



National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

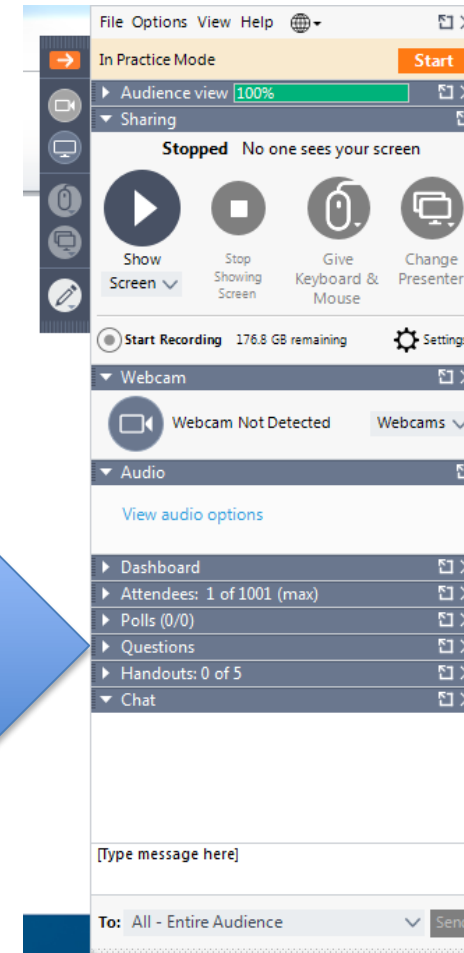
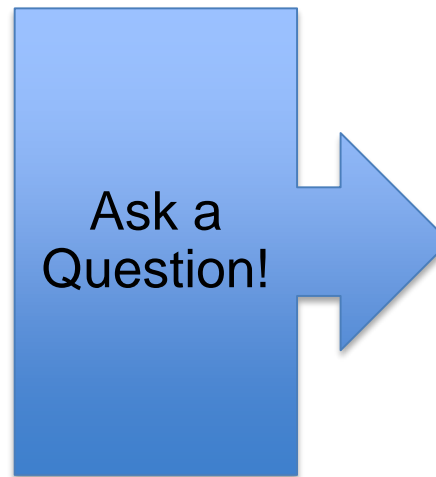
The Emergency Shelter Learning Series

Low-Barrier Access to Shelters for
People and Their Animals

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.



Today's Speakers

Rebecca Koppel

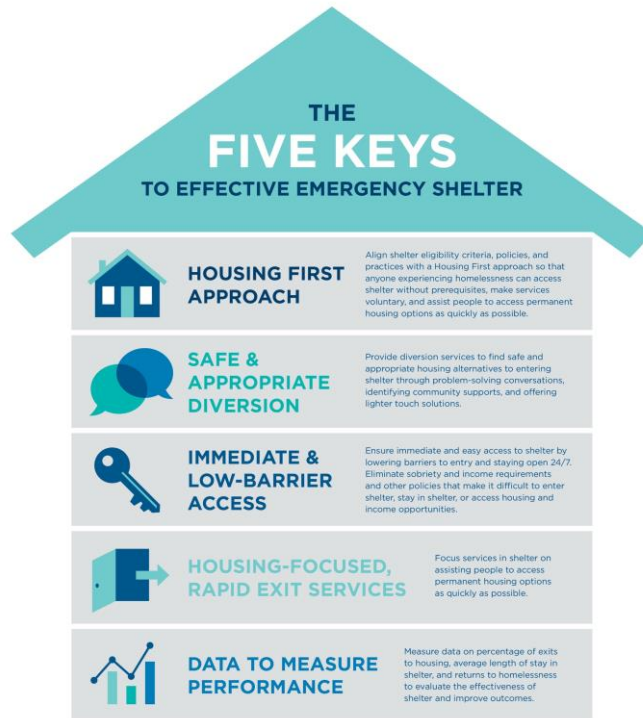
Center for Capacity Building, NAEH

Kristi Schulenberg

Center for Capacity Building, NAEH

Kelsey Madigan

LA Family Housing



Who Is On The Call?

