



National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

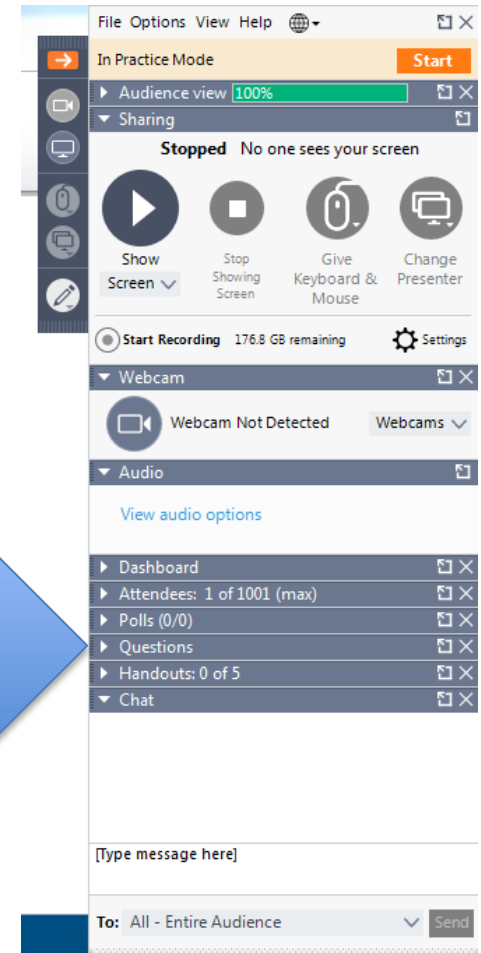
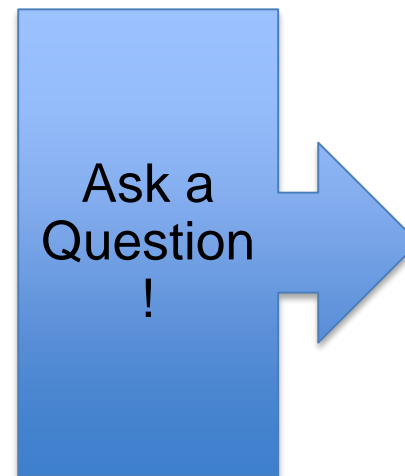
The Emergency Shelter Learning Series

The Keys to Effective Low-barrier Emergency Shelters

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION • INFLUENCING FEDERAL POLICY • BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY

Today's Webinar

- Please note that all lines are on mute.
- Please pose questions at any time in the Questions box. We will try to get to as many as we can at the end.
- The webinar and slides will be posted following the presentation. Feel free to share with your staff and any other stakeholders.

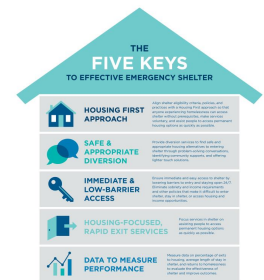


Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Anna Blasco, NAEH

Cynthia Nagendra, NAEH

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/emergency-shelter>



Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Goals

- **Strengthen** shelter policies and services to improve the housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness across your crisis response system
- **Implement** a system-wide approach to ending homelessness that includes emergency shelters
- **Align** emergency shelters' goals with the community's goals to end homelessness
- **Provide** low-barrier, safe, and housing-focused shelter

Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Activities

- ✓ **Understand** the role of shelter in a crisis response system
- ✓ **Assess** how your shelter currently aligns with the key elements to effective emergency shelter
- **Implement** key elements to effective emergency shelter
- **Develop** goals, action plans, and a timeline to make the shift to a low-barrier, housing-focused shelter model
- **Track** shelter metrics
- **Establish** benchmarks to improve outcomes



Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Technical Assistance

- **Series** of webinars
- **Key elements** to operating an effective shelter
- **Self-assessments** to assess your shelter
- **Tools** that your shelter can use to implement programmatic, policy, and operational changes
- **Guidance** from shelters that have made the transition to a new shelter model



Alliance's Work

- Collected and documented effective shelter practices
 - Interviewed shelters across the country serving various populations
 - Looked at housing outcomes, length of stay, staffing, eligibility, rules, services
 - Collected common elements of effective shelters
- Working with communities to guide their shelters' transition from high-barrier to a low-barrier, housing-focused model that is better integrated into their community's systemic response to homelessness
- Consulted experts in the field

“What If” Concerns about a New Shelter Model

- What if our clients aren't ready for housing?
- What if we are “setting people up to fail” by putting them in housing too quickly?
- What if there is no housing available?
- What if we don't have extra resources for these changes?
- What if staff quit?
- What if we need more training?
- What if we are de-stabilizing people who are trying to stay clean and sober in a shelter with people who are using?

Where are you in your Transformational Change?

Old Shelter Model

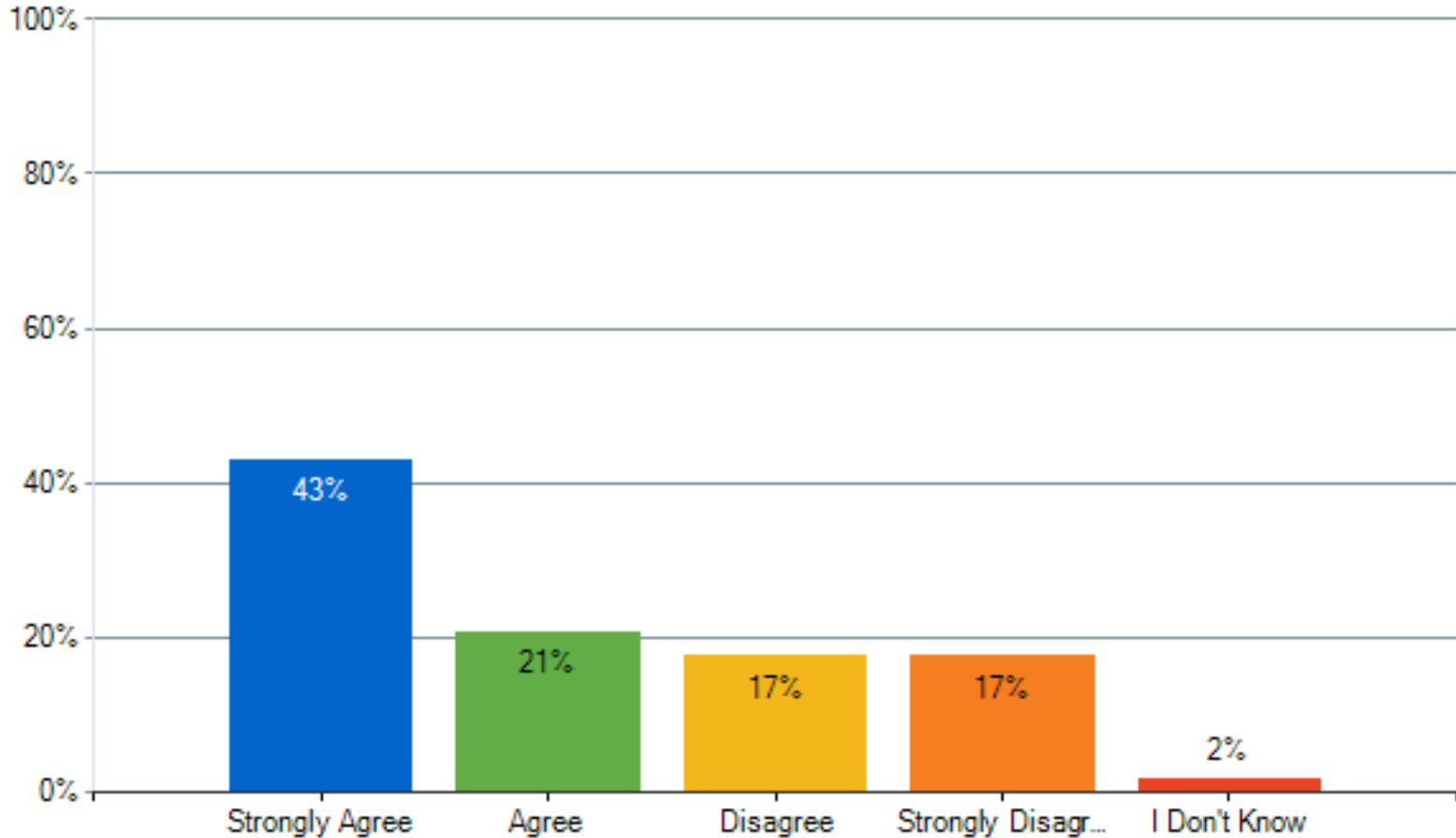
New Shelter Model





Shelter Self-Assessment Results

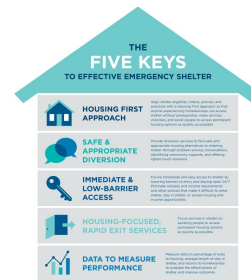
Our shelter does not make people leave every morning at a certain time, stay outside until evening, and line up for their beds every night.





