Reimagining Interim Housing

SUPPLEMENT

Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services

December 2022

Use of the Term "Interim Housing"

We have purposefully chosen to entitle this project and this document "Reimagining Interim Housing" but want to make the meaning and intentions behind the term "interim housing" clear.

We have received considerable **guidance from people with lived expertise and experiences of homelessness about the stigmatizing and traumatizing impacts of language in current usage within homelessness response systems, including the term "emergency shelter."**

Based upon that guidance, we have chosen to largely avoid the term "emergency shelter" within this document. Instead, **we have chosen to refer to "interim housing" or, less frequently, to "sheltering people," but in the descriptions of tools and resources included here, we have used the terminology used by the authors and creators of those materials**

The term "interim housing" is not meant to refer to one specific program model. Rather, the term is meant to refer to a full range of shorter-term, crisis options for temporary accommodations which may currently be referred to by a variety of terms: congregate or non-congregate emergency shelter; navigation centers; bridge housing; transitional housing; or other models or terms.

The term "interim housing" is also not meant to imply that people who are staying in such programs have ended their experiences of homelessness. People in interim housing programs of any type are still experiencing homelessness, and interim housing programs alone cannot end homelessness within our communities.

We recognize that it will take time to shift language usage consistently and that language will likely continue to evolve as we strive to reimagine and transform our approaches. **We also know that some programs may have to use specific terms for their programs or models based upon funding sources' eligibility requirements, regulations, or for other reasons.**

In implementing transformation efforts, we encourage people to use the terms that makes the most sense locally, while also listening to and following the guidance and preferences of people with lived expertise within your community.

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INTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT

The **Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response** project partners, in collaboration with other organizations, are implementing activities **to support communities to pursue transformation of their approaches to sheltering people within their efforts to end homelessness.** The Reimagining Interim Housing project is intended to advance priorities identified in the Framework, which calls upon communities to: sustain and expand interim housing opportunities during the pandemic; *and* to strive to transform their approaches to sheltering people to focus on non-congregate environments and other models, in order to better respond to public health crises, provide healthier environments, and to create more welcoming and efficient systems.

This project is directly responsive to one of the Top 4 Policy Shifts identified through a series of Listening Sessions held with representatives of historically marginalized communities in 2020. These sessions were coordinated through the then-active National Innovation Service's Center for Housing Justice and a working group of national and local policy experts and advocates, working alongside direct service providers and people serving the communities most impacted by the pandemic.

> ## Policy Shift
>
> **Implement a crisis response that ends the use of large congregate shelters and creates dignity-based, safe, temporary crisis options as a bridge to long-term housing.**

As we have implemented this project, it has been painfully clear that, **collectively, we have neglected to focus adequately on supporting and guiding the implementation of high-quality, low-barrier, housing-placement focused interim housing options** for people who are experiencing homelessness.

We believe strongly that **making adaptations within current programs and models will not be fully responsive to the guidance and recommendations provided by people with lived expertise regarding the needs and interests of people experiencing homelessness.** Therefore, through this project, **we have sought to develop guidance on how communities and organizations can systematically pursue a comprehensive reimagination and transformation of their approaches to sheltering people.**

We recognize, however, that even as we pursue such transformation efforts, there is **an urgent need for strengthening the operations and outcomes of existing interim housing programs, and for improving the experiences, well-being, and opportunities for people participating in such programs – right now.**

In this document, a Supplement to **Reimagining Interim Housing: Stages and Action Areas for Transforming Approaches to Sheltering People Experiencing Homelessness**, **we have sought to gather and present existing documents, guidance, and tools that people and organizations can use, right now, in support of such improvements.**

The range of available information we have been able to identify to date is somewhat limited. **We'll continue to identify additional tools and resources, and we expect to issue a revised and updated version of this document in the future, but hope that this collection of resources can support communities and providers to improve their current programs.**

INVENTORY OF CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The materials that we have gathered to date are organized into the following topics, which can be accessed by clicking on the title for each topic:

We offer brief descriptions of each tool or resource, and they can all be accessed via active links. Some materials will be listed under multiple topics, and materials are coded with the following icons to indicate what kind a tool or resource it is:

Webinars, other on-line learning opportunities, or other primarily web-based tools

Brief documents, handouts, or visual illustrations of ideas and information

Longer, more detailed written materials, guidance documents, and reports

We also offer brief assessments of the gaps in the materials that we have identified to date.

1. Partnering with People with Lived Expertise of Homelessness

People with Lived Expertise

This document uses the term "people with lived expertise" to reflect and value the expertise that people have developed through their lived experiences of homelessness.

We recognize that a variety of language is currently being used to acknowledge the crucial expertise people with experiences of homelessness bring to every element of communities' efforts to prevent and end homelessness. And we expect that such language may continue to evolve and change.

Any efforts to strengthen existing interim housing programs must be deeply informed and guided by people with lived expertise from experiences of homelessness. The tools and resources in this section can help communities foster meaningful, collaborative partnerships with people with lived expertise that support and empower their decision-making and leadership and that value and embrace cultural differences and diversity of perspectives and communication.

Available Tools and Materials

Engaging Individuals with Lived Expertise

This brief, prepared by HUD TA consultants who are individuals with lived homelessness expertise, provides guidance regarding engaging people with lived expertise as urgent and necessary as communities grapple with how to create more equitable systems, including contrasting meaningful engagement with inauthentic engagement.

