EMERGENCY SHELTER: REIMAGINING A HOUSING-FOCUSED PLACE PEOPLE WANT TO USE

An effective homeless response system should work to prevent homelessness when possible and quickly connect individuals experiencing homelessness to housing.

Shelter plays a crucial role in this system, offering critical temporary shelter for those most in need within the community. To ensure shelters positively impact the flow of the overall system, they must adhere to five key components:

Housing First Approach: Embrace the belief that permanent housing is the cornerstone of transformative change. Shelter settings should be focused on getting people back into housing as soon as possible.

Safe and Appropriate Diversion: Utilize housing-focused problem-solving strategies to assist individuals in resolving their housing crises in a safe and appropriate manner.

Immediate Low-Barrier Access: Guarantee that individuals can access shelter services regardless of their circumstances upon arrival, removing barriers to entry.

Housing-Focused Rapid Exit Services: Maximize all available resources and concentrate efforts on swiftly connecting individuals with permanent housing solutions.

Data-Driven Performance Measurement: Harness the power of data to evaluate effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and address gaps in the system.

Not following the core principles can result in a negative impact to the overall system flow and the well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness. Without embracing these principles, shelters may become inaccessible to the most vulnerable members of the community, or result in longer shelter stays.

This reality — of inaccessible beds, or of shelters staying full — will inadvertently contribute to an increase in unsheltered homelessness or individuals experiencing extended prolonged periods of sheltered homelessness. This increases the likelihood of trauma, worsening mental and physical health conditions, and elevating the risk of mortality.

By prioritizing core components, shelters can play a pivotal role in fostering an effective, efficient, and equitable homeless response system. This will lead to better outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness and the community they live in, and help to reduce unsheltered homelessness overall.

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FIVE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE SHELTER

GUIDANCE ON EFFECTIVE SHELTER EXPECTATIONS

PART OF THE WEBINAR SERIES "STRONGER TOGETHER: A ROADMAP TO AN EFFECTIVE HOMELESS SYSTEM"