National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

Key Components in Effective Emergency Shelters that End Homelessness

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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.

Today's Training

- Provide a **basic framework** for the **immediate** response to a community's homelessness crisis
  - Understand how the system components fit together and interact:
    - Entry to the homelessness system
      - Coordinated entry
      - Diversion
      - Prioritization
    - Emergency Shelter/Crisis Beds
    - Housing Interventions
- The key components of an effective emergency shelter within this crisis response framework

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Key Questions

- How should you design your system's immediate response to a housing crisis?
- What is the role of shelter and how do we connect shelters to the system in a meaningful way?
- What are the key components of an effective shelter in this system?

Philosophical Shift

Practice Shift

Operations Shift

Key Components of Emergency Shelters in an Effective Crisis Response System

✓ Housing First approach

✓ Immediate and easy access

✓ Housing-focused services

✓ Rapid exits to permanent housing

✓ Measure outcomes to improve performance

Role of Emergency Shelter in Crisis Response System

Why is this useful?

- **Shelter** plays an **important role** in your system's response to homelessness
- The effectiveness of emergency shelter greatly impacts your system's performance
  - Average length of homelessness
  - Exits to permanent housing
  - Returns to homelessness

Make me feel IMPORTANT

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What Do We Know About Shelter Stays?

- The majority of people who become homeless have relatively short stays in the homeless system and rarely come back to it. ("transitionally homeless")

- Families with long stays are no more likely than families with short stays to have intensive behavioral health treatment histories, to be disabled, or to be unemployed.

Dennis Culhane, *Testing a Typology of Family Homelessness Based on Patterns of Public Shelter Utilization in Four U.S. Jurisdictions: Implications for Policy and Program Planning*, 2007

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What Do We Know About Shelter Stays?

The results suggest **that policy and program factors**, rather than family characteristics, **are responsible for long shelter stays**

Dennis Culhane, *Testing a Typology of Family Homelessness Based on Patterns of Public Shelter Utilization in Four U.S. Jurisdictions: Implications for Policy and Program Planning*, 2007

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 to exit homelessness for good (RRH)

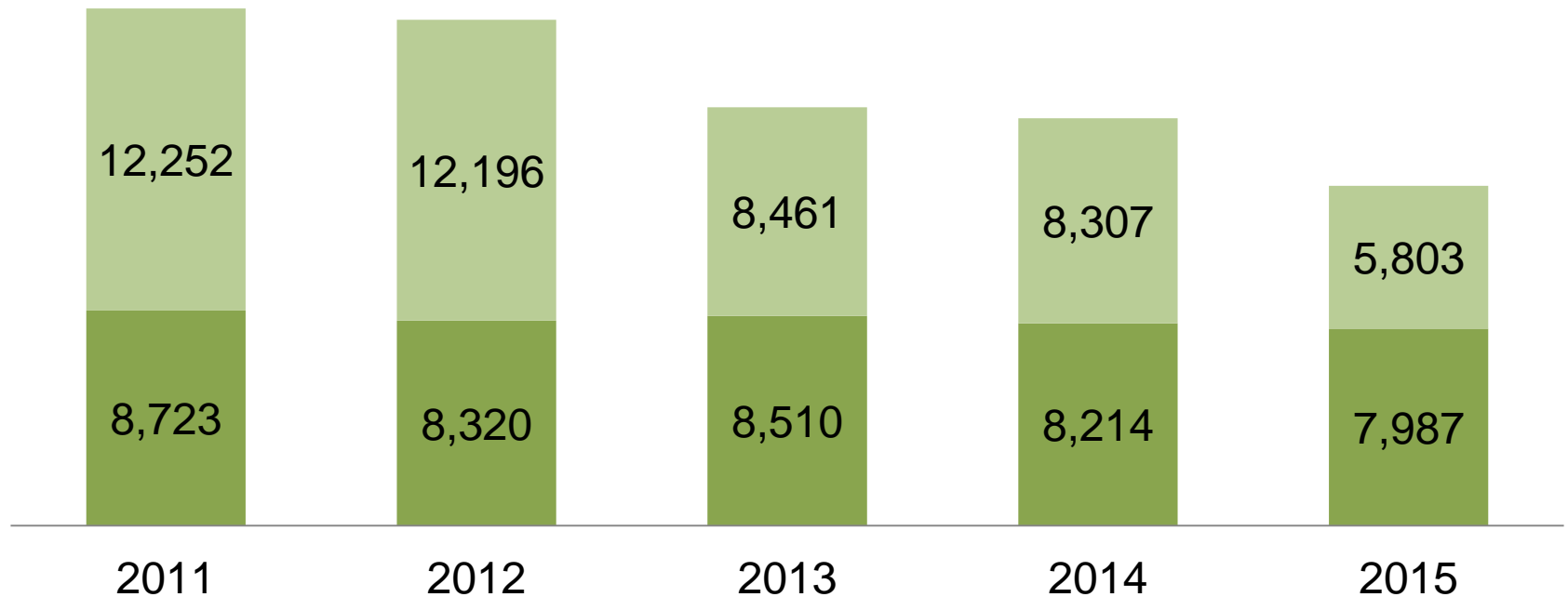- Minority of people need more intensive services and long-term housing supports (PSH)

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Activity

Complete the following sentences:

- I believe that the role of emergency shelter in a crisis response system is to…

- When someone enters shelter, the goal is to assist them to…
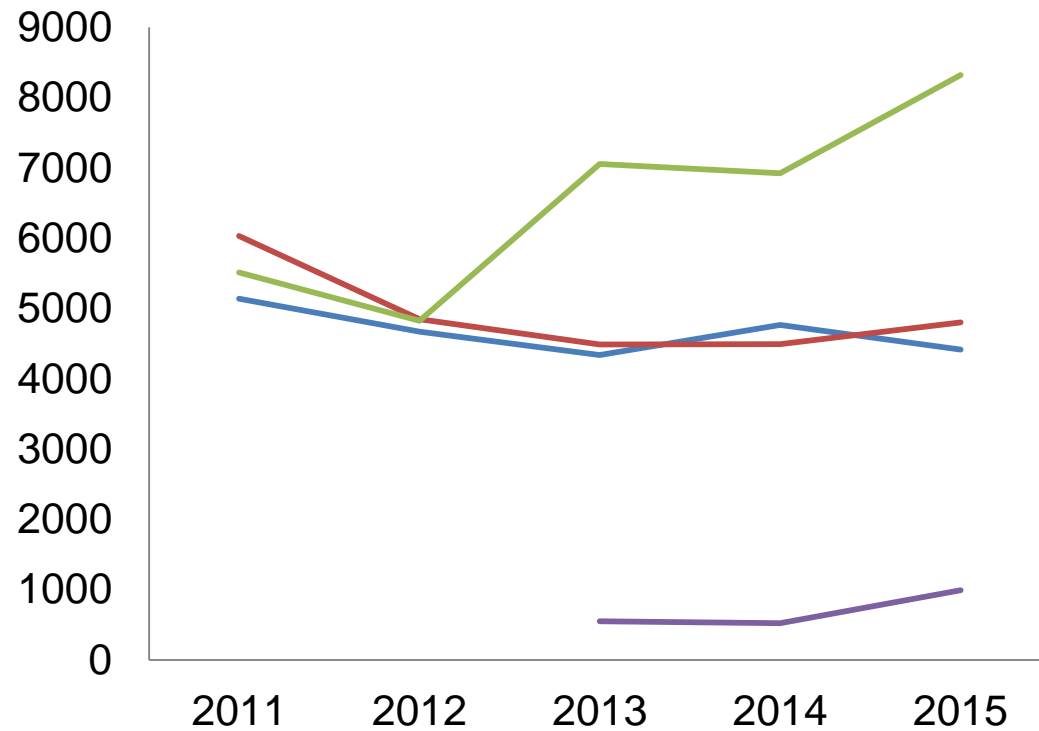
Homelessness in Georgia
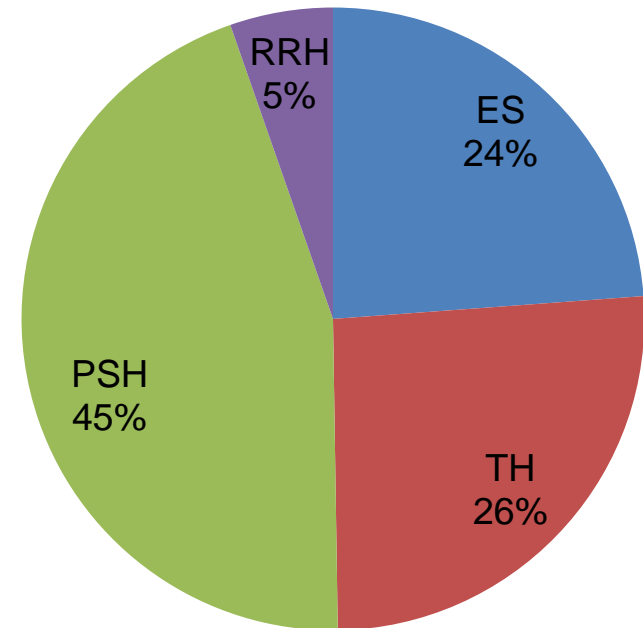
Homelessness in Georgia

