

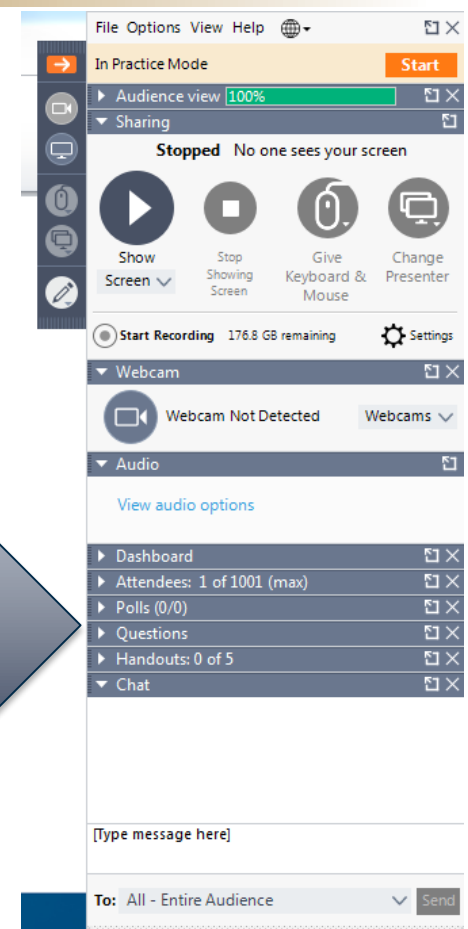
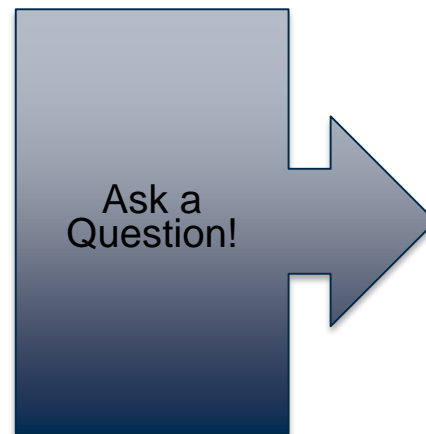
THE ROLE OF EMERGENCY SHELTER IN DIVERSION

September 27, 2018



Today's Webinar

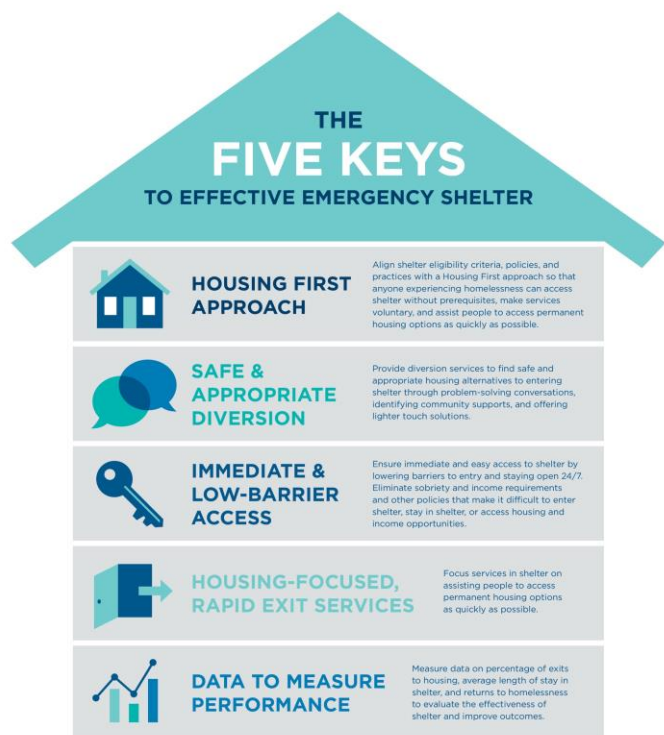
- Please note that all lines are on mute.
- Please pose questions at any time in the Questions box. We will try to get to as many as we can at the end.
- The webinar and slides will be posted following the presentation. Feel free to share with your staff and any other stakeholders.



The screenshot shows a webinar control panel with the following elements:

- File Options View Help
- In Practice Mode (Start button)
- Audience view 100%
- Sharing section: Stopped (No one sees your screen). Controls include Show Screen, Stop Showing Screen, Give Keyboard & Mouse, and Change Presenter.
- Start Recording (176.8 GB remaining) and Settings icon.
- Webcam section: Webcam Not Detected (Webcams dropdown).
- Audio section: View audio options.
- Dashboard: Attendees: 1 of 1001 (max), Polls: 0/0, Questions, Handouts: 0 of 5, Chat.
- [Type message here] input field.
- To: All - Entire Audience (Send button).