Guidance for Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining People With Lived Experience and Expertise of Homelessness

This document prepared by HUD TA providers discusses key requirements for the recruitment, hiring, effective onboarding, and retention of people who have experienced homelessness, including: inclusive and equitable hiring practices; staff orientation to racial equity and trauma; a supportive workplace that creates a sense of belonging; and a workplace environment that values the awareness, knowledge, and wisdom that comes from experiencing homelessness.

Paying People with Lived Experience and Expertise

The document prepared by HUD TA providers acknowledges that truly valuing the expertise and power of people with lived experience and expertise requires that people be appropriately compensated for contributing their time, energy, and valuable expertise, and discusses: approaching conversations about when and how people would like to be paid; compensation considerations; and potential funding streams.

Webpages of The Lived Experience Advisory Board (in partnership with Destination: Home)

The Lived Experience Advisory Board in Santa Clara County, CA is a leadership development body consisting of members with current or past experience of homelessness. Members use this platform to learn about and evaluate the system of care and to make recommendations for improvement. Their website provides access to best practices and documents that can help guide the formation and operations of a Lived Experience Advisory Board in other communities.

Webinar: Partnering with People with Lived Expertise to Design and Implement Homelessness Response Systems

This Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response webinar focuses on experiences of co-designing and implementing products and work as stakeholders in the movement toward justice, exploring what co-design and authentic collaboration have meant within this work and what it might mean for you to take these kinds of approaches into your own community.

What We Heard about COVID-19, Homelessness, and Services from People with Lived Experience

The then-active National Innovation Service, through the Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response project, undertook a series of focus groups with people with current and past experiences of homelessness to better understand these compound impacts and the implications they have for policy and service priorities. From these listening sessions, NIS produced a series of population-specific briefs to summarize the ideas and recommendations of individuals from ten historically-marginalized communities.

Integrating Lived Experience into the Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response

This documents describes how Framework partners have sought to incorporate lived-experience into the deliverables associated with the Framework project itself, experimenting with a more authentic and participatory process, and describes key design elements and results of the teams that were created.

Equity-Based Decision-Making Framework

Developed by the National Innovation Service in support of the Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response project, this decision-making structure is designed to deconstruct the processes that perpetuate oppression and, instead, establish accountability to people experiencing homelessness and position customers of homelessness service systems and programs as decision-makers and power-holders within these systems. This framework is designed to be applicable at all levels of homelessness service systems, including in policy and program design**,** operations**,** budgeting**,** technical assistance provision**,** contracting practices**,** and human resources processes.

Nothing About Us Without Us: Seven Principles for Leadership & Inclusion of People with Lived Experience of Homelessness

Prepared by the Lived Experience Advisory Council, a group of leaders from across Canada who share lived experience of homelessness and poverty, this document articulates principles for the inclusion and leadership of people with lived experience in organizations and initiatives that aim to address homelessness.

The Value of Lived Experience in the Work to End Homelessness

This USICH guest blog by Sheila White, Advocacy Fellow at Miriam's Kitchen in Washington, DC, identifies ways that organizations can better engage people with lived experience in the work to end homelessness, empowering people as advocates for their communities.

Beyond Mere Principle: Strategies for Truly Partnering with People Who Have the Lived Experience in Our Work

This USICH guest blog by Katherine Cavanaugh, Consumer Advocate, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, explores challenges and lessons learned from the Health Care for the Homeless community's efforts to invest in consumer engagement in governance and leadership.

Three County Continuum of Care Racial Equity Action Plan Summary

Three County Continuum of Care (Franklin, Hampshire, and Berkshire Counties in Western Massachusetts) made an explicit commitment to center racial equity in their homelessness response and the Racial Equity Action Plan provides an example of bringing people with lived experience of homelessness into decision-making roles as an element of that commitment.

Gaps in Tools and Materials Currently Identified
While a wider array of tools and resources have recently been developed regarding the leadership of, and meaningful partnerships with, people with lived expertise within homelessness response systems, there remains a need for more guidance and examples of the strongest and best practices and a more consistent focus on the ways that people with lived expertise should be leading and guiding communities' approaches to sheltering people experiencing homelessness.

2. Implementing Low-Barrier, Housing-Focused Approaches

Many interim housing providers across the country have embraced their roles within Housing First approaches to homelessness by striving to implement low-barrier, housing-focused approaches to their work. Many of the tools, documents, and webinars linked to in this section are drawn from the National Alliance's **Emergency Shelter Learning Series** and can also be accessed through the webpage for that Series.

