Reweaving the Safety Net: Creating Diversion Opportunities

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Introductions
History of Cleveland Mediation Center
- Providing mediation and training since 1981
- Initial focus on youth
- Programs:
  - Eviction Prevention/Community Mediation
  - Diversion/Shelter Discharge Mediation
  - Training
  - Court Mediation

History of Cleveland Mediation Center
- Learned about Diversion from National Alliance session
- Successful pilot in 2009 at men’s shelter
- Conflict resolution/empowerment approach
- HPRP funding, full implementation

Coordinated Intake & Assessment
Accessing Homeless Services in Cuyahoga County
- Centralized point of access
- In-person assessment required
- Public transportation system
- After hours access to shelter
**Diversion: A Part of the System**

**Diversion for All!!**

- Not a separate system
  - Provided within the existing Coordinated Entry System
- Our way of doing business...Commitment
  - Part of the service design
- Leveraging existing resources
  - Collaboration and connections are key

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**Why is Diversion Important?**

**We understand that:**

- The shelter experience is traumatic for everyone
- Homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring
- Diversion for all!! - short-term & permanent
  - Reduces the number of families and individuals entering shelter

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**How Does This Work?**

**Everyone is at the table!!**

- Individualized, person-centered, quality problem solving
- Identification of other resources and supports
- Opportunities for mediation and conflict resolution
- Financial support helpful, but not necessary
Coordinated Intake & Diversion

- Identify presenting circumstances
- Explore diversion options
- Determine eligibility for veteran services, if applicable

Transportation Assistance

- Lower Barrier to CI Access:
  - No ID necessary
  - No appointment necessary
  - No income restriction
  - No residency requirement
  - No referral necessary
  - Shelter resistant…? OK!

Coordinated Intake

- Tailor a Housing Recommendation (short & long term) for client
- Initiate referrals for supportive services
- Service Point data entry + referral

Continuous Diversion

- Diversion training for shelter staff
- Diversion exploration as part of the Housing Plan discussion
  - Recognizing shelter experience is traumatizing
  - Trauma informed approach to explore ongoing diversion
  - Family reunification for young adults

Bringing Diversion to the Table

The people we serve bring more than housing barriers to the table.

- Diversion acknowledges the resourcefulness of our clientele, and builds on it
- Housing solutions come in surprising forms; diversion does not close the door to creative safe arrangements
- No one wants to end homelessness more than our clientele
Diversion Improves RRH Capacity

Diversion brings us toward Functional Zero, in more ways than “Inflow reduction”

- Diversion prompts housing plan creation in advance of shelter placement
- Non-SITH/GPD enrollments all require this plan
- Due to Diversion and ongoing housing offers, those who enter shelter in a diversion-focused system experience reductions in length of stay
- Ensures our limited PSH and RRH resources go to those with high-barriers who have no other options

Overheard while diverting veterans...

“I’m here to use my Grant-Per-Diem...”

- Common misconception shared by veterans and providers: Substance use disorder treatment and shelter diversion are mutually exclusive
- False...BUT, to safely present this option with confidence, partnerships must already be in place.
- Collaborate with the VA and community partners so this plan can be executed quickly if a veteran requests it.

“Overheard while diverting” ... Part II

“I’m here to sign up for the Diversion Program...”

- Rule of thumb: Diversion referrals should pull from RRH. No sleeping arrangements worked out before CI? Then Diversion.
Empowering persons facing imminent homelessness to identify safe and appropriate housing options (other than the street/car/shelter), and assisting them in returning, as quickly as possible, to housing.

- Staff meet targeted individuals and families
- Quickly establish rapport
- Access to flexible funding
- Linkage with mainstream services

Diversion Is........

Traditional Diversion

Diversion as an outcome based descriptive model. A process-based set of activities, at the shelter front door, that empowers folks to identify permanent and temporary housing options.

System-Wide Diversion

Diversion as a normative, system-wide model. Activities and information that empowers people such that homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring. Begins by creating a supportive shelter culture.
HF Shelter Services Should...

- Teach/ build skills to meet needs and gain access to stable housing
- Demonstrate building working relationships with others
- Teach crisis prevention through structure, norms and expectations
- Identify and communicate behaviors that may become a barrier to housing stability
- Build motivation for future possibilities

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