- Executive Director/Leadership of an Emergency Shelter
- Program Director/Manager of an Emergency Shelter
- Case Manager/Front Line Staff of an Emergency Shelter
- Funder
- CoC/System Leader
- Outreach Worker
- Animal Welfare Staff (shelter, veterinarian, etc.)



What Access Do Animals Currently Have In Your Shelter?

- We do not allow animals in our shelter
- We accept service animals only
- We accept service animals and emotional support animals only
- We accept all animals



Today's Webinar

- **Why** is there a need for shelters to accept animals along with their owners?
- **How** do shelters implement cultural, operational, and practical changes to increase their pet-friendliness?
- **What** are some of the challenges and opportunities associated with shelters accessible to animals?
- **What** are the legal obligations of shelters to accept service and emotional support animals?

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

<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/emergency-shelter/>

- The Role of Emergency Shelter in the Crisis Response System
- The Keys to Effective Low Barrier Emergency Shelters
- How to Transition Your Emergency Shelter to a Low-Barrier and Housing-Focused Shelter Model
- Safely Serving Families and Survivors of Domestic Violence
- Serving Single Adults in Congregate Settings
- Frequently Asked Questions for Low-Barrier Shelter
- Keys to Effective Emergency Shelter: Using Your Data to Evaluate and Improve Performance
- HUD's Equal Access Rule: What it Is, What's Changed, and What You Need to Know



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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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.



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THE FIVE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY SHELTER

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

- Serving households of any configuration including couples without children, persons identifying as LGBT, two-parent households, mothers with teen boys, etc.
- 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



**IMMEDIATE &
LOW-BARRIER
ACCESS**

Impact of a Low Barrier System

- Encourages and promotes a system-wide Housing First approach
- Ensure that the most vulnerable households have access to safe and decent shelter
- Offers an opportunity for housing-focused case management that they may not receive if still living on street/place not meant for human habitation
- Targets scarce resources for those who need it most

LAFH Bridge Housing

Because everyone deserves dignity and respect.

Bridge Housing is interim housing that provides a safe place to sleep and a community of support networks to get people back on their feet.



Housing Navigation

Helps participants locate housing, access supportive services, and move into permanent housing.



Mental Health Social Workers

Identify participant needs through ongoing assessment, counseling, workshops, and linkage to services.



Resident Advocates

Support staff trained to teach positive coping and living skills for future success.



LA FAMILY
HOUSING

Impetus for Change



Owner: Elderly Veteran who was priced out of his previous unit

Chico:

- 19 year old emotional support animal
- Loves taking long walks and bus rides to the VA
- Assists his owner in feeling and showing love, allows for his introverted owner to start conversation with others
- Fills the void of relatives and friends his owner has lost over time

Support Animal Classifications

Emotional Support Animal

- An animal that helps an individual with psychiatric disabilities manage or alleviate the symptoms of those disabilities, by providing therapeutic nurture, comfort and support. Emotional support animals are not required to have specialized training.

Service Animal

- Any dog or other common domestic animal individually trained to do work for or perform tasks for the benefit of a qualified person with a disability.



Efficacy of Support Animals

For Mental Health:

- The simple act of petting animals releases an automatic relaxation response.
- Lowers anxiety and helps people relax.
- Reduces loneliness.
- Increases mental stimulation.
- Can act as catalysts in the therapy process.
 - May help break the ice.
 - May reduce the initial resistance that might accompany therapy.

<https://www.uclahealth.org/pac/animal-assisted-therapy>

For Physical Health:

- Lowers blood pressure and improves cardiovascular health.
- Breathing slows in those who are anxious.
- Releases many hormones such as Phenylethylamine which has the same effect as chocolate.
- For Children with Autism
 - Many children with autism feel a deep bond with animals and feel that they are able to relate better than humans.
 - Children with autism were engaged in significantly greater use of language as well as social interaction in their therapy sessions that incorporated animals compared to standard therapy sessions without them.