Available Tools and Materials

The Five Keys to Effective Emergency Shelter	This NAEH infographic defines five keys to effective emergency shelter: Housing First Approach; Safe and Appropriate Diversion; Immediate and Low Barrier Access; Housing-Focused, Rapid Exit Services; Data to Measure Performance.
Key Considerations for Implementing Emergency Shelter within an Effective Crisis Response System	This USICH brief discusses how shelter can promote dignity and respect for every person, divert people from the homelessness service system when possible, foster low-barrier access to emergency services, and serve as a platform for housing access.
Key Components of Effective Emergency Shelter In an Effective Crisis Response System	This NAEH presentation deck provides a basic framework for the immediate response to a community's homelessness crisis and discusses the key components of an effective emergency shelter within this crisis response framework.
Webinar: How to Transition Your Emergency Shelter to a Low-Barrier and Housing-Focused Shelter Model	This NAEH webinar features leaders from three emergency shelters who have made the shift to low-barrier, housing-focused emergency shelter who address common questions and concerns regarding low barrier shelter.
Webinar: Frequently Asked Questions for Low-Barrier Shelter	This NAEH webinar answers the toughest and most frequently asked questions about low-barrier shelter.
Webinar: Serving Single Adults in Congregate Settings	This NAEH webinar addresses rules and safety issues for low-barrier shelters that serve single adults, exploring how to re-examine and shift rules to primarily focus on expectations that promote safety.
Webinar: The Keys to Effective Low-Barrier Emergency Shelter	This NAEH webinar gives an overview of five keys to effective emergency shelter: using a Housing First approach, safe and appropriate diversion, immediate and low-barrier access to shelter, housing-focused services, and using data to measure performance.
Webinar: Getting Your Board on Board with Low-Barrier, Housing-Focused Shelter	This NAEH webinar provides tips from shelter operators for educating Boards of Directors regarding shifting to low-barrier, housing-focused shelter and keeping them committed to the shelter mission.

Webinar: Low-Barrier Shelter: How to Become Pet Friendly

This NAEH webinar delves into the operations and practices of shelters that are accessible to people and their animals, discussing how to shift philosophy and operations to welcome animal owners and a more vulnerable population into shelters and exploring practical considerations and creative solutions to consider when making this shift.

Keeping People and Pets Together

This publication from NAEH and PetSmart Charities, Inc. discusses: the importance of effective relationships between the homelessness response system and animal welfare system to end homelessness for people with pets; steps that homeless service provider agency leadership can take to improve agency-wide culture and effectiveness in serving people experiencing homelessness with pets; and recommendations for outreach workers, case managers, program managers, facilities staff, and others to improve the outcomes of people experiencing homelessness with pets when accessing services. The document provides links to many other documents and case studies.

8 Tips to Add More Harm Reduction Practices to Your Shelter

Recognizing that the implementation of Harm Reduction practices falls along a continuum, the document from OrgCode consulting provides eight tips and practices that can be followed to add more harm reduction practices into programs.

So, You Think You're a Low Barrier Shelter...Let's Check

From OrgCode Consulting, a list of 10 practices that should <u>not</u> be found in low-barrier programs.

Housing Focused Sheltering: Thoughts from OrgCode

Thoughts from OrgCode Consulting regarding the effective operation of sheltering programs within crisis response system to ensure that they have a strong housing orientation, the shortest possible lengths of stay, and the least number returns to shelter in the future possible.

Rehousing Out of Non-Congregate Shelter: Maximizing Placements

The document from HUD technical assistance providers offers guidance to help communities facilitate rapid exits from non-congregate shelters directly into housing, including recommended tactics for increasing capacity, assessing and matching people to rehousing options, adapting existing models, meeting health needs, and gauging success.

Low-Barrier Approaches

A part of series of Research & Results briefs from Arnold Ventures focused on unsheltered homelessness, this document provides an overview of low-barrier program features, how such approaches building upon evidence-based practices, and examples of the incorporation of such approaches into temporary settings.

Making the Case for a Low-Barrier Shelter: Low-Barrier Solutions for High-Barrier Communities

This presentation deck from GRACE, a one-stop homelessness resource center serving Gainesville and Alachua County, Florida, explores how to differentiate between high- and low-barrier practices, evaluate local needs and advocate for change, and implement a variety of low-barrier practices.

Salvation Army Center of Hope: Transitioning to a Low-Barrier Shelter Model With the Primary Goal of Rapidly Exiting People to Permanent Housing

This NAEH case study profiles the Salvation Army Center of Hope in Charlotte, N.C., which provides emergency shelter and rapid re-housing to individual women and families with children. A fixture in the community for more than 100 years, the Center of Hope embraces a philosophy of accepting people regardless of their needs.

Crossroads Rhode Island: Transitioning to a Low-Barrier Shelter That Focuses on Rapid Exits to Permanent Housing

This NAEH case study profiles Crossroads Rhode Island, the largest homelessness service organization in Rhode Island, which provides shelter for families, individuals, and couples experiencing homelessness.

DESC: Sheltering the Most Vulnerable

This NAEH case study profiles Seattle's Downtown Emergency Services Center, nationally recognized for providing over 1,200 units of permanent housing but also a model for how to operate a low-barrier shelter for the most vulnerable residents in a community.

Shut Out: How Barriers Often Prevent Meaningful Access to Emergency Shelter

This study by Suzanne Skinner and Sara Rankin, published by the Seattle university School of Law Homeless Rights Advocacy Project, examines how barriers often prevent meaningful access to emergency shelter and offers several recommendations to encourage cities to stop criminalizing homelessness and to instead pursue non-punitive alternatives.

Gaps in Tools and Materials Currently Identified
Taken together, the materials identified above provide a strong set of materials for understanding and shifting toward low-barrier, housing-focused operation of interim housing – at the program level, but not systemically at the community level. More guidance is also likely needed regarding managing organizational culture change to embrace such approaches, staffing levels and staffing patterns to best support such operations, and for training staff in the day to day implementation of such approaches.

