HOMELESS SYSTEM SIMULATION

Key Terms & Activity Language (for Facilitators)

Purpose of this sheet: This simulation uses simplified terms to help participants move through and reflect on a homelessness response system. The definitions below are not intended to capture every variation in local practice, funding requirements, or program design. They provide a shared starting point for the activity and debrief.

Activity Language

Term	Working Definition for the Simulation
Person Marker	A bead, chip, token, counter, button, or other small object used to represent one person or household in the simulation.
Elevated Support Marker	A marker representing someone whose pathway may require additional support, flexibility, coordination, or problem-solving from the system. These markers are not labels for people; they are tools for examining how systems respond to different needs, barriers, and circumstances.
Standard Support Marker	A marker representing someone whose pathway may require a less intensive or more typical level of system response. Standard Support does not mean “no need”; it simply distinguishes one activity category from another.
Program Capacity	The number of people a program can serve at a given time in the simulation. When a board is full, additional people must move elsewhere, wait, or return to unsheltered homelessness based on the card instructions.
Round	One cycle of activity in which programs receive instructions, move markers, make decisions, and experience system pressure.
Exit	A movement out of a program or pathway during the simulation. An exit may represent a move to housing, another program, unsheltered homelessness, or another destination named on the card.

Term	Working Definition for the Simulation
System Event	A round instruction that changes the conditions of the system, such as adding capacity, converting a program, opening Diversion, or limiting available options.
Program Addition or Conversion	A system decision that adds a new program space or changes the use of an existing program board. The Extra board can be used to represent an added or converted program.

System Pathways and Destinations

Term	Working Definition for the Simulation
Coordinated Entry / Intake	The process people or households use to connect with the homelessness response system. In many communities, coordinated entry uses shared access points, assessment or problem-solving conversations, referral processes, and information about available resources to help match people to appropriate options.
Diversion	A problem-solving strategy used when someone first seeks help. The goal is to identify safe, appropriate housing options outside of shelter or homelessness programs whenever possible, and to connect the person or household to supports such as mediation, transportation, flexible financial assistance, or short-term services.
Unsheltered Homelessness	A situation in which a person or household is staying in a place not meant for human habitation, such as outside, in a vehicle, in an encampment, or in another location not intended for regular sleeping accommodation.
Market Housing	Housing obtained outside dedicated homelessness program resources. In the simulation, this may represent a move to rental housing, shared housing, family or friend housing, self-resolution, or another permanent housing arrangement.

Program Types

Term	Working Definition for the Simulation
Emergency Shelter	A temporary crisis response for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Emergency shelter provides a safe place to stay while people work to resolve their housing crisis and connect to next-step resources.
Rapid Re-Housing	A housing intervention designed to help individuals and families exit homelessness and move quickly into permanent housing. Rapid re-housing generally includes housing identification, time-limited financial assistance, and case management or services tailored to the household's needs. Assistance is offered without preconditions such as employment, income, sobriety, or absence of criminal record.
Outreach	Outreach programs build relationships with people living in unsheltered locations and help connect them to housing, shelter, documents, health care, benefits, services, and other supