USC Homelessness Policy Research Institute

Towards a Flourishing Framework in and Beyond Permanent Supportive Housing

Prepared by:
Homelessness Policy Research Institute (HPRI)
University of Southern California

Executive Summary

Los Angeles County's Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) system plays a vital role in addressing chronic homelessness, but faces persistent fragmentation across service, property management, clinical, and policy domains. The result is often an underperforming ecosystem that frustrates staff, marginalizes tenants, and limits opportunities for long-term healing and housing stability. These same challenges are mirrored across other homelessness service programs, and can unintentionally undermine the very communities they aim to serve.

A Framework for Flourishing provides a research-based, human-centered model designed to address this challenge. Developed by HPRI through landscape analyses, collaborative inquiry and direct experience, the framework leverages improvement science to catalyze collaboration, accountability, mindfulness, innovation, and trust across PSH stakeholders, with implications for the greater service sector. It empowers individuals, teams, and public systems to co-create housing environments where tenants can flourish.

I. The Problem

Despite growing investment in PSH and some vital successes, outcomes are often undermined by:

- Fragmented roles and misaligned accountability across agencies
- Low morale and high burnout among frontline staff
- Reactive, compliance-driven cultures with limited room for innovation
- Underutilized tenant voice in service design and evaluation
- Built environments that reinforce isolation rather than community

These conditions yield avoidable conflict, stunted progress, and reduced impact—both at the individual and systems level.

II. Purpose of a Framework

A “Flourishing" model provides a human-centered, evidence-based theoretical foundation for optimizing service delivery in and beyond L.A. County’s permanent supportive housing (PSH). Rooted in multidisciplinary research, it addresses the apparent fragmentation in vision, program alignment, property management, tenant engagement, environmental design, and data systems that currently limits holistic care and long-term housing stability. The framework empowers service providers, clinicians, property managers, and stakeholders to co-create environments where tenants—and teams—can thrive.

III. Conceptual Roots

This framework draws from and integrates:

1. **Best Practices in Permanent Supportive Housing –** Henwood, Pitts, et al. (2025)’s L.A. PSH landscape analysis and framework addresses operational realities, relational dynamics, and integrated care needs, prioritizing four key tenant outcomes: Home, Health, Meaning, and Connections.
2. **Human Flourishing and Empowerment Theories –** Flourishing includes well-being across five dimensions: 1) physical and mental health, 2) meaning and purpose, 3) character and virtue, 4) close social relationships, and 5) material stability. Empowerment centers the mindset and structures required to make informed decisions and effect meaningful change. (VanderWeele, 2020, Seligman, 2011, Zimmerman, 1995).
3. **Trust-Building Literature –** accountability, reliability, generosity, and boundaries, are trainable and foundational for systems-level collaboration and tenant engagement (Mayer et al., 1995; Edmondson, 1999; Covey, 2006, Brown, 2018).
4. **Innovation Pedagogy –** From Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen (2011), this model provides the pedagogical foundation for newer and better through observational, inquisitive, and experimental learning. These tools reframe service delivery as an ecosystem open to redesign and co-creation.
5. **User experience (UX) Theory –** Principal grounding in human-centered design (Norman, 2013) and iterative participatory co-design (Sanders & Stappers, 2008) supports organizational learning and validates lived experience, promoting environments where users, tenants, and staff feel safe to contribute insights for continuous improvement.

6. **Organizational Learning & Psychological Safety –** Building on Argyris and Schön (1978) and Edmondson (1999) and user experience theory ((Norman, 2013), the framework encourages learning-oriented culture, error-embracing, and iterative participatory co-design.
7. **Housing First Model –** This paradigm prioritizes permanent housing as a platform from which individuals can pursue recovery, connection, and long-term flourishing. Housing First principles reinforce dignity, reduce institutional barriers, and reimagine service delivery around trust and client choice.
8. **Implementation Science –** Bridging the gap between theory and practice by focusing on the "how" of systemic transformation emphasizing structured processes for adoption, fidelity, adaptation, and sustainability (Fixsen et al., 2005; Nilsen, 2015). —ensuring that interventions are both evidence-based and context-sensitive.
9. **Artificial Intelligence in Society** – Enabling proactive outreach and service through enhanced machine learning models, network analysis, and decision-support algorithms that are ethically guided, bias-aware, and transparent (Rice, 2023).