Today's Speakers



Kristi Schulenberg, NAEH

Cynthia Nagendra, NAEH

Feleica M. Harrington, MBA

Lowndes Associated Ministries to People, Inc. (LAMP)

Kay Moshier McDivitt, NAEH

Emergency Shelter Learning Series Goals

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

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

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.



HOUSING FIRST APPROACH



SAFE & APPROPRIATE DIVERSION



IMMEDIATE & LOW-BARRIER ACCESS



HOUSING-FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES



DATA TO MEASURE PERFORMANCE

Webinar Agenda

- Diversion: Who, What, When, Why
- Identify the role of shelter in diversion
- Describe “diversion” strategies related to shelter practices
- Provide a community example of using diversion strategies in shelter
- Provide an overview of the fundamentals of effective diversion practices at shelter
- Describe successful diversion outcomes

An Effective Homeless Response System

- Aims to make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time
- Focuses on housing as the primary solution to homelessness
- Helps people resolve their housing crises at every engagement opportunity



An Effective Homeless Response System

Every community must have the capacity to:

- Quickly identify and engage people at risk of and experiencing homelessness
- **Intervene to prevent people from losing their housing and divert people from entering the homelessness services system**
- Provide people with immediate access to shelter and crisis services without barriers to entry if homelessness does occur
- Quickly connect people experiencing homelessness to housing assistance and services tailored to their unique needs and strengths to help them achieve and maintain stable housing
 - USICH, *Home Together, The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*

DIVERSION: WHAT, WHEN, WHO



What is Diversion?

A strategy that helps people identify and access alternatives to entering emergency shelter to resolve their immediate housing crisis and avoid homelessness.



What is Diversion?

- Is a service to help people avoid a shelter stay and resolve their immediate housing crisis
- Is ***not*** a denial or barrier to shelter entry and instead expands options to identify alternatives to shelter



What is Diversion?

Services

- Creative Problem Solving Conversation to Identify Solutions to Immediate Housing Crisis
- Connections to Family and Natural Supports
- Strengths-Based Case Management
- Conflict Resolution/Mediation
- Housing Search/Placement
- Landlord/Tenant Mediation
- Connection to Mainstream Resources
- Tenant Legal Services
- Credit Repair



What is Diversion?

Financial Assistance

- Utility Arrears
- Moving Costs
- Transportation Costs
- Car Repairs
- Other Financial Assistance
- Rental Subsidy/Arrears
- Food assistance



What is Diversion?

- Services and financial assistance does not have to be provided by the shelter itself.
- Financial assistance is often unnecessary to successfully divert someone from shelter

When Should The System Use Diversion Strategies?

- At access points or “front doors” to the homeless system
 - Coordinated entry system access points
 - **Emergency shelter**
 - Other places people are seeking homeless services assistance



When Should Shelters Use Diversion Strategies?

- When person is seeking shelter but before shelter intake

When Should Shelters Use Diversion Strategies?

Consumer's Housing Situation	Intervention Used	Services Provided in All Interventions
At Risk of Losing Housing (precariously housed)	PREVENTION	<p>Services (Strengths-Based Case Management)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Problem Solving Conversation • Conflict Resolution • Housing Search/Placement • Landlord/Tenant Mediation • Connection to Mainstream Resources • Tenant Legal Services • Credit Repair <p>Financial Assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental Application Fee • Rental Subsidy/Arrears • Security/Utility Deposits • Utility Arrears • Moving Costs • Transportation Costs • Other Financial Assistance
Seeking Shelter (at "front door" of system and seeking place to stay)	DIVERSION	
Literally Homeless (on the street/place not meant for human habitation/ shelter)	HOUSING FOCUSED, RAPID EXIT SERVICES	

Who Can Be Diverted From Emergency Shelter?

Try diversion with **everyone!**

- *Try* having a problem solving conversation with **everyone** seeking shelter to determine whether it is viable, desirable, safe, and appropriate to divert them

Who Can **Not** be Diverted From Emergency Shelter?

