WEBINAR TO BEGIN AT 2:00PM EDT
EFFECTIVE DIVERSION: A KEY STRATEGY FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS

October 15, 2020

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Diana Berube, Program Manager for Prevention and Exit Strategies, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

Kristi Schulenberg, Director, Center for Capacity Building, National Alliance to End Homelessness
Housekeeping & Announcements

• All attendees are on mute, and video options are turned off.
• The Zoom chat function has been disabled. Please enter your questions in the Zoom Q&A box.
• Upcoming webinars:
  • October 22nd at 2PM EDT - Researching an End to Homelessness: Election Year Policy Ideas (The Affordable Housing Crisis)
Agenda

- Welcome, Housekeeping, and Introductions
- Overview: Diversion, Homelessness Prevention, and Eviction Prevention
- Diversion: What, How, and Why
- How communities are and can use diversion as an effective strategy to end people’s homelessness in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond
- Questions & Answers
AN OVERVIEW:
Diversion, Homelessness Prevention, and Eviction Prevention
## Diversion, Homelessness Prevention, and Eviction Prevention

### Impact on Homelessness System

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Targeted to:</strong> People who have lost housing and are about to enter shelter or sleep outside</td>
<td><strong>Targeted to:</strong> Extremely vulnerable people who are about to lose their housing</td>
<td><strong>Targeted to:</strong> Low income people who have received an eviction notice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Funded by:</strong></td>
<td>• Homelessness system funds</td>
<td>• Mainstream “feeder system” funds</td>
<td>• Federal, state, and local housing funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Homelessness systems that have served their entire homeless population</td>
<td>• Legal assistance funds</td>
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[End Homelessness](endhomelessness.org)
Which Strategy Has the Greatest Impact on a Community's Response to Homelessness?

**DIVERSION**
- Serves people who have lost housing and are facing **IMMINENT** entry into shelter or sleeping outside
- Reduces number of entries to a system
- Lowers demand for shelter beds
- Shortens wait lists

**HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION**
- Serves extremely vulnerable people who are about to lose their housing
- Only effective when targeted to those most at risk of becoming homeless

**EVICTION PREVENTION**
- Serves low income people who have received an eviction notice
- Most recipients **DO NOT** face imminent risk of homelessness
What Do People Mean When They Talk About Preventing Homelessness?

| Assisting people who have lost their housing avoid entering shelter or unsheltered homelessness by helping them identify alternative places to stay. | Helping people at **high-risk** of homelessness and **facing imminent housing loss stay** housed (in current or new housing). | Helping low-income people threatened with eviction or housing loss remain housed (in current or new housing). | Helping low-income people achieve long-term housing security (e.g. through providing permanent housing subsidies). |

| Diversion | Homelessness prevention | Eviction prevention | Addressing affordable housing need |
Homelessness Prevention Programs

- Homelessness prevention programs are narrowly targeted interventions that are designed to reduce entries into homelessness among those who are at heightened risk of homelessness.

- Effective programs rely heavily on data to identify populations at heightened risk as well as knowledge of “precipitating events” that increase the likelihood of an imminent homeless episode to target resources.

- While using data increases the chance that dedicated resources will prevent literal homeless episodes, even the best targeting tools are imperfect.
Eviction Prevention Programs

- While homelessness prevention programs are designed to reduce entries into homelessness among people at heightened risk, eviction prevention programs are designed to help people under threat of eviction to retain their housing.

- People typically served by eviction prevention programs are people behind on their rent, often due to external events (lost job, family crisis). Programs may require households to demonstrate the ability to sustain housing independently after receiving minimal assistance and/or demonstrate they are behind in rent through “no fault of their own”.

- Eviction prevention programs also often have broad income eligibility criteria, for example, families with eviction notices and with incomes below 100 percent of AMI. Since eligibility criteria is broad and eligible populations is large, resources may be depleted within days (if not hours).
Moving Eviction Prevention Programs Toward Homelessness Prevention

• Lessons learned from homelessness prevention interventions can be applied by eviction prevention programs so they too can become more impactful in reducing homelessness.

• Steps to achieve this may include:
  o Aligning eligibility criteria to reflect the characteristics of families/individuals entering homelessness;
  o Serving secondary tenants;
  o Targeting eviction prevention services to highly vulnerable leaseholders (e.g. people living in subsidized housing);
  o Narrowing eligibility criteria to poorer households;
  o Adopting universal screenings to identify highly housing insecure people in high-risk groups as part of public social service delivery (e.g. adults receiving MH services who are reliant on SSI).
DIVERSION: WHAT, HOW, AND WHY
What is Diversion?

• An intervention designed to immediately address the needs of someone who has just lost their housing and become homeless.

• A client-driven approach to help a household find safe alternative housing immediately, rather than shelter or unsheltered homelessness.

• An intervention intended to ensure:
  • The homeless experience is as brief as possible
  • To prevent unsheltered homelessness, and
  • To avert stays in shelter
How Does Diversion Work?

Through an intensive service interaction utilizing a problem-solving conversation to:

1. **Understand** what caused a person’s housing crisis
2. **Explore** what immediate solutions to the crisis may be possible, and
3. **Help** them pursue a solution(s)

Safe alternative short-or longer-term options may include:

• A negotiated return to their previous housing
• Short-term, non-shelter accommodations
• Shared housing
• Returns to family
6 STEPS TO A PROBLEM-SOLVING CONVERSATION
Why Do Diversion?

• To provide a positive alternative to entering shelter or unsheltered homelessness
  • Shelter can be traumatic
  • Unsheltered homelessness creates a higher risk for negative outcomes
• Diversion is a much more effective intervention for homeless response systems and in ending homelessness
  • Stems inflow to shelter
  • Less costly
  • Avoids emergency-related costs of unsheltered homelessness
NORTH CAROLINA COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS

Denise Nuenaber, Executive Director
Diversion Strategies with ESG Funding

Denise Neunaber, Executive Director
WATER

SOAP

AGITATION
AFFORDABLE HOUSING

APPROPRIATE SERVICES

ADEQUATE INCOME
Back@Home Activities

Flexible Financial Assistance
- Rental Assistance
- Utility Assistance
- Rental + Utility Arrears
- Deposits (Rent, Utility, Pet)
- Barrier Busters*
- Moving Costs
- Household Goods*

*Private dollars

Housing Navigation
- Housing Search
- Liaison/negation with rental properties
- Move-In Fees
- Upfit + Repairs*

Housing Stabilization Case Management

Legal Services
## Back@Home Eligibility using ESG-CV

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<thead>
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<td><strong>Eligible Living situation(s)</strong></td>
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Barriers for Prioritization
Households are asked about barriers to getting and keeping housing.

- No income
- Unaccompanied youth (under 25)
- One or more children under 6 and/or pregnant
- Currently at-risk of losing housing subsidy or subsidized unit (Targeted Homeless Prevention only)
- Household from disproportionately impacted populations
- Victim of DV in prior 6 months
- No lease in name in last 3 years
- Adult in household has severe and persistent disabling condition
- Unsheltered (RRH only)
- Felony conviction among household members
- Household size of 5 or more
- 2 or more episodes of homelessness in prior three years
- Vacated a unit 3 or more times in prior 7 years and/or ongoing rental arrears
- Current homeless episode is 1 year or longer
- Veteran, not eligible for VA services
- Child in household has a severe and persistent disabling condition
CONNECTICUT

Bobbi Riddick, Assistant CAN Coordinator, Meriden/Middlesex/Wallingford (MMW)

Diana Berube, Program Manager for Prevention and Exit Strategies, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness
Let’s share a common goal to make episodes...

RARE, BRIEF, and NON-RECURRING!
Outreach plays the critical role of ensuring those outdoors or unlikely to use the 2-1-1 process are put on the By-Name List.

Conduct VI-SPDAT when/if appropriate, which adds client to By-Name List.
Why shelter diversion is effective and important

- Reduces trauma
- Cost effective
- Limited space available in emergency shelter
- Builds on client’s strengths – It’s empowering!
- Takes into account client choice
Shelter Realities

• Low-barrier
• Wet shelter
• Reduction of rules/policies
• Privacy
• Safety
• Minimal Staffing
• Hours
• Trauma
• Congregate setting during current pandemic
• SHELTER IS NOT HOUSING – IT IS A TEMPORARY SOLUTION!
Creating a “Housing Stabilization Plan”

- Identify barriers that a household might face in finding stable housing
- Address any issues concerning household income
- Connect client to “natural” resources (family/friends)
- Refer household to other community supports
- Provide limited time financial assistance when appropriate
Best Practices in Problem Solving Conversations

- Practice Motivational Interview
- Take a Strength’s Based approach
- Always remain client choice oriented – conversation should be client led
- Be trauma informed
- Exercise cultural awareness
- Use Active and Empathetic Listening
- Meet the client “where they are at”
Coordinated Entry during the Pandemic

• Accessibility of available resources to Everyone in need
• Virtual/Phone only assessments
• State issued phones – usage of minutes and access to WiFi
Questions & Answers