

Eastern PA Training Series

Session One: **Effective Homeless Response
Systems and Housing First Approach**

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Your Trainers

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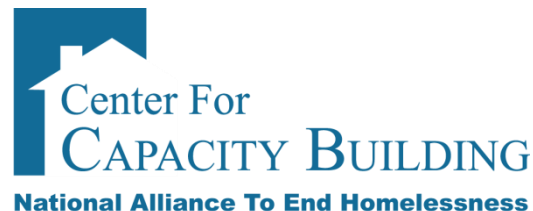
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The National Alliance to End Homelessness is the leading national voice on the issue of homelessness. The Alliance analyzes policy and develops pragmatic, effective policy solutions. The Alliance works collaboratively with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity, leading to stronger programs and policies that help communities achieve their goal of ending homelessness. The Alliance provides data and research to policymakers and elected officials in order to inform policy debates and educate the public and opinion leaders nationwide.

Working with a strong network of innovators, the National Alliance to End Homelessness identifies and evaluates hundreds of policy and program strategies and their impact on homelessness. The Alliance's Center for Capacity Building helps communities replicate and customize the best of those strategies. The Center focuses on strategies that are cost effective, data driven, and can be implemented at a scale that can significantly reduce homelessness.

National Alliance to End Homelessness Statements for Participation

- The Alliance works to ensure that diverse voices are included as speakers, attendees, and guests at our conferences and webinars. All voices are welcome.
- The organization has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of discrimination or abusive behavior. The Alliance is committed to ensuring that all its events are safe and respectful for all participants.
- Participants acknowledge that any form of discrimination, violence, or abusive behavior may result in removal from a session, webinar, or conference, depending on the situation.
- If any discrimination is witnessed or experienced during this training, or if you feel unsafe, please notify any member of the Alliance staff.
- The National Alliance to End Homelessness strives to create a diverse, inclusive, accepting, and safe space for everyone.

Virtual Session Logistics



Why an Emergency Shelter Training?

- **Implement** a system-wide approach to ending homelessness
- **Align** emergency shelter's goals with the CoC goals to end homelessness
- **Provide** low-barrier, safe, and housing-focused shelter that people will use
- **Increase** the number of people that exit from shelter to permanent housing (and decrease the number exiting back into homelessness)
- **Shorten** the length of time people experience homelessness



Introductions

Let's get a sense of who's here!

In the chat, tell us your name, pronouns, race/ethnicity, and what inspires you to do the work you are doing?



Thoughts...in chat...

- When I think of emergency shelter across our continuum of care, the first word that comes to mind is...
- I wish our emergency shelter system could...
- The greatest obstacle facing our unsheltered neighbors is...

AND Finally

- A word that describes how I am feeling about participating in the Emergency Shelter Clinic is...

Breakouts: Get to Know your Colleagues

- Say hello to each to other
- Identify the top 3 challenges that you agree on in operating Emergency Shelter
- Identify the top 3 takeaways you hope to gain from participating in this training

First...when you arrive your breakout room, turn on your cameras, identify the note taker, and identify the reporter for the debrief

Challenges

Rm 1:

1. Funding (competition)
2. Barriers of clients
3. Access to shelters

Rm 2:

1. Funding (operations/staffing)
2. High demand/low space
3. Barriers: Transportation/MH challenges

Rm 3

1. Funding
2. Staffing/Volunteers
3. Lack of affordable housing

Rm 4

1. Funding
2. Space

Rm 5

1. Funding/Space
2. Affordable Housing
3. LL's who work with programs
4. Childcare

Rm. 6

1. Funding/Resources
2. Space
3. Lack of affordable housing

Rm. 7

1. Fast turnaround time to get into housing
2. LL willingness to work with clients
3. Client participations
4. Winter shelter

Rm. 8

1. Transportation
2. Affordable housing
3. MH/SUD increasing/ Effects on CH
4. Recidivism for high need folx

Rm. 8

1. Lack affordable
2. Lack of staffing capacity
3. Lack of shelter

Rm. 10

1. Funding
2. Staff capacity/ Housing affordability
3. Increased needs of guest



**BUT FIRST
AN EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT, AND EQUITABLE
HOMELESS RESPONSE SYSTEM**

That ends homelessness...



Effective, Equitable and Efficient Homeless Response System: **GOAL**

House people as quickly as possible and
divert people from imminent homelessness whenever possible



Effective, Equitable and Efficient Homeless Response System: **APPROACH**

Use a systemic approach

to align interventions and resources across programs in a coordinated way around this common goal



Effective, Equitable and Efficient Homeless Response System: **ENDGAME**

Homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time

- People in a housing crisis have access to immediate help, including a safe place to go
- People are not unsheltered
- People do not spend long periods of time homeless
- People exit homelessness quickly and do not quickly cycle back into homelessness
- Black people are not overrepresented in those experiencing homelessness



Effective, Equitable and Efficient Homeless Response System: **PERFORMANCE**

Establish systemic performance measures

1. Reduce in-flow into homelessness
2. Increase exits to permanent housing
3. Decrease average length of homelessness
4. Decrease returns to homelessness



An Effective Homeless Response System: **PRACTICE**

Practice Standards Across all Programs

- **Housing First** approach across all interventions within the system
- **Diversion** from imminent homeless system when safe and appropriate
- **Rapid identification and engagement of people** experiencing unsheltered homelessness to connect them to crisis services and housing assistance

An Effective Homeless Response System: **PRACTICE**

Practice Standards Across all Programs

- **Quick, accessible, low-barrier pathways to shelter** and other crisis services with **short stays** in shelter
- **Rapid connection to permanent housing** for all sheltered and unsheltered people, *whether or not* they are matched to a housing resource through coordinated entry

An Effective Homeless Response System: Increase System Flow

System Flow:

An efficient and coordinated **process** that moves people from homelessness to housing as quickly as possible