Today's Webinar

- **What** are the keys to effective low-barrier shelter?
- **How** should shelters implement the keys to effective low-barrier shelter?
- **How** should communities assess the performance of emergency shelters?



What Are The Key
Elements of Effective
Low-barrier Shelters?





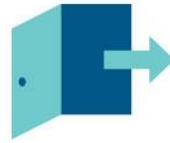
HOUSING FIRST APPROACH



SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION



IMMEDIATE & LOW-BARRIER ACCESS



HOUSING-FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES



DATA TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

THE FIVE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY SHELTER



HOUSING FIRST APPROACH

Align shelter eligibility criteria, policies, and practices with a Housing First approach so that anyone experiencing homelessness can access shelter without prerequisites, make services voluntary, and assist people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION

Provide diversion services to find safe and appropriate housing alternatives to entering shelter through problem-solving conversations, identifying community supports, and offering lighter touch solutions.



IMMEDIATE & LOW-BARRIER ACCESS

Ensure immediate and easy access to shelter by lowering barriers to entry and staying open 24/7. Eliminate sobriety and income requirements and other policies that make it difficult to enter shelter, stay in shelter, or access housing and income opportunities.



HOUSING-FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES

Focus services in shelter on assisting people to access permanent housing options as quickly as possible.



DATA TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

Measure data on percentage of exits to housing, average length of stay in shelter, and returns to homelessness to evaluate the effectiveness of shelter and improve outcomes.

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Shifting Shelter

Philosophical Shift

Practice Shift

Operations Shift





**HOUSING FIRST
APPROACH**

Housing First Approach



Housing First

- Homelessness is a housing problem
- Everyone is ready for housing **now**
- People should be returned to or stabilized in permanent housing as quickly as possible and connected to resources necessary to stay there
- Issues that contributed to a household's homelessness can best be addressed **once they are permanently housed**

Housing First

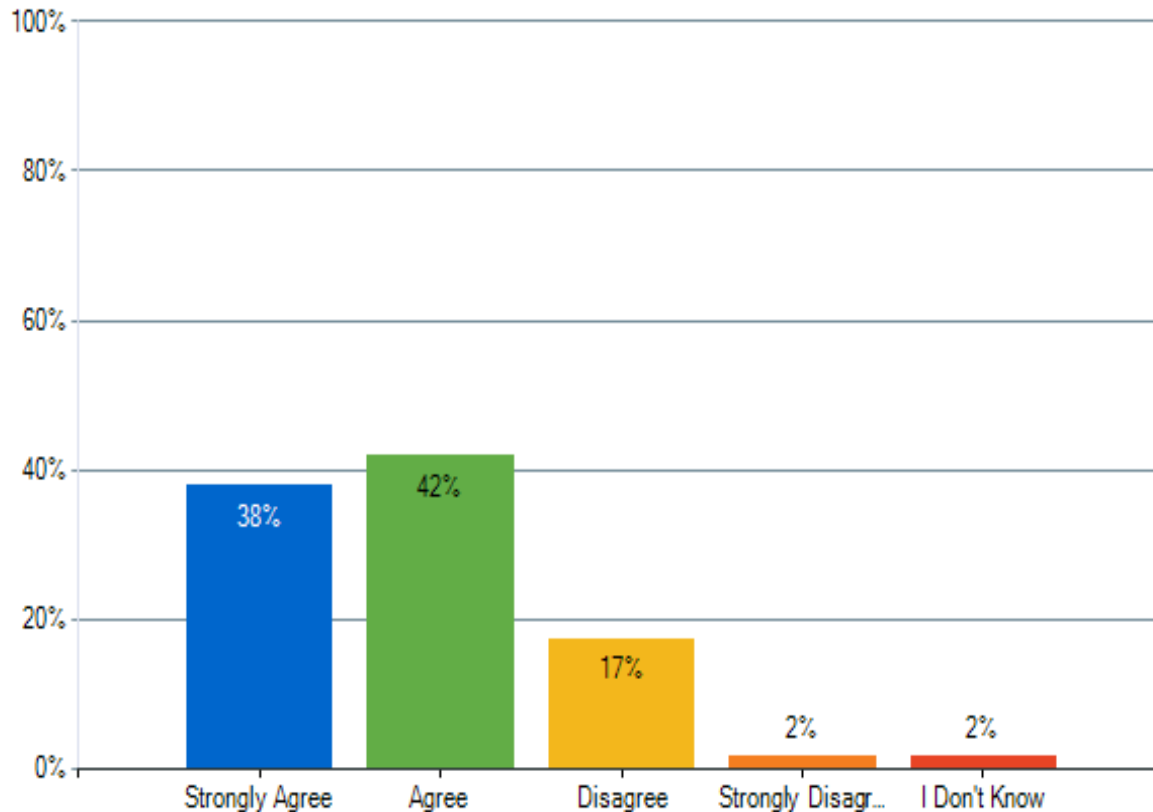
- For most people experiencing homelessness intensive services are not necessary.
- Vast majority of homeless individuals and families fall into homelessness ***one time*** after a crisis and need minimal assistance to return to housing