Individuals or families that do not have any safe or viable alternatives aside from staying in shelter



When Diversion Is Not Appropriate, Use Housing-focused Services in Shelter

When a household is not diverted from shelter, the same diversion strategies - **effective problem solving conversations, that are client-centered, and focus on creative solutions – should continue in the shelter** in order to quickly resolve a household's homelessness.

When Diversion Is Not Appropriate, Use Housing-focused Services in Shelter

These continued strategies provide much needed **housing focused, rapid exit services** for all households assessed for housing and support services and **are critical for those who will not receive** interventions such as rapid re-housing or permanent support housing.

DIVERSION: WHY

Why Employ Diversion Strategies?



Diversion: Why?

- Reduces new entries into homelessness
- Cuts down on **shelter** wait lists
- Stems inflow into the **shelter** system
- Reduces demand for limited **shelter** beds
- Improves system performance outcomes by reducing new entries and re-entries into homelessness
- Targets more intensive homelessness interventions and resources to be provided to those with higher needs who have no alternatives to a shelter stay

Diversion: Why?

When we don't utilize diversion...

- People enter shelter when they could have been successfully diverted
- Shelters become overloaded and cannot adequately respond to those who have no other safe alternative housing options
- Increase of unsheltered homelessness due to not enough shelter beds available

DIVERSION STRATEGIES

Where To Begin Within the Homeless Response System



Coordinated Entry and Shelter

- Many communities have not yet integrated shelter entry/prioritization together with coordinated entry and diversion strategies
- Shelters are therefore **critical** in implementing diversion strategies as it serves as the “front door” of the homeless response system
- Shelters have an incredible opportunity to engage households and assist in solving their immediate housing crisis **before they become homeless**
- Shelters **are not** denying service when employing diversion strategies. Instead, they are providing a chance to avoid trauma of homelessness and find safe, appropriate alternative
- In employing diversion strategies, shelters ensure resources dedicated to those who will need them most

Coordinated Entry and Shelter

Move Away From	Move Towards
Are you willing to enter shelter?	Is the place you were staying safe? What can we do to help you remain there? What can we do to help you find a safe place other than shelter?
What programs are you eligible for? Who has a bed?	What would resolve your current housing crisis?
Beginning with eligibility determinations	Begin with brainstorming and structured problem solving conversations about household's situation and resources
Beginning with screening and assessment tools and shelter waitlists	Support crisis resolution to avoid shelter entry through problem solving conversation

IMPLEMENTING DIVERSION AT EMERGENCY SHELTER

A Community Example

Feleica M. Harrington, MBA

Executive Director

Lowndes Associated Ministries to People, Inc. (LAMP)

Valdosta, GA



LOWNDES ASSOCIATED MINISTRIES TO PEOPLE



Located in Valdosta, Georgia



WHY DIVERSION?

- Cost Effective
- Frees up bed space for those who really need it



HOW DID WE START DIVERSION?

1. Developed a plan
2. Trained Staff
3. Collaborated with strong social service partners



WHEN & WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK?

The practice of diversion happens during the initial housing conversation.

1. In terms of housing, have you tried other things in the past (ie. living with other family members)?
2. What were these and how did they work for you?
3. What other things have you considered doing?
4. What barriers are preventing you from using the above to address your current housing situation, even for the short term while other options can be explored?
5. You said you were living _____. Is this a safe situation for you to return to and if so could you stay there for a few days, week or a month while other options are explored and resources accessed

PRAGMATIC SHIFTS

Conflict mediation (with a landlord, family or friends)

Financial, utility, and/or rental assistance

Short-term case management focused on housing stabilization

Connection to mainstream services and benefits

Housing location and advocacy

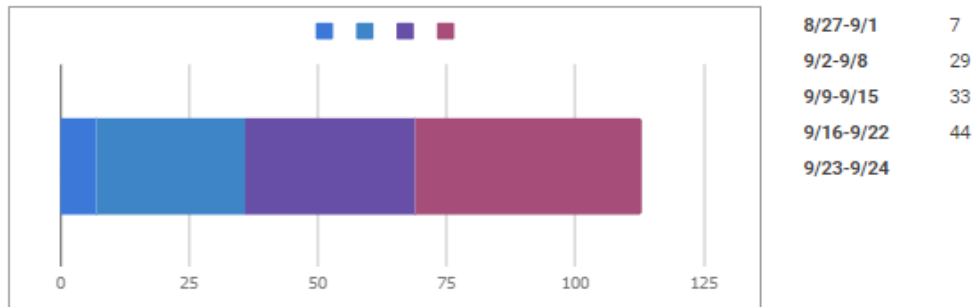
WHO TO DIVERT WITH?