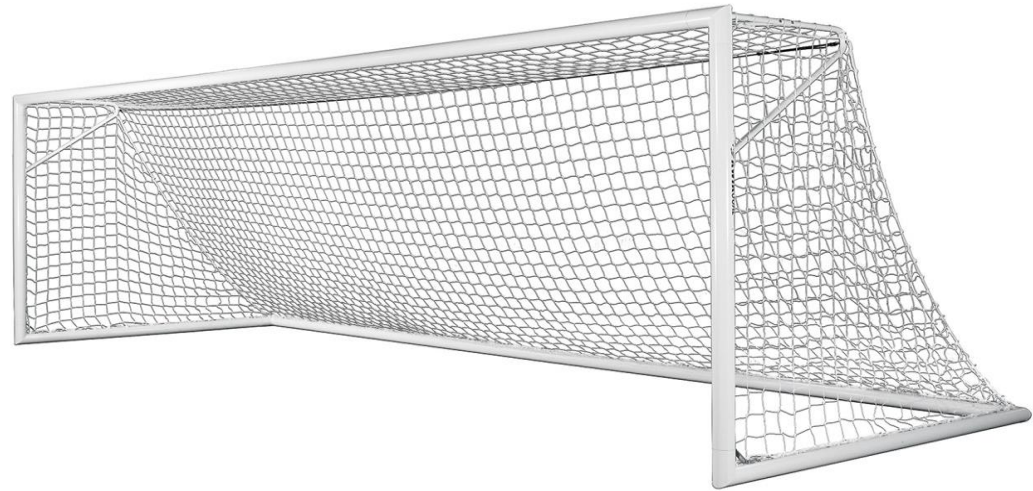
The “**process**” means that all interventions need to work as one system to create flow.

THE ROLE OF EMERGENCY SHELTER IN SYSTEM FLOW

THE ROLE OF EMERGENCY SHELTER



Sooo, just what is the goal of emergency shelter?



Break Out Discussion:

What is the **ROLE** of Emergency Shelter in Your Homeless Assistance System?

1. What is the purpose of emergency shelter?
2. Who is emergency shelter for?
3. Who does emergency shelter not work for?

Role of Emergency Shelter

What role does it play in achieving the goal?

- Ensures individuals and households experiencing homelessness have a safe, decent place to stay that is immediately accessible while focusing on quickly exiting people to housing
- Provides housing support within shelter or connections to rapid re-housing and other housing resources for rapid exits to housing.

Purpose of shelters/crisis housing?

- To provide temporary shelter
 - Hostel-like environment (check-in and check out every day)
 - Meets basic needs
 - Shower/bathroom
 - Laundry
 - Mail
 - Self-directed resource/information and referral
 - Light services

OR

- To end homelessness
 - Resolve housing crises permanently
 - Facilitate self-resolution
 - Re-house people quickly
 - Reduce unsheltered homelessness
 - Create better system flow
 - Connect people to coordinated entry
 - Connect people to housing search and other resources to help stabilize them once housed

POLL

Which of the following system performance measures does shelter impact?

Why Are Shelters So Important?

- People in a housing crisis will always need a safe and decent place to go that is immediately available
- Shelters will most likely be the only place people receive help to resolve their housing crisis and get connected to permanent housing
- Shelter eligibility, policies, and stays impacts performance outcomes and **system flow**



Effective Shelters Create System Flow

- Systemic Alignment of Practice Across Shelters
 - Analysis of Why Some People Refuse Shelter
 - Engage and Listen to People with Lived Experience
- And...
- Then Make Changes!

Before adding more beds, look at what you currently have in your system. What are barriers? How are people exited? Does your shelter options align with systemic needs?



Break time!

See you back in 5 min



WHAT DOES DATA TELL US?

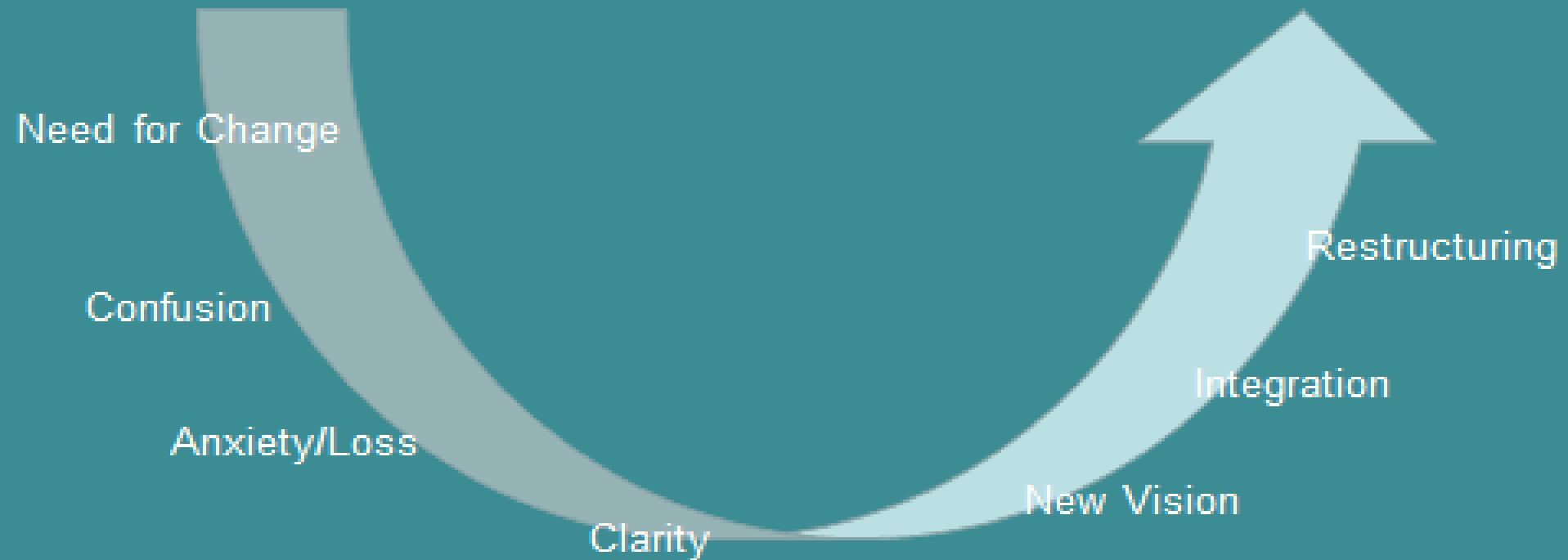
Impact of shelter practice in Eastern PA's System Flow



Where are you in your Transformational Change?

