RAPID RE-HOUSING

RRH

National Alliance to
End Homelessness

RAPID RE-HOUSING LEADERSHIP SUMMIT: WHAT WE LEARNED

In September 2016, the National Alliance to End Homelessness convened nearly 100 rapid re-housing (RRH) champions from around the country to develop a common vision about how we can advance RRH and discuss emerging knowledge, research and practice on the model.

What we heard resoundingly is that *RRH continues to be a primary solution for ending homelessness.* It has been demonstrated to be effective in getting households into permanent housing and keeping them there.

Ramping up RRH would increase the number of people we can serve, thus reducing the overall numbers of people experiencing homelessness. And while we know RRH is increasing in places around the country, there is a need to scale up the intervention in a coordinated manner and at the systems level in order to truly address homelessness on a broader scale.

WHAT WE LEARNED

1. **We need more rapid re-housing.** Rapid re-housing (RRH) should be the primary intervention within the homeless service system for most people experiencing homelessness and needs to be scaled up in a strategic way to more effectively serve the most people.
2. **We need to better understand its impact.** More information is needed about the impact of RRH on a community's system; how progressive engagement[1] works across a system; and the effectiveness of various program models (e.g., duration of assistance, variation in program design).
3. **We need to improve practice.** RRH programs should be aligned with best practices, as described in the Rapid Re-Housing Performance Benchmarks and Program Standards, and need to reflect Housing First principles.
4. **We need to build stronger partnerships.** To end homelessness, we need to develop strong partnerships with mainstream systems — housing, employment, education, health care, and benefits — and other nontraditional partners that can help ensure that people experiencing homelessness have the community supports they need to succeed.
5. **We need more resources.** We need to advocate for more federal, state and local dollars for RRH so that communities are able to effectively serve those in need. We also need to leverage the resources of our partners (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, others).

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[1] When system-wide progressive engagement is implemented, all households in the community are referred to RRH as the primary intervention and are continuously reassessed to determine if they need additional support beyond what RRH can provide.

The Summit was built around what the Alliance identified as five keys strategies to advance RRH (see box 1). Some key takeaways and action items for each identified during discussions at the summit are described below.

1. Building the Evidence on RRH.

Key action items and takeaways from the discussion related to **building the evidence** for RRH include the need for and to:

- **Collect and monitor quality local data** to convince funders and providers to invest in RRH and to monitor and make improvements in real time. This is particularly needed to improve the understanding of impacts of modifications in program delivery and the different needs of subpopulations being served (e.g., tailoring data collection, metrics, and benchmarks for subpopulations being served). he Federal government should fund capacity building grants for better use of local data.
- **Strengthen our knowledge of program structure and impact on homelessness** by understanding the duration and intensity of assistance needed, particularly the impacts of progressive engagement on the broader system, program design, and households served. There is also a need to better understand the impact of supportive services.
- **Elevating system-level impacts** that rapid re-housing can have on ending homelessness by minimizing lengths of stay and using a more cost efficient model.

2. Standards of Excellence and Practice.

Key takeaways from the discussion related to improving practice and the adoption of quality RRH programs, include the following:

- **The need for wider adoption of the [Rapid Re-Housing Performance Benchmarks and Program Standards](#)**, both at the program level and at a systems level to improve performance and outcomes. Also, while improving practice through standardization is important, it is also critical to allow space to innovate around challenges.
- **The importance of local leadership and funders** in aligning performance outcomes and standards of expected practice, leveraging resources, creating change, and driving excellence at the program and system level.
- **The need to support the professionalization of the housing location function** by, whenever possible, hiring and developing staff who can be entirely focused on building effective relationships with landlords. Providers should have flexible resources necessary to incentivize landlords and make move-in and housing stability a priority for consumers.

Box 1: Five Key Strategies for Advancing RRH

1. **Building the Evidence:** Identifying what is needed to build and advance knowledge of the effectiveness of RRH, improve our understanding of how best to deliver RRH and inform the development of a research agenda.
2. **Standards of Excellence and Practice:** Identifying the most important activities to promote the adoption of quality RRH programs, ensuring compliance with 'standards of excellence,' and improving our understanding of what is good practice.
3. **RRH as Part of a System:** Ensuring that RRH is appropriately scaled, is an integral part of a homeless service system, and that it is supported by all other key actors.
4. **Expand the Role of Local/State and Federal Partners:** Identifying the most important actions of other systems to ensure households being rapidly re-housed have the supports they require to achieve stable housing and to thrive.
5. **New Resources for RRH:** Increasing new resources for RRH through strategic use of funding, harnessing mainstream systems, and ramping up federal and state funding through advocacy.

- **Ensuring [Housing First](#) principles in RRH** requires building in incentives and/or requirements, perhaps through coordinated entry and assessment, to ensure programs adhere to the philosophy. Better training and support is needed on adapting Housing First in RRH.

