



National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

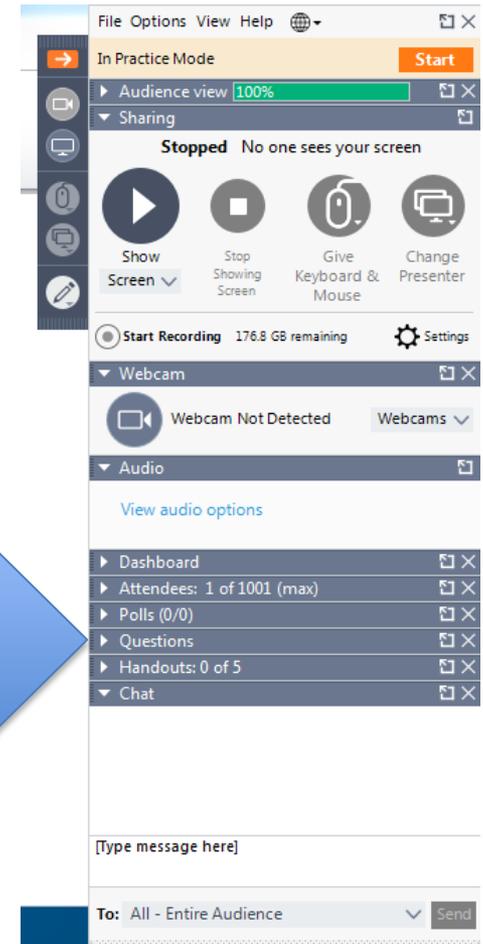
The Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Frequently Asked Questions for Low-Barrier Shelters

Today's Webinar

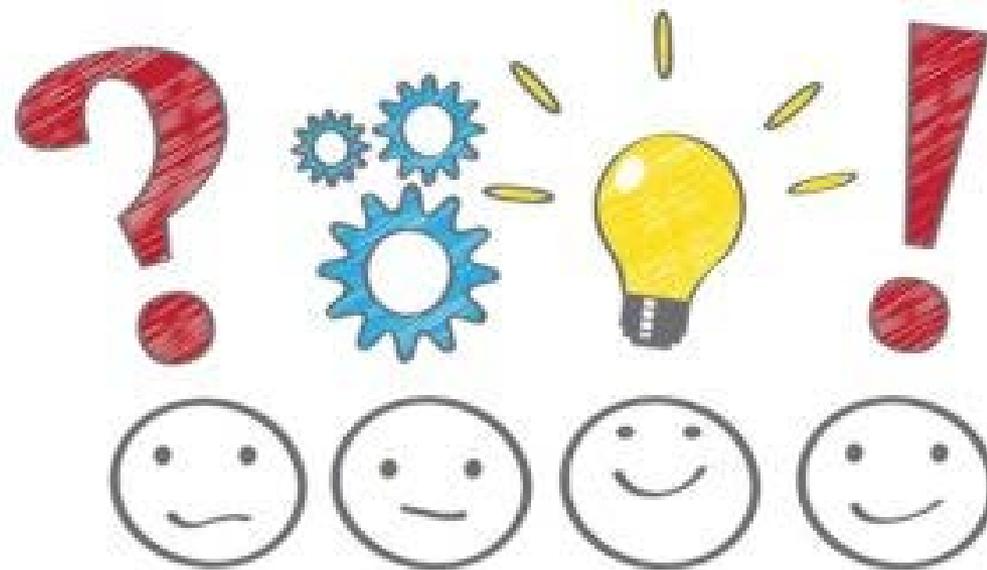
- Please note that all lines are on mute.
- Please pose questions at any time in the Questions box. We will try to get to as many as we can at the end.
- The webinar and slides will be posted following the presentation. Feel free to share with your staff and any other stakeholders.

Ask a Question !



Today's Webinar

Frequently Asked and Challenging Questions



The Critical Role of Shelters

- Emergency shelters and other types of crisis housing (crisis beds, interim housing, motel vouchers) play a **critical role** in your system's response to homelessness
- People in a housing crisis will always need a **safe and decent** place to go that is immediately available



Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Overview

- **Series** of webinars
- **Key elements** to operating an effective shelter
- **Self-assessments** to evaluate your shelter
- **Tools** that your shelter can use to implement programmatic, policy, and operational changes
- **Guidance** from shelters that have made the transition to a more effective shelter model



Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Goals

- **Strengthen** shelter policies and services to improve the housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness across your crisis response system
- **Implement** a system-wide approach to ending homelessness that includes emergency shelters
- **Align** emergency shelters' goals with the community's goals to end homelessness
- **Provide enough** low-barrier, safe, and housing-focused shelter



Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Tools

- Shelter outcome metrics form
- Shelter self-assessments
- 5 Keys to Effective Shelter Infographic
- How to Re-tool Your Rules Infographic
- **Coming soon:**
 - Sample RFP
 - Videos featuring shelter providers who have made the shift to low-barrier shelter
 - Motion Graphic of the 5 Keys
 - Many more webinars



Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Resources

<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/emergency-shelter/>

Past Webinars in the Series

1. The Role of Shelter in the Crisis Response System
2. The Keys to Low-Barrier Effective Shelter
3. How to Transition Your Shelter to Be Low-Barrier and Housing-focused
4. Which Rules are the Right Rules Part I (DV and Family Shelters)
5. Which Rules are the Right Rules Part II (Shelters that Serve Single Adults)

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.