Old Shelter Model

New Shelter Model



What Do We Know About Shelter Stays?

Significant portion of people self-resolve or seek help from another system

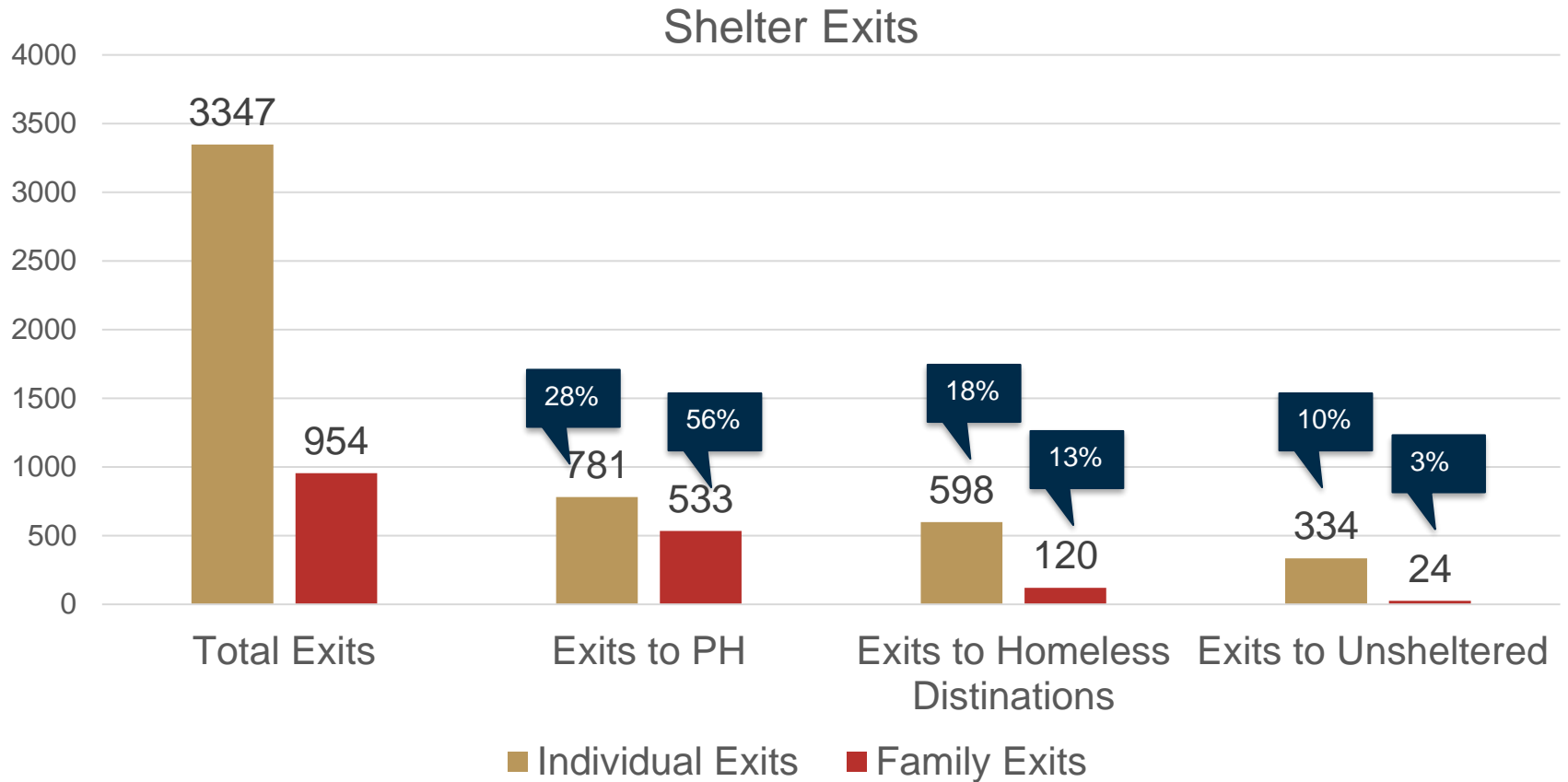
Most people can exit homelessness with a light touch of services and assistance, and exit homelessness for good

People who have highest needs often lose shelter beds due to non-compliance issues

