
Diversion: The Critical Questions to Ask & The Order In Which to Ask Them

by

OrgCode Consulting, Inc.



The practice of diverting people from services is a helpful and necessary part of delivering shelter services. As an individual or family presents for shelter, considerable effort must be made to ensure that all other possible natural supports have been exhausted prior to undertaking a shelter admission.

There are nine steps to an effective diversion practice:

STEP ONE:

Explanation of the diversion conversation.

“Our goal is to learn more about your specific housing situation right now and what you need so that together we can identify the best possible way to get you a place to stay tonight and to find safe, permanent housing as quickly as possible. That might mean staying in shelter tonight, but we want to avoid that if at all possible. We will work with you to find a more stable alternative if we can.”

STEP TWO:

- Why are you seeking emergency shelter today?
- What are all the other things you tried or thought about trying before you sought shelter today?

STEP THREE:

- Where did you stay last night?
 - a. If staying with someone else, what is the relationship between them and you?
 - b. How long have you been staying there?
 - c. Where did you stay before that?
 - d. Would it be safe for you to stay there again for the next 3-7 days?
 - e. (If a couple and/or household with children under 18) Would your whole household be able to return and stay there safely for the next 3-7 days?
 - f. If indicate that the place where they stayed is unsafe, ask why it is unsafe.
 - g. If cannot stay there safely, or if were staying in a place unfit for human habitation, move to Step Six.

STEP FOUR:

- What is the primary/main reason that you had to leave the place where you stayed last night?
- Are there additional reasons why you can't stay there any longer?

STEP FIVE:

- Do you think that you/you and your family could stay there again temporarily if we provide you with some help or referrals to find permanent housing or connect with other services?
- If no, why not? What would it take to be able to stay there temporarily?

STEP SIX:

- If no, is there somewhere else where you/you and your family could stay temporarily if we provide you with some help or referrals to find permanent housing and access other supports? For example, what about other family members? Friends? Co-workers?
- What would it take for you to be able to stay there temporarily?

STEP SEVEN:

- What is making it hard for you to find permanent housing for you/you and your family - or connect to other resources that could help you do that?
 - a. For example, do you or does anyone in your family have special needs or a medical condition? How does this affect your housing situation?
 - b. Do you owe money for rent or utilities?
 - c. Are you new to the area?

STEP EIGHT:

What resources do you have right now that could help you and your family find a place to stay temporarily or find permanent housing?

- a. For example, are you getting any help from other family members or friends?
- b. Do you have income? What are the sources?
- c. Are you involved with any other services right now?

STEP NINE:

- If admitted to shelter there is still an expectation that you will be attempting to secure permanent housing for you and your family.
- What is your plan at this point for securing housing if you are admitted to shelter?