

CHENNAI

# 'Housing is important in rehabilitating mentally ill people'

**STAFF REPORTER**

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## Recovery, rehabilitation better at home than in institutional care: experts

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The importance of shifting the approach from institutional care towards providing housing to mentally ill persons for better recovery and rehabilitation was stressed by the panelists who spoke at the Sundram Fasteners Lecture Series on 'Preventing homelessness among persons with severe mental health issues.'

Speaking on the second day of the lecture series on Sunday, Deborah K. Padgett, Professor of Social Work, Public Health and Psychiatry, New York University, termed the approach of putting the mentally ill in shelters as a "stair case approach" where they kept falling down the stairs as the dropout from shelters was very high.

Citing her research, she said that providing permanent housing clearly showed better outcomes for mentally ill persons than shelters, provided they received adequate support services. She acknowledged the challenges in implementing such an approach, particularly in the global south that already struggled to provide affordable housing to low-income and the homeless people.

Roberto Mezzina, Chair, International Mental Health Collaborating Network, who worked in the development of the progressive Trieste model of providing mental healthcare in Italy, shared his experience in shifting from institutional care to providing housing and care.

He attributed the success of the model mainly to a number of factors, including the availability of a network of community centres with trained professionals, to provide the required care at the homes where the mentally ill people lived and the government's ability to provide housing.

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He said that in the long run, the approach proved to be cost-effective.

Pallavi Rohatgi, executive director, The Banyan, shared the experience from the organisation's 'Home Again' project that followed a similar approach to mental health care. Highlighting that the organisation is now in the middle of a significant scaling up of the project in a number of States and in Sri Lanka, she said the present phase of the project had been largely successful.

K.T. Ravindran, Senior Academic Advisor, RICS School of Built Environment, and Chairman of Architecture Heritage Advisory Committee, INTACH, highlighted the poor condition of

the houses given free of cost to the poor. She spoke on the things to be taken care of architecturally while providing housing to the mentally ill persons.

Mrinalini Ravi, Co-Lead, Sundram Fasteners Centre for Social Action and Research, moderated the discussion.

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