Minority of people need more intensive services and long-term housing supports

Shelter Exits to Permanent Housing

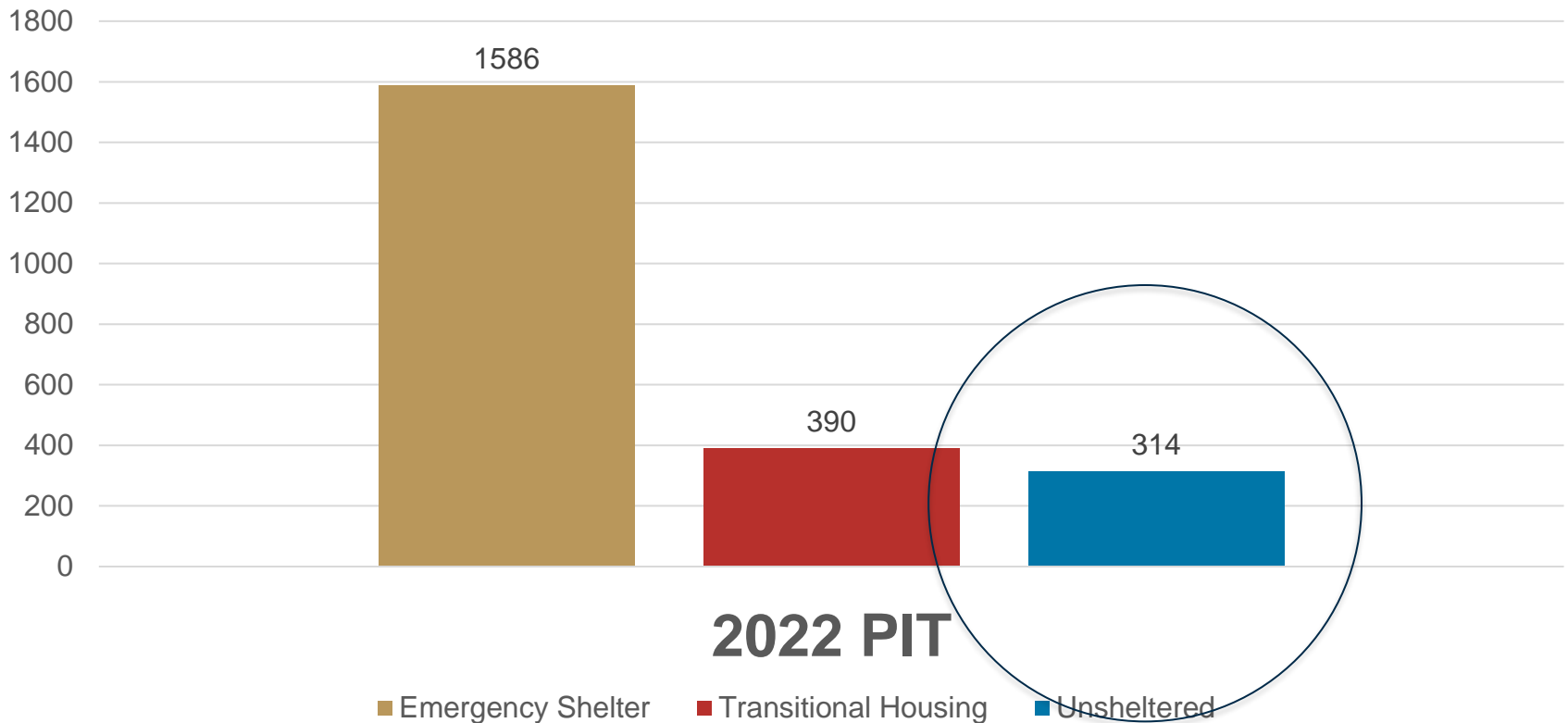
Eastern PA October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023



Local Data

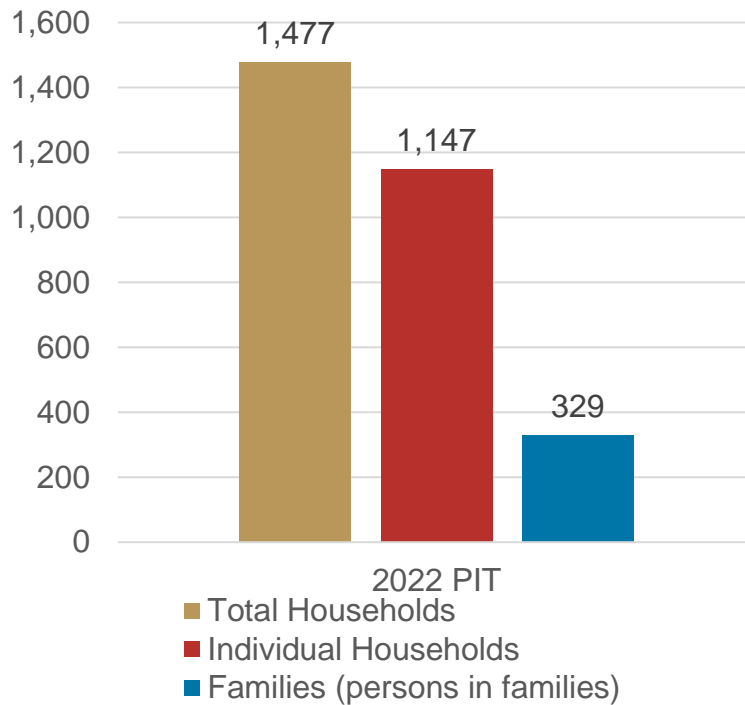
Eastern PA 2022 PIT

Persons Experiencing Homelessness

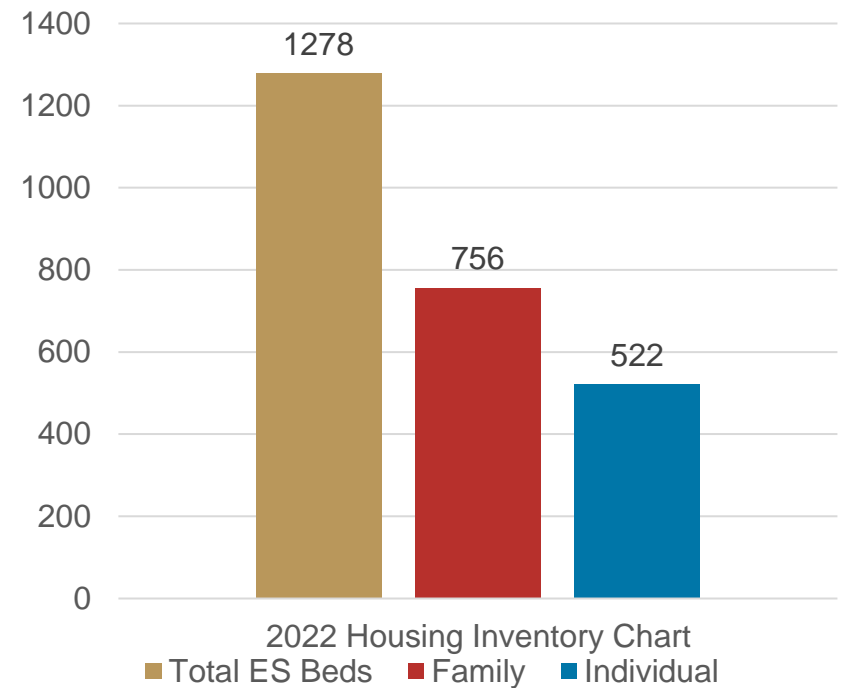


Do We Have the Right Mix?