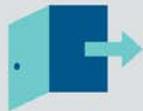
SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION

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.



HOUSING FIRST APPROACH



SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION



IMMEDIATE & LOW-BARRIER ACCESS



HOUSING-FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES



DATA TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

Changes You Have Made

What has been the impact of these changes on your program, your staff, the people you serve, and your community?

- “As a partner at the County level, seeing the increased engagement and willingness from shelter leadership has made the biggest difference.”
- “More people are able to access our shelter that are truly the most vulnerable in our community. While we still cannot serve everyone, lowering the barriers has been significant for many folks that have never had the opportunity to access shelter and be immersed in a supportive environment. ”
- “Safer shelter. Faster moves to housing (150 day drop in length of stay). Rules that were more friendly yet maintained shelter management. Engaged clients in discussions about shelter practices.”

Today's Speakers

Cynthia Nagendra

Director

Center for Capacity Building, NAEH

Kay Moshier McDivitt

Senior TA Specialist

Center for Capacity Building, NAEH

Kris Freed

Chief Programs Officer

Los Angeles Family Housing

John MacDonald

Vice-President of Adult Services

Crossroads Rhode Island

Mary Ann Haley

Deputy Director

Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness



Your Questions

Q1 Share in 100 words or less, your biggest challenge when it comes to providing low-barrier shelter.

Answered: 122 Skipped: 0

Hard Increasing Run Fact Drug and Alcohol
Transportation Space Order Clients Substance
Low-barrier Shelter Staffing Staff
Policy Housing Aren't Challenge
Agency Families Screening Funding Youth
Emergency Shelter Circumstances Bed Length
Criminal

Working with People Who Use Substances

- Our shelter is located on a site where we provide services to families with young children. How do we keep people safe and allow low-barrier access to people who are under the influence?
- We have had numerous problems where we have needed to call the police due to aggression when people are under the influence. This makes staff and guests feel unsafe. How do we manage these situations more effectively?

Working with People Who Use Substances

“ How can we meet the needs of different populations who need to access shelter? For example, our residents who are trying to maintain sobriety are upset that they have to share space with people who are using and get upset when there are not consequences given out for behavior associated with drug or alcohol usage. Aren't we threatening people's sobriety?

Serving Different Populations

“ How can we allow families to be in the same building as registered sex offenders? Should we ask about criminal backgrounds to avoid any danger or liability?

Time Limits on Shelter Stays

“ Should we have time limits at shelter? How can we ensure a quick flow through our beds without a time-limit? We removed our 90-day policy but now have many long-stayers. If we should have time limits, what is an ideal length?

Finding Housing

“ Our community does not have enough affordable housing, rapid re-housing, or supportive housing for high-barrier households to move into. Our prioritization list has hundreds of people with high acuity scores waiting for a voucher they are unlikely to receive any time soon. How can our shelter support them?

Finding Housing

“ How should we start being more housing-focused at shelter if the rest of our system won't support us by helping to scale up housing resources? Aren't shelters only as effective as the permanent housing options are in their community? How can we get support from our system?

Serving Highly Vulnerable People with Lack of Staff Capacity and/or Community Supports

“ How do we work with high-needs persons who we are not equipped to take care of? For example, police and hospitals drop off people whose condition is so extreme we are not prepared to help them. Our community has very little to no mental health or medical respite beds, and not enough substance abuse resources for uninsured individuals. Case managers are overwhelmed. What advice do you have?

Serving Highly Vulnerable People with Lack of Staff Capacity and/or Community Supports

“ Sometimes the reason that shelters in our community have a large number of rules is that they are staffed by volunteers, rather than professional staff. How can the system balance the low-barrier approach with limited professional resources to work with the hardest-to-house in shelters?

Housing-focused Services



How do we help transition clients' expectations to be more housing-focused? Many participants are very transient and do not stay long enough to acquire the skills they need to sustain them in permanent housing. To many, "shelter" means 3 hots and a cot and is not about responsibility, accountability, setting goals and progress needed to achieve them. How do we change this perception?

Housing-focused Services



How do you encourage clients to focus on housing and getting out of shelter? Some of our clients do not want to develop a housing plan. What do we do if clients do not want to work on getting housing? Should we exit them if they are not showing progress? How do you promote accountability to goals?

Prioritizing for Shelter

“ We have a long waiting list for our shelters, which are currently first-come, first serve. How do we prioritize people for shelter? Can we use the same assessment as the coordinated entry system (VI-SPDAT)?

Illegal Activity

“ How do you handle loitering and illegal activities (selling drugs, prostitution, fights, etc.) in front of your property?

Buy-in



I am a funder. Many of our shelters don't want to make these changes. How do we get the buy-in of shelter staff and leadership and support them to make this transition?

Buy-in

“ We want to move to a low-barrier model, but our board does not want this change. For example, there has been a long-standing warrant check at intake that we wish to discard. However, the board believes the policy offers safety and protects us from liability. How do we handle this?

Operations

“ How should we handle security in a low-barrier shelter? Do we have to get rid of our metal detectors or our security guards?

Operations



- What should we do about having a curfew? How can you achieve the need to secure the building for the safety of residents and staff without having a curfew?
- How can we ensure that other guests are able to get rest if we do not have a “lights out” time?

What's Next

Webinar in March

Evaluating Shelter's Performance with Data



Contact Us!

The Center for Capacity Building

Email: thecenter@naeh.org