Exit Destinations from Shelter

■ 2015 ■ 2016

	Permanent Housing	Temporary	Homeless	Institutions	Other/Unknown
2015	23%	12%	47%	3%	10%
2016	17%	15%	16%	3%	49%

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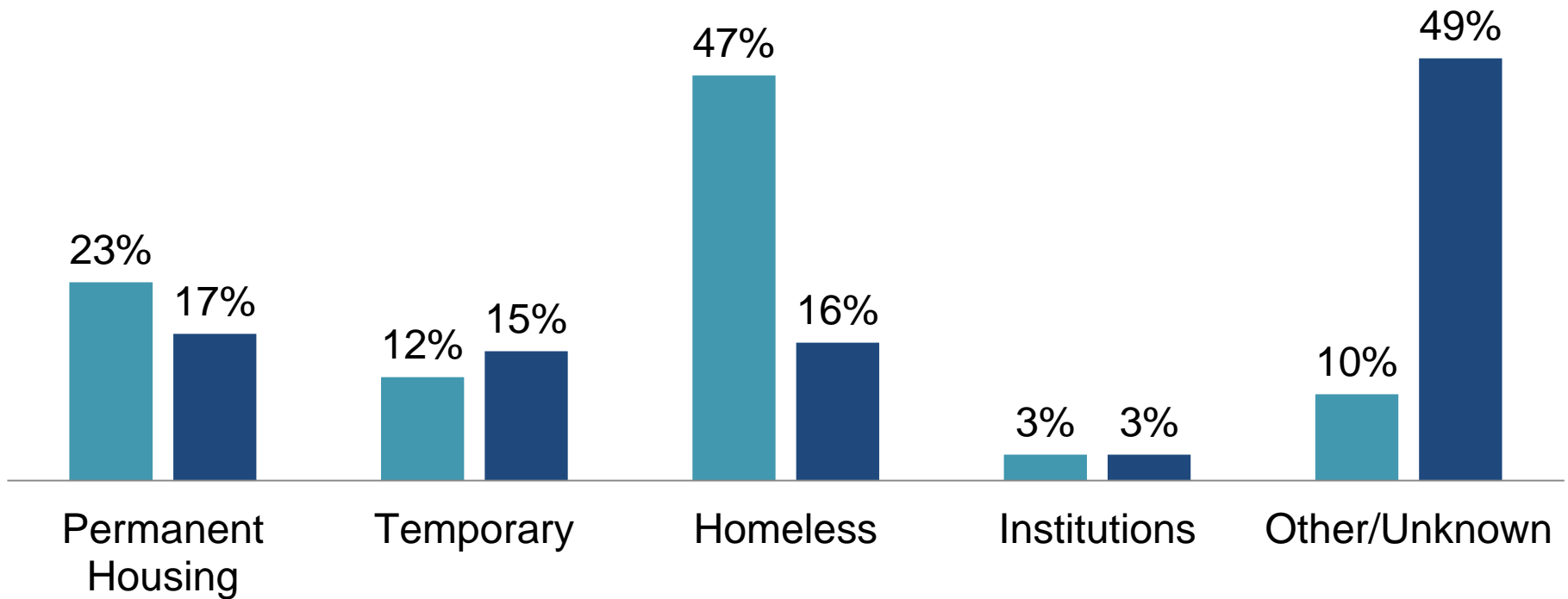
National Data

Length of Stay in Emergency Shelter
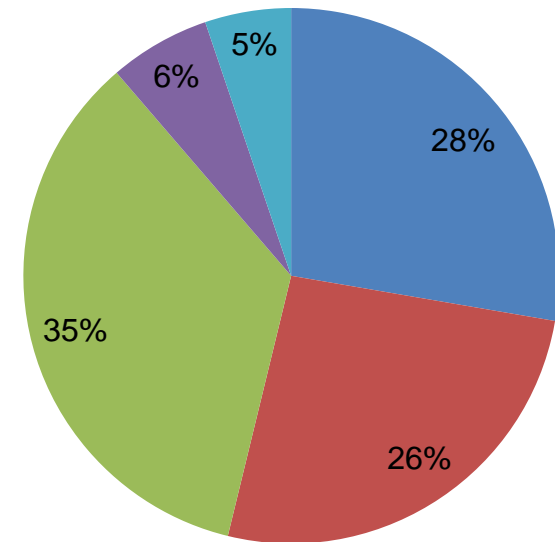
Crisis Response System

Crisis Response System
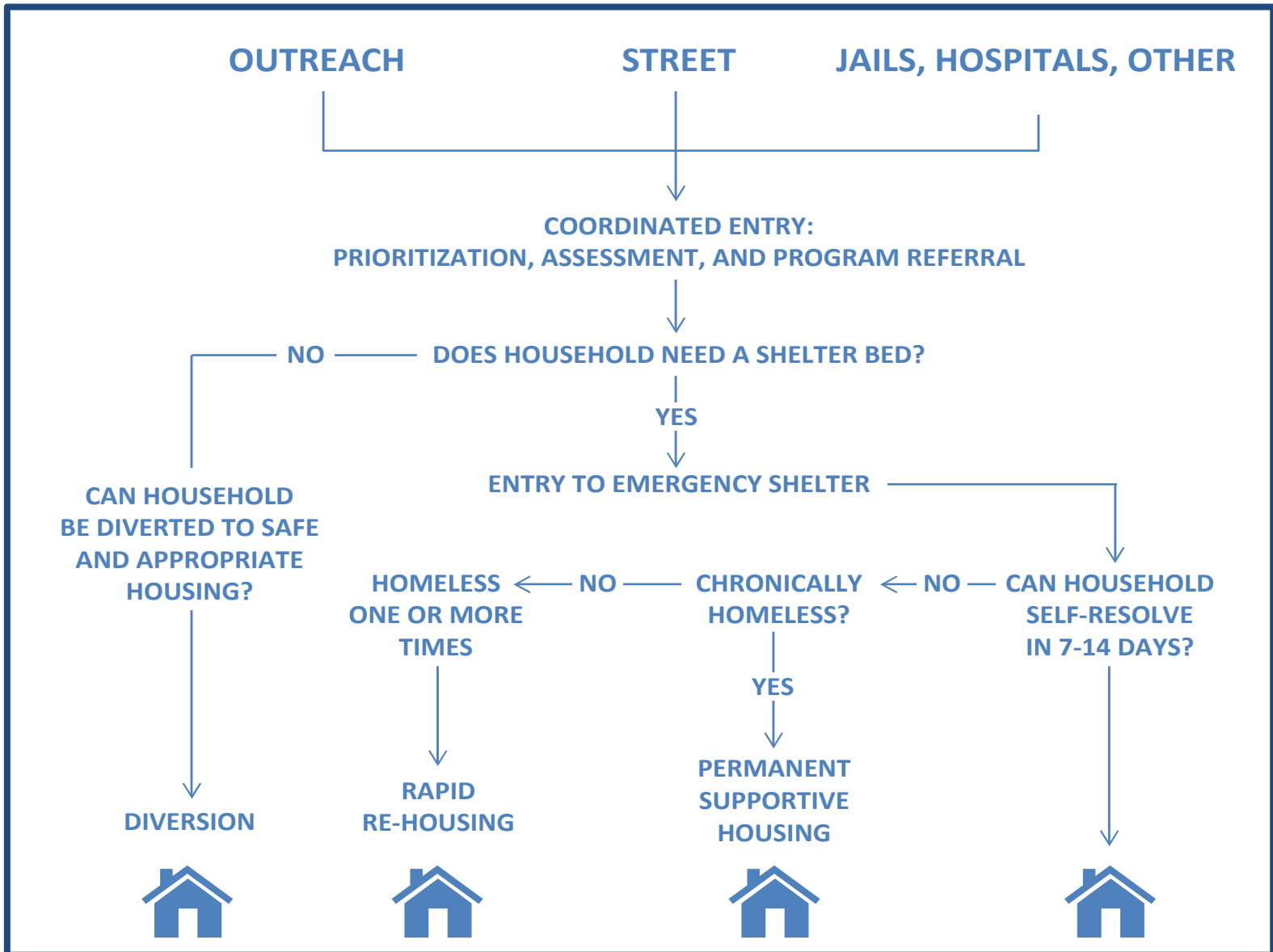
Key Elements of an Effective Crisis Response System that *Ends Homelessness*

An effective Crisis Response System provides **immediate and easy access to safe and decent shelter** to anyone that needs it and aims to **re-house** people as quickly as possible.