- Behavioral Health Services
- PATH
- DFCS
- Local Landlords
- Privately Owned Motels
- Churches



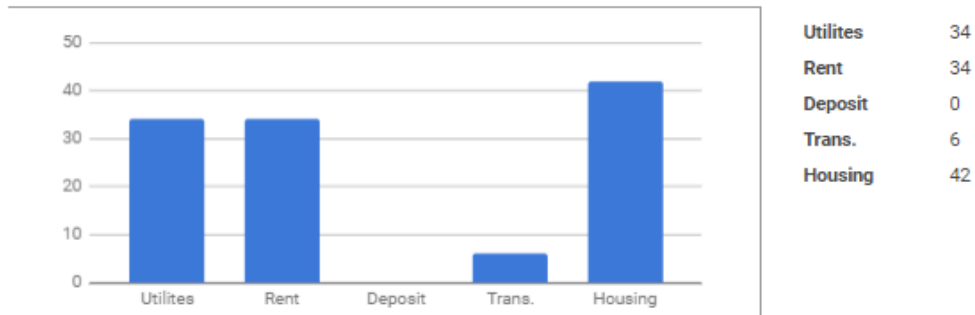
RESULTS OF DIVERSION

By Project



Prevented households that have alternative housing options from entering the homeless system

Per Day



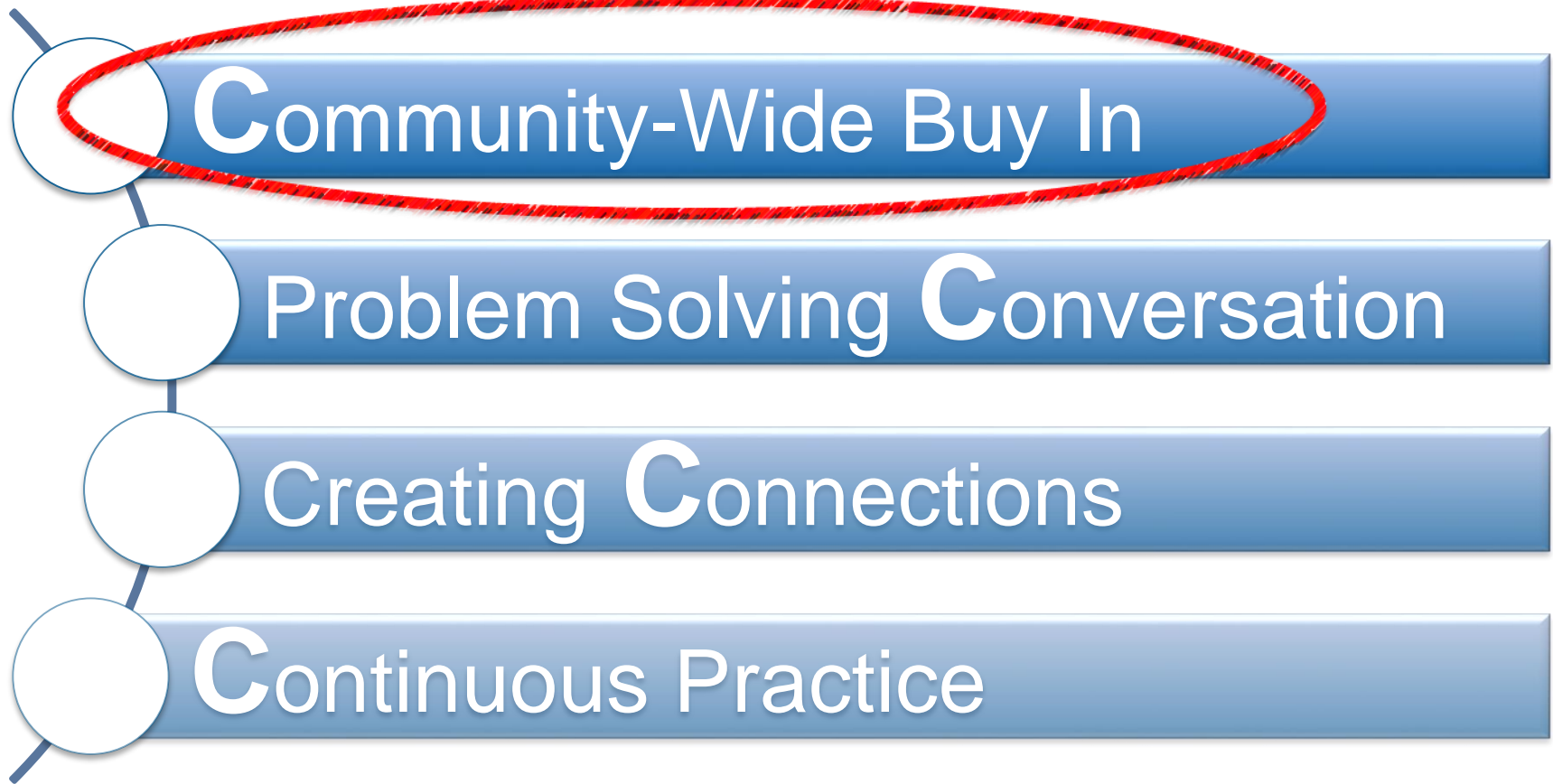
Reserved emergency shelter beds and other homeless services for households who have no other options available to them