3. Providing Equal and Equitable Access and Outcomes

Homelessness services and housing providers have an obligation to provide equal and equitable access to their programs and services, including to eligible individuals and families regardless of race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, household composition, disability status, and other factors. We've identified a few materials that can help support compliance with HUD's Equal Access Rule, and for serving LGBTQ+ youth, but to date have not identified meaningful tools and resources specifically focused on helping to ensure that all people have equitable – and welcoming and affirming – access to interim housing opportunities in their communities.

Available Tools and Materials

Webinar: HUD's Equal Access Rule: What it Is, What's Changed, and What You Need to Know

This NAEH webinar will help you to better understand HUD's Equal Access Rule, which was expanded in 2016, and teach you how to amend your shelter's policies and procedures to ensures that HUD's housing and shelter programs are open to all eligible individuals and families regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.

Equal Access in Accordance with an Individual's Gender Identity in Community Planning and Development Programs Rule

This Rule ensures that all individuals have equal access to the Department's core programs, including shelters and other buildings and facilities, in accordance with their gender identity and in a manner that affords equal access to the individual's family. Providers that operate single-sex projects using funds awarded through the Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) are required to provide all individuals, including transgender individuals and other individuals who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth, with access to programs, benefits, services, and accommodations in accordance with their gender identity without being subjected to intrusive questioning or being asked to provide documentation. This requirement includes tenant selection and admission preferences. The rule also amended the original EAR definitions for sexual orientation and gender identity.

SNAPS In Focus: Equal Access for Transgender People

This message discusses the challenges transgender people face in accessing community services and HUD's commitment to ensuring that all persons experiencing homelessness have access to inclusive and nondiscriminatory housing.

Racial Equity and Emergency Shelter: Access and Outcomes

NAEH developed a flowchart and explanatory video for providers to examine racial equity through the lens of their emergency shelter's coordinated entry connections, diversion practices, barriers to shelter, shelter exits, and returns to shelter.

Inclusion Toolkit

Creating a space where everyone feels welcome can be difficult, especially since everyone has different needs. This Inclusion Toolkit from True Colors United will walk you through the process of creating a more inclusive and affirming environment for young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) and will also equip you with the policies and tools to back it up.

National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth

National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Network for Youth, Lambda Legal, and National Center for Lesbian Rights produced this document with a set of recommendations to provide direction to agencies and not-for-profit organizations to increase their competency in working with LGBTQ+ youth, including: steps intake workers, case managers, social workers, youth supervisors, and others who have regular, direct contact with youth should take to improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth accessing services; steps administrators should take to improve agency-wide culture and effectiveness in serving LGBTQ+ youth; and steps both administrators and youth workers should take to improve the experiences of youth in residential settings, whether these settings are emergency shelters or longer term transitional living.

Homeless Youth Shelters and Services for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) Clients: Results from a Nationwide Survey

This study explored results from a nationwide survey conducted with homeless youth shelter directors. The research sought to further the understanding of how policy and societal changes about gender affirming access to services have affected service delivery and accommodations at homeless youth shelters for transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) youth. Results from (n = 117) youth shelters indicate the majority of those surveyed are current in implementing many of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gender affirming policies. Among others, recommendations include a need for shelters to incorporate TGNC safety accommodations, and to update dress code policies from a universal design perspective.

Gaps in Tools and Materials Currently Identified
There is a profound need for more information and guidance on how to ensure equitable access and outcomes in interim housing programs, including for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ populations, and for eligible individuals and families regardless of race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, household composition, disability status, and other factors. More materials and guidance are also needed regarding how to create welcoming, accessible, and affirming environments and operations, and for providing equitable access to services and supports and for achieving equitable outcomes, both within specific programs and systemically.

4. Operating and Assessing Impact of Non-Congregate Interim Housing

Many tools and resources have been provided since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic related to the operations of non-congregate emergency shelter, interim housing, alternate care sites, and isolation and quarantine units during the pandemic. Rather than link to all of those materials here, you are encouraged to check the following regularly-updated collections of information and materials:

- **HUD's Disease Risks and Homelessness webpage** and the **Disaster Response Rehousing** webpage provide access to many materials related to creating safer environments, and providing services safely, to prevent and respond to infectious diseases like COVID-19; check these locations for the most up to date information from HUD, technical assistance providers, and other federal agencies and organizations.

- **CDC's Homeless Populations: Resources to Support People Experiencing Homelessness webpage:** Provides access to regularly updated guidance and information from the CDC regarding COVID-19 and people experiencing homelessness.

- The **Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response project's Resource Directory** includes links to materials focused on shelters, including guidance regarding federal funding sources, planning and operational guidance from federal and national organizations, and state and local examples, tools, and resources.

Materials listed below, developed within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, provide guidance relevant to operating and assessing the impact of non-congregate interim housing settings in any context.

Available Tools and Materials

Hotels to Housing Case Studies	These NAEH case studies describe some of the most noteworthy hotels-to-housing initiatives across the country, including examples of hotels being converted to non-congregate shelter that may later be converted into permanent housing. Each document includes an overview of the funding sources that were implemented, the administrative approach that guided the initiative, the overall project development process, key success factors, and major lessons learned for each effort. States and communities represented among case studies include: California; Vermont; Minnesota; Fort Worth; Los Angeles; San Diego; Minneapolis; and Essex Junction, VT.
Operation Comfort: Alameda County Emergency Hotel Shelter Handbook	While developed by a range of partners in Alameda County, California specific to the operation of hotel shelters during COVID-19 pandemic, this handbook covers many policies, practices, and considerations applicable to non-congregate sheltering programs generally.
Guidelines for Establishing Hotels & Motels as Isolation, Quarantine, Respite or Emergency Shelters	This document from the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) provides guidance intended to help communities establish non-congregate options using hotel/motel settings during the COVID-19 crisis, including pandemic-related settings, but also to be operated as emergency shelter.

