



The Framework for  
an Equitable COVID-19  
Homelessness Response  
#HousingEquity

Strategies to ensure no child sleeps outside:  
*Immediate and Flexible Crisis Options for  
Children and Families*

December 9, 2021

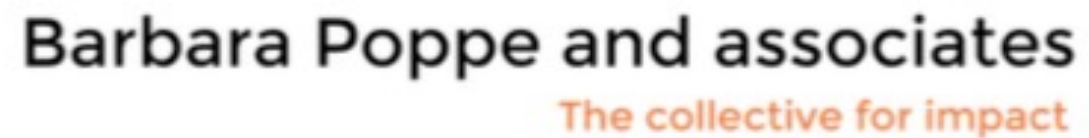
<http://housingequityframework.org>

# Welcome

Tiffany Haynes, co-author "Immediate and Flexible Crisis Options for Children and Families"



# Partners



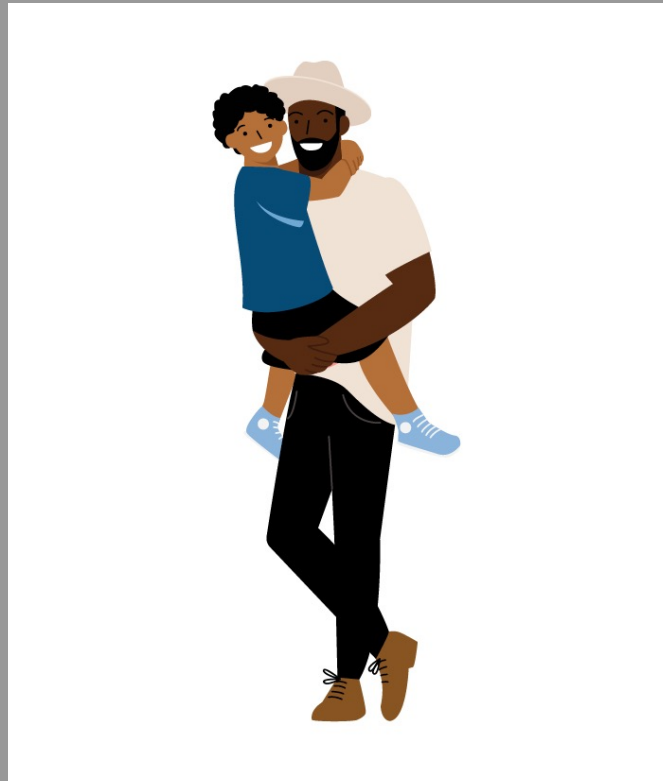
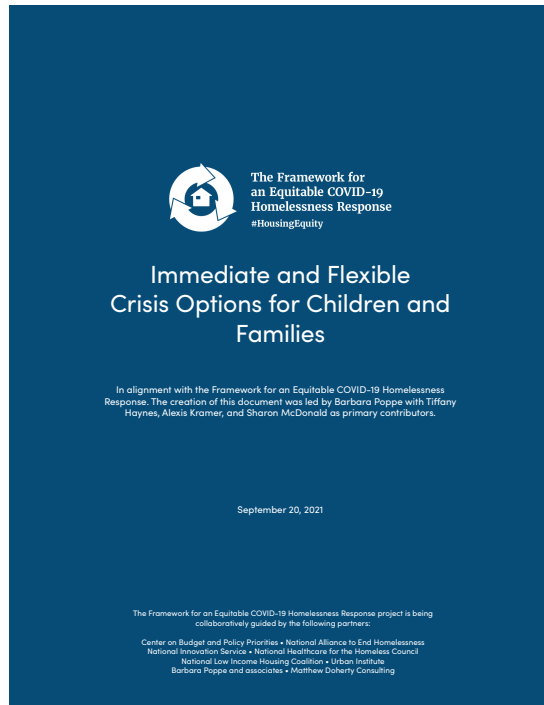
# The Framework: Guiding Strategies

1. Advance racial justice and equity
2. Address the highest needs first
3. Grow Partnerships
4. Get people into Housing
5. Act Quickly



Housing instability and  
homelessness  
*are*  
inextricably linked to  
long standing racial disparities  
*and*  
have been amplified  
during the pandemic.