IV. Core Principles

1. **Flourishing is Holistic –** Physical, mental, social, and systemic wellness must be addressed in tandem. Silos fracture outcomes.
2. **Learning is Inherent –** Everyone can improve performance and outcomes by acquiring new and enhanced skills.
3. **Design Shapes Experience –** The built environment, organizational culture, and service architecture must align to reduce trauma and promote community.
4. **Dignity is Foundational –** Every tenant, provider, and stakeholder is worthy of care, attention, and voice.
5. **Leadership is Relational, Not Positional –** In fragmented systems, everyone has the capacity and responsibility to lead through values, voice, and collaboration.
6. **Celebration is Contagious –** Positive affect, gratitude, and acknowledgement foster favorable outcomes.

V. Learning Domains

COLLABORATION addresses the problem of siloed services, fragmented systems, and disintegrated teams by fostering a shared vision, clear roles, and stronger partnerships. Through visioning exercises, storytelling, team charters, relational coordination, and shared care plans, collaboration builds a culture of safety, transparency, and trust.

Practices include integrating peer councils and co-design methods to amplify tenant voice, coordinating property management with supportive services, and redesigning physical and social environments through community-led reviews. A flourishing approach centers collective purpose, relationship-based structures, and resouto better support residents' well-being.

ACCOUNTABILITY addresses weak trust, adversarial cultures, burnout, and misaligned policies by promoting a culture of integrity, reliability, and continuous improvement. Using frameworks like BRAVING, restorative practices, reflective supervision, and sustained communities of learning and practice, accountability ensures that staff and partners own their commitments, repair harm, and safeguard confidentiality. Shared dashboards, data storytelling, and workflow mapping help align decisions with resident-centered values. By embedding equity, trauma-informed care, and dignity-affirming practices into policy and daily operations, accountability upholds the stability, healing, and self-sufficiency that support residents to flourish.

VI. Some Domains of Practice

- Empathic listening and trust-building communication
- Collaborative problem solving and role clarity
- Data storytelling and reflective practice
- Leadership through influence, not authority
- Observational and design thinking skills

VII. Some Implementation Pathways

- **Listening Sessions —** Facilitated conversations with residents, staff, and partners to surface lived experiences, identify barriers, and co-create a vision for flourishing practices.
- **Workshops & Labs** — Interactive, arts- and dialogue-based sessions that build trust, foster integration across silos, and develop creative leadership skills among PSH stakeholders.
- **Observational & Associative Learning** — Reframing exercises, such as "Your PSH Site as a Restaurant," that spark fresh perspectives and inspire innovation in daily practices.
- **Flourishing Audit Tool(kit)s** — Structured team check-ins, tenant listening protocols, physical space assessments, and other practical resources, guides, and templates that help measure, reflect on, and strengthen flourishing conditions.

- **Training and Evaluation** — Skill-building for diverse stakeholders to deliver framework-aligned implementation and sustain cultural standards change over time.

VIII. Potential Evaluation & Learning Agenda

The framework proposes a mixed-methods evaluation strategy focused on:

- Tenant outcomes: stability, wellness, engagement
- Built environment assessments
- Changes in cross-agency collaboration
- Staff engagement
- Organizational trust metrics

IX. Conclusion

By investing in dignity, trust, and systems alignment, we can transform not only the homelessness sector, but the entire human services ecosystem—across housing, health, social care, and community development—into a network of environments that foster stability, healing, and human potential.

“Flourishing is not a luxury—it is the goal of human systems done right.”