3. RRH as Part of a System.

Key takeaways and action items from the discussion related to ensuring that RRH is an integral part of a homeless service system, [include](#):
- R**RH should be the primary homeless system intervention,** which must be implemented system-wide, rather than as a collection of programs. To do this effectively, each part of the system must align their activities with a common goal around RRH, requiring an understanding of the community's needs and their role in meeting those needs. This will require more resources dedicated to scale up the intervention.
- **Implementing system-wide progressive engagement** requires strategic resource collaboration and coordination across all providers, particularly among those delivering RRG. There is a need for more models of progressive engagement and an understanding for how the model can work. Resource and service-rich interventions, such as permanent supportive housing (PSH) and vouchers, which are limited in most communities, should be reserved for those households where RRH will not provide enough support. When RRH doesn't work the first time for a household, continue to offer it. For households truly in need of the supports offered through PSH, ensure that resources are available at the back end of the system to offer this intervention to households.
- **Prioritizing households for RRH must be a clear and transparent community process.** As the need for prioritizing is a resource issue for communities, additional funds and clarity are needed around how to effectively prioritize. Communities should create system efficiencies to create flow and more RRH. If communities are more efficient in certain aspects of their system, for example, prevention-like diversion, move up vouchers, targeted PSH, it will be possible to free up PSH for the most vulnerable.

4. Expand the Role of Local, State and Federal Partners

While there are many important partnerships necessary to ensure households being rapidly re-housed have the supports they require to achieve stable housing, the discussion at the summit focused on what could be done to collaborate more effectively in four areas: employment, housing, child and family supports, and health and behavioral health. Below are key themes that emerged from the discussion regarding ways to improve connections with partners to support RRH.
- **Elevate best practices** that highlight how effective partnerships have been key in supporting the needs of households experiencing homelessness.
- **Build champions and community leaders** that can support and develop partnerships.
- **Demonstrate the mutual benefit** of working collaboratively.
- **Develop an understanding** of what mainstream systems are in the community.
- **Exchange data** to show the intersection between populations being served and aligned goals.

5. New Resources for RRH

Key takeaways and action items from the discussion related to ensuring that [leveraging](#) and [advocating](#) for resources for RRH:
- **To improve the strategic allocations of homeless assistance resources**, communities should be focusing how data and performance measures can be used to drive decision making. The structure and design of Unified Funding Agencies is conducive to aligning funds strategically to

support best practices, including RRH. Also, while braiding funds to support RRH can leverage a variety resources for maximum impact, there remain many challenges that need to be addressed (e.g., documentation collection issues; the need to eliminate match requirements within braiding; contract date matching; etc.).

- **To increase investment in RRH from mainstream systems**, there is a need to develop and align goals so that mainstream systems seem themselves as important players in ending homelessness. There is also a need for communities to engage with nontraditional partners in ending homelessness, such as, with Medicaid, Community Action Partnership agencies, and faith-based organizations. Framing the issue so it is appealing to the potential partnering agency, including using data to demonstrate the effectiveness of RRH, are important.

- **To build support for RRH through increased federal funding**, there is a need for better mechanisms to share successes and evidence about the impact of RRH. Innovative mechanisms for sharing information about RRH to policy makers include designing "adopt a legislator" events. Communities should work locally to advocate for additional resources for homeless programs and nationally.

WHAT'S NEXT

What we will be doing:
The Alliance commits to taking action to help advance rapid re-housing (RRH) as a primary homeless service intervention.

To inform knowledge about RRH, we will:
- Develop a research agenda on RRH that focuses on the need for collecting and evaluating data on key issues such as duration of assistance and progressive engagement, both at the program and the systems level.
- Leverage local and systems-level data to improve our understanding of how RRH is working.
- Communicate research on RRH to the field.

To build capacity and improve performance, the Alliance commits to:
- Ensuring that the Rapid Re-Housing Performance Benchmarks and Program Standards are being disseminated and adopted.
- Identify the critical elements of a high functioning homeless system and where RRH fits in.

To inform policy, the Alliance commits to:
- Working to transfer knowledge about RRH to the new Administration.
- Continuing to advocate for federal dollars to support homeless programs.

Here's what you can do.
- Learn and champion the Rapid Re-Housing Performance Benchmarks and Program Standards, which can be used to evaluate and improve RRH practice. Communities are now incorporating the performance benchmarks and standards into their Request for Proposal and Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) processes to provide consistency in terms of how programs should be operating and evaluating their outcomes to receive funding.
- Examine ways to use resources more strategically in your community to support RRH.
- Collect data on RRH to help us understand system-level impacts, progressive engagement and how it works, and improve our understanding of the program model.
- Develop new partners at the local, state and federal level, particularly in engaging with mainstream systems.
- Advocate for new resources for RRH.