

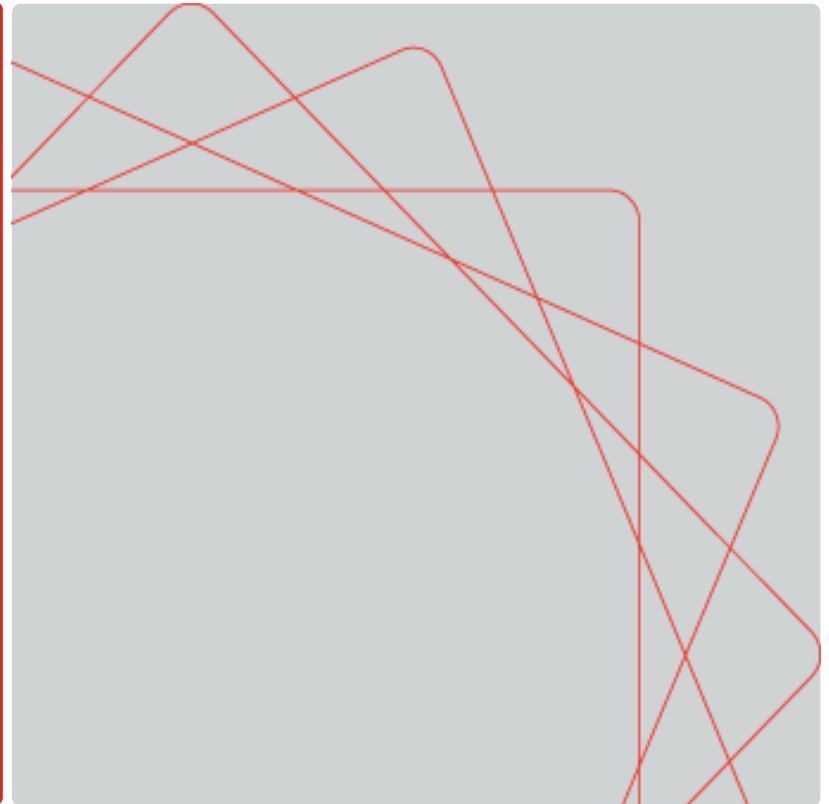


Housing First Institute

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COHHIO Annual Conference

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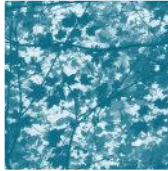


Paradigm Shift



- Evolving understanding based on...
 - Evidence from “early adopters”, local experience & data, research
 - Consumer feedback
- Emergence of *community homeless crisis response systems* driven by...
 - Public policy
 - Establishment of community-level data systems (i.e., HMIS) and ability to set and reliably measure community-wide goals
 - Funding changes – increasing focus evidence-based practices and outcomes
 - Natural evolution toward more coherent social ecological model for understanding and responding to homelessness
- Potential for defining and achieving *optimization* of community homeless crisis response systems

Ideas Behind Housing First



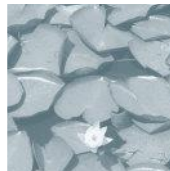
Homelessness is a
housing crisis

Homelessness can often be
solved with limited assistance



Everyone is “housing ready” –
Programs need to be
consumer ready

Other needs are best addressed when people
are in their own housing



Self-determination,
dignity and respect

What is “Housing First”?



Housing First approaches quickly connect people experiencing a housing crisis with permanent housing without preconditions (e.g., sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements) and the supports needed to maintain housing

Housing First: Core Features



- **Housing crisis orientation**
- **Client choice/self-determination**
 - Services goals not predetermined; consumer driven based on need/choice
 - Service participation, compliance not a condition of tenancy
- **Low-barrier housing and service accessibility**
 - Assistance and acceptance regardless of sobriety, substance use, low/no income, other barriers

Housing First: Core Features



- **Progressive, housing barrier-focused**
 - Assessment and goal planning (Housing Plan vs ISP)
 - Services, financial assistance
 - Assistance type, amount, duration relative to resolving housing crisis
- **Expert at housing identification, placement**
 - Landlord recruitment, retention, support
 - Broad array of landlord partners = more options, greater ability to match & succeed
- **Expert at mainstream and community-based services linkage, advocacy**

Housing First Practices for Emergency Shelters



Screening, Triage and Access

- People requesting shelter are quickly screened for...
 - Other safe and appropriate housing options (temporary or permanent) and resources to obtain/maintain their housing.
 - Critical health and safety needs to identify people with greater vulnerabilities and provide an appropriate response.
- Diversion to homelessness prevention assistance OR emergency shelter admission – when appropriate and possible