Cultural and Operational Change



Dexter:

- Reminded his owner what unconditional love felt like
- Loves long walks and excursions to the dog park

Everyone has to be on board!

Team members: Training on safety in approaching animals and how emotional support and service animals positively impact participants

Participants: Training and monitoring of cleanliness, animal caretaking, responsibility, safety, impact on housing plan

Funders: Sharing the impact emotional support animals have on our participants

Leadership: Connecting our animal policies to our low barrier bridge housing model and mission

Practical Steps

1. Outreach connects participant with community resources:
 - Spay and neuter options
 - City license and tags
 - Emotional support documentation
 - Shots
2. Intake Coordinator collects all required documentation at entry and explains the expectations of having an animal on site:
 - Specific Breeds must wear a muzzle on site
 - Animals are not permitted to enter dining area
 - Animals are to be left in a crate if not supervised



Practical Steps

3. Bridge Housing Resident Advocates match the participant to a room with participants who are not allergic to animals and upholds the participant to our support animal expectations
4. Housing Navigator includes the needs of the animal in the housing plan and discusses the ways in which the animal will impact housing



Fair Housing Act

Allows people with disabilities to request accommodations for assistance and emotional support animals (emotional support animal is a type of assistance animal)



Emotional Support Animals and Permanent Housing

After receiving a request to accommodate an emotional support animal, the housing provider must consider the following:

1. Does the person seeking to use and live with the animal have a disability?
2. Does the person making the request have a disability-related need for an assistance animal?

Service Animals and Permanent Housing

1. Is this a service animal that is required because of a disability? and
2. What work or tasks has the animal been trained to perform? A covered entity shall not require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a service animal

Landlord Engagement Tools

- Meet and greet with the support animal
- Personalize the animal as you would the participant
- Talk about the animal's behavior in a shelter or previous housing environment
- Discussing the ADA and FHA with landlords
- Educating landlords about the direct correlation between mental and/ or physical health management and support animals
- Sharing success stories!



Key Partnerships

- Bark Avenue Foundation www.barkavenuefoundation.org
 - Monthly food, flea medication and supply donations
 - Animal care resources
 - Collaborating with participants on proper animal care and fielding individual participant concerns/questions
 - Assists in training staff on animal safety, how to approach animals in a living space, how emotional support animals are effective in stabilizing the mental health of participants
- Local Humane Society
 - Spay and neuter
 - City Licensing and tagging
- Animal Clinics
 - Spay and neuter
 - Vaccinations



Lessons Learned

Challenges

- Managing participant fear and possible trauma experienced with animals
- Room placement
- Training participants how to properly care for their animal
- Reporting abuse
- Implementing corrective action for animal behavior on site

Opportunities

- Setting clear expectations at intake
- Implementing training classes for animals
- Ensuring participants are presenting with appropriate support animal documentation before an intake is completed
- Obtaining an animal after entrance into Bridge Housing? What should be the messaging?
- Identifying an emergency contact should the owner be separated from the support animal

Pet Friendly Shelter Models

- Co-sheltering animals and owners
- Indoor kennel
- Outdoor kennel



Noah's Animal House, N Las Vegas, NV

Questions

Pet Friendly Shelter Resources

- National Alliance to End Homelessness Sample Guidelines for Emergency Shelters that Welcome Service/Emotional Support and Other Animals
- Pet-Friendly Shelters: 10 Lessons From The Field
- Pet-Friendly Shelter Profile: Catholic Charities Santa Rosa
- Guest Blog: Catholic Charities Santa Rosa

What's Next

Register for the next webinar!

Diversion

Save-The-Date:

September 27th at 2-3:30PM ET



Questions?

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