Housing First in Shelter Practice

- Few to no programmatic pre-requisites to permanent housing entry
- Low-barrier admission policies
- A focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible
- Supportive services are voluntary

Emergency Shelter Agency Self-Assessment

“Our mission statement reflects a Housing First philosophical approach to providing shelter, services, and housing.”

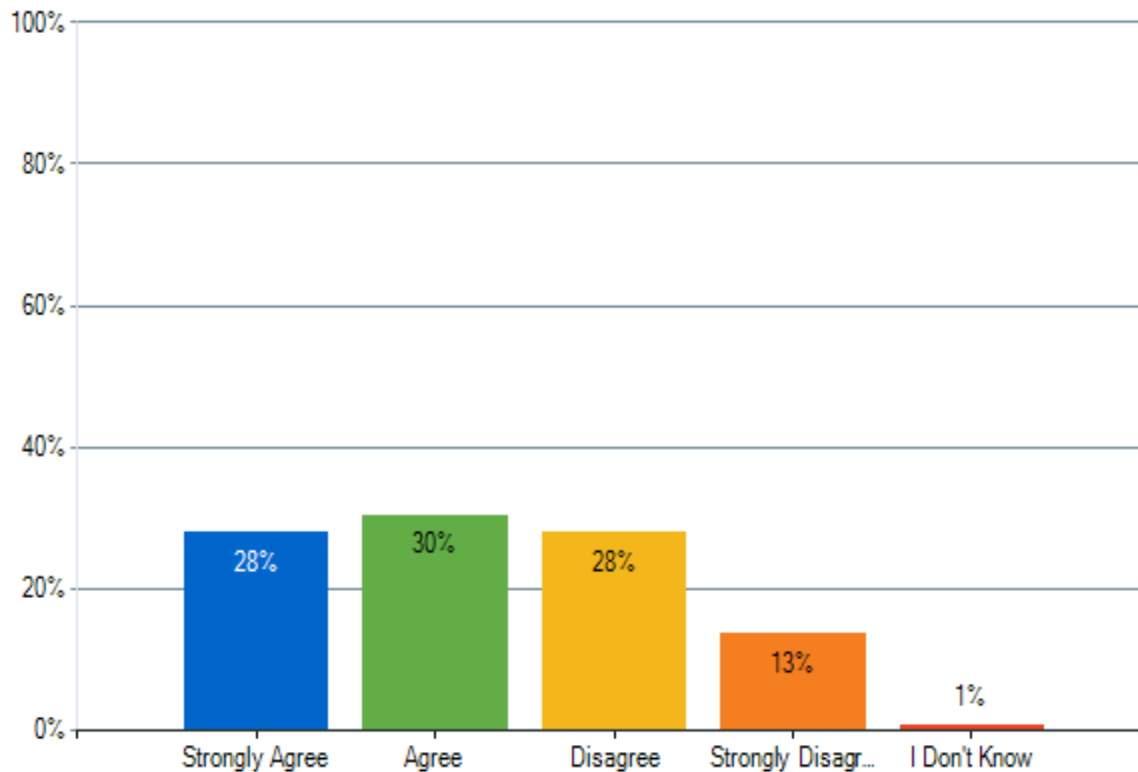


- While 80% of respondents either “strongly agree” or “Agree” that the mission of their shelter reflects a Housing First approach...

