

## **What is progressive engagement?**

Progressive engagement is an approach to quickly ending homelessness for a household that considers their tenant or housing stabilization barriers, and utilizes the minimal financial and support resources as is necessary. It is considered a person-centered approach, as it is based on tailoring assistance to each household's strengths and needs. Progressive engagement assesses what works best for each household while integrating their specific situation, cultural needs, and goals into solutions. Additional supports are applied on an as-needed basis to achieve housing stabilization.

## **Who does progressive engagement serve?**

Progressive engagement is a strategy at both the homeless system and program levels. It is used with varying populations or household types, including individuals, families, people experiencing chronic homelessness, veterans, youth, and survivors of domestic violence. Progressive engagement is also an approach that can be effective in assisting people who are newly homeless, and people in programs like Rapid Re-housing or Permanent Supportive Housing who are transitioning into their own housing. Progressive engagement is a practice and a philosophy, rather than a strategy for specific program types or a program in itself.

## **When is progressive engagement used?**

Progressive engagement can be used throughout a household's journey from homelessness to housing. This strategy can be used at the first contact point with the homeless service system, and should continue throughout the household's ongoing engagement with the system.

## **How does progressive engagement work?**

At a household's first touch point with the homelessness system, staff engage in a problem-solving conversation to identify the household's strengths and most immediate needs for services. From this initial conversation, staff will assess which light-touch interventions (such as information and connection to resources, warm handoffs to community partners, or small financial assistance) can be utilized to resolve the household's housing crisis. After this initial engagement, if additional services are needed, the provider will engage in further problem-solving conversations to assess this need — with the ultimate goal of providing the right amount of assistance needed to get the household back into permanent housing quickly.

The key to a successful progressive engagement approach is to consistently employ these problem-solving conversations throughout the household's experience within the homelessness response system. As their circumstances change and their strengths are identified, supports are adjusted throughout their pathway to permanent housing.

## **Where can progressive engagement be used?**

A progressive engagement approach can be applied within all settings in the homelessness response system. It begins at the first touch with the system — whether that's outreach, shelter, a Coordinated Entry access point, or another setting. It continues throughout that household's efforts to return to permanent housing, including in permanent housing interventions like Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing.

## **Why use progressive engagement?**

The fastest way to end homelessness is to immediately connect each household in the homelessness response system with a permanent address of their own. Progressive engagement recognizes that there are ways to accurately predict how much help someone may need to end their homelessness and avoid a return to the streets or shelter. Progressive engagement ensures that those predictions are informed by dialogue with the household on their strengths, obstacles, needs, and wants, and are not informed by false assumptions about what people need and want.

This approach provides an opportunity for providers to individualize approaches, ensuring the right amount of assistance meets a household's needs at a given time. Progressive engagement is an efficient approach, in that it avoids providing more assistance than is needed; this reduces the time people spend homeless and enables the homelessness response system to serve more people.

Effective progressive engagement requires homelessness response systems and programs to be flexible. It also means taking creative approaches to solve a problem, and trying different approaches as necessary until providers find what works best for a household. With progressive engagement, increased flexibility can lead to a path towards increased effectiveness.

Progressive engagement allows homeless service systems to assess the resources they have available, and match them to households based on their level of need. This ensures that the households who have lower needs receive lighter-touch supports. More importantly, it ensures that the most intensive resources are available to those with the highest needs. This approach allows systems to tailor resources and services to the unique experiences of each household, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach where too little or more assistance than is needed can be given.