Low-barrier shelter is a cornerstone of a **functional crisis response system.**

Key Elements of an Effective Crisis Response System that *Ends Homelessness*

1. Access and Prioritization

2. **Crisis and Interim Housing**

3. Assistance to Return to Housing

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Key Elements of an Effective Crisis Response System that *Ends Homelessness*

Access and Prioritization

- Outreach
- Coordinated Entry
- Diversion

Crisis and Interim Housing

- Immediate and easily accessible and available for anyone

Assistance to Return to Housing

- RRH
- PSH
- Mainstream public housing

Key Elements of an Effective Crisis Response System that *Ends Homelessness*

- The community provides low-barrier shelter immediately to **any person** experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it

- Some form of shelter (ES, TH, other temporary setting) is offered immediately (i.e., same day)

- The community ensures shelter is not contingent on sobriety, minimum income requirements, criminal records, or other unnecessary conditions

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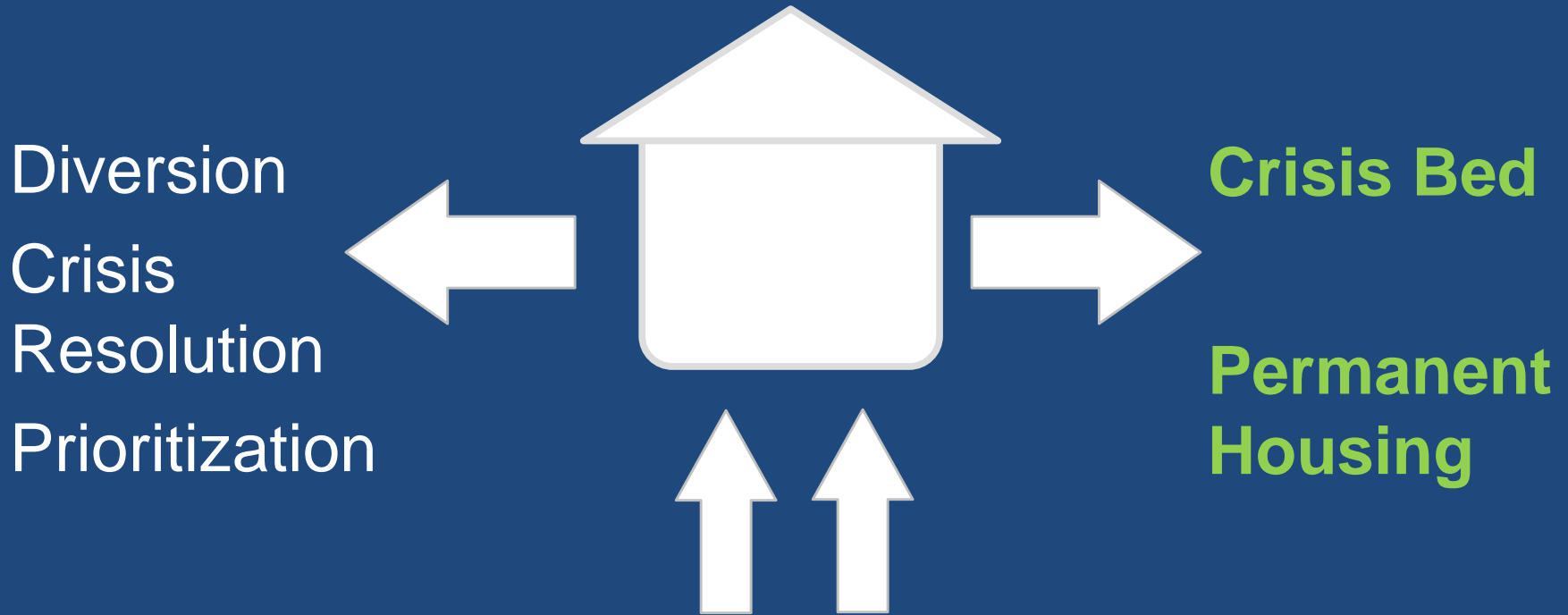
Activity
Table Discussion
5 minutes each questions

How do people access shelter?
What is used to determine who will enter shelter?
What do you do when shelter is full?

Crisis Response System
The Role of Homelessness Diversion

Homelessness Diversion

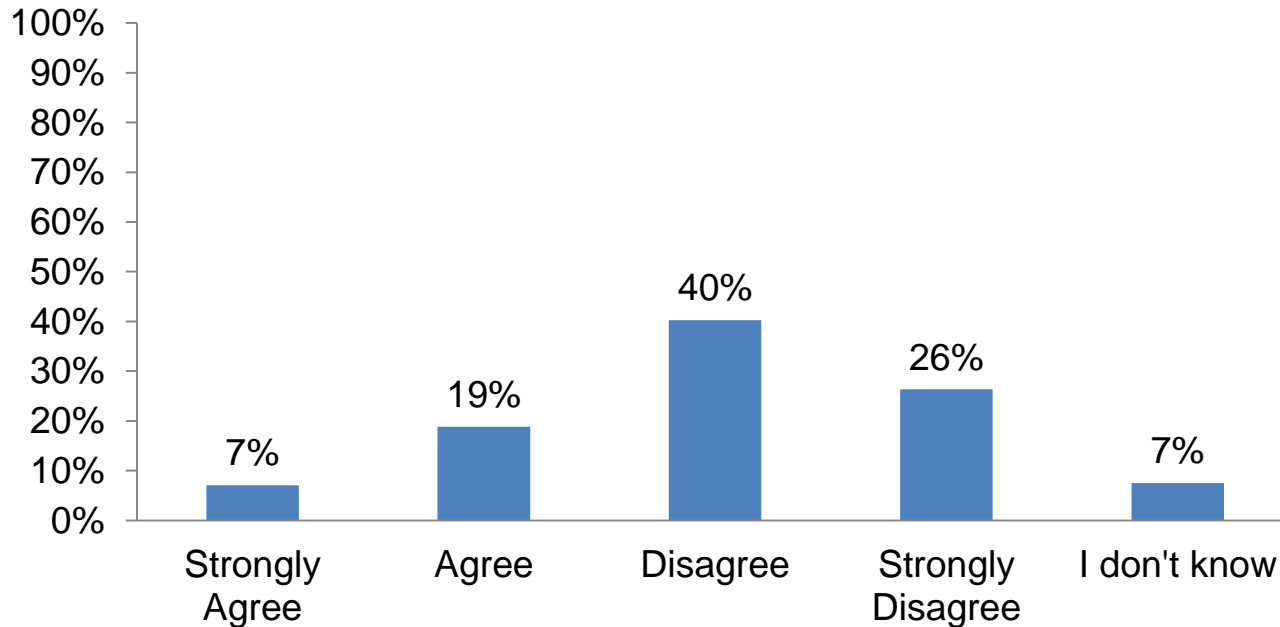- Diversion prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them retain or return to housing.

- Diversion is NOT a separate "program" but rather part of the entire system – problem solving and solution focused

- Diversion should always be safe and appropriate for the client.

Diversion and Prevention

Housing Situation	Intervention	Services Provided
At imminent risk of losing housing	Prevention	• Housing search • Rental Subsidy • Financial assistance • Case management • Mediation • Connection to mainstream Resources
Requesting shelter	Diversion	
In shelter	Rapid Re-Housing	

Keys to Successful Diversion

- ✓ Coordinated entry process and shelter front door
- ✓ Resourceful staff trained in mediation
- ✓ Strength based and problem solving
- ✓ Recognizes client choice and safety
- ✓ Linkages to mainstream services and natural supports
- ✓ Flexible dollars

The Four C's of Diversion

1. Commitment
   - Mainstream and homeless service providers must believe households are better served outside of homelessness system
2. Conversation
   - Diversion works best as a conversation, rather than checking off a list of questions
3. Creativity
   - Help clients think of creative solutions and explore every option
4. Continuous
   - Diversion conversation may happen multiple times, not a one time service

Community Examples

Southeastern Connecticut

- Reduced shelter beds from 83 to 53
- In 2015 diverted 79% of families
- Average cost is $1,649

Montgomery County, PA

- 85% of cases handed in under an hour
- In 2015 diverted 64% of clients
- Average cost is $1,325
- Where did they go?
  - 35% stayed doubled up
  - 15% stayed in their housing
  - 12% moved to their own housing

Assessment and Prioritization

Assessment and Prioritization

- **Phase the assessment process**
  - Prevention and diversion (20-30%+)
  - Chronic homeless eligibility
  - Housing barriers
  - Vulnerability
  - VI-SPDAT score
- **Prioritize** people who are most vulnerable or have the most severe service needs
- **Do not** serve people on a first-come basis

Housing crisis resolution
Rapid re-housing
Permanent Supportive housing
Market rate housing
Voucher

CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

Key Component

Housing First Approach:
A Philosophical Shift

Activity

Are We a Housing First Community?

1. Complete the survey *(adapted from USICH tool)*
2. Find others from your community. Take 5 minutes to talk about your similarities/differences.
3. Next, identify two things that are a challenge to becoming a "housing first" community.