Emergency Shelter Agency Self-Assessment

“Our eligibility criteria to enroll in shelter does not restrict access to shelter because of the use of alcohol, drugs, lack of income, criminal history background, or because the person has a pet.”

- Only 58% “strongly agree” or “agree” that their shelter’s eligibility criteria does not restrict access because of the use of alcohol, drugs, lack of income, criminal history background, or because the person has a pet.





**SAFE &
APPROPRIATE
DIVERSION**

Safe and Appropriate Diversion



Safe and Appropriate Diversion

- A strategy that prevents homelessness by helping people experiencing a housing crisis and seeking shelter to preserve their current housing situation or make immediate alternative arrangements **without having to enter shelter**

Safe and Appropriate Diversion

- Diversion prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements or helps them stay where they are **if safe and appropriate**
- Diversion is problem-solving and solutions-focused
- Diversion is NOT a separate “program” but rather part of the entire crisis response system
- Diversion should always be safe and appropriate for the person or household seeking help
- Diversion should feel like **a service**, **not** like being turned away with no assistance
- Diversion happens through coordinated entry process and/or at **shelter front door**

Safe and Appropriate Diversion

- Engage people seeking shelter in a **solutions-focused conversation** and identify safe alternatives to shelter first, instead of immediately doing an intake into shelter
- Use a strength-based approach vs. a needs-based approach
- Assist in connecting to community resources to avoid a shelter stay



**IMMEDIATE &
LOW-BARRIER
ACCESS**

Immediate and Low-barrier Access



Why Do People Avoid Shelters?

They are too crowded	37%
Bugs	30%
There are too many rules	28%
They are full	27%
I can't stay with my partner/family	23%
Germs	22%
They don't accept my pet	22%
There is nowhere to store my stuff	19%
They are too far away	18%
I can't stay with my friends	13%

Immediate and Low-barrier Access

- **Screening people in, not out**
- Shelter is open 24/7
- People do not have to line up for a bed each night or leave early in the morning
- No drug and alcohol testing to get in
- No criminal background checks to get in
- Not requiring income to get in
- Not requiring “housing-readiness” to get in
- Allowing people, pets and possessions