2022 PIT Families VS Singles in shelter



2022 HIC Shelter Beds




SOOO....

Ideally, Emergency Shelter...



The Role of Shelter in the Crisis Response System...Ideally

- Integrated with coordinated intake system (accepts referrals, provides real-time data)
- Diverts people who can safely maintain their current housing
- Prioritizes shelter for those who need it most
- Provides immediate and low-barrier access through coordinated entry to shelter and crisis services without barriers to entry, as stable housing and supports are being secured
- Quickly connects people who experience homelessness to housing assistance and/or services tailored to the unique strengths and needs of households

The background of the slide features an isometric illustration of a shelter room. On the left, there are several beds with purple bedding and white pillows, each accompanied by a small wooden nightstand with a lamp. On the right, a group of stylized human figures in various colors (blue, purple, grey) represents a diverse population, including men, women, children, and an elderly person with a cane. A dog is also visible among the figures. A large green arrow points from the right towards the text on the left.

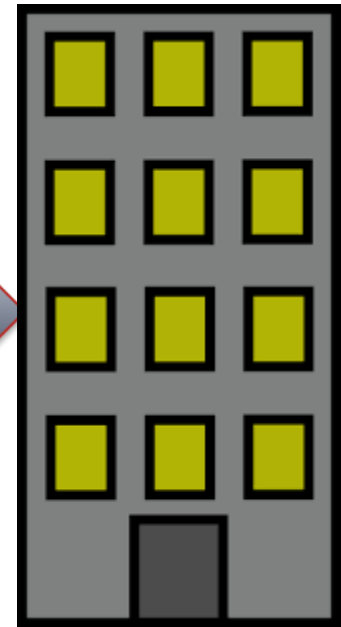
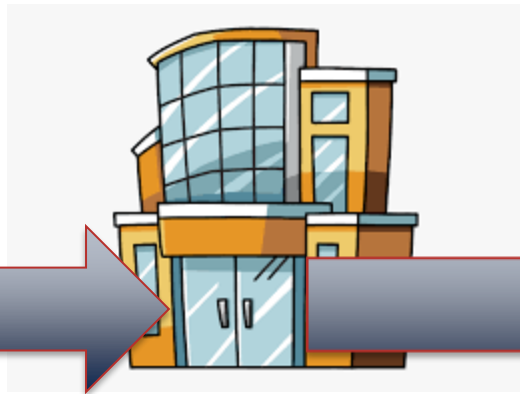
And remain low barrier while
focusing on housing to quickly exit to
permanent solutions!

In order to play a critical role
in ending homelessness,

**EMERGENCY SHELTERS MUST BE ACCESSIBLE
TO ANYONE WHO NEEDS HELP.**



People have to be able to get *in*...
...and be able to get *out* (to housing).



Breakout Discussions

1. What are some of the biggest challenges to getting into shelter in your community?

- *How do people access shelter?*
- *How do you determine who will enter shelter?*
- *What do you do when shelter is full?*

2. What are some of the biggest challenges to successfully getting out of shelter in your community?

- *How long does it take for people to exit to housing?*
- *How do you support clients to successfully exit to housing?*



First...when you arrive your breakout room, turn on your cameras, identify the note taker, and identify the reporter for the debrief

FIVE KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SHELTER

THAT CREATE SYSTEM FLOW IN THE HOMELESS RESPONSE SYSTEM





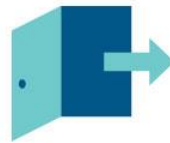
HOUSING FIRST APPROACH



SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION



IMMEDIATE & LOW-BARRIER ACCESS



HOUSING-FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES



DATA TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

THE FIVE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY SHELTER



HOUSING FIRST APPROACH

Align shelter eligibility criteria, policies, and practices with a Housing First approach so that anyone experiencing homelessness can access shelter without prerequisites, make services voluntary, and assist people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION

Provide diversion services to find safe and appropriate housing alternatives to entering shelter through problem-solving conversations, identifying community supports, and offering lighter touch solutions.



IMMEDIATE & LOW-BARRIER ACCESS

Ensure immediate and easy access to shelter by lowering barriers to entry and staying open 24/7. Eliminate sobriety and income requirements and other policies that make it difficult to enter shelter, stay in shelter, or access housing and income opportunities.



HOUSING-FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES

Focus services in shelter on assisting people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



DATA TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

Measure data on percentage of exits to housing, average length of stay in shelter, and returns to homelessness to evaluate the effectiveness of shelter and improve outcomes.

THE FIVE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY SHELTER



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Key Elements of Emergency Shelters in an Effective Crisis Response System

- **Housing First Approach**
- Safe & Appropriate Diversion
- Immediate and Low-barrier Access
- Housing-focused, Rapid Exit Services
- Data to Measure Performance



POLL
**What Is Your
Experience with or
Understanding of
Housing First?**



Housing First Approach

Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people who are homeless as quickly as possible and connects them to supports necessary to sustain that housing



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

At the system level, key Housing First principles include...