DIVERSION STRATEGIES

Fundamentals of Effective Diversion Practice



Effective Diversion Practice: Four Fundamentals “Cs”



Community-Wide Buy In

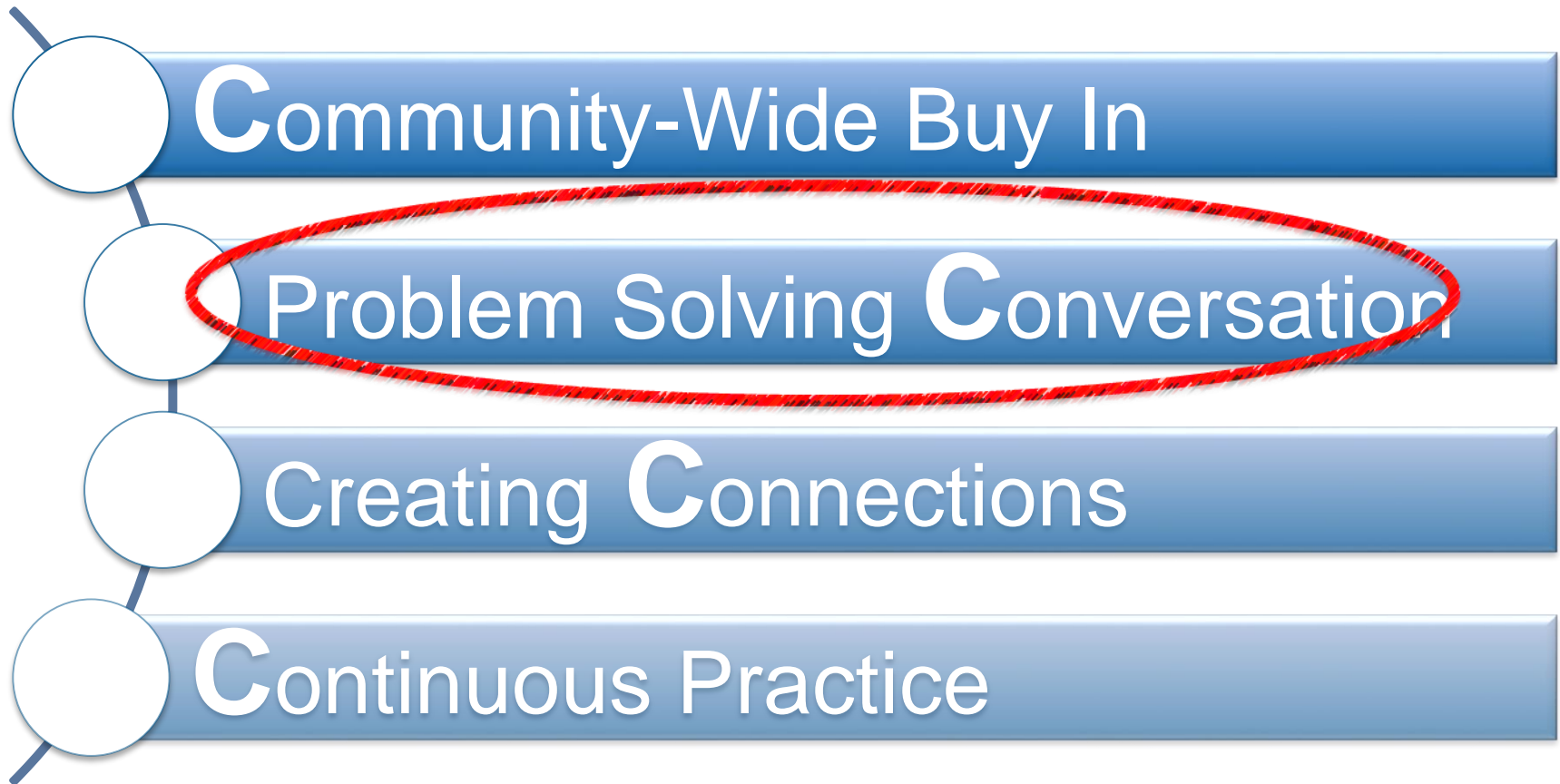
Obtaining both community-wide and **shelter staff** buy in is critical to the successful implementation of diversion strategies across the system.



