

Meeting People Where They Are: Embedded Housing Navigation Partnerships

Tara Ryan

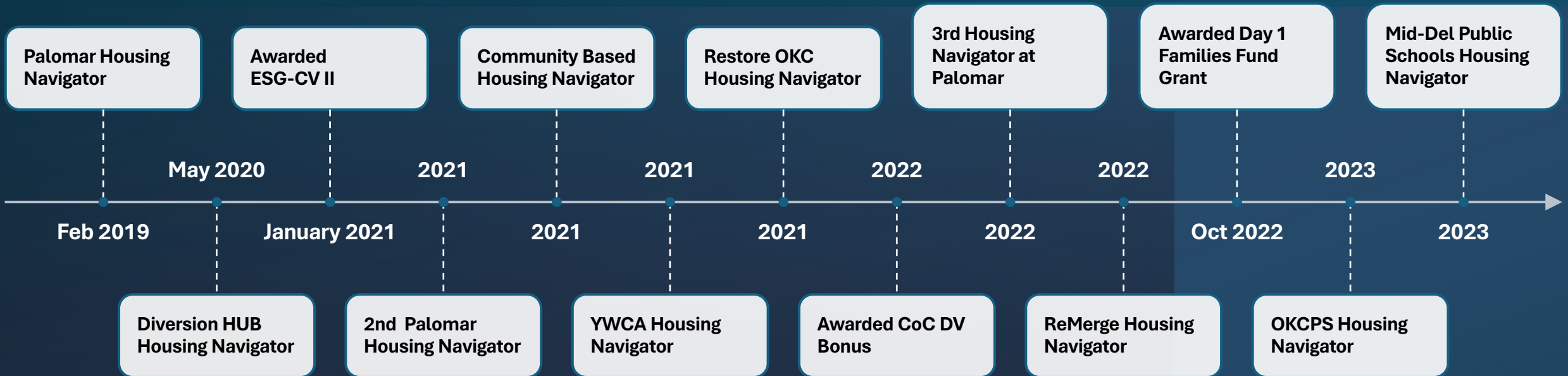
Chief Housing Officer

Homeless Alliance- Oklahoma City

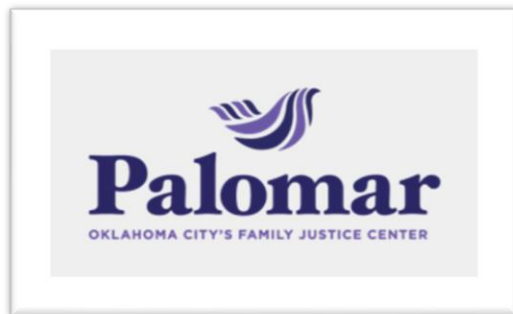


How it Works: A Brief History of Housing Navigation at the Homeless Alliance

- Homeless Alliance (HA) administered an ESG RRH grant but did not employ any CMs underneath this grant.
 - We collaborated with partner agencies who provided CM services and we administered the funding.
- In training new partners on accessing funding and housing, some found the rules and requirements cumbersome and requested that we provide the housing services directly.
- As an agency whose focus is housing, we were receiving calls from partners seeking guidance on assisting special populations of individuals experiencing homelessness.
- In 2019 the Homeless Alliance embedded its first housing navigator at Palomar, a Family Justice Center, serving clients who were fleeing domestic violence
- We have embedded staff at 14 different agencies and have served over 1600 clients



Embedded Housing Navigation: Streamlining Services



Through the embedded housing navigation model, clients are typically receiving some form of case management services which allows the housing navigator to solely focus on housing and the case manager to focus on their area of expertise.

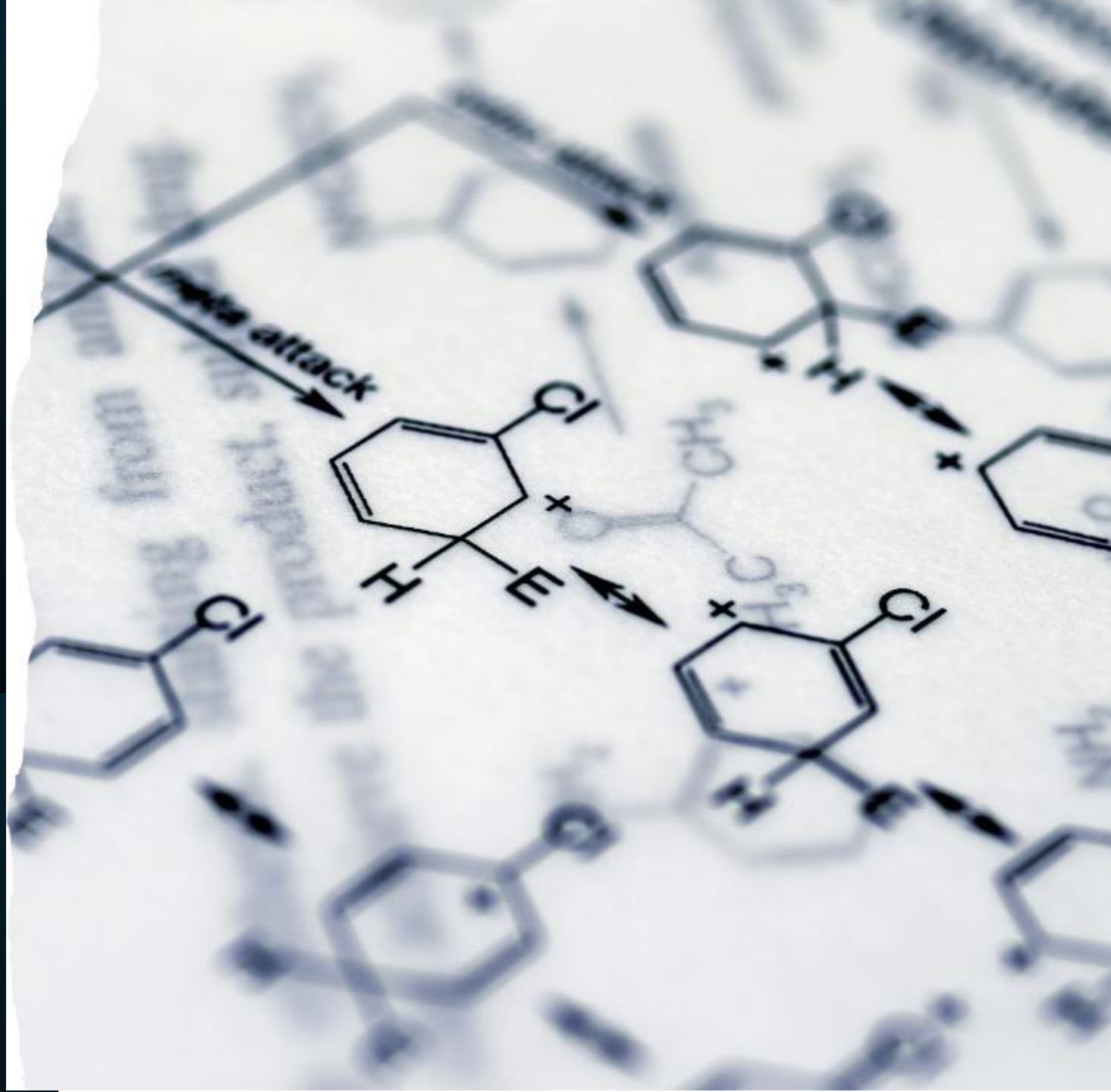
Embedded Housing Navigation: Streamlining Services