- Policies and regulations do not create barriers to accessing services and housing
- People with the greatest needs are screened **INTO** programs and services, not **OUT OF**
- Communities provide a continuum of supports that meet the breadth of needs of all people experiencing homelessness, not just particular subpopulations
- Providers coordinate with each other to ensure that access to services is unified, streamlined, user-friendly, equitable, and available across the entire community
- All levels of service have a housing focus and are dedicated to quickly resolving the experience of homelessness

Housing First

HOUSING FIRST IS NOT	HOUSING FIRST IS
Just one type of program (not just PSH)	A system-wide philosophical approach to many types of homeless assistance interventions
One-size fits all	A philosophy that values flexibility, individualized supports, client choice, and autonomy
Housing only	Supportive services that people choose for themselves are a critical part of a Housing First approach
Setting people up for failure	The provision of a foundation of stability and health through permanent housing
A way to prioritize one population over another	A way to provide a housing intervention for everyone regardless of the severity of their needs

Things to Keep in Mind

- Households experiencing homelessness are not significantly different than other low-income households
- Majority experience homelessness due to a financial or other crisis
- Prolonged exposure to homelessness has a significant negative impact on adults and children

Homelessness is Misunderstood & It Impacts Shelter Practice

- Almost everyone with poor credit history is housed, not homeless.
- Almost everyone with a history of evictions is housed, not homeless.
- Almost everyone with a felony conviction is housed, not homeless.
- Almost everyone who is a registered sex offender or sexual predator is housed, not homeless.

-Orgcode

IN CHAT:

One concern/question I have about housing first is...

