

- Housing is essential to Georgians' abilities to live stable, healthy, and affordable lives.
- Individuals with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI) experience homelessness at higher rates than those without mental illness.
- Individuals with SPMI identify housing as a critical factor in achieving and maintaining their health. (1)

## History of Georgia's Housing Voucher Program

In 1999, the *Olmstead v. L.C.* lawsuit from Georgia resulted in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision. The decision found that **individuals with disabilities (including serious and persistent mental illness, SPMI) have the right to live in community-based settings rather than institutions.** (1)

In 2007, the federal government launched an investigation into hospital conditions in the state of Georgia. The investigation resulted in settlement agreements in 2008 and 2010 to expand community living opportunities for individuals with SPMI, thus upholding the *Olmstead* decision. (2) To meet the state's responsibilities, the [Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities \(DBHDD\)](#) created the [Office of Supportive Housing](#) in 2019 to oversee programs for individuals with SPMI who were not stably housed. One of these programs is the [Georgia Housing Voucher Program \(GHVP\)](#).

## The Georgia Housing Voucher Program

GHVP is a permanent supportive housing program for individuals with SPMI. GHVP community providers assist these individuals in finding safe and affordable housing. Then GHVP directly pays rent to landlords and continues to support GHVP participants so they stay in their homes and become a part of their communities. **GHVP is a highly effective and nationally recognized program.**

Bridge Funding is another source of financial support for GHVP recipients through DBHDD and the Office of Supportive Housing. It helps to cover some of the one-time costs of transitioning to permanent housing, such as furniture or security deposits. GHVP and Bridge Funding were created with the intention of preventing homelessness among individuals with SPMI.

## Who Qualifies for the GHVP?

To participate in GHVP, Georgians must be:

1. Listed on the ADA Ready to Discharge List; or
2. An individuals with a diagnosis of severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI), and who are:
  - a. Being served in state hospitals;
  - b. Frequently readmitted to state hospitals;
  - c. Seen in emergency rooms for psychiatric concerns frequently; or
  - d. Chronically homeless (4+ episodes within 36 months).

*"Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is an intervention that combines affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of chronically homeless people."*

- National Alliance to End Homelessness

# Georgians served by the GHVP

As of 2024, the Georgia Housing Voucher Program enables 2,550 Georgians with serious mental illness to secure housing in the community.

However, Georgia is under a legal obligation from the federal Department of Justice through the Olmstead Agreement to provide housing for 9,000 people. That's more than three times the amount who are currently served through this program. (2)



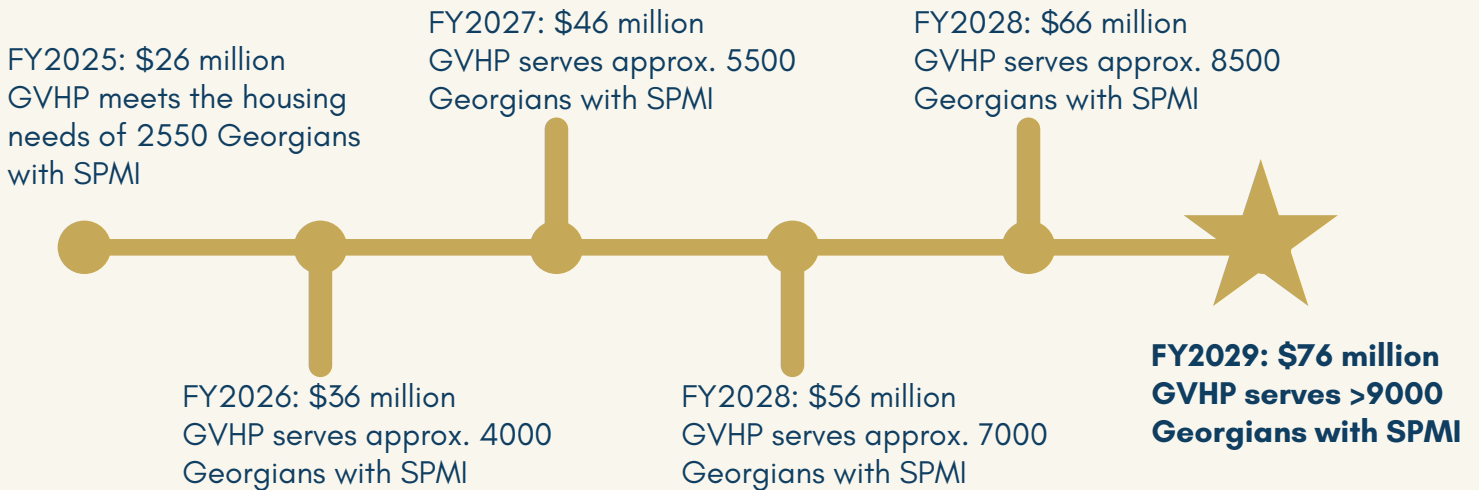
## An investment in housing, mental health, and Georgians

Despite the effectiveness of GVHP, the program's funding was cut at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and has not been restored to pre-pandemic levels. At the same time, rent and other expenses related to everyday living have increased substantially.

State leaders can help grow and strengthen the Georgia Housing Voucher program so that it reaches the full scale needed to meet Georgia's legal obligations and the needs of Georgia families.

The GHVP's base budget is currently \$26 million. **A \$10 million increase in the FY26 budget is needed to house 1,500+ more people** and meet their needs for case management to connect them to health care, benefits, and stability.

★ **If state leaders commit to increasing the GVHP budget by \$10 million annually, Georgia could meet the housing needs of Georgians with SPMI by 2030.**



### References:

- 1) [https://archive.ada.gov/olmstead/olmstead\\_about.htm](https://archive.ada.gov/olmstead/olmstead_about.htm)
- 2) <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-obtains-comprehensive-agreement-regarding-state-georgia-s-mental-health>