



## Successes with Section 811



*Bob Pitts Villas opened May 11 and will provide 16 units of housing for individuals with disabilities.*

**B**oley Centers is one of those nonprofits that has been very successful in using the 811 program to meet its mission.

The Florida Housing Coalition interviewed Jack Humburg, Director of Housing Development and ADA Services at Boley Centers, and a Florida Housing Coalition Board member, about the Section 811 program and the changes being made to the program by the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Act.

**Q:** For the past 20 years, Section 811 was the one federal program targeted to providing supportive housing for people with serious mental illness. It focused on single purpose housing with an integration of services and was affordable to people with disabilities with extremely low incomes - such as SSI. How important has the 811 program been for Boley Centers?

**A:** Very important. Over the past 15 years, Boley Centers has sponsored twelve Section 811 developments providing 208 units of permanent supportive housing for persons with mental illnesses who are at or below 50% of median income in Pinellas County. We have two more 811 awards under development that will add 23 new units to that mix and an application pending for another 14 units in the current round.

The 16-unit Bob Pitts Villas, was funded with a Section 811 grant and funds from the City of St. Petersburg HOME program. It is Boley Center's first green certified project, featuring low flush toilets, tankless water heaters, tin roofing, tile floors and Xeriscaping.

But not all our housing is financed through the Section 811 program, the 22-unit Burlington Gardens was acquired and rehabbed with NSP funding from the City of St. Petersburg. Burlington Gardens will provide housing for individuals with disabilities.

Twin Brooks Apartments will provide 28 units of permanent housing for people with disabilities and who are homeless.

It is a three-phase development constructed on land donated by the City of St. Petersburg. Phase I is comprised of one 14-unit complex funded by HUD's 811 program and an AHP loan from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta. It provides permanent housing for people with severe and persistent mental illness. Phases II and III are funded by the City of St. Petersburg, the State of Florida Homeless Housing Assistance Grant and PAL, Inc.

**Q:** Are you concerned about the changes made to the 811 program by the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act?

**A:** We are concerned about the changes related to providing supportive housing for persons with severe and persistent mental illnesses. While we recognize the need to leverage these funds to get more units for individuals with disabilities, something that we have been doing for years, the complexities of combining the 811 program with tax credits will require a sophisticated developer willing to partner with a strong mental health services provider. Time will tell, but there could be a tendency for developers to look for less challenging populations to serve than those with mental disabilities.

**Q:** What, if anything, would you like to see come out of HUD's rulemaking for the Act?

**A:** We would like HUD to add flexibility into the rules and allow different mixes of financing and configurations. For example, the current proposal for a 25% maximum 811 unit count within any development will cause problems in an area like Pinellas County where vacant land is at a premium. We would also hope to continue some of the traditional 811 developments while this new paradigm is implemented. **HNN**