Philosophy Shift ➡ Housing First Principles

- 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 connected to resources necessary to sustain that housing

Philosophy Shift ➡ Housing First Principles

Issues that may have contributed to a household's homelessness can best be addressed *once they are permanently housed*

Philosophy Shift ➡ Housing First Principles

- 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 Components of Shelters

- Few to no programmatic prerequisites to permanent housing entry

- Low-barrier admission policies

- **Rapid** and streamlined entry into permanent housing

- Supportive services are voluntary

Homelessness and Substance Abuse in Georgia

Homelessness and Substance Abuse in Georgia
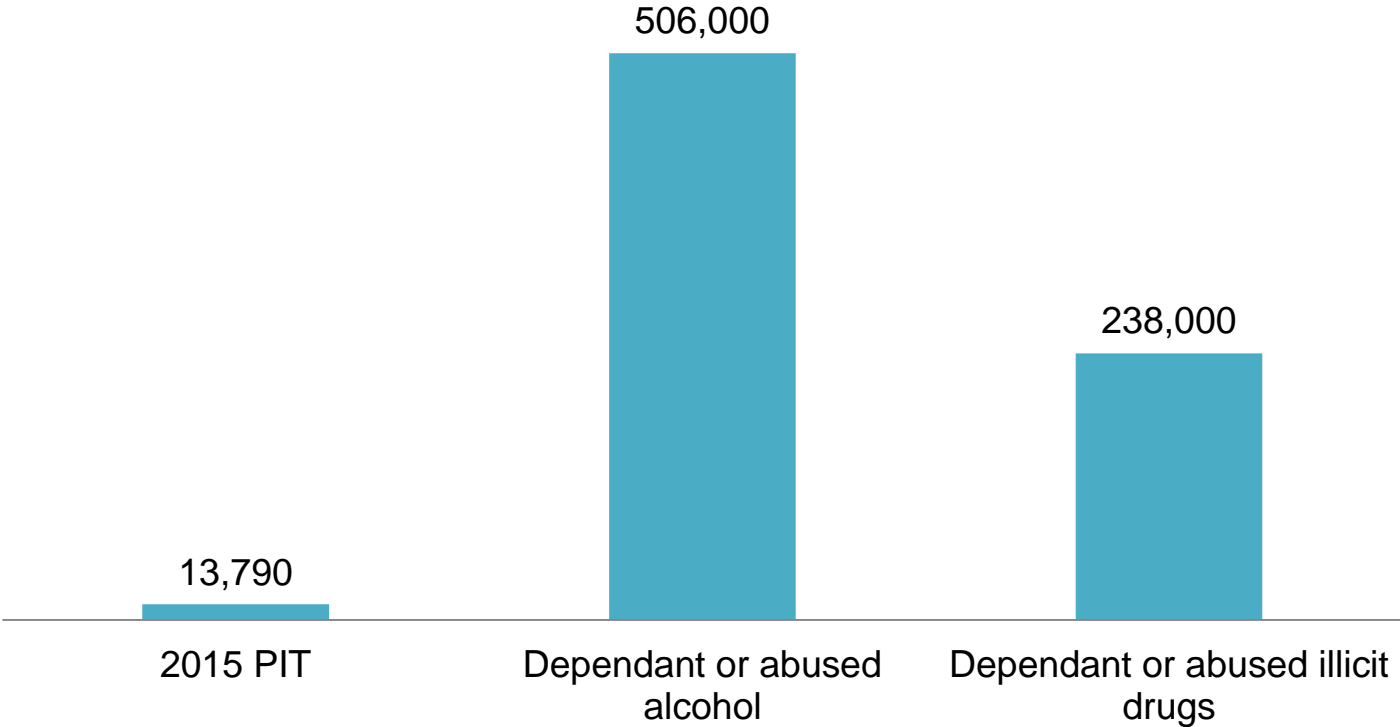
Changing/Controlling Behavior? Or Promoting Safety?

Sobriety

- People that drink or use other substances are not a safety issue

- Unruly inebriation is a safety issue

- Shelters are not (usually) designed to be drug and alcohol treatment centers

Changing/Controlling Behavior?
Or
Promoting Safety?

No weapons

- Weapons are a safety issue

Changing/Controlling behavior? Or Promoting Safety?

Belongings must be searched before entry

- Items such as weapons should be banned for safety reasons
- Let people check in belongings into plastic totes without search instead of barring people for having certain things

Changing/Controlling behavior? Or Promoting Safety?

No entry with criminal history

- Having a criminal history does not mean the person is a danger to others
- Leaves people with high barriers with nowhere to go

Changing/Controlling behavior? Or Promoting Safety?

Must participate in life skills classes

- Not necessary to find housing
- Slows down the housing search process

Housing First Components of Shelters

- Few to no programmatic prerequisites to permanent housing entry
- Low-barrier admission policies
- **Rapid** and streamlined entry into permanent housing
- Supportive services are voluntary

Activity: Create a Timeline to Housing

1. Read your household scenario

1. Show the path of this household from being identified as homeless today until they exit to permanent housing (outreach, assessment, documentation, participation requirements/classes, program referrals, case management)

2. Show amounts of time it takes to make it to each next step

Key Component

Immediate and Easy Access

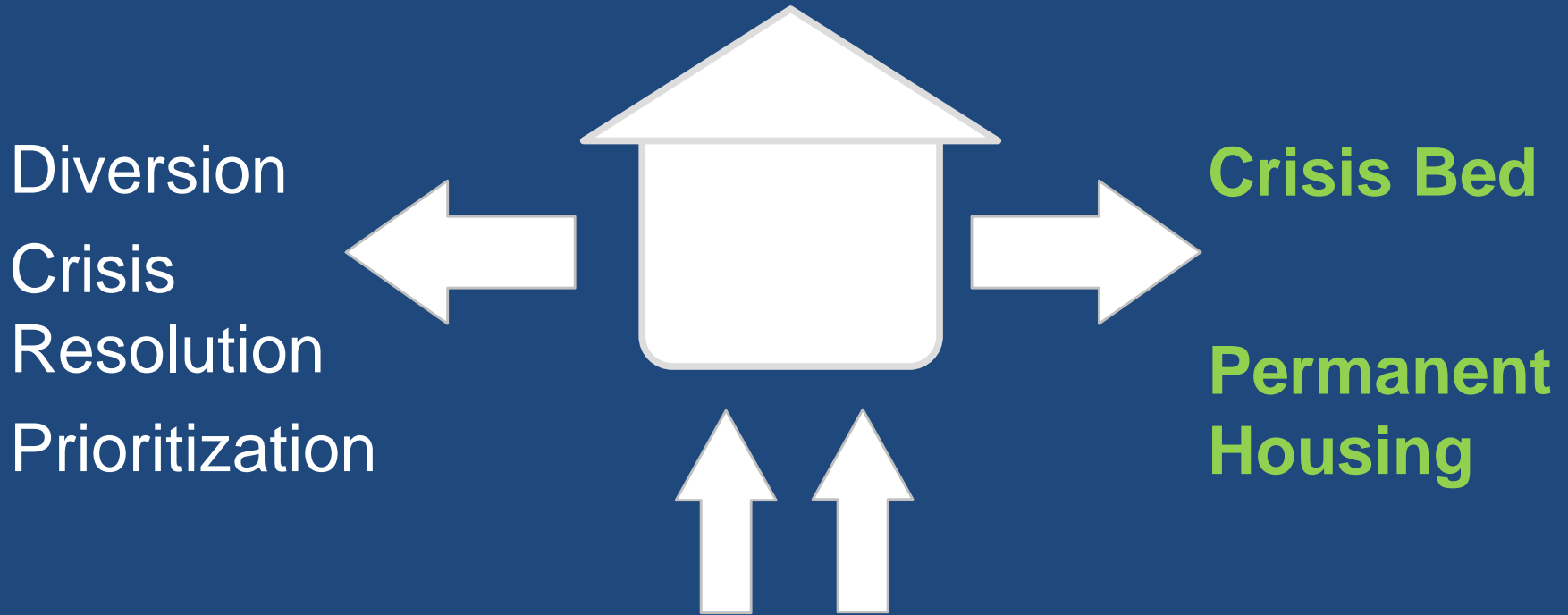# Immediate and Easy Access:
Getting Into Shelter