Community-Wide Buy In

- Shelter staff, other homeless service providers, and system leadership must believe households are better served outside of homelessness system
- Diversion is fully integrated at shelter/system front door – before people are literally homeless
- Funders and providers are committed to use of personnel and financial) at the shelter front door as having the most impact on reducing homelessness in the community
- Community-wide clear message about what diversion is and the role it plays in the system
- Effective, consistent, and on-going partnership building and maintenance
- On-going training on diversion strategies across the system

Effective Diversion Practice: Four Fundamentals “Cs”



Problem Solving Conversation

- Diversion begins with a problem solving, strengths-based conversation
- Diversion **does not begin** with a pre-application for eligibility or an assessment tool with a list of questions

Problem Solving Conversation

Problem-solving Conversations to Resolve Immediate Housing Crisis:

- Are realistic discussions on household's housing, employment, and financial needs and opportunities
- Help households to think of creative solutions and explore every option
- Are related to: employment, transportation, food security, other supports used previously (people and organizations)
- Are about allowing staff time to be creative and less about quickly offering rental assistance
- About discovering what other options that may be available; help households identify their current supports

Problem Solving Conversation

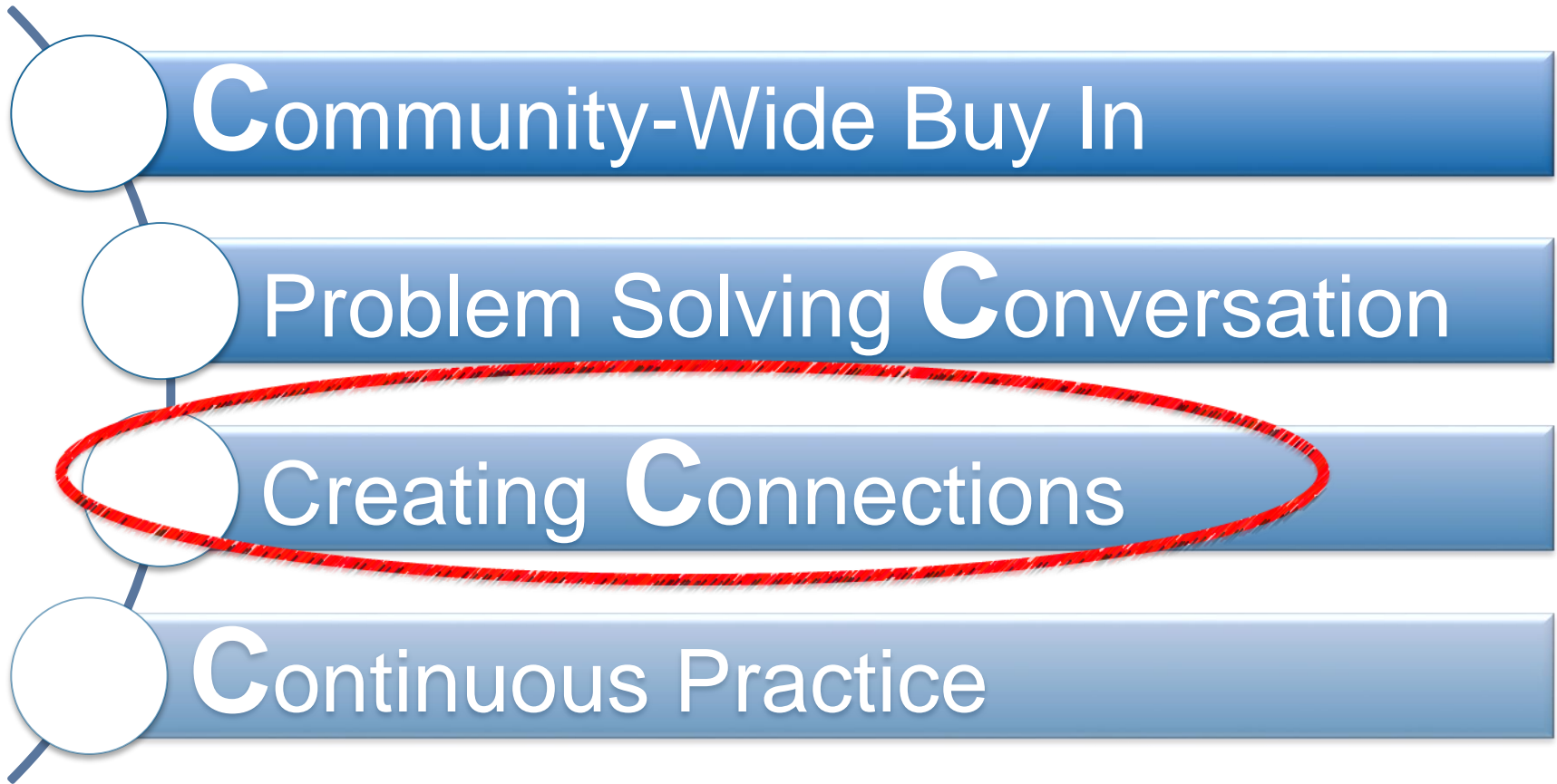
- ***Listen and validate*** a person's experience: ***honor all and build their capacity to act***
- ***Be client-centered:*** *don't* assume what people need - help them articulate their needs
- ***Use a strength-based approach:*** help clients identify and mine strengths, successes and resources they've used in the past to help them with this bout of homelessness
- ***Be consistent*** with honoring, validating and building persons' capacity to act; be non-judgmental.
- ***Support and trust*** that people want to succeed, have done so previously, and help them tap into their own strengths and past successes to help them with their current situation.

-Ed Boyte, previously of the Cleveland Mediation Center

Problem Solving Conversation

- Examples of Creative Problem Solving:
 - How to make “Doubled Up” situations more manageable
 - Contributing to household supplies, food, etc.
 - If you’re home all day, help with chores/cooking/childcare
 - Give the person you’re staying with some quiet time when they get home at the end of the day (i.e. go for a walk, go to your room)
 - Don’t let tiny frustrations build up

Effective Diversion Practice: Four Fundamentals “Cs”



Creating **C**onnections

- Shelters **cannot** do it all
- A household's natural supports and community partners **are critical** for effective implementation of diversion strategies
- Warm Handoffs – **A MUST**



Ani_ka via iStock

Creating Connections

Tips for Creating Connections

- When connecting with a friend/family or provider, explain clearly who you are and what your goal is (i.e. to assist this household in ending their housing crisis, avoid the trauma of homelessness, and prioritize resources for the most vulnerable)
- Be clear what your ask of this connection will be:
 - These asks are identified in the problem solving conversation
 - For friends and family asks, consider that this connection, with support from you and other connections, may be a benefit for all involved

Creating Connections

Connections Critical to Diversion Strategies

- Friends and/or Family
- Faith Community
- Mainstream benefit programs
- Employment
- Legal Services
- Transportation
- Private business
- Health and wellness
- Food security
- Other

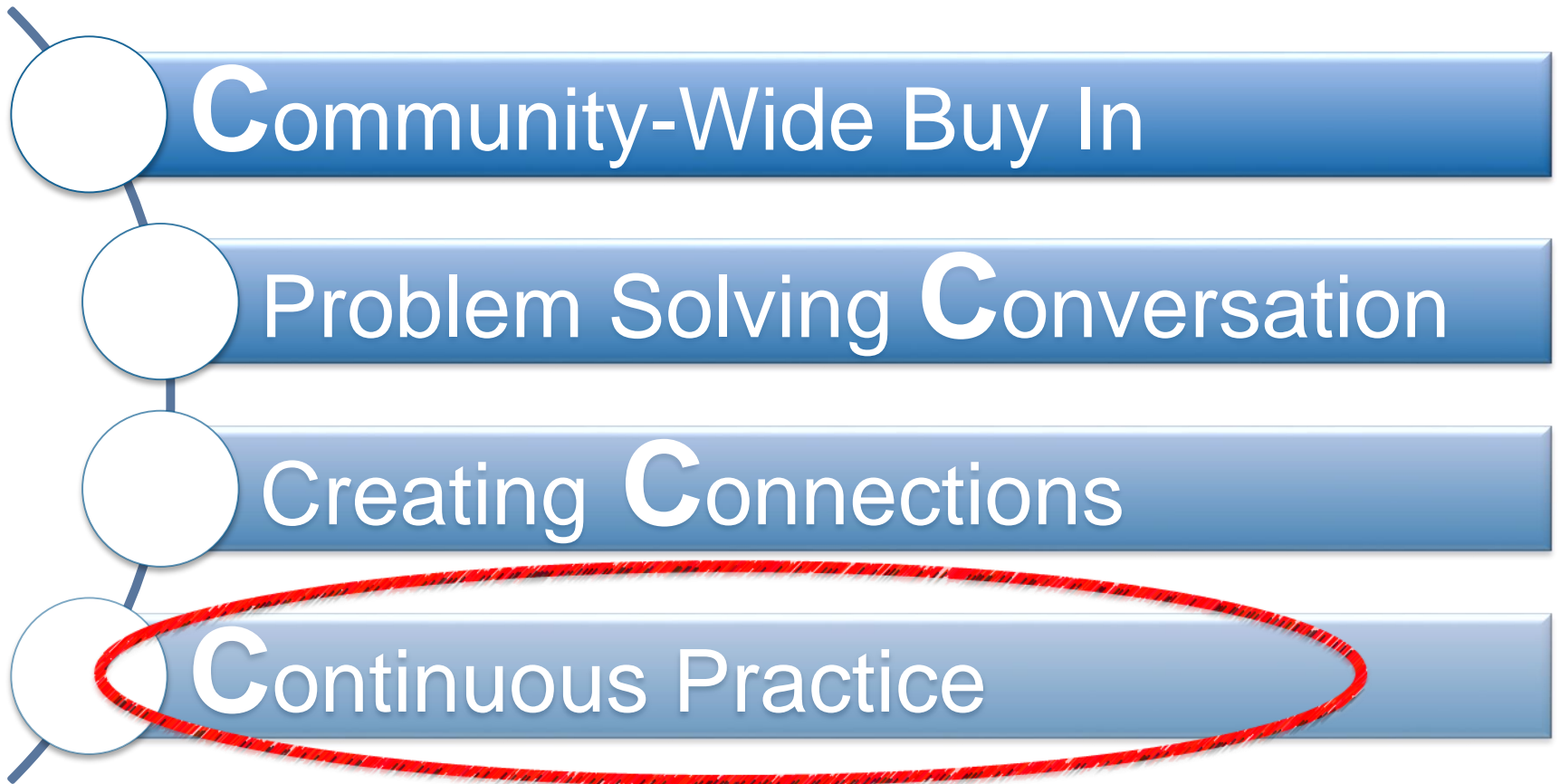


Creating Connections

The Warm Handoff: What – When – Why

- A warm handoff is a way for friends/family and providers working to end a person's homelessness to include that person when they share information during a meeting/visit.
- Warm handoffs should be used each time a provider shares information about a person's housing crisis or the person's plan to resolve it.
- Warm handoffs are important because:
 - The person hears what is being said about resolving their situation
 - Encourages the person to speak up, ask questions, and join the conversation
 - Gives everyone the opportunity to correct or clarify information
 - Makes everyone an active member in the problem solving

Effective Diversion Practice: Four Fundamentals “Cs”



Continuous Diversion Practice

Ongoing Diversion Strategies

- Continuous means:
 - Problem solving conversation may need to happen **more than** once and may happen multiple times
 - Diversion is **NOT** a “one time service”
- Need to consider at what point is a different or more intensive strategy required (i.e. case management)
- Follow-up is critical
 - Use **progressive engagement** approach
 - Short or long term resolution – **ALWAYS** follow-up
 - If first solution kept household housed but they are back again it **DOES NOT MEAN** a failure! They were not homeless for that period of time!



Successful Outcomes

**Permanently Back with
Friends or Family**

**Return to Own
Residence**

**Temporarily Diverted
While Seeking New
Housing**

**Permanent Relocation
To Safe Place Out of
Town**

Q&A



What's Next

Next Webinar: October



Questions

thecenter@naeh.org

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