Guidance on Leasing of Hotels by Governmental Entities for Use as Temporary Shelters for Quarantining of Homeless Persons During the COVID-19 Pandemic

While this document from Community Solutions and the National Homelessness Law Center was developed specifically in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it provides relevant guidance for entities that may be leasing hotels or other buildings for the provision of non-congregate emergency shelter or interim housing.

Rehousing Out of Non-Congregate Shelter: Maximizing Placements

The document from HUD technical assistance providers offers guidance to help communities facilitate rapid exits from non-congregate shelters directly into housing, including recommended tactics for increasing capacity, assessing and matching people to rehousing options, adapting existing models, meeting health needs, and gauging success.

Impact of Hotels as Non-Congregate Emergency Shelters

A team of researchers from the University of Washington and the King County Department of Community and Human Services studied the impacts of the use of hotels as non-congregate emergency shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic in King County, Washington. They found favorable outcomes for those in hotel locations, beyond preventing COVID-19 outbreaks, including: increased feelings of stability associated; improved health and well-being; reduced interpersonal conflict; higher exits to permanent housing; and indications of greater engagement with housing services.

Project Roomkey In Action

This video, produced by the California Department of Social Services, features county staff, community-based service providers, and program participants describing the impact of Project Roomkey, a locally-operated and state-supported program that secured hotel and motel rooms to help provide shelter to individuals and families experiencing homelessness as a response to COVID-19.

Gaps in Tools and Materials Currently Identified
There is a need for more tools and materials to support the effective operation and delivery of services within non-congregate settings, including more information regarding staffing and training needs, effective outreach for engaging people into interim housing and services, and effective harm reduction and overdose prevention strategies for people using substances and/or affected by mental health issues.

5. Addressing Physical and Behavioral Health and Safety Needs of People Staying in Interim Housing

Many tools and resources have been provided since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic related to safer operations of congregate and non-congregate emergency shelter, interim housing, alternate care sites, and isolation and quarantine units. Rather than link to all of those materials, you are encouraged to check the following collections of information and materials:

- The **Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response project's Resource Directory** includes links to materials focused on shelters, including guidance regarding federal funding sources, planning and operational guidance from federal and national organizations, and state and local examples, tools, and resources.

- **National Health Care for the Homeless Council's COVID-19 and People Experiencing Homelessness: Resources and Guidance webpage** has an array of relevant tools, resources, and guidance.

- **HUD's Disease Risks and Homelessness webpage** provides access to many materials related to creating safer environments, and providing services safely, to prevent and respond to infectious diseases like COVID-19. Check there for the most up to date information from HUD, technical assistance providers, other federal agencies and organizations.

- **CDC's Homeless Populations: Resources to Support People Experiencing Homelessness webpage** provides access to regularly updated guidance and information from the CDC regarding COVID-19 and people experiencing homelessness.

- **Community Solutions' Built for Zero website** includes a searchable compendium of relevant resources.

Materials listed below primarily focus on non-COVID-specific health and safety issues, but also include some resources that were developed within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic which provide guidance relevant to addressing health and safety needs of people in emergency shelter more generally.

Available Tools and Materials

NHCHC's Shelter Health webpage	Includes links to a variety of tools focused on approaches to providing medical and support services in shelters as a hallmark of the Health Care for the Homeless model of care.
Webinar: Safely Serving Families and Survivors of Domestic Violence	This NAEH webinar focuses on shelters that serve families and survivors of domestic violence and discusses how to retool your shelter's rules, expectations, and policies and procedures in a low-barrier environment that prioritizes safety for participants and staff.
Reducing Harm During COVID-19 for People Using Drugs at Alternative Care Sites	While this issue brief from the National Health Care for the Homeless Council specifically provides local government officials and alternate care site program managers with a framework for serving individuals with substance use disorder in isolation and quarantine, and reducing possible harmful consequences, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the guidance can also be applied to serving people in other shelter or interim housing setting. It outlines why 'harm reduction' is critical to saving lives, how to prepare spaces in a manner that will reduce harm, and tips for supporting vulnerable people.

Medical Respite Care and Alternative Care Sites

This National Health Care for the Homeless Council issue brief is intended to provide public health authorities, emergency response systems, and Alternate Care Site (ACS) program administrators with an operational framework that will improve the quality of care at ACS programs and promote longer-term stability for vulnerable people. Ideally, communities can retain this increased capacity for medical respite care after the pandemic subsides given the high level of need for these programs prior to COVID-19.

How are CoCs Expanding Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation Capacity During Outbreak

This document from Homebase focuses on examples of communities' efforts to expand shelters, support social distancing, and provide quarantine, alternate care and isolation for people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic, but addresses issues and questions relevant for any planning for shelter or interim housing programming.

A Tale of Two Shelter Organizations in Approaches to Supporting People that Use Substances

This OrgCode blog explores the role of evidence-based Harm Reduction practices in the provision of low-barrier homelessness and housing support services programs, including emergency shelter.

Winter Planning Guide Overview: Meeting Winter Shelter Needs and Mitigating Health Risks

This document, prepared by HUD technical assistance providers, is designed for homeless system leaders and describes an inclusive local winter planning process, helping communities to engage critical partners, to project winter sheltering capacity needs, to create a Winter Emergency Plan to meet escalating levels of shelter demand, and to consider alternative approaches to winter sheltering, and helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in winter shelter facilities. The document provides links to connect to various planning tools and additional information.

Guidelines for Establishing Hotels & Motels as Isolation, Quarantine, Respite or Emergency Shelters

This document from the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) provides guidance intended to help communities establish non-congregate options using hotel/motel settings during the COVID-19 crisis, including pandemic-related settings, but also to be operated as emergency shelter.

Gaps in Tools and Materials Currently Identified
While there are now a great number of tools available to help interim housing providers reduce risks posed by COVID-19 virus, which will also have benefits for reducing risks from other transmissible diseases, there is very little information about how to plan for and effectively respond to people's other physical and behavioral health care needs, or how to create environments and programming in which people will feel safe and that their well-being is being effectively protected.

6. Implementing Standards and Assessing and Strengthening Programs

Strengthening the quality and impact of interim housing programs will require a consistent focus on implementing standards and expectations, assessing and improving living environments and the quality and impact of program operations, service delivery, and outcomes.

Available Tools and Materials

Webinar: Keys to Effective Emergency Shelter: Using Your Data to Evaluate and Improve Performance

This NAEH webinar focuses on using data to create changes in program design. Experts describe which metrics are most important and how to use them to evaluate whether your shelter is effective in its role in ending homelessness in your community.

Key Components of Effective Emergency Shelter In an Effective Crisis Response System

This NAEH presentation deck provides a basic framework for the immediate response to a community's homelessness crisis and discusses the key components of an effective emergency shelter within this crisis response framework.

ESG Minimum Habitability Standards for Emergency Shelters and Permanent Housing

The Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program interim rule, at 24 CFR 576.403, establishes minimum standards for safety, sanitation, and privacy in emergency shelters funded with ESG. This HUD document explains when the minimum standards apply. Accompanying the habitability standards are checklists, which offer an optional format for documenting compliance with the appropriate standards.

Standards for ESG-Funded Emergency Shelter Programs

The Missouri Interagency Council on Homelessness developed standards for ESG-funded emergency shelter programs to help ensure: program accountability to individuals and families experiencing homelessness, specifically populations at greater risk or with the longest histories of homelessness; program compliance with HUD and State rules; program uniformity; and adequate program staff competence and training, specific to the target population being served.

Alameda County Emergency Shelter Standards for Year-Round Shelters

These Emergency Shelter Standards were adopted by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors in 2017, were developed based on the guiding principles of inclusion, dignity, accessibility, self-determination and mutual accountability, and intended to ensure a consistent quality of care across all County funded shelters and to operationalize the County's commitment to providing low barrier, housing first, and emergency shelter services.

NC Balance of State Continuum of Care Program Standards Emergency Shelter

The NC Balance of State Continuum of Care developed these program standards to provide specific guidelines for how programs can operate to have the best chance of ending homelessness. The standards strive to create consistency across programs, to protect clients by putting their needs first, and to provide a baseline for holding all CoC programs to a specific standard of care.

Emergency Shelter Program Performance

From Your Way Home Montgomery County, PA this dashboard provided an example of public-facing tracking and reporting of program performance.

Gaps in Tools and Materials Currently Identified
We have identified very few publicly available materials that provide adequately detailed information to support regular assessment and strengthening of the design or implementation of interim housing programming, and nothing that would support Continuous Quality Improvement-type approaches to ongoing assessment and improvement efforts.

7. Projecting Interim Housing Needs in Communities

As communities strive to strike an effective balance of investments into permanent housing and crisis services, including interim housing programs, there is a need for tools and guidance to develop projections for the scale of interim housing options that are needed now, and that will be needed in the future if progress on reducing homelessness is achieved. To date, we've identified only a few relevant, <u>publicly</u> available materials that can help support communities to develop such projections and make such decisions, but recognize that HUD is equipping Continuums of Care to implement system modeling through their Stella M tool.

Available Tools and Materials

System Modeling with Stella M

System modeling is a structured, data-informed process to develop estimates of the size and needs of a population of people experiencing homelessness and assumptions about the types and amounts of assistance (housing, shelter, services) that would effectively and equitably meet those needs. HUD's Stella M is an online analysis tool that Continuums of Care can use to support the system modeling processes within their communities. Stella M uses the community's data on homelessness, combinations of project types, and performance goals to calculate the inventory of housing, shelter, and services needed to fully meet the community's needs. Using these estimates and assumptions, Stella M calculates the inventory that is needed to meet the services and housing needs of households experiencing homelessness in the community. See the <u>Stella M Quick Start Guide</u> to get started and the full array of tools and materials at this webpage.

Winter Planning Guide Overview: Meeting Winter Shelter Needs and Mitigating Health Risks

This document, prepared by HUD technical assistance providers, is designed for homeless system leaders and describes an inclusive local winter planning process, helping communities to engage critical partners, project winter sheltering capacity needs, create a Winter Emergency Plan to meet escalating levels of shelter demand and consider alternative approaches to winter sheltering, and helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in winter shelter facilities. Document provides links to connect to various planning tools and additional information.

Alternative Approaches to Winter Sheltering During COVID-19

This document, prepared by HUD technical assistance providers, describes a graduated approach to sheltering from life-threatening temperatures and regular seasonal weather. Coordination with local public health and emergency management partners is essential in design, resource investment, and staffing considerations. Also available in a **Spanish Version**.

Estimated Emergency and Observational Quarantine Bed Need for US Homeless Population Related to COVID-19 Exposure

This research report, from researchers at University of Pennsylvania, University of California Los Angeles, and Boston University, aims to establish the potential mortality and hospitalization costs associated with COVID-19 infection among the homeless population in the United States and analyzes the total estimated cost to meet the nation's emergency and observational/quarantine shelter bed need. The authors have created a **companion web application** for communities to customize estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on their homeless populations and the additional capacity required to manage this crisis.

Gaps in Tools and Materials Currently Identified
There is a lack of publicly-available tools to support communities to project the scale of interim housing opportunities needed with their community to meet needs within an efficient, housing-placement focused homelessness response system, especially for communities that may not be able to implement full-scale, comprehensive system modeling activities or may need extensive technical assistance in order to do so.

8. Aligning Diversion-Focused Strategies

Diversion strategies and practices, which can include problem-solving services and financial assistance, assist people to resolve a housing crisis and divert people from needing to enter an emergency shelter or becoming unsheltered. Many communities are seeking to implement or expand Diversion programming, sometimes integrated directly into their interim housing programs, as a key strategy for reducing demand for emergency shelter or interim housing while still supporting people's housing stability. We have not tried to assemble a comprehensive list of tools and resources regarding implementing effective Diversion programming here; rather, we have tried to identify examples of tools and resources most relevant to aligning such programming with Interim Housing programming.

Available Tools and Materials

NAEH Diversion Explainer	This NAEH article provides a high-level explanation of what diversion is, staff considerations, and why to implement diversion programming, and also links to some useful infographics to communicate the roles of diversion and problem-solving services within efforts to prevent and end homelessness.
Closing the Front Door: Creating a Successful Diversion Program for Homeless Families	This NAEH document addresses many key elements for implementing diversion programming that can prevent people from needing to enter the homelessness response system, including: distinguishing diversion from other interventions; assessing for diversion eligibility; keys to a successful diversion program; what diversion looks like; funding diversion; and measuring performance.
Webinar: The Role of Emergency Shelter in Diversion	This NAEH webinar explores the role emergency shelter plays within the homelessness response system's coordinated strategy to divert households from shelter safely and appropriately. It explains why problem-solving conversations don't end at Coordinated Entry.
Homelessness Prevention, Diversion, and Rapid Exit	This document, which was developed collaboratively by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, is intended to support more effective implementation of prevention, diversion, and rapid exit services by providing clear definitions of each intervention and a common language to support effective communication among community partners and stakeholders, as well as across communities.
Lessons in Family Homelessness: Diversion	From Building Changes, this document presents their five tips for implementing Diversion effectively within communities and features stories and voices of those working in the field to marshal the strengths of people by proactively helping them identify and secure stable housing through an innovative mix of short-term services and, if needed, one-time financial assistance.
Centralized Diversion Fund: A Necessary Tool for Addressing Homelessness in King County	Building Changes produced two communications resources that illustrate how the Centralized Diversion Fund works in King County, WA, how it provides a mechanism for supporting the strategy of Diversion, what makes it work so well for people, and why it deserves sustainable funding support.

Homeless to Housed in a Hurry: Extending the Use of Diversion to Help Families Exit Homelessness

Building Changes presents results drawn from their evaluation of Diversion pilots in King County and Pierce County, WA, including one publication that provides an overview of Diversion and one that is a case study of the Pierce County experience, concluding that Diversion is an effective and efficient approach for resolving the homelessness of some families.

Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness' Shelter Diversion webpage

This webpage of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness provides access to a variety of tools and resources that communities can use to prevents homelessness at the front door of the homelessness response system by helping people identify immediate alternative housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing.

Shelter Diversion: A best practice to prevent homelessness

This blog from Strategies to End Homelessness describes the approach and effectiveness of diversion programming in the Greater Cincinnati area.

Shelter System Diversion Program

This document from MaineHousing describes how its Diversion program is being implemented to divert people from entering the shelter system by helping them identify alternate housing solutions and connecting them to the services and financial assistance they need to remain stably housed.

WSFC CoC Diversion Policy and Procedures

This policy and procedures document describes how Diversion programming is being implemented in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Continuum of Care (WSFC CoC), including referral and assessment processes, services and resources provided, performance measures and data requirements, and the characteristics of an exemplary Diversion Specialist.

ClearPath, The Atlanta Continuum of Care's Prevention, Diversion, and Rapid Exit Request for Proposals

This example of a (now-closed) RFP from Partners for Home provides an example of a solicitation for prevention, diversion, and rapid exit programming, including expressing definitions, expectations, and performance measures.

Characteristics of an Exemplary Diversion Specialist

From OrgCode Consulting, this brief guide describes the characteristics of an exemplary diversion specialist to highlight the best practices in staffing diversion programming.

Gaps in Tools and Materials Currently Identified
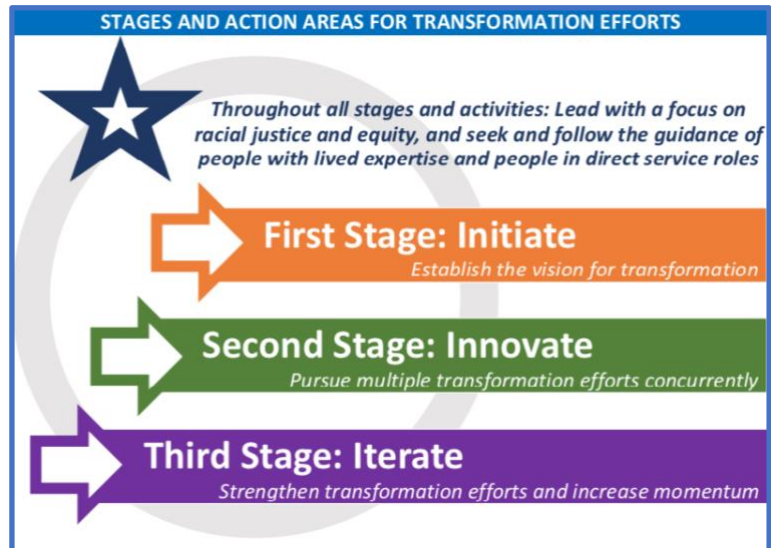**While there is a significant array of tools that can help support the effective implementation of Diversion programming – although less so regarding Diversion programming for individuals than for families - we have identified very few publicly available materials that provide adequately detailed information to support the integration of such programming into interim housing strategies or programs.**
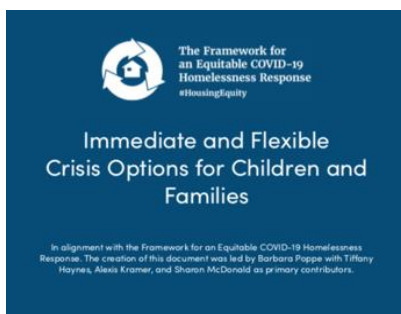
Reimagining Interim Housing: Stages and Action Areas for Transforming Approaches to Sheltering People Experiencing Homelessness describes a recommended approach to transformation organized into three (3) Stages and six (6) Action Areas with clearly defined objectives, so that:

- First, **a clear and compelling vision is developed and communicated for the planned transformation** of approaches, and for the provision of stronger, welcoming, empathetic, and effective interim housing options to people experiencing homelessness, options that support their ability to end their experiences of homelessness by accessing permanent housing.

- Then, grounded in that vision, **multiple transformation and improvement efforts are pursued concurrently**, with areas of focus being identified based upon local considerations, priorities, and opportunities and in support of national goals and best practices.

- Finally, **these transformation efforts must feature sustained dedication of time, effort, and resources,** adapting and strengthening efforts, seizing new opportunities, shifting to the most successful and sustainable models across the homelessness response system, and **building the momentum that will be necessary to achieve full-scale and ongoing transformation**.

STAGES AND ACTION AREAS FOR TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS

Throughout all stages and activities: Lead with a focus on racial justice and equity, and seek and follow the guidance of people with lived expertise and people in direct service roles

First Stage: Initiate
Establish the vision for transformation

Second Stage: Innovate
Pursue multiple transformation efforts concurrently

Third Stage: Iterate
Strengthen transformation efforts and increase momentum

And throughout all of the efforts and activities, there must be a **sustained and leading focus on racial justice and equity, and on seeking and following the guidance of people with lived expertise and people in direct service roles**. It is expected that transformation will require **repeatedly cycling through each of the Stages and Action Areas over an extended period of time.**

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.

Immediate and Flexible Crisis Options for Children and Families explores and supports the expansion of crisis options, paired with strong housing exits, that can be replicated, adapted, and scaled up or down as needs and/or scale of resources change in each community, with the goal that no child sleeps outside. A summary of key concepts within the brief, video discussions of related themes, and a recorded webinar reviewing the report and featuring several of the Spotlight Organizations, are all also available.

Expanding Options for Health Care Within Homelessness Services: CoC Partnerships with Medical Respite Care Programs seeks to help improve health care quality and outcomes for people experiencing homelessness by strengthening partnerships between homelessness assistance systems and medical respite care (MRC) providers, and features the views of both Continuums of Care (CoCs) and MRC staff as well as a community spotlight on the CoC-MRC partnership in Yakima, Washington.

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

Expanding Options for Health Care Within Homelessness Services:

CoC Partnerships with Medical Respite Care Programs

Help Us Strengthen this Information and Identify Other Tools and Materials

We hope that people with lived experiences of homelessness, community leaders, and interim housing and shelter provider organizations will find ways to use this document and guidance to strengthen current and new programs and services.

We would welcome your thoughts and insights on its content, your experiences using tools included, or any other feedback that you have.

We also encourage you to consult with **Reimagining Interim Housing: Stages and Action Areas for Transforming Approach to Sheltering People Experiencing Homelessness**, which provides guidance on how communities and organizations can pursue systemic reimagination and transformation of their approaches to sheltering people.

There are many gaps in the materials that we have identified to date. If you wish to share other tools and documents to help us expand available content, or if you have strong examples of policies and procedures or other documents that your own programs use, we welcome receiving them and considering them for inclusion in any future editions of these documents.

You can send your thoughts, feedback, suggestions, and other tools and materials to matthewdoherty.consulting@gmail.com

THE FRAMEWORK
FOR AN EQUITABLE
HOMELESSNESS
RESPONSE
#HousingEquity