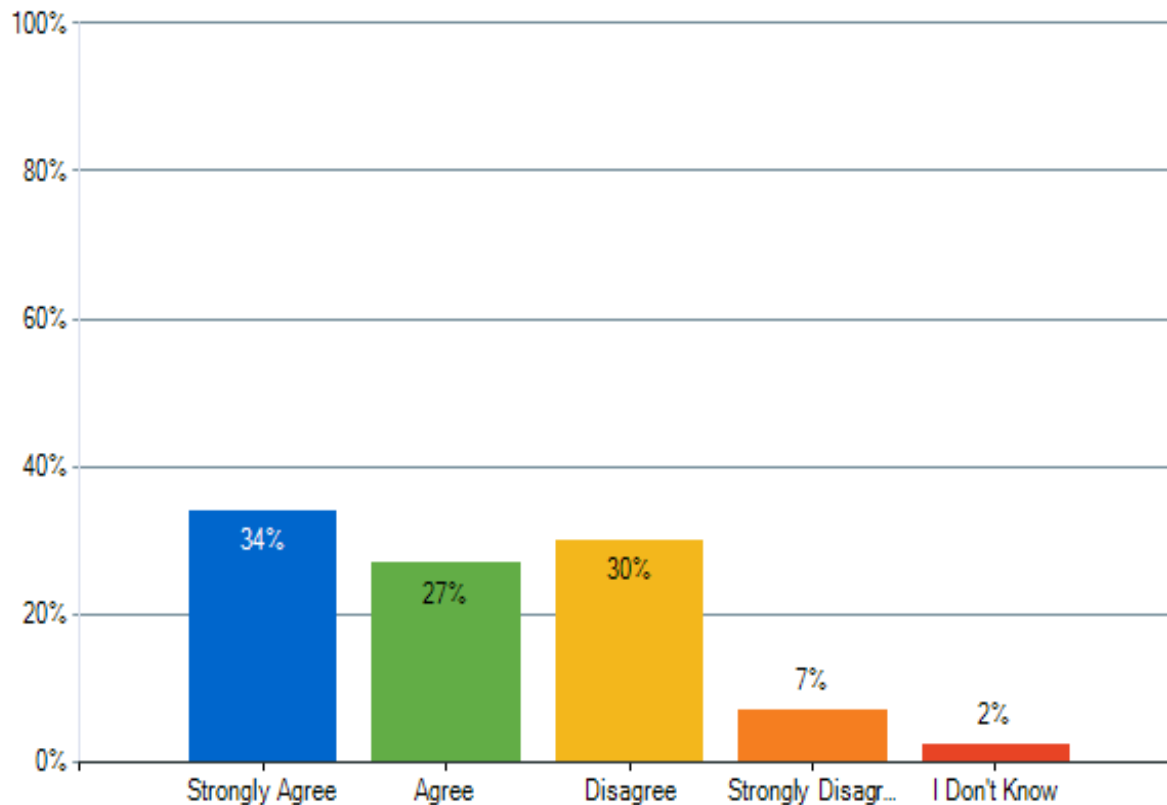
Immediate and Low-barrier Access

- The most acute, highest need people are prioritized for shelter **such as unsheltered individuals and families who are at greatest risk for severe health and safety consequences if not sheltered.**
- Fill your shelter with those that **need it the most**, not those that got there first or can “comply” with the rules
- **Do not require** service participation to stay in shelter

Emergency Shelter Agency Self-Assessment

“Shelter participants are not required to participate in services to stay in shelter.”

- **37% of shelters require participation in services to remain in shelter**



Immediate and Low-barrier Access

- Serving households of any configuration including couples without children, persons identifying as LGBT, two-parent households, mothers with teen boys
- Serving people using substances and/or with mental illness, regardless of treatment compliance
- Configuring space to serve different configurations of households and accommodate special needs

Equal Access Rule

What it requires:

- ✓ Determine eligibility regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status
- ✓ Must not discriminate against anyone because they do not conform to gender or sex stereotypes
- ✓ Grant equal access consistent with a person's gender identity

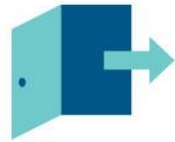
Immediate and Low-barrier Access

LOW-BARRIER DOES NOT MEAN

- Not having rules or expectations of shelter participants
- Allowing people to act in ways that are unsafe to themselves or others
- Letting anything happen or letting everyone in

Simple, Safe, Behavior-Based Rules

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Use the shelter space in a respectful manner.
- Be a good neighbor.
- No weapons are allowed in the shelter, and nothing may be used as a weapon inside the shelter.
- Substance use is not allowed on the premises.



HOUSING-FOCUSED,
RAPID EXIT SERVICES

Housing-focused and Rapid Exit Services



Housing-focused, Rapid Exit Services

- All services should be focused on exiting people **to permanent housing as rapidly as possible**
- Shift the case management approach from:
“What can I do to help you?”
to
“How can I help you to obtain housing?”
- It’s all about housing, not about “healing” or “fixing”

-From OrgCode’s “How to Be an Awesome Shelter”