- Getting Into Shelter
- Shift in Practice
- Shift in Operations
- Examples

Shift Happens

Learning Together in a changing world

Coordinated Entry

Diversion

Crisis
Resolution

Prioritization

Crisis Bed

**Permanent
Housing**

People With Housing Crisis
Seeking Shelter

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Prioritize, Prioritize

"The classic sense of a 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor gets flipped on its head"
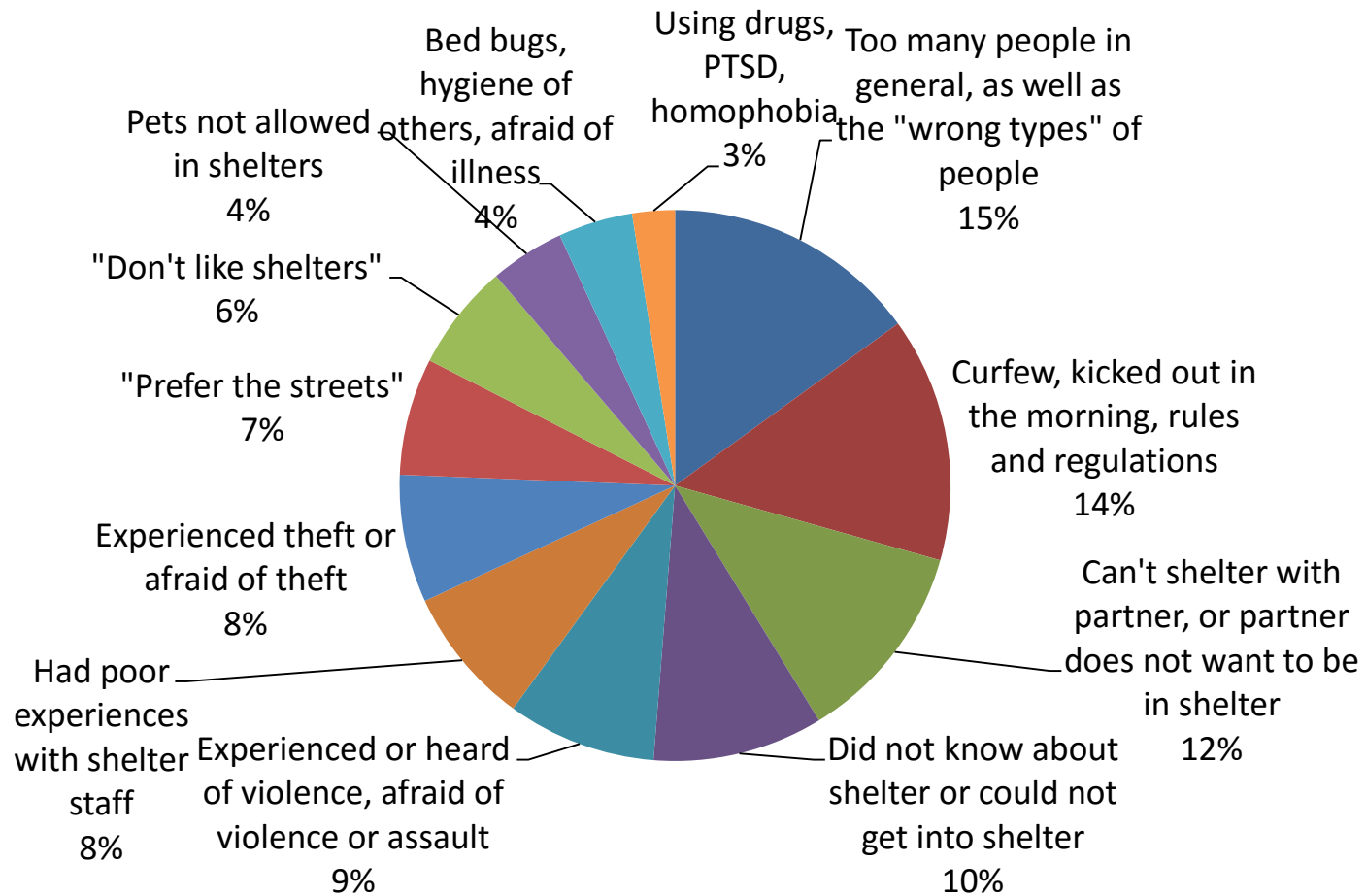-Iain DeJong

- The MOST acute, highest needs people are your priority; NOT the most compliant, motivated, and "housing ready" people.

- Fill your shelter with those that need it the most, not those that got their first.

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Why do you think some people experiencing homelessness avoid shelter?

Why People Avoid Shelters

Low-barrier shelter
is a cornerstone of a
functional crisis response system that
prevents and ends homelessness.

-USICH Federal Benchmarks and Criteria

Key Elements of an Effective Crisis Response System that *Ends Homelessness*

- The community provides some form of low-barrier shelter immediately to **any person** experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it

- Some form of shelter is offered immediately (i.e., same day, available 24/7)

- Shelter is not contingent on sobriety, minimum income requirements, criminal records, or other unnecessary conditions

-USICH Federal Benchmarks and Criteria

Immediate and Easy Access Does NOT Mean:

- First come, first serve
- Everyone calling needs a shelter bed
- Waiting in line to get the next bed
- Building more shelter beds

Are You Screening People In Or Screening People Out?

Low Barrier Means:

1. Prioritizing those with the MOST need and HIGHEST barriers

2. Serving households of any configuration including couples without children, persons identifying as LGBTQ, two parent households, families with teen boys

3. Serving people using substances and or with mental health challenges, regardless of treatment compliance

4. Serving people with criminal history

Are You Screening People In Or Screening People Out?

Low Barrier Does NOT Mean Requiring:

- Income at entry

- "Employability"

- Exhibiting a "desire" to change

- Having a "good" attitude

- Being cooperative

- Seeming "motivated"

Immediate and Easy Access
Operational Shift

**Emergency Shelter = Immediate response to a housing emergency**

- Shelter is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, 365 days per year

- Staff available to allow entry as needed

- Connects directly to street outreach

Immediate and Easy Access
## Operational Shift

- What does our space look like?
  - Configure it to serve more populations
  - Flexible spaces to accommodate special household needs
  - Private and confidential space for meetings
  - Space to store belongings
  - Accommodate pets if possible
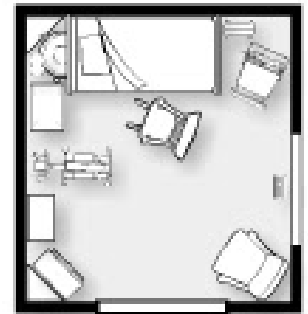
Equal Access Rule

Answers these questions:

- What criteria can I use to determine who is eligible for shelter or housing programs?

- What are the requirements around same sex couples, unmarried couples, families with teenage boys, or transgender clients?

- Can I ask people for an ID to verify their gender?

- How do I handle complaints or discriminatory comments from shelter residents?

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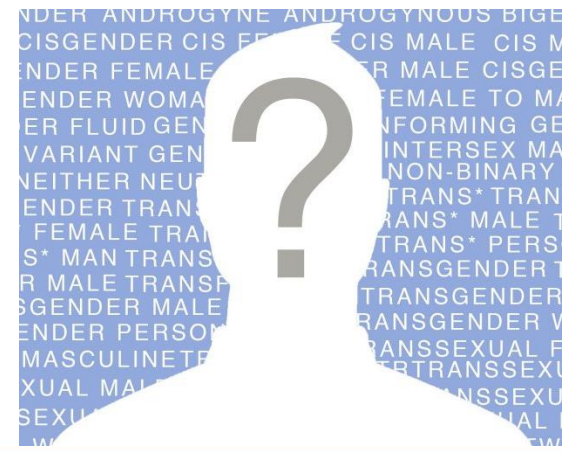
Equal Access Rule

What it requires:

- ✓ Determine eligibility regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status

- ✓ Must not discriminate against anyone because they do not conform to gender or sex stereotypes

- ✓ Grant equal access consistent with a person's gender identity

Equal Access Rule

What it requires:

✓ Cannot discriminate against a group of people presenting as a family based on the composition, the age of members, disability, marital status, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or gender identity.

✓ Must not ask anyone to provide anatomical information or documentation (like an ID), physical, or medical evidence of gender identity

✓ Take non-discriminatory steps when necessary and appropriate to address privacy concerns raised by any residents or occupants

Equal Access Rule

One quick example:

- An emergency shelter that serves households with children
  - Can limit assistance to households with children
  - Cannot limit it only to women with children
  - Must serve single male head of household with minor children
  - Must serve any household made up of two or more adults, regardless of sexual orientation, marital status, or gender identity, presenting with minor child(ren).

