

RRH Strategies for TANF Leaders: A view from Mercer County, NJ

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A Little Background

In 2008, Mercer Alliance convened its government partners in a year-long study process.

- Analyzed Dennis Culhane research on family shelter utilization.
- Researched National Alliance best practices around Rapid Rehousing.
- Looked internally at our HMIS Data for Emergency Shelter (ES), Transitional Housing (TH) projects.

What We Discovered

- People were staying in TH too long, and were not exiting to Permanent Housing
- Long term stayers in TH were not those with highest need
- 80% of persons in TH could be rapidly rehoused.
- Current system was NOT ending homelessness and was very costly - \$5M from TANF agency alone.
- Need to look at reallocation of TH and moving toward Rapid Rehousing as a policy.

New Funding Model Since 2010

Rental Assistance

- Made fundamental decision to give **Temporary Rental Assistance (TRA)** to homeless households at TANF Agency
- Changed Use of **TRA** to front end, rather than after Transitional Housing

Case Management

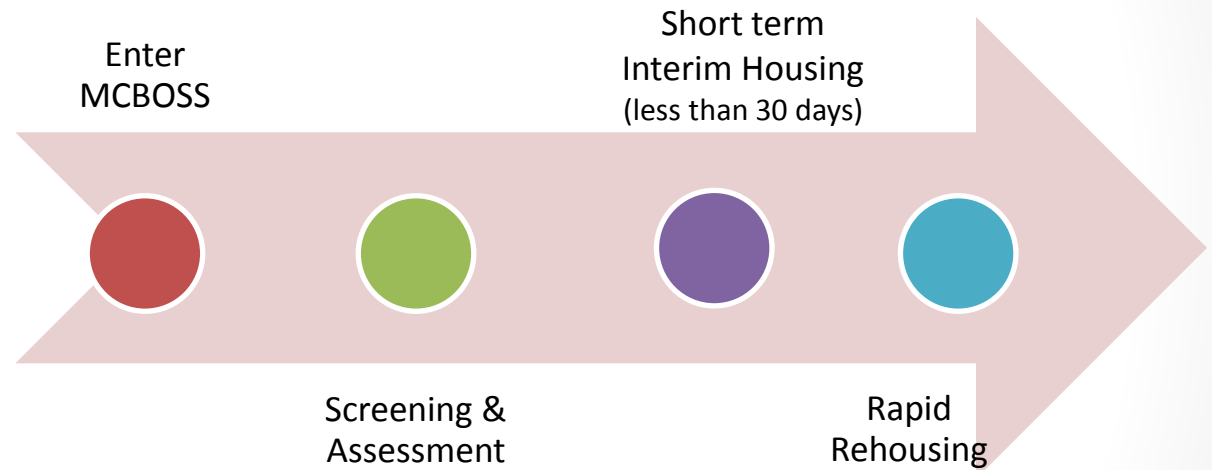
- Case Management with Focus on Employment was key
- Contracted community-based agency for CM services, paid for by mix of funds

New System:

Rapid Rehousing for Families

Here's what we do:

- Screen and assess the needs of the family
- Provide short term shelter to resolve immediate crisis
- Develop housing stability plans with families
- Assist with housing searches and landlord negotiations
- Rental and utility assistance
- Case Management



WHAT WE LEARNED:

RAPID REHOUSING WORKS

Comparing Rapid Rehousing to Transitional Housing

Decreased
Length of Time
on Public
Assistance



Rapid Rehousing: **189 Days**
Transitional Housing:
339 Days

Increased Earned
Monthly Income



Rapid Rehousing: **50%**
Transitional Housing:
14%

Reduced
Recidivism Rate



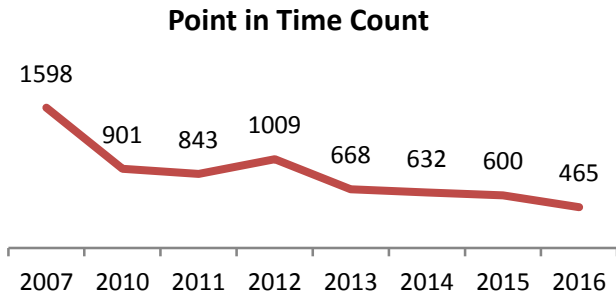
Rapid Rehousing: **6%**
Transitional Housing:
21%



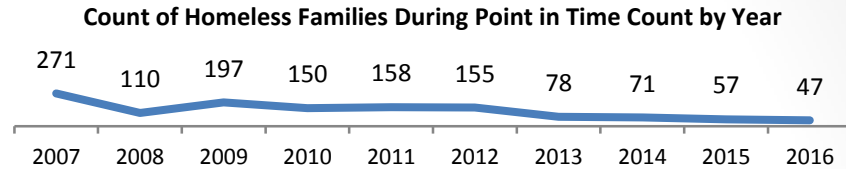
**MERCER ALLIANCE
TO END HOMELESSNESS**

The one day **Point in Time Count** of the Homeless (PIT) is an indication that we are quickly moving people from homelessness to permanent housing. Mercer County, like many other localities, continues to see individual and families become homeless for a variety of reasons. However, we have learned how to move people rapidly out of homelessness and into homes through our **Housing First and Rapid Rehousing** programs. Therefore, on any one day, fewer people in Mercer County are homeless.

On a single night in January 2016, 8,941 persons were homeless in New Jersey – 465 persons were homeless in Mercer County. On any given day, homelessness in Mercer County has declined by **71%** since 2007.



Mercer County Reduces Family Homelessness by **83%** since 2007.



Rapid Rehousing Works!

Over the last 4 years the system to deal with family homelessness has been transformed. A comprehensive screening allows us to identify the truly homeless as well as those families who need one time interventions to prevent homelessness. Since 2010 over **1000** homeless families have been rapidly rehoused by moving into their own apartments within **54** days of entering the homeless system. Before the transformation, families were remaining in Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing programs for up to a year.



- Over 2000 children, who were once homeless, are now living with their families in their **own** apartments, and attending schools in their **own** neighborhoods.
- Rapid Rehousing’s case management services have helped families increase their earned income by **50%**, reducing the length of time on public assistance from one year to **6** months on average.
- Rapid Rehousing decreases the length of stay in emergency shelter by **36%** meaning that families are able to be back in their own homes more quickly.
- Best of all, **94%** of families who have been rapidly rehoused have not become homeless again.

Key Question for your State

1. How can the state align itself with the national mandates embodied in HEARTH.
2. Policy Support for Rapid Rehousing.
3. DHS now permits a daily rate for shelter and transitional. The same rule could allow for Rapid Rehousing daily rate.
4. This is permissive, not mandatory - Another tool in the tool kit for CWAs.
5. Based on Mercer data, rate could be set at \$25-30 for case management, plus TRA.

What's Needed at Local Level

- Commitment from County Welfare Agency to use TRAs, coupled with intensive case management -- through a community agency or CWA staff.
- Commitment to assign high-level staff to work in partnership with COC.
- Commitment to using a Rapid Rehousing screening tool.
- Commitment to enter data in HMIS so outcomes can be tracked and reported.

Contact Information

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