

My Housing Problem

When I lost my job with PRC as a customer service representative I couldn't pay my rent. I was living in a big studio apartment in South Beach, my rent had gone from \$550 a month to \$700 a month and taking 50% of my income. I didn't have a lot of money in the bank, so in a few months I was evicted and had to go into a shelter. I spent six months in the Hack where I got very little help and then I was able to get into Beckham Hall. There I received much more help. I was able to go to the Hospitality Institute and go through their three day course. While I was there, I impressed the director so much she hired me to work part time as her assistant.

Having a part time job allowed me to get into the Carrfour Supportive Housing program. Although I had to wait for an opening, in a few months I was able to move into the Little Haiti Gateway development. I live in an efficiency apartment the size of a motel room but it does have a kitchen with a full size refrigerator and stove. I suffer from severe depression. And when I lost my job my depression became horrible. Fortunately I found the Key Clubhouse which helps people with mental illness to recover their lives. Thanks to the Clubhouse I was able to stabilize and I started to improve. Having a place to live and going to the clubhouse kept me alive. If I had been homeless I would have committed suicide.

The problem is that the going rate for one of these apartments is \$575 a month, more than I paid when I started on South Beach in a much better neighborhood. For someone working a low wage job, 40 hours a week at \$8 an hour only gives you \$320 a week or \$1280 a month. So \$575 is virtually half of your income and my old apartment in South Beach is now \$850 a month and completely unaffordable. Even if you make \$10 an hour or \$400 a week or \$1600 a month means you're spending over half your income on housing. This just shows that Miami is desperately in need of affordable housing for low income workers. People like me who suffer from mental illness have a very hard time finding a job much less an apartment and when they do find work it is usually a low paying job, this makes finding a place to live very hard. We must have low income supportive housing for people with mental illness so they can live a normal life.

Thanks,

Robert Mandell