Immediate and Easy Access
Operational Shift

- Staff are:
  - Trained in conflict resolution
  - Using motivational interviewing and strength based approaches
  - Not "program monitors" or "house parents"
  - Not using statements like, "they are not working the program" to exit people
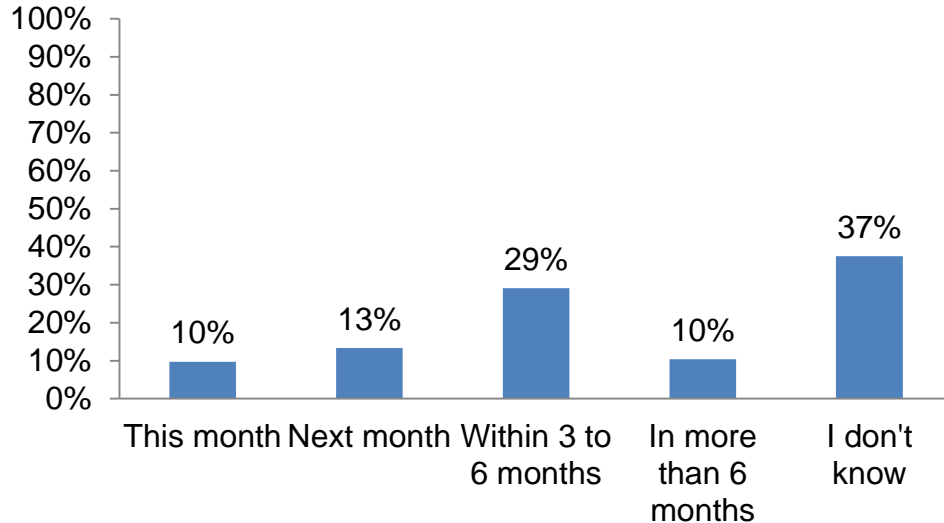
Key Component

Housing-focused Services

" I tell my staff, 'if you're not talking about housing, you're having the wrong conversation.'

Deronda Metz, Salvation Army, Charlotte, NC

Community Consumer Surveys

If you are NOT currently in permanent housing, when do you expect to be?

This month	10%
Next month	13%
Within 3 to 6 months	29%
In more than 6 months	10%
I don't know	37%

Within one week of becoming homeless, I was assisted in developing a plan for returning to permanent housing within 30 days.

Strongly Agree	9%
Agree	22%
Disagree	40%
Strongly Disagree	21%
I don't know	7%
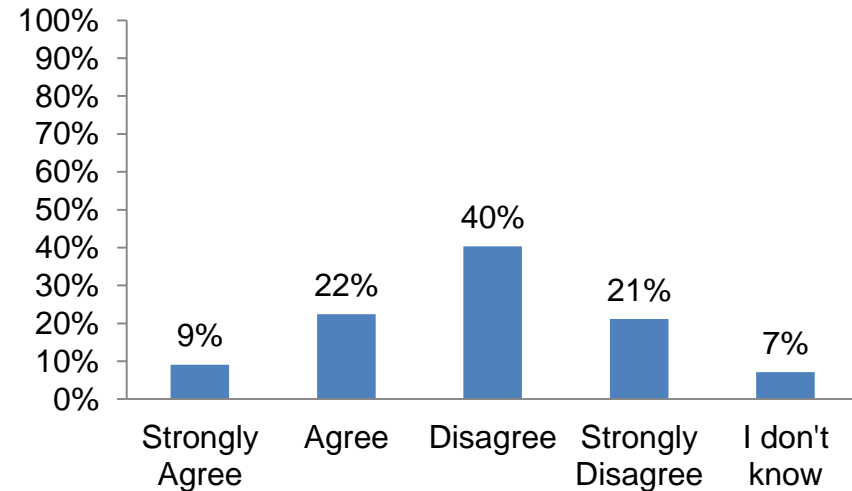
Housing-Focused Services
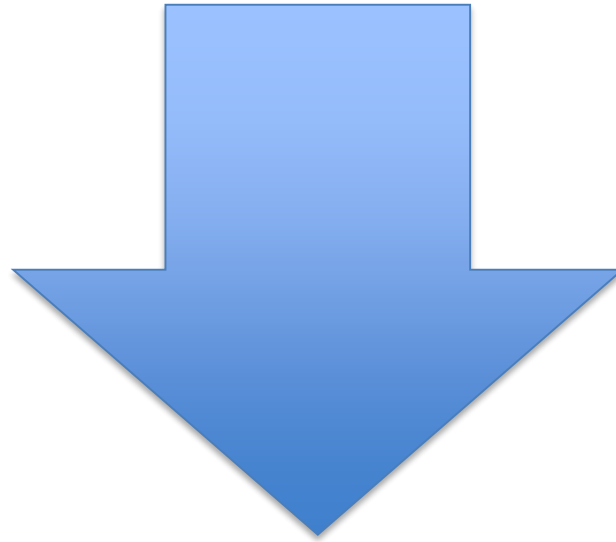## Practice Shift

Emergency Shelter serves as temporary, **short-term** crisis housing with crisis services to alleviate people's **immediate** housing crisis as a first step to being quickly and permanently re-housed

How Can I Help You?

How Can I Help You Get Housed?

- Iain De Jong, "How To Be An Awesome Shelter"

Housing Focused Services
Practice Shift

- Focus on permanent housing starts *at the front door*

- Requires a paradigm shift to believe that everyone is "housing ready," meaning they are ready to be housed *immediately*

- It's all about housing, not about healing or fixing

Housing Focused Services
Practice Shift

- Focus on a "housing plan" vs "family plan" or "case plan"

- Identify barriers to housing and identify resources to address barriers

- Focus every in-person meeting on a quick move to permanent housing

- Create a clear "housing message" throughout the shelter

- Review and discuss the housing plan weekly at minimum

Housing Focused Services
Practice Shift

- Shelters are not primarily meant to be employment programs, substance use recovery programs, or mental health services – can these services happen later?

- Shelters are primarily there to resolve a housing crisis

- Mandatory program participation does not result in better housing outcomes

Are We a Housing-Focused Shelter? Questions to Ask

- What services are provided in the shelter, and what is the reason?

- Are all of the services focused on obtaining permanent housing?

- How often do staff talk to clients about housing?

- When does the conversation about moving to permanent housing begin?

Housing-Focused Services
Operational Shift

Staff job descriptions:

- Understanding of housing first principles

- Knowledge of housing resources in the community

- Understanding of client centered/client driven planning
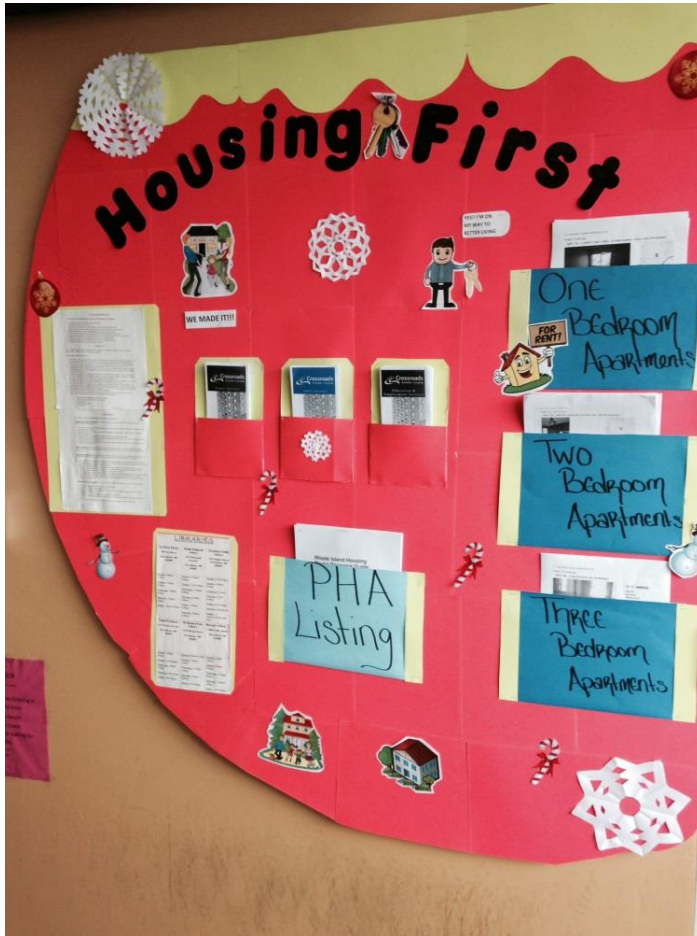
Housing-Focused Services
Operational Shift

All written materials reflect housing-focused practice:

- Mission statement: is it about permanent housing?