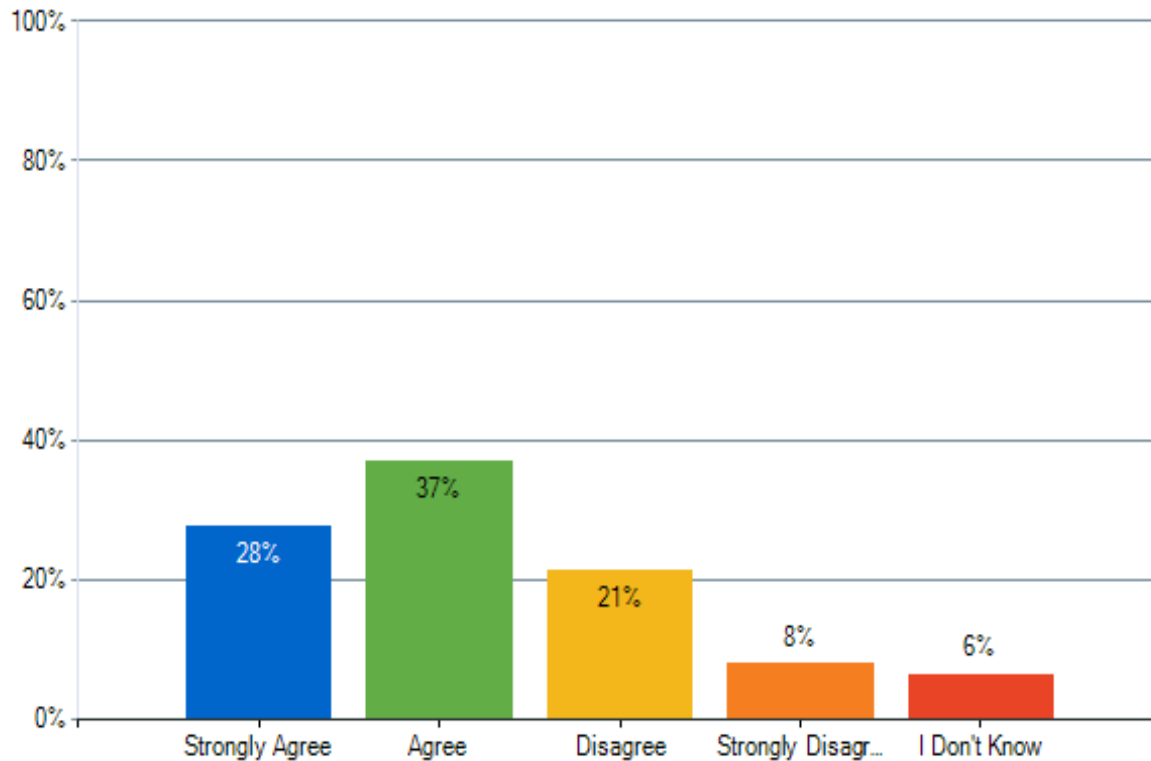
Housing-focused, Rapid Exit Services

- At entry, start to focus on a “housing plan”
- Identify barriers to tenancy that will be worked through in the housing plan
- Connect to housing resources
- Focus every in-person meeting on a quick move to permanent housing
- Review and discuss the housing plan weekly at a minimum

Emergency Shelter Agency Self-Assessment

“Participants are assisted to create a rapid exit housing plan with staff within one week of entering our shelter.”

- **65% said they create a rapid exit housing plan with clients within one week of entering shelter**



Housing-focused, Rapid Exit Services

- Create a clear “housing message” throughout the shelter
 - “Shelter is not a destination, it is a process to get you housed”
 - “We are going to re-house you RAPIDLY”
 - “You can be housed”

