


Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care


Implementing Housing First Practices in Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Assistance Programs

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Housing First Presentation Overview


- Housing First and the Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards
- Housing First and Federal Funding
- Housing First Overview
- Key elements of Housing First
- Housing First Implementation by Project Type
- Overcoming Challenges
- Lessons Learned



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Housing First and Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards

- HUD's CoC Program requires development of program standards
 - Applicable to CoC and ESG funded projects (includes HCRP grantees)
- Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards
 - Released in January 2016
 - Require Housing First practices by Jan. 2017




Housing First and Federal Funding

- US Dept of HUD encourages and rewards implementation of Housing First practices via the CoC Competition
- US Interagency Council on Homelessness, VA, and HUD require system-wide Housing First orientation as part of federal criteria to end Veteran homelessness



What is Housing First?


Housing First is a model of housing assistance that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with permanent housing quickly, with no pre-conditions or service participation requirements, while providing the supports needed to maintain housing.



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Ideas Behind Housing First

- Homelessness can be solved with limited assistance
- Everyone is ready for housing
- Other needs are best addressed when people are in their own housing
- Self-determination, dignity, and respect



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Housing First Elements

- Focus on housing crisis & rapid intervention when person is homeless or at imminent risk
- Low barriers to program entry
 - Assistance and acceptance regardless of sobriety, substance use, lack of income, etc



Housing First Elements

- Voluntary supportive services
 - Driven by client self-determination and individualized goal planning
 - Program compliance not a requirement for housing placement or ongoing tenancy



Housing First Elements

- Housing focused assistance
 - Individualized services to help maintain housing stability
 - Participants expected to actively work on their housing plan along with services staff
 - Other personal issues only addressed after housing obtained, and only as client desires



What Housing First Isn't

- Housing First is NOT:
 - A requirement to serve people in a congregate facility who serve a risk to other residents or staff
 - An approach that allows program participants to avoid engaging in basic case management related to their housing plan and assessment for ongoing assistance



What Housing First Isn't

- Housing First is NOT:
 - An approach that allows program participants to engage in illegal activities in the facility or housing unit assisted by the program



System-Wide Housing First Orientation

- Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards require housing first implementation in all project types
 - Homelessness prevention
 - Emergency shelter
 - Transitional housing
 - Rapid re-housing
 - Permanent supportive housing



Housing First: Homelessness Prevention Projects

- At program entry
 - No barriers to entry, including no income requirement
 - Prioritize assistance for those households with greater urgency and/or more severe needs

- In program

- Housing focused



Individualized assistance and housing plans

Housing First: Homelessness Prevention Projects

- In program

- Individualized assistance and housing plans
 - Financial assistance based on needs of households; NO policy that only allows, for example, payment of one month rent



Housing First: Emergency Shelters

- At program entry

- No barriers to entry
 - Exceptions related to safety
 - No prohibitions on returns to shelter for past residents
 - No drug testing/sobriety requirement



Housing First: Emergency Shelters

- In program

- Voluntary supportive services
 - Housing focused
 - Individualized assistance and housing plans
 - Participants are expected to actively work on their housing plan



Housing First: Transitional Housing

- Create a culture around housing focused assistance

- Permanent housing is primary focus from the start, regardless of other personal issues or concerns
 - Everyone has a housing plan



Housing First: Transitional Housing

- At program entry

- No barriers to entry
 - Prioritize assistance for those households with greater needs
 - Eg, those who seem unlikely to resolve their homelessness without more assistance



Housing First: Transitional Housing

- In program
 - Voluntary supportive services
 - Housing focused
 - Participants move to permanent housing when they choose (mostly)
 - Individualized assistance and housing plans
 - Participants are expected to actively work on their housing plan



Housing First: Rapid Re-housing

- At program entry
 - No barriers to entry, including income requirements
 - Prioritize assistance for those households with more severe needs
- In program
 - Housing focused
 - Individualized assistance and housing plans
 - Financial assistance based on needs of households; NO policy that only allows, for example, payment of one month rent



Housing First: Permanent Supportive Housing

- At program entry
 - No barriers to entry
 - Prioritize assistance for those households with longer histories of homelessness and greater service needs



Housing First: Permanent Supportive Housing

- In program
 - Voluntary supportive services
 - Compliance with treatment/service plans is NOT required for ongoing tenancy
 - Housing focused
 - Participants have a choice in identifying their unit



Housing First: Challenging Assumptions

- Housing stability can be achieved for households even if they appear not to be 'housing ready' or have little income
 - Most low income households pay more than 50% of income for housing and never become homeless



Housing First: Overcoming Challenges

- Don't be afraid to fail
 - Strive to serve households with greatest barriers/needs
 - Some households will lose their housing, but the majority will not
 - Work to prevent returns to homelessness
 - Change your plans/approach if a household returns



Housing First: Overcoming Challenges

- Don't be afraid to fail
 - Negotiate realistic project goals with funders/partners



Housing First: Overcoming Challenges

- Housing First is not housing only
 - Requires partnerships across homeless system and providers
 - Real barriers need real discussions
 - Have the difficult discussions with participants and partners



Housing First: Lessons Learned

- Shift to Housing First philosophy
 - Across your entire program and agency
 - Take chances and build on successes to educate colleagues/staff
- Continual Housing First focus
 - Ongoing training is necessary



Housing First: Lessons Learned

- Formal Implementation
 - Align all formal and informal program documents with Housing First
 - Client rules
 - Policies and Procedures
 - Intake forms and processes



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