Housing First Practices for Emergency Shelters



Housing-Focused Assistance & Participant Self-Determination

- Participants and staff understand that the primary goals of the emergency shelter are to:
 - Provide temporary accommodation that is safe, respectful, and responsive to individual needs; and
 - Re-house participants as quickly as possible, regardless of other personal issues or concerns.
- Participants expected to actively work on re-housing and engage in assistance to overcome immediate *housing* barriers; other services are voluntary

Housing First Practices for Emergency Shelters



Housing-Focused Assistance & Participant Self-Determination

- Participant assessment focuses on:
 - Immediate health and safety needs relevant to providing temporary accommodations
 - Information relevant to securing housing
 - Participant housing preferences
 - Factors that would cause a landlord to reject the person's application (past evictions, criminal history, etc.)
 - Factors that have directly led to housing instability or homelessness in the past (failure to pay rent, lease violations, etc.)
 - Other information necessary to link participants to financial assistance and housing-related resources

Housing First Practices for Emergency Shelters



Housing-Focused Assistance & Participant Self-Determination

- Staff (or re-housing partner) assists participants with creating and updating individualized Housing Plans designed to re-house participants as quickly as possible.
- Staff (or re-housing partner) is aware of, knows how to access, and helps participants understand...
 - A wide array of housing options (public/private, subsidized/unsubsidized, all local permanent supportive housing, etc.)
 - Other relevant community resources to secure/maintain housing

Housing First Practices for Emergency Shelters



Housing-Focused Assistance & Participant Self-Determination

- Housing location and placement assistance, including financial assistance for move-in costs, is available to participants:
 - Who cannot otherwise exit on own,
 - Without additional preconditions, such as service participation, demonstrated changes in behavior (e.g., cease drinking),
 - With understanding that housing may continue to be unaffordable (cost > 30% income) and precarious

Housing First Practices for Emergency Shelters



Housing-Focused Assistance & Participant Self-Determination

- Exits to other homeless situations are avoided, even when program rules are violated.
 - People who are risk to themselves or others exited to more appropriate assistance (e.g., more intensive program, hospital, other emergency responder)

Housing First Practices for Emergency Shelters



Housing-Focused Assistance & Participant Self-Determination

- Participants only move to other interim shelter (emergency shelter or transitional housing) when:
 - They desire and choose;
 - More appropriate to meet health and safety needs (e.g., some persons in early recovery, some domestic violence survivors; some transition-age youth; others needing special accommodations); and
 - No permanent housing solution (with or without supportive services) is currently available that is similar or better match for their preferences and needs.

Common Challenges



- **Organizational culture, mission, and system/community orientation**
 - Shift to homeless crisis response system orientation
 - Perceived as unethical, not helping whole person/family, households will fail if not “housing ready”
- **Changing program practices (it’s a lot of work!)**

Moving Forward



- Participate in local system planning
 - Coordinated entry/assessment – get involved
 - Partner to ensure who comes in the front is who you're best able to serve, account for your program's core competencies/qualities
 - But...be open to change, growth as system resources are aligned to meet community goals

- Create organizational culture and identity around ***housing crisis intervention & resolution***
 - Seek to be the best: high quality program *and* fastest path to permanent housing for who you serve

Moving Forward



- Internalize continuous quality and performance improvement
 - Identify housing-related goals, measure and use results to inform changes (i.e., know how you're doing before your funder asks...)
- Examine and adjust program practices, policies, procedures
 - Engage consumers, board members, staff, other key stakeholders in tough questions
- Explore what others are doing...“seeing is believing”

Helpful Resources



- Organizational Change: Adopting a Housing First Approach

National Alliance to End Homelessness

www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/organizational-change-adopting-a-housing-first-approach

- Housing First in Canada

Stephen Gaetz, Fiona Scott & Tanya Gulliver (Eds.) (2013): Housing First in Canada: Supporting Communities to End Homelessness. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/HousingFirstInCanada.pdf

Activity & Reflection



- **Individual/team activity: *Housing First Practices Review***
 - Use *Housing First Practices Review Tool*, individually or as program team
 - *Identify barriers/challenges, opportunities, and next steps*
- **Large group discussion:**
 - *What questions did this exercise raise for you?*
 - *What are some of the more difficult challenges your program faces in adopting HF practices?*
 - *What are some possible solutions and next steps?*

Small Group Discussion

-By Program Type



- *What Housing First practices are you following in your program?*
- *In what ways is your program dependent on other system or community partners in order to implement Housing First practices?*
- *What Housing First practices aren't you following? What are some of the challenges you face?*
- *What are some ways these challenges can be overcome? What are potential solutions?*
- *What staff training might be needed to adopt or improve Housing First related practices?*

Report Out & Discussion



- *What are common challenges?*
- *What solutions work or could be tried to overcome challenges?*
- *What questions do we still have? Did we address concerns coming into today?*