# Today's Agenda:

- Welcome
- Report Highlights
- Panel Discussion
- Q&A
- Closing

# Highlights of the Report

Barbara Poppe, co-author “Immediate and Flexible Crisis Options for Children and Families”





# Key Practices to Enhance Community Responses to Family Homelessness

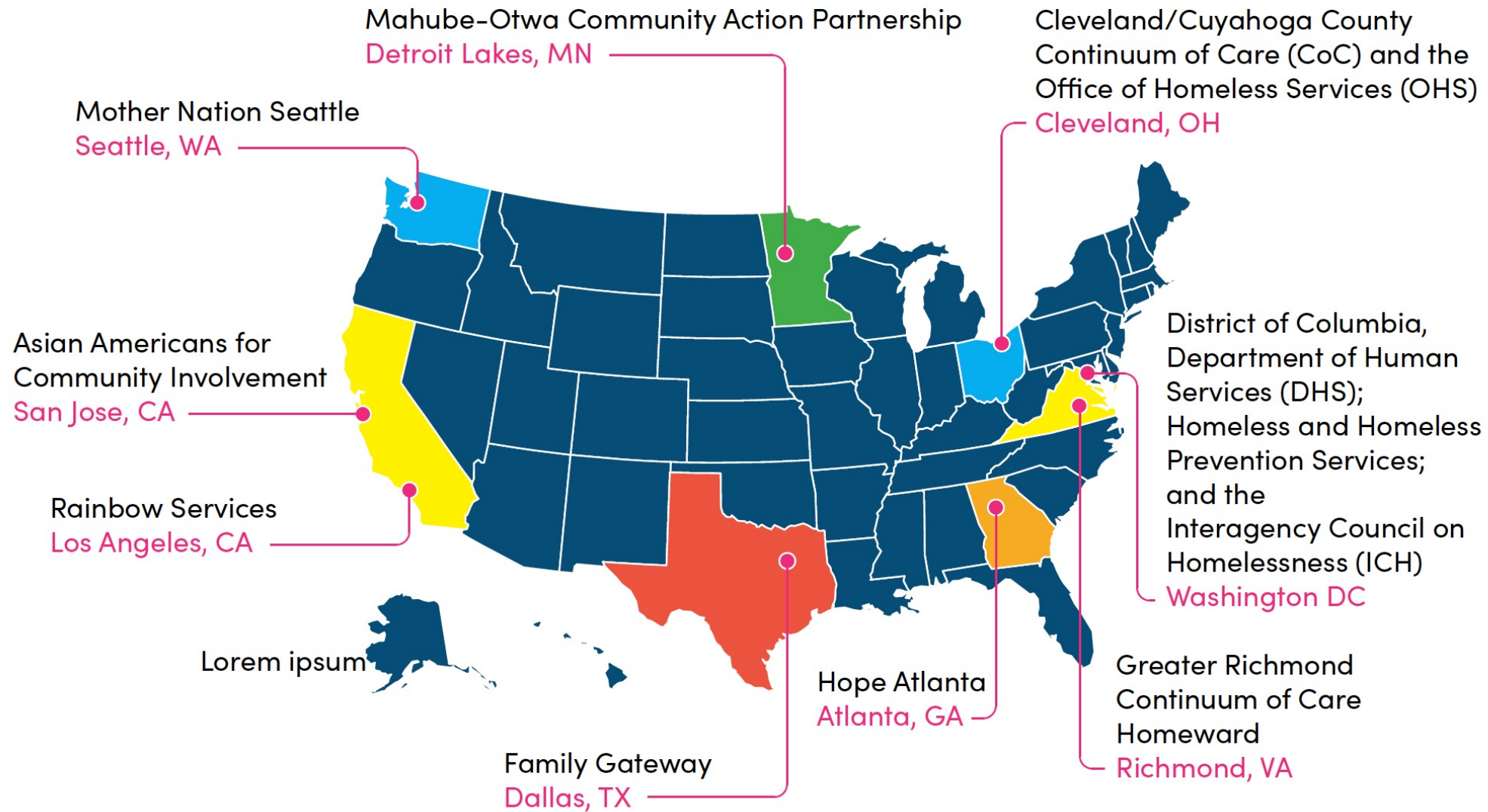
01. Ensure capacity to serve all families
02. Center equity and culture throughout every element of planning and programming
03. Utilize hotels/motels, vouchers, and master-lease units strategically and effectively
04. Implement homelessness diversion activities across the system
05. Connect sheltering strategies to rehousing assistance
06. Embed homelessness assistance within broader community systems of services and support

