

# BEST PRACTICES IN HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION & DIVERSION

**What is Prevention?** Prevention is an umbrella term for any service or process that prevents persons from becoming homeless.

**What is Diversion?** Diversion interventions stop newly homeless individuals from entering the homeless system of care by connecting households that present at a shelter or coordinated entry access point to alternate housing arrangements or supports that help them return to permanent housing.

**Why are these programs best practices?** These programs are less expensive and more humane than letting individuals and families fall into homelessness.

Examples of Prevention & Diversion Interventions:

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Flexible fund for critical family needs
- Rental assistance (short or long term)
- Rental application fees
- Security deposits
- Last month's rent
- Utility deposits and payments
- Rental or utility arrears
- Moving costs
- Car repair
- Other services that support individuals/families with paying rent

### SERVICES

- Housing advice
- Housing search and placement
- Housing stability case management
- Conflict resolution/mediation (with landlords, friends, neighbors, family)
- Legal services
- Credit repair and budgeting
- Employment
- Education
- Other wraparound services

## HOUSING FIRST

Housing First is a program model that quickly and successfully connects individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety or services participation requirements. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals prior to permanent housing entry.<sup>1</sup> Many agencies providing housing or shelter in Tulsa have adopted a Housing First approach for their services, but not all.

**Why is Housing First a best practice?** Housing First has been shown to improve housing retention rates and reduce the use of emergency services.

**Housing First improves housing retention.** One study found that 90% of participants in Housing First programs remained housed after one year, which was 55% more than the group that received as-usual treatment (where only 35% remained housed).<sup>2</sup> The participants in Housing First programs spent significantly less time homeless.<sup>3</sup>

**Housing First reduces arrests and jail nights.** One study found that there was a 78% reduction in arrests and an 84% reduction in jail nights among a group of tenants after enrolled into a Housing First program.<sup>4</sup> Another study found that participants in Housing First programs saw a 76% reduction in jail nights.<sup>5</sup>

**Housing First reduces hospital bills/inpatient treatment.** One study found that the average hospital bill for across all tenants reduced from \$41,542 in the year before housing to \$12,472 after enrolling into the program.<sup>6</sup> Another study found that inpatient treatments reduced by 40% and inpatient nights reduced by 80% among participants after they entered a Housing First program.<sup>7</sup>

**Housing First reduces emergency room and detox visits.** One study found that detox visits decreased by 82% among newly enrolled Housing First participants which resulted in an average cost savings of \$8,732 per person.<sup>8</sup>



COORDINATED BY THE  
COMMUNITY SERVICE COUNCIL

## REDUCING BARRIERS TO HOUSING

**What barriers to housing exist for individuals and families experiencing homelessness?** In addition to financial barriers, those experiencing homelessness may also face other barriers to housing, including:

- Eviction histories,
- Poor credit or no credit,
- Criminal records,
- Past-due utility bills or rent,
- Limited rental histories, and
- Various forms of discrimination based on race, family composition, housing status, and income source.

These barriers often result in individuals and families experiencing homelessness being at a competitive disadvantage relative to other low-income tenants.

**How can barriers to housing be reduced?** In some cases, program staff can address financial barriers for individuals and families experiencing homelessness by accessing financial resources (e.g., move-in funds, temporary subsidies, Housing Choice (Section 8 vouchers)) to make housing more affordable. For other barriers to housing, if the household's rental history cannot be addressed, communities can engage property owners and management companies to consider a family or individual as a whole, not based on one piece of their history.

Community Service Council's A Way Home for Tulsa team currently partners with landlords to increase housing access for homeless people through the Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Community Service Council's Abode Initiative.



## RAPID RE-HOUSING

Rapid re-housing provides individuals and families experiencing homelessness with short-term rental assistance (usually three months to two years) and services to help obtain housing, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed. Rapid re-housing does not require restrictive preconditions (e.g. employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the services provided are responsive to the individual needs of the individual or family.

**Why is Rapid Re-Housing a best practice?** Rapid re-housing not only moves people experiencing homelessness into housing, it also helps them retain it. As a result, they are more capable of addressing other challenges (e.g. obtaining employment or addressing substance use), in order to become self-sufficient. People who receive rapid re-housing assistance are homeless for shorter periods of time than those who receive transitional housing or emergency shelter assistance, and it can be less expensive than other models. The most comprehensive study to date found that the average monthly cost of rapid re-housing per family was \$880, whereas transitional housing cost three times as much (\$2,706) and emergency shelter costs five times as much (\$4,819).<sup>9</sup>

*Across Tulsa County, there is only enough rapid re-housing resources for 73 people experiencing homelessness.*

## PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Permanent supportive housing combines long-term affordable housing with wraparound services to support individuals who have been homeless for a long period of time and also suffer from additional disabilities. These services create not only independent living situations, they also connect people with necessary health care, treatment, and employment services.

**How can Permanent Supportive Housing end chronic homelessness?**<sup>20</sup> Permanent supportive housing programs have helped decrease chronic homelessness nationally by 26% since 2007.<sup>11</sup>

**Why is Permanent Supportive Housing a best practice?** Research has shown that permanent supportive housing can have other improved outcomes; for example, 23% fewer days in hospitals for individuals in permanent supportive programs, and over \$6,000 in annual savings per person compared to those who remained unhoused.<sup>12</sup> It is also more cost effective than other housing models (e.g. transitional housing), and has better outcomes on average.

*Across Tulsa County, there is only enough permanent supportive housing resources for 580 people experiencing chronic homelessness.*



**DATA SOURCES** 1 Housing First in Permanent Supportive Housing: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-First-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Brief.pdf>; 2 Housing First as an Effective Model for Community Stabilization Among Vulnerable Individuals: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jcop.21763>; 3 Ibid.; 4 Moore Place Permanent Supportive Housing Evaluation Study: <https://shnny.org/images/uploads/Charlotte-Moore-Place-Study.pdf>; 5 Denver Housing First Collaborative—Cost Benefit Analysis and Program Outcomes Report: [https://shnny.org/uploads/Supportive\\_Housing\\_in\\_Denver.pdf](https://shnny.org/uploads/Supportive_Housing_in_Denver.pdf); 6 Moore Place Permanent Supportive Housing Evaluation Study: <https://shnny.org/images/uploads/Charlotte-Moore-Place-Study.pdf>; 7 Denver Housing First Collaborative—Cost Benefit Analysis and Program Outcomes Report: [https://shnny.org/uploads/Supportive\\_Housing\\_in\\_Denver.pdf](https://shnny.org/uploads/Supportive_Housing_in_Denver.pdf); 8 Ibid.; 9 Family Options Study: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Family-Options-Study-Full-Report.pdf>; 10 Ibid.; 11 Derived by comparing the total number of chronic homeless from the 2007 and 2017 national Point in Time count; 12 Comparative Cost Analysis of Housing and Case Management Program: <https://www.ncbinlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3393008/>

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