- Housing systems/regulations are complicated!
 - Eligibility Criteria
 - Definitions of Homelessness
 - Different Subsidies
 - Complicated Forms/Documentation Requirements
 - Acronyms/Housing Jargon

Housing Systems are Complicated

Can you translate this?

CM and CT contacted the PHA to apply for a PSH HCV after determining that the CT was within the AMI limits. CT and CM will begin looking for a unit within FMR that meets HQS.



Streamlining Services

- When a person is in crisis, they may not be able to identify the need of housing. But if a housing navigator is present, we can help the client navigate their housing options.
- When a person has a place to call home it can help them resolve their other traumas.
- While we are navigating housing, our partners are helping the client navigate their other needs.



But How Does Embedded Housing Navigation Actually Work?: The Model



Case Management Occurs at Host Agency



Referral



Housing Counseling



Connection to Appropriate Subsidy



Housing Search



Landlord Engagement



Move-In



Stabilization/Ongoing Case Management Occurs at Host Agency

Engaging Clients Who Would Not Be Otherwise Engaged in OKC

- OKC is the 10th largest city in the US by land mass—people are spread out and not always accessing services in a centralized location
- The embedded housing navigation model leverages community resources in the area where the client is residing
- We bring the services to their neighborhoods, so they do not have to come to us, eliminating the run around
- This model seeks to combat the effects of redlining and helps to locate affordable housing options in or near the neighborhoods that are familiar and comfortable to the people we are assisting

Engaging Clients who Would Not Be Otherwise Engaged: The Unsheltered Population

- According to PIT count data in 2023, 31% of people surveyed were experiencing unsheltered homelessness
 - In 2024 this number decreased, but we also added an emergency winter shelter to the community—without this shelter the unsheltered population would have been 40%
- When asked why they were not staying at shelters, 33% of people stated they were too crowded and 25% of people stated that they had concerns for their personal safety
- Services are often more readily available at shelters, but this model brings services to people where they are, so they do not have to access shelter if they choose not to

What it looks like in Coordinated Entry: The Referral Process

Host Agency Makes Referral

Assessment is Completed

Client added to Name Data Base

Client referred to opening on embedded Housing Navigator Caseload

What it Looks Like in Coordinated Entry



Case management services at the embedded agency are considered a prerequisite for eligibility for the housing navigator



The type of housing intervention being offered at the embedded site is pre-established to ensure referrals are appropriate



Increases coordinated efforts, by opening more points of entry into the system; engages more clients and more partners



If a client is not eligible or appropriate for the Housing Navigators caseload, then they would remain on the name database allowing the client opportunity to be paired with the appropriate program.

Lessons Learned

- Communication between partners is key!
- Outline clear responsibility in an MOU
- Outline responsibility even further in a programmatic flow
 - There can be overlap in services so make sure to clearly define who is doing what (i.e. who does document collection, makes the referral to MH services when this impacts their ability to clean their home, etc.)
 - When do you communicate? Set-up a regular time for case consultations.
- Define who you will serve and make sure both partners understand why! (i.e. RRH, Prevention, PSH)

Lessons Learned Continued

Differing Missions—for example working alongside rehabilitation programs where their core values may be different can sometimes diverge from a housing first model/agency's mission

Engagement policies—this looks different at every agency—consider what it would be like if clients quit engaging with the host agency while they are still engaging with the housing navigator

Hire a strong supervisor and a strong housing navigator who maneuver through policies and procedures for both agencies and can work collaboratively—consider this in your compensation scale

Questions?



Special Thank You To Our Funders!



- The Department of Housing & Urban Development
- The Day 1 Families Foundation
- The Arnall Family Foundation
- Inasmuch Foundation
- The City of Oklahoma City

Homelessness is complicated and everyone has a role to play! The support of these donors and of our community makes our impact possible!