Housing-focused, Rapid Exit Services

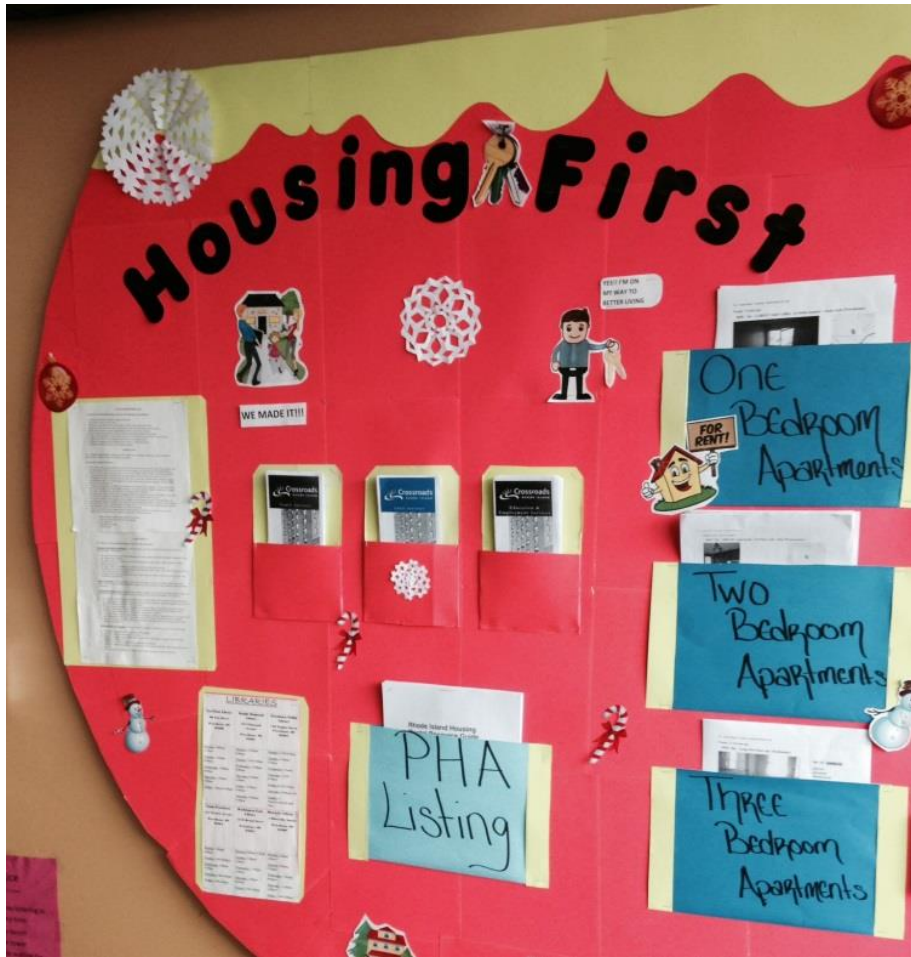
Staffing

- Staffing could include housing locator
- All job descriptions require:
 - Understanding of how to navigate tenancy barriers
 - Knowledge of housing resources in the community
 - Understanding of client centered/client driven planning

Budget

- What can we eliminate and use to pay for housing-focused services/staffing?

Housing-Focused Messaging



“I tell my staff, ‘if you’re not talking about housing, you’re having the wrong conversation.’”

Deronda Metz, Salvation Army, Charlotte, NC

Are our services housing-focused?

- What services are provided in the shelter and what do they accomplish?
- Are there services that make obtaining housing difficult ?
- Which services are focused on obtaining permanent housing?
- What can we do to decrease the length of stay without timing people out?
- When does the conversation about moving to permanent housing begin?
- What do we need to change in staff and budget to rapidly exit people to housing?
- What can we change to make our environment and services housing focused?





**DATA TO MEASURE
PERFORMANCE**

Data To Measure Performance



Data to Measure Performance

 DECREASE Length of Stay/Time Spent Homeless

 INCREASE Exits to Permanent Housing

 DECREASE Returns to Shelter

Data to Measure Performance

- These outcomes work together!
- Just decreasing the length of stay WITHOUT increasing exits to homelessness is NOT a good outcome
- Do not institute arbitrary lengths of stay in shelter to reduce shelter stays
- Rather, consider increasing exits to permanent housing and decreasing the length of time someone spends being homeless.
- The only way to end people's homelessness is to help them obtain permanent housing

Emergency Shelter Outcome Metrics

#	Measure	May 2017
1	Total number of beds a. Total beds for unaccompanied individuals b. Total beds for families	
2	Total unique households served	
3	Total households entering shelter	
4	Total households exiting	
5	Total households exiting to a permanent housing destination	
6	Average length of shelter stay in days for all households exiting the shelter to any destination	
7	Average length of shelter stay in days for all households exiting to a permanent housing destination	
8	Total household stayers (those households who entered in previous months and did not exit this month)	
9	Average length of shelter stay in days for all stayer households	

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN!

- **Review** each key element
- **Create** action steps and goals for each key element that you want to accomplish in the next 3-6 months

Develop Goals For Shelter Transition

Our goal is to provide shelter that:

- ✓ Is immediately accessible to those who need it most
- ✓ Is low-barrier without pre-requisites for entry
- ✓ Increases exits to permanent housing
- ✓ Reduces the length of time people are homeless

Develop Benchmarks For Shelter Transition

Increase exits to PH by **25%** over the next **3 months**

Decrease all average LOS to **60 days** by focusing on housing **long-stayers**

Eliminate drug and alcohol testing **in 3 months**

Add housing-focused activities to staff job **descriptions in 30 days**

Train all staff and board on keys to effective shelter **in 3 months**

Increase shelter utilization if you have unsheltered homeless people in your community **by 20% in 60 days**

What's Next

Register for the next webinar!

When: Mid-June (TBD)

Learning How to Transition to a Low-Barrier and Housing-Focused Shelter Model From Shelters Who Have Done It



Questions?

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