[housingequityframework.org](https://housingequityframework.org)





# Spotlight Organizations



## Ensure Capacity to Serve All Families

- Centralized or coordinated access point(s) to triage families in crisis
- Homelessness diversion was offered before admission to shelter or another crisis option
- Coordinated with other crisis programs
- Accommodate families as self-defined households
- Legal status, criminal history, or prior utilization of the system was not a barrier to being served.
- Housing First, low-barrier admission practices, and family-centered practices were key to being inclusive of all families
- Make the crisis option convenient and accessible for families, without requiring families to travel long distances nor be put on waitlists



## Equal Access is not only a best practice, but also required by the HUD Equal Access Rule.

All individuals, including families, should have access to crisis options, housing, and services based on their self-defined gender identity, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or marital status. Individuals who identify as transgender and non-binary are also protected.

Programs may not exclude individuals based on their gender identity or age, i.e., teenage boys and adult males as part of families should be accommodated.

Admission and services should be provided without families being subject to intrusive questioning or being asked to provide documentation of gender for any family member.



## Center Equity and Culture throughout Every Element of Planning and Programming

- Be attentive to the diverse cultural identities of people served by programs/system as well as people who may be underutilizing their program/system
- Engage people with lived expertise to identify types of culturally specific programming that is offered and in planning, implementation, funding decisions, outreach, and provision of services
- Offer culturally specific approaches that reflect the culture of the population served by the agency
- Families can choose which culturally specific options to explore and utilize
- Build bridges with culturally specific programs and diverse faith communities
- Regularly disaggregate program data (admissions, types of exits, length of stay, and improvements in income) by race, gender, and LGBTQ to uncover disparities.

## Center Equity and Culture throughout Every Element of Planning and Programming

- Culturally specific approaches must be survivor-driven and trauma-informed recognizing both historical and recent trauma
- Display program materials and/or signage that reflects the diversity of participants
- Hire diverse staff and provide training by leaders and trainers of color/LGBTQ on about all the cultures, races, and ethnicities that are served by the program
- Evaluate potential partners' policies and practices to ensure their services are centered on equity and culture to avoid exacerbating trauma for program participants
- Adopt "Equity-Based Decision Making" approaches (see <https://housingequityframework.org/equity> )

**“Indigenous people need access to our cultural practices to heal. Mother Nation celebrates and inspires the ancestral strength of each participant through cultural services combined with housing assistance.”**

**Norine Hill, founder Mother Nation**



## Key Finding 03

# Utilize Hotels/Motels, Vouchers, and Master-lease Units Strategically and Effectively

- Expandable/contractible options adjust to demands and needs
- Geography of the crisis option should match needs of people who need it
- Select hotel/motel sites that offer kitchenettes (or at least free breakfast), allow family to be in the room 24/7, are family friendly, and can accommodate pets
- Educate master lease landlords and hotel/motel operators about homelessness, the program and agency. Provide a 24/7 contact at the agency who can problem-solve issues that may arise.
- Provide services onsite and remotely (based on family preference), offer transportation to agency programs and community services, and ensure all basic needs are for food, hygiene supplies, diapers, formula, etc.
- Coordinate with schools, childcare, and other child/youth serving organizations to ensure children's care, activities, and education are not disrupted
- Embed these crisis options within the existing program and broader community response so families can access Coordinated Entry resources and be tracked through HMIS (unless exempted)
- Hotel/motel programs should either reserve rooms or have other mechanisms to ensure availability when needed





“Problem solving together to mediate conflict and create a tailored, individualized plan from a variety of flexible and interchangeable tools.”

“Safety is central. The goal is to not only meet needs, but create spaces and situations where people can thrive.”



## Implement Homelessness Diversion Activities Across the System

### Homelessness Diversion

is a practice used to help families who are seeking crisis services or to enter shelter including those who may have already lost their housing, find safe alternative places to stay to avoid shelter or unsheltered homelessness. Diversion practice, coupled with flexible financial assistance, short- or long-term rental assistance, and/or other supports can reduce the number of families exposed to unsheltered or sheltered homelessness. Diversion has been demonstrated to be both effective and efficient. Expanding and strengthening diversion by offering targeted assistance to help families quickly secure new places to stay can avert a shelter stay or need for a flexible crisis option.

## Implement Homelessness Diversion Activities Across the System

- Staff trained in problem-solving techniques to help families generate options and able to help families assess options to ensure safety.
- Offer and explore diversion before admission to any shelter option
- Continue diversion services while in flexible crisis option -- a great way to help families exit more quickly to safe and stable housing
- When needed, diversion services include provision of housing relocation assistance
- Allow families too choose which diversion options to explore and accept.
- Diversion is a key part of “Domestic Violence Housing First” approaches [see <https://wscadv.org/projects/domestic-violence-housing-first/> ]

## Connect Sheltering Strategies to Rehousing Assistance

### Supporting Transitions to Stable Housing Is Critical

A range of re-housing interventions to help families transition out of shelter and back into permanent housing were used, including:

- Flexible financial assistance
- Rapid resolution
- Housing navigation support
- Rapid re-housing
- Affordable rental housing
- Permanent supportive housing

## Connect Sheltering Strategies to Rehousing Assistance

- Families are quickly linked to re-housing assistance upon becoming homeless.
- Re-housing support is available to every family that does not quickly self-resolve.
- Homeless providers ascribe to a Housing First orientation. Re-housing support is not conditioned on compliance with service requirements and is available to every family that requires support regardless of family challenges.
- Families are assisted with housing identification and landlord negotiation. Family choice is prioritized and supported by staff.
- Homeless service programs are responsive to the concerns of both newly re-housed families and landlords to facilitate successful long-term tenancy.
- A progressive engagement approach is utilized; there is an ability to transition families seamlessly to a richer intervention (longer-term, more intensive support) as needed.
- Re-housing assistance includes a focus on linking families to community-based supports to facilitate long-term family stability and well-being.

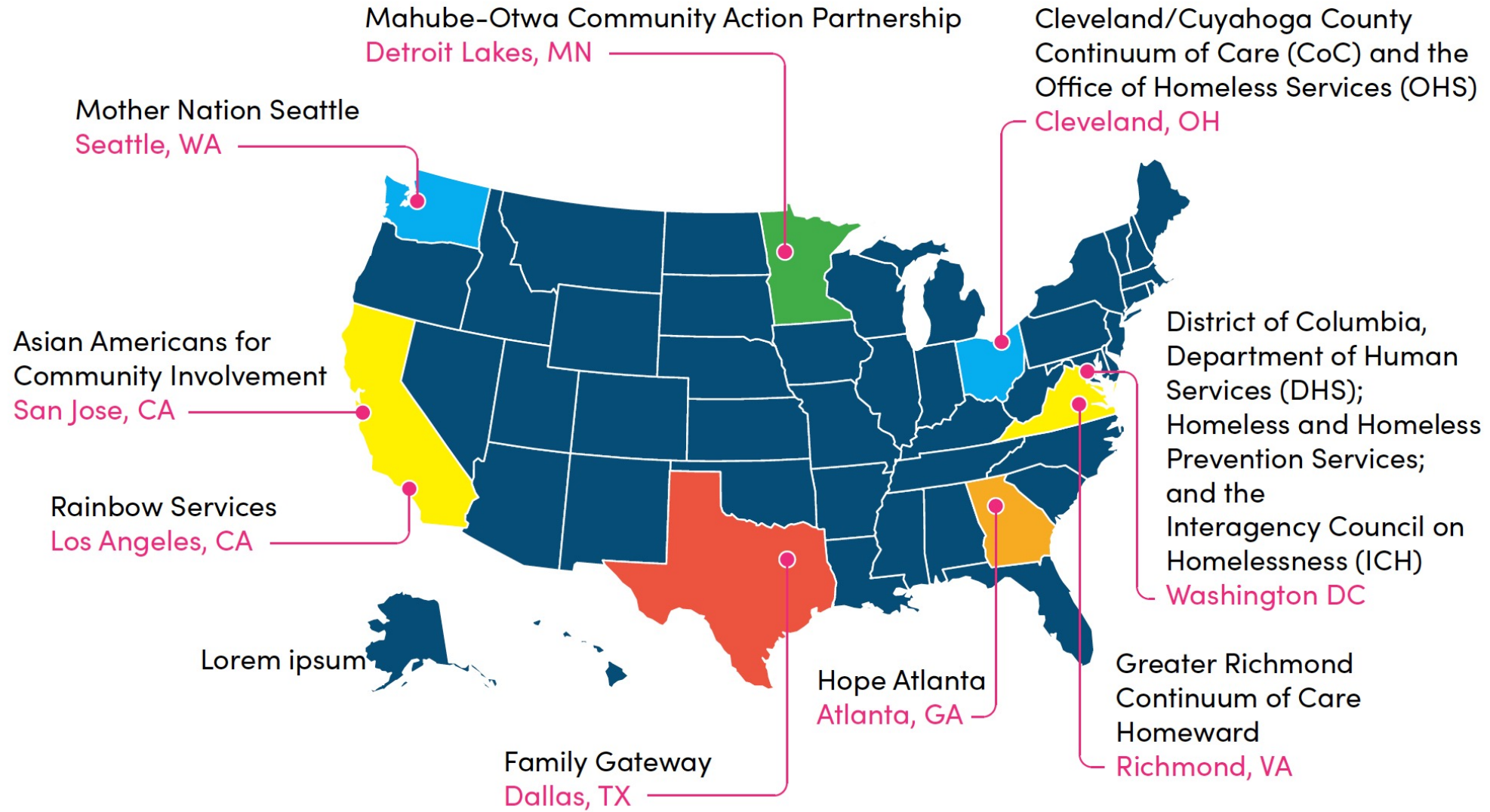


## Embed Homelessness Assistance within Broader Community Systems of Services and Support

- Closely coordinate service provision to ensure families have a seamless transition from shelter to re-housing support
  - Those who require more intensive support are quickly connected to providers best equipped to support them
- Families are quickly, and voluntarily, connected to income and support services available in the community
- Homeless service system leaders and providers meet regularly to continuously assess system performance and outcomes.
  - Ensure the services each organization can provide are fully leveraged
- Homeless service system leaders continuously assess and work to improve families' access to community-based services and the quality of services families receive.
  - Close collaboration and advocacy with social service and political leaders is essential.



# Spotlight Organizations



# Ways to Organize Your Flexible Crisis Response



- Does your community have a strong Continuum of Care or other system-led response to family homelessness?
  - [Spotlight 01. Community-wide Systems](#)
    - Washington, DC
    - Cleveland/Cuyahoga County, OH
    - Greater Richmond, VA
- Does your organization provide a full range of homelessness assistance for families?
  - [Spotlight 02. Comprehensive Agency Response](#)
    - Family Gateway, Dallas, TX
- Does your organization currently provide crisis assistance for families and have capacity to partner with other organizations?
  - [Spotlight 03. Collaborative Agency Response](#)
    - HOPE Atlanta, GA
    - Mother Nation, Seattle, WA

# Ways to Organize Your Flexible Crisis Response



- Does your organization provide culturally specific services and serve families who are often not well served by mainstream providers? Does your community have gaps in meeting the culturally specific needs of homeless families?

## Spotlight 04. Culturally Informed Programs

- Asian Americans for Community Involvement, Santa Clara County, CA
- Mother Nation, Seattle, WA
- Rainbow Services, Los Angeles, CA

- Does your organization serve survivors of domestic and interpersonal violence but struggle with having sufficient capacity to meet the needs all types of families?

## Spotlight 05. Serving survivors of domestic and interpersonal violence

- Asian Americans for Community Involvement, Santa Clara County, CA
- Mother Nation, Seattle, WA
- Rainbow Services, Los Angeles, CA

- Does your organization serve families in rural and smaller communities and want to expand crisis options for families?

## Spotlight 06. Approaches in Rural Settings

- Mahube-Otwa







# Immediate, Near-Term Actions for Children and Families



[housingequityframework.org](https://housingequityframework.org)

Build equity into policy and funding decisions and decision-making practices.

Recognize and dismantle punitive system and program policies that impede and police Black families and other families of color.

Increase flexible funding to meet the unique and self-defined needs of all families with children who experience homelessness.

Ensure policy and funding supports Housing First approaches that are inclusive, holistic, and trauma-informed.

Ensure all funding and policies are accountable for meeting each family's needs.



# Systemic Actions that Require Persistent Advocacy for Children and Families

Stop criminalizing and policing the activities of black and brown people.

Eradicate barriers to assistance for immigrant and undocumented family members.


Increase the supply of deeply affordable rental housing, expand rental assistance access, and remove barriers to safe, stable housing.

Support policies that raise families' incomes and promote economic stability.

Expand capacity of community and public social service programs for families experiencing housing crises to avoid eviction, housing loss, and homelessness.



[housingequityframework.org](https://housingequityframework.org)



The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response  
#HousingEquity

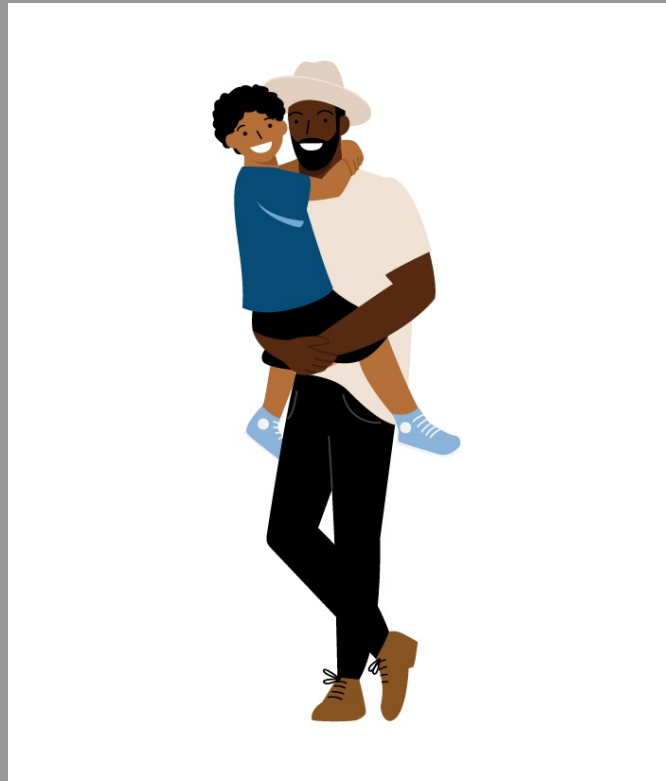
## Immediate and Flexible Crisis Options for Children and Families

In alignment with the Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response, the creation of this document was led by Barbara Poppe with Tiffany Haynes, Alexis Kramer, and Sharon McDonald as primary contributors.

September 20, 2021

The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response project is being collaboratively guided by the following partners:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities • National Alliance to End Homelessness  
National Innovation Service • National Healthcare for the Homeless Council  
National Law Institute Housing's Coalition • Urban Institute  
Barbara Poppe and associates • Matthew Doherty Consulting



Questions?

# Panel Discussion

Moderators:


Tabitha Blackwell, Funders Together to End Homelessness

Joe Savage, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness



# Panelists

- Alexis Kramer, co-author, Minnesota
- Liz Kuoppala, MAHUBE-OTWA Community Action Partnership, MN
- Melissa Sirak, Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care, Ohio
- Norine Hill, Mother Nation, Seattle, WA
- Tiffany Haynes, co-author, Virginia



The Framework for  
an Equitable COVID-19  
Homelessness Response  
#HousingEquity

## Immediate and Flexible Crisis Options for Children and Families

In alignment with the Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response. The creation of this document was led by Barbara Poppe with Tiffany Haynes, Alexis Kramer, and Sharon McDonald as primary contributors.

September 20, 2021

The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response project is being collaboratively guided by the following partners:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities • National Alliance to End Homelessness  
National Innovation Service • National Healthcare for the Homeless Council  
National Low Income Housing Coalition • Urban Institute  
Barbara Poppe and associates • Matthew Doherty Consulting

Approximately 25% of people in poverty in this region are Native American

5,000 square miles including tribal land



Whole Family Approach

Shelter options include:

Master Lease Apartments  
Hotel/Motel



**MAHUBE-OTWA**

**M** Community Action Partnership, Inc.

*Community Minded Client Focused Resourceful*

# Cleveland/Cuyahoga County – Ohio CoC

*System-wide Equitable Approach based on Housing First*

## Coordinated Entry = Resource Matching



## Progressive Engagement Model

Permanent Housing:  
RRH Services  
12 Months of Rent

Extended Rental Assistance & Case Management  
- 50% Rental Assistance  
- 25% Rental Assistance

CMHA / PHA

Permanent Housing Voucher

Maintain Housing: Exit  
– no ongoing subsidy

Flexible Crisis Options:  
Diversion, Mediation/Case Management  
Legal Services, Gift Cards, Cash Incentives, Landlord Incentives, Hotel, Motel  
Expanded Rental Assistance





# MOTHER NATION

## Mission

- ▶ To provide cultural services, mobile advocacy, and mentorship to support the success of Indigenous Women and families.

### What we do....

- Mother Nation Homeless Response Team provides wrap around services for Indigenous women and families including single dads in homeless emergency services, and homeless prevention. The Wantuwaan Street Outreach team recently added to our Homeless Services.
- Mobile Advocates transport families to safety, attend court, refer to cultural services team programs and groups.
- Training is offered to both on and off-reserve programs along with a mentorship program to provide hands-on experience to inspire mentees to join our network of services.



*"Honoring the beauty and strength of Native Women"*



# Dialogue

## Moderators

- Tabitha Blackwell, Funders Together to End Homelessness
- Joe Savage, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

## Panelists

- Alexis Kramer, co-author, Minnesota
- Liz Kuoppola, MAHUBE-OTWA Community Action Partnership, MN
- Melissa Sirak, Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care, Ohio
- Norine Hill, Mother Nation, Seattle, WA
- Tiffany Haynes, co-author, Virginia



# Closing

Alexis Kramer, co-author "Immediate and Flexible Crisis Options for Children and Families"





## The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response

#HousingEquity

### Key Concepts

[https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DOC\\_FamilyShelteringBriefFactSheet\\_Final\\_11-15-21.pdf](https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DOC_FamilyShelteringBriefFactSheet_Final_11-15-21.pdf)

### Report

<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/09-30-2021-Immediate-and-Flexible-Crisis-Options.pdf>

### Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLi5yT1GxwY&t=7s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHSor2-S9U4&t=2s>

<http://housingequityframework.org>

# Additional Tools & Resources

---

- Urgent Message About **Prioritizing People for Emergency Housing Vouchers**
- Having **Greatest Impact on Preventing Homelessness and Addressing Racial Inequities** with New Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Resources
- **Equity-Based Decision-Making Guide** and Assessment Tool
- **What We Heard from People with Lived Experience** about COVID-19, Homelessness, and Services
- **Making the Case for Homeless Children and Families** During the Pandemic
- Strengthening **Partnerships for Better Health Outcomes**
- **Videos** introducing and accompanying tools
- **Library of hundreds of other tools and resources** re: federal funding, operational guidance, State and local examples
- Available at [HousingEquityFramework.org](https://HousingEquityFramework.org)