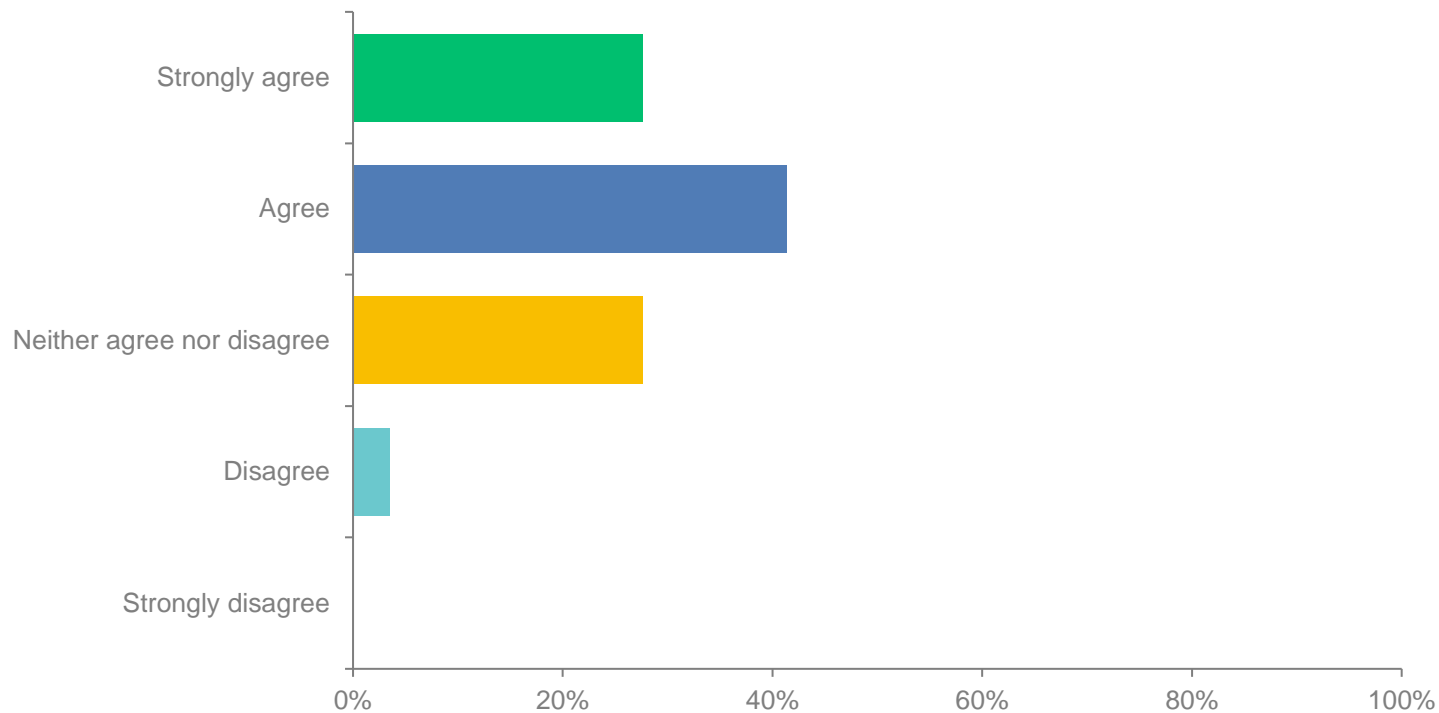
Break time!
See you back in 3 min



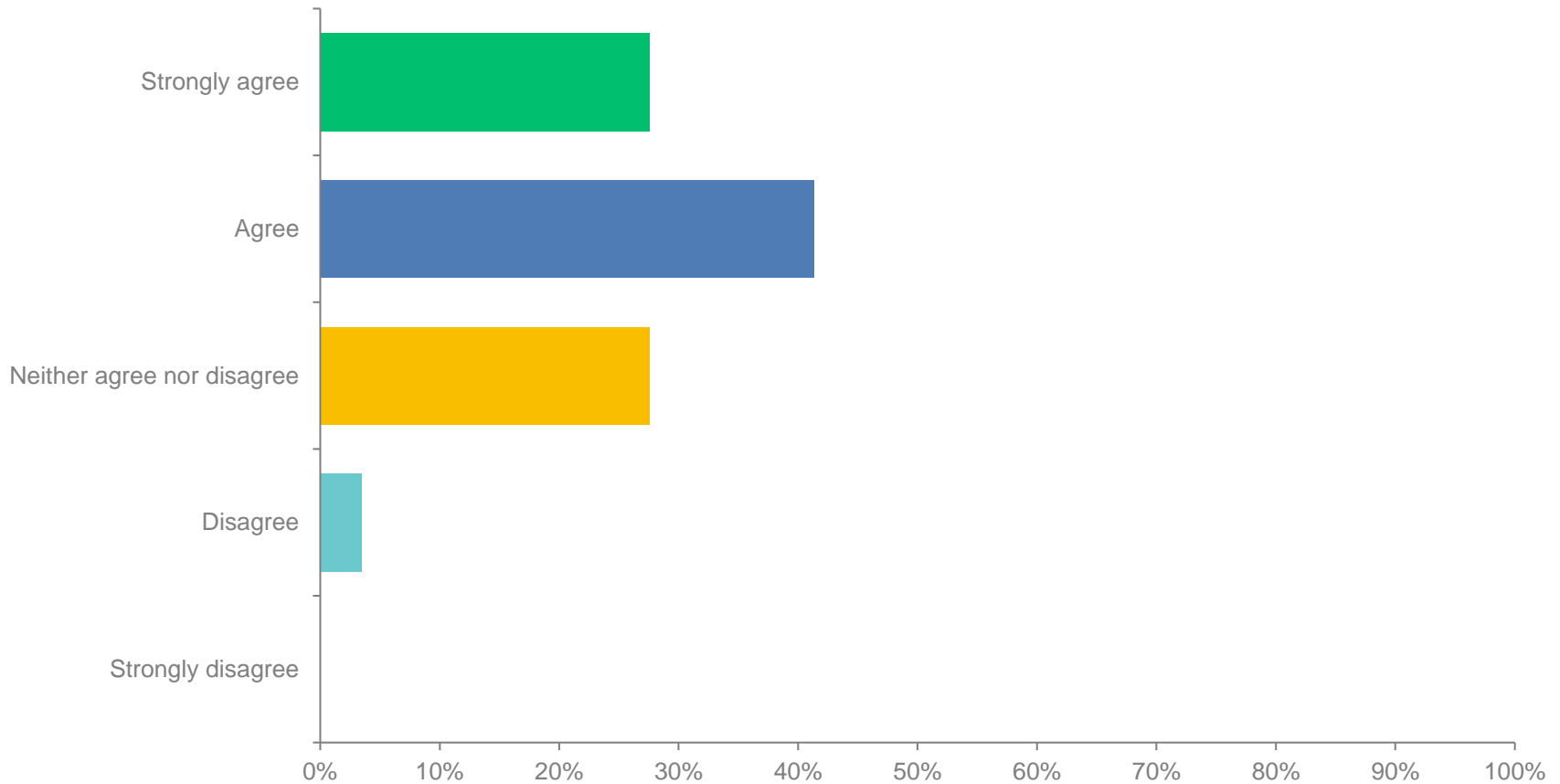
SURVEY RESPONSES



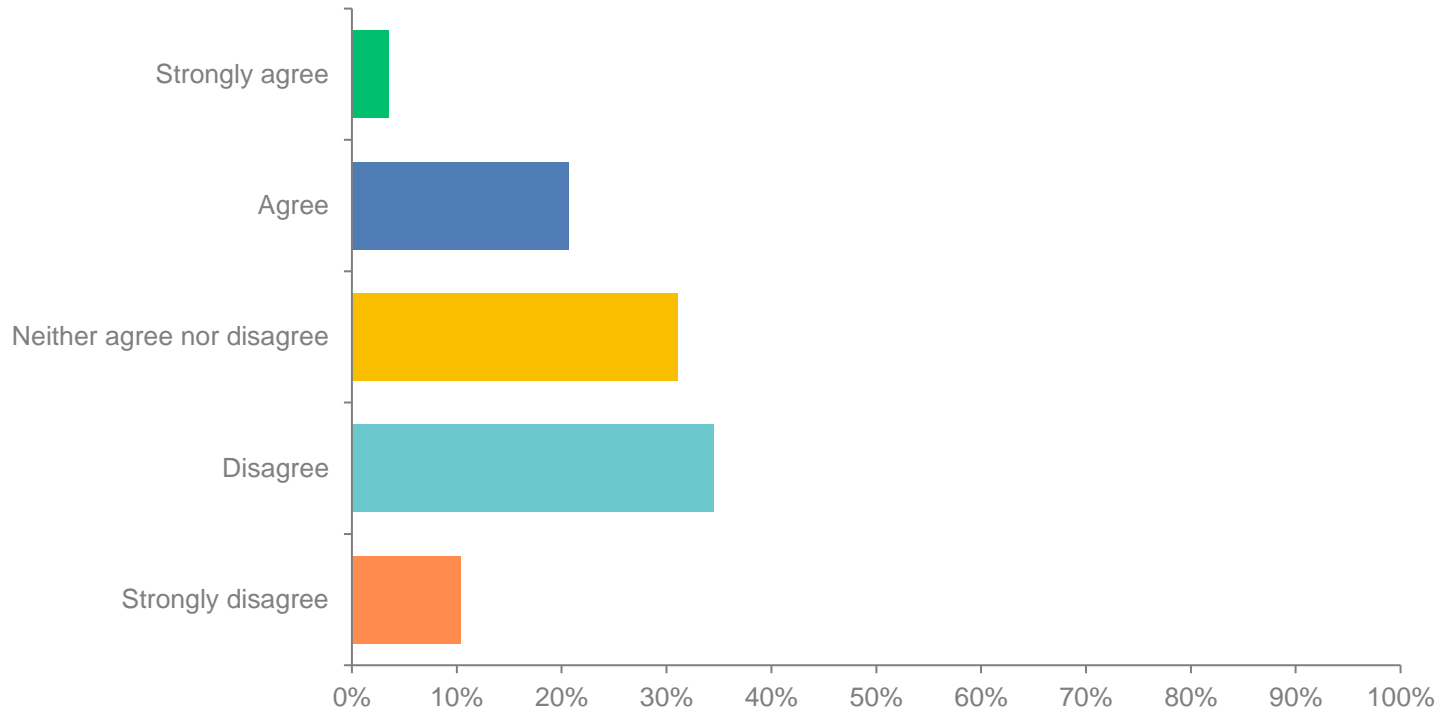
Our community utilizes a Housing First approach to ending homelessness.



Our community's shelters are focused on assisting shelter guests into permanent housing as quickly as possible.



All people experiencing homelessness are housing ready and should be supported to immediately move into permanent housing.



INTEGRATING HOUSING FIRST

The Philosophical Shift



Advancing the Role of Shelter in
Reducing Homelessness

Philosophical Shift

Operational Shift

Practice Shift

Shelter Adopts Housing First Principles

Philosophy Shift

- Homelessness is foremost a housing problem
- Everyone is ready for housing **now** if they choose
- Permanent housing is a right to which all are entitled
- People should be returned to or stabilized in permanent housing as quickly as possible and voluntarily connected to resources necessary to sustain that housing

Shelter Adopts Housing First Principles Philosophy Shift

- Issues that may have contributed to a household's homelessness can best be addressed ***once they are permanently housed***
- For most people experiencing homelessness, intensive services are not necessary
- Vast majority of homeless individuals and families fall into homelessness ***one time*** after a housing or other crisis

Housing First Philosophy in Practice

- Housing First is NOT a “program”, but the adoption of the Housing First Principles across the shelter
 - Belief by all staff that guests are housing ready
- Housing First is NOT a one size fits all approach
 - Everyone’s housing plan is unique to them
- Housing First is NOT housing ONLY
 - Services are more effective when someone is in a permanent setting
- Shelter is NOT a destination
 - Shelter is life-saving, but ONLY housing ends homelessness

Sample Mission Statement for a “Housing First” Shelter

OUR MISSION: To offer safe, temporary, emergency shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness, while offering individualized housing solutions. Our goal is to empower our guests to quickly obtain stable, permanent housing. We are committed to advancing a collaborative, locally driven solution to ending homelessness in our community.

McKinney Shelter

Hartford, CT

A Note: Don't be the “Dumping” Grounds for Other Systems

- Your shelters should be the crisis response of first choice for **people with a housing instability issue**; not the exit plan for other systems
- A shelter should not adapt to become a parallel substance use recovery system, mental health care provider, halfway house, hospice, center for chronic disease management, refugee or immigrant settlement home, etc.
 - Shelters simply are not equipped nor designed to be good at these types of services, nor should they be!

Housing First Advances Race Equity

Black/African Americans disproportionately...

- Are evicted
- Are criminalized
- Are un/underemployed
- Face health disparities contributing to underdiagnosis with MH and other health conditions

So, if you are screening out for these things, who's disproportionately affected?

SHIFTING TO A HOUSING FIRST PHILOSOPHY

Operational and Practical Shift



Housing First

Operational Shift

- Mission Statement reflects the Housing First Philosophy
- Shelter adopts a “Housing First” orientation across all practice by using policies and procedures that:
 - Clearly define the housing first philosophy
 - Reflect low-barrier admission and retention policies
 - Emulate the Housing First Approach in shelter operations
- Shelter Job Descriptions require that employees embrace the Housing First philosophy, and job duties reflect a Housing First approach

Housing First Shelter

Operational Shift

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McKinney Shelter

Hartford, CT

Housing First Cornerstone **Belief: Shift in Mindset**

Practice – Let's do a POLL!!

Shift from...

- Many of our clients/consumers have too many barriers to be successful in housing
- Housing is too expensive for the Housing First approach to work
- Some of my clients just aren't ready for housing
- The most successful Housing First approaches use the same approach and model when working with everyone

To...

- Creativity in housing options is critical!!
- **People Can Be Successful** regardless of barriers
- Housing First Philosophy offers a great opportunity to empower people without housing to believe in themselves and their success
- Many people that have the same housing history as our clients never become homeless and find ways to make housing work
- Creativity and flexibility are the key factors in successful housing first.

Housing First

Practice Shift

Shelters adopt a “Housing First” orientation across all practice by:

- Using strength-based case management
 - Strengths assessment vs. needs assessment
- Supporting guests by communicating the belief that they are ready for housing
 - Eliminate all “housing readiness conversations”
- Focusing all interactions on supporting guests to access and sustain permanent housing situations quickly
- Building partnerships to connect guests with services **after** they are housed
- Offering housing-focused services that are voluntary.

Activity: POLL

Housing First in Practice

Summary: Housing First Approach

Philosophy

- Not a “program,” it is a system-wide orientation and response
- Everyone is ready for housing
- Homelessness is a housing problem
- Housing First means housing fast

Practice

- Few to no pre-requisites to shelter entry
- Not screening for “housing readiness”
- Staff embrace “housing first” approach
- Services are voluntary and all are housing-focused
- Services come after housing



Assignment

Evaluating Housing First In Your Shelter Focus Areas



1. Does our mission statement reflect a Housing First philosophy?
2. Do our policies and procedures help or hinder the Housing First philosophy?
3. Do our job descriptions require an understanding of Housing First?
4. Are staff and board trained in Housing First Principles?
5. Do our staff reflect a Housing First approach in what they say and do?

Key Elements of Emergency Shelters in an Effective Crisis Response System

- Housing First Approach
- **Safe & Appropriate Diversion**
- **Immediate and Low-barrier Access**
- Housing-focused, Rapid Exit Services
- Data to Measure Performance



Training Series Overview

Week One

- Effective Homeless Response Systems
- Role of Emergency Shelter
- Housing First Approach in Shelter

Week Two

- Role of Shelter in Diversion and Problem Solving
- Transitioning Shelter to a Low Barrier Model
- The role of rules and guidelines for effective shelter

11/7/2023

Week Three

- Housing Focused Shelter
- Rapid Exits
- Creating a Housing Focused Environment

Week Four

- Using Data and Outcomes to Measure Success
- Taking Action
- Wrap-up



Q&A



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