- Re-writing policy and procedures

- Client handbook

- Voluntary service participation

- Clear messaging to community and clients

Housing-Focused Services Messaging

Housing-Focused Services Messaging
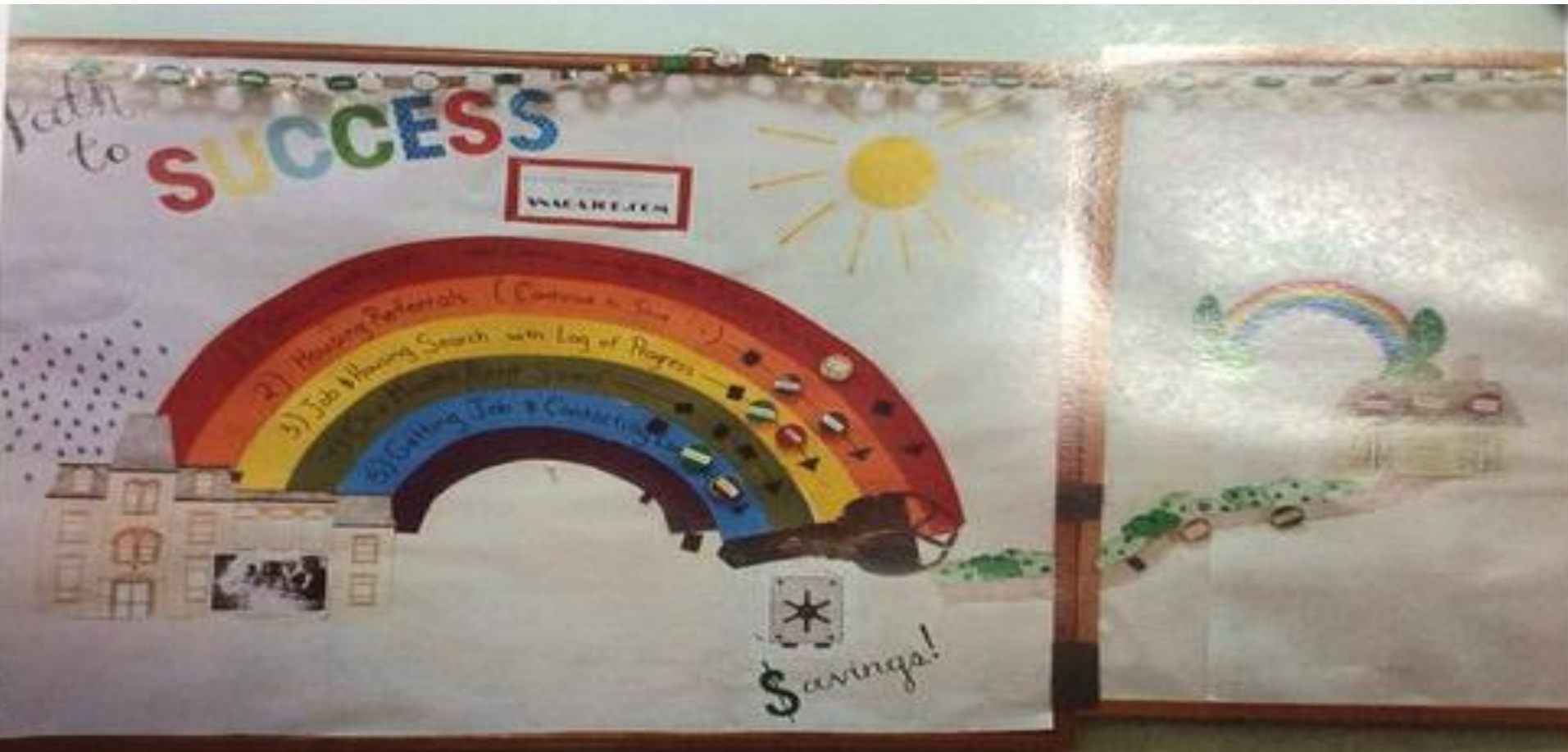
ACTIVITY:?

At your Table

Create a housing focused message, theme, or practice for your shelter(s)

How can you get your residents energized and focused on quickly moving to permanent housing?

Community Examples

Housing-Focused Services

The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte Center of Hope

- Shelter staff used to hold a meeting every Thursday to discuss shelter rules and expectations. Clients and staff would leave this meeting "exhausted."

- The shelter director now meets with residents weekly to discuss:
  - The national goal of ending homelessness
  - What rapid re-housing is
  - How to start looking for housing right away

- This is an opportunity to inspire and empower clients to take ownership of their housing instead of telling them how to stay in shelter

Key Component

Rapid Exits to Housing

Rapid Exits to Housing
Practice Shift

What services do we need to increase rapid exits to permanent housing?

- Rapid re-housing
- Connections to mainstream services
- Develop community partnerships

Rapid Exits to Housing
Practice Shift

Re-frame your messaging:

- – Shelter is not a destination, it is a step to get you housed
- – We are going to re-house you RAPIDLY
- – You can be housed

Rapid Exits to Housing
Practice Shift

What services or requirements are slowing down rapid exits to housing that we should eliminate or that can take place after housing is obtained?

– Life skills, parenting classes, financial classes, job search classes

– If the clients wants these services, how can they happen later?

Rapid Exits to Housing
Operational Shift

- Staffing:
  - Housing Navigation or Housing Search position

- Budget
  - Rapid Re-housing

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Community Examples

Rapid Exits to Permanent Housing

The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte Center of Hope

- Length of stay in shelter went from 6 months to 39 days
- What they did:
  - Removed barriers to entry
  - Implemented shelter diversion
  - Changed their communication with clients to focus on housing
  - Invested in rapid re-housing, reallocated $315,000 from transitional housing to rapid re-housing

Activity: How Do We Increase Rapid Exits to Housing?
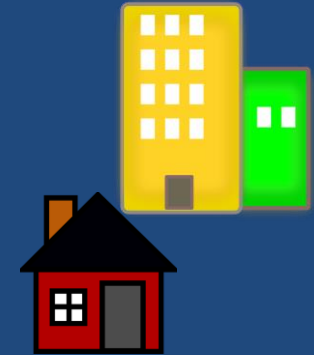
BRAINSTORM

- Develop a list of ways that you decrease lengths of stay (from shelter entry) to exits permanent housing?

Key Component

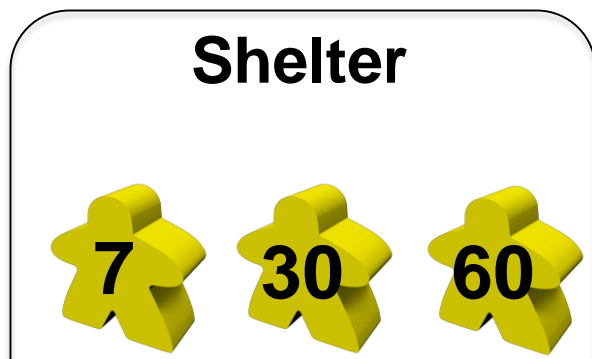Measuring Outcomes To Improve Performance

Using Data to Improve Shelter

Measure Performance → Report → Evaluate → Improve → Set Goals → (cycle)

Using Data to Be Better

DECREASE Length of stay

INCREASE Exits to permanent housing

DECREASE Returns to shelter

# Average Length of Stay

Shelter

7   30   60

7 + 30 + 60

= 97

97/3 = 32.3

- This month there are three households in shelter
- One has been there for 7 days, one has been there for 30 days, and one has been there for 60 days
- Add together the total number of days each households has been in shelter
- Then divide by the total number of households in shelter

Exits to Permanent Housing

Shelter

= 2

2/3 = 67%
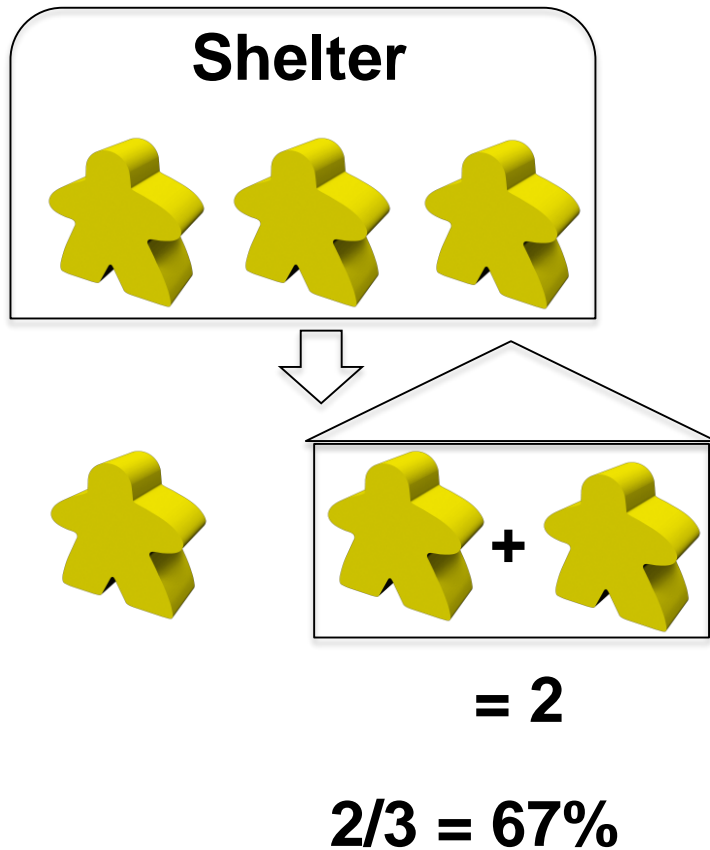
- This month there are three households exiting shelter
- One exited back to homelessness, and two exited to permanent housing
- Add together the total number of households exiting to permanent housing
- Then divide by the total number of households exiting

Connecticut Example

Average number of household exiters that exited to a permanent housing destination.

That's a 227% increase in 6 months
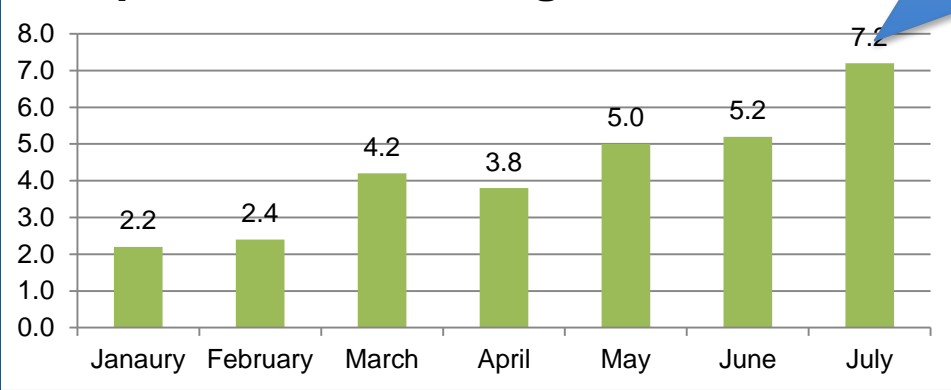
Crossroads Rhode Island

- Focused on re-housing people who stayed in shelter the longest
- From 2013 – 2014:
  - 26% increase in housing placements
  - 20% decrease in length of stay in shelter

Rhode Island Point-in-Time Count

Year	Households without Children	Households with Children
2008	714	181
2009	891	202
2010	704	216
2011	649	137
2012	784	182
2013	858	177
2014	637	132
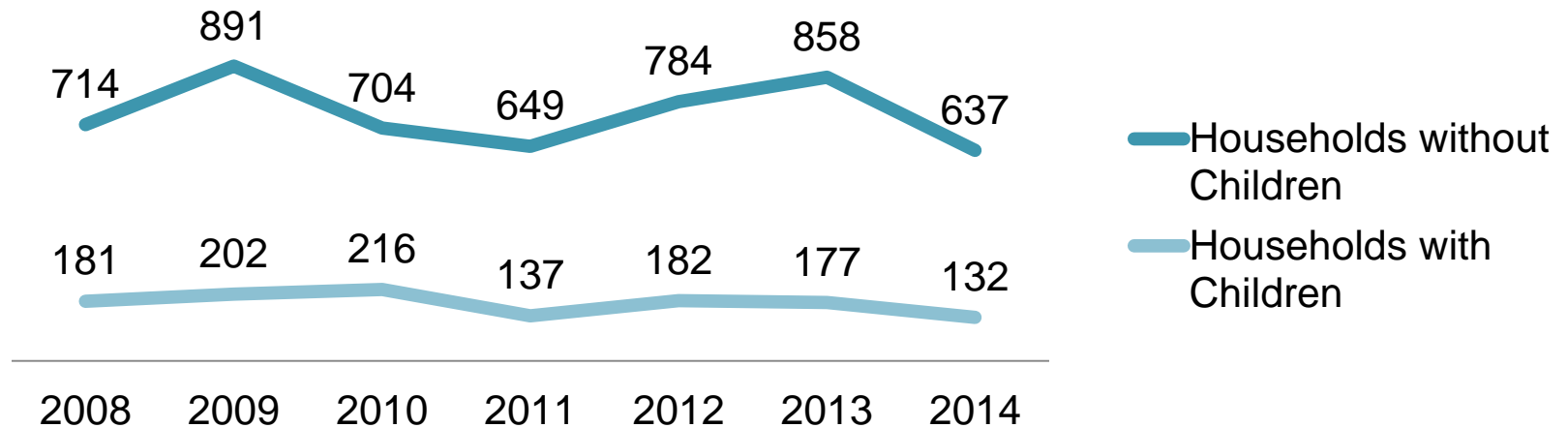
Crossroads Rhode Island

What made the biggest impact?

- Used to measure outputs:
  - Number of people served
  - Bed nights provided

- Now measure impact:
  - How many people exit to permanent housing?
  - How long do people stay in shelter

- Staff evaluations now align with accomplishing these outcomes
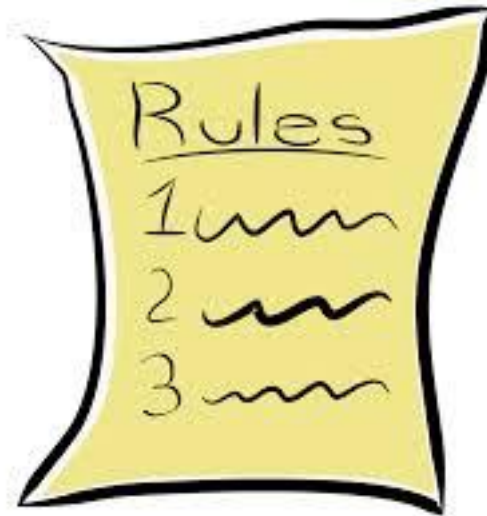
WHICH RULES ARE THE "RIGHT" RULES?

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RULES

- Which rules are needed to operate your emergency shelter?

- How can a shelter promote safety without creating unnecessary barriers to services and housing?

" Sometimes I feel like a child, with everyone watching my every move. It's not a good feeling and it makes me feel like I did something wrong by being homeless.

Consumer, Family Study

How Adults Respond

Does not work

- Coercion

- Pressure to change

- Moralizing

- Telling clients what they should do

- Disagreeing, judging, criticizing, or blaming

- Bargaining

- Penalizing, warning, threatening

How Adults Respond

Reasoning Works!

- Presentation of facts relative to needs

- Alignment to values

- Appreciation of personal goals

- Assessment and reassessment of needs

The Role of Rules

Promote safety

Don't try to change or control people or their behaviors

Reviewing the Rules

- How does this activity/service get people into or hinder people from getting housing?

- How does this keep people safe?

- Is this rule about controlling or changing behavior?

- Does this rule hinder people from getting housed quickly?

Re-tooling the Rules

Which rules cause people to be kicked out the most?
- – Decide which behaviors are a safety issue and which behaviors are a behavior management issue that was handled by asking the client to leave

Restrict "barring" or service restriction rules to:
- – Matters of violence (including sexual violence)
- – Excessive damage to property
- – Theft

Re-tooling Rules

1. **Review** incidents resulting in clients being barred
2. **Recognize** similar issues that could be handled in other ways
3. **Meet** with staff and clients to discuss changing the rules and gather input
4. **Review** each rule for whether it helps people get out of shelter into housing - or whether it inhibits this from occurring quickly?
5. **Rules** that remained should be directly related to safety
6. **Post** new rules and let them take effect in 30 days
7. **Hold** frequent meetings with staff and clients to assess how the new rules are working and revise as needed
8. **Track** if the number of people barred decreases

Re-tooling the Rules

The "Marvin" Rule

A Few of the New Rules

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Use the shelter space in a respectful manner.
- No weapons are allowed in the shelter, and nothing may be used as a weapon inside the shelter.
- Lying down is only permitted on your assigned bed when the dorms are open.

Next Steps for Re-tooling Your Shelter

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Next Steps to Re-Tooling Shelter

- Identify a vision and core value that will drive the re-tooling and adoption of the new model

- Develop an organizational structure for the new model that includes a program flow chart

- Develop a plan to shift the organizational culture to adopt the new core values and vision
  - Identify what in the current culture will need to shift to adopt the philosophy of the new model

Next Steps to Re-Tooling Shelter

- Identify staffing and training needs, including revised job descriptions
    - Develop a plan for ongoing staff communication and training
    - Be prepared for staff turnover
    - Allow opportunities for open dialogue
- Update policies and managerial practices to accommodate the transition
- Obtain Board support and endorsement
    - Identify who is on your board that supports this retooling and how you can use them to engage the rest of the board

Next Steps to Re-Tooling Shelter

- Create an outcomes measurement plan
  - Include outcomes and benchmarks to be achieved
- Develop a proposed budget
  - Identify the current funding sources that may need to be modified and points of contact for those sources
- Identify community partnerships and outside resources that will be needed to support households
- Develop a clear communication plan
  - Plan for internal communication to board and staff and external communication to the community and funders

Make It Happen!

People Receiving Services	People Providing Services
Safety = Minimizing loss of control over their lives	Safety = Minimizing loss of control over the environment
Safety means: • Maximizing choice • Develop authentic relationships • Exploring limits • Defining self • Defining experiences without judgement • Receiving consistent information ahead of time • Being free from force, coercion, threats, punishment, and harm • Owning and expressing feelings without fear	Safety means: • Maximizing routine and predictability • Assigning staff based on availability • Setting limits • Defining client problems/diagnosing • Judging experiences to determine competence and appropriateness of services • Providing information as time allows • Threatening force to de-escalate a situation • Reducing expression of strong emotion

Make it Happen!

What is one thing that you will do in your shelter/community/program in the next week as a result of today's training?

Anything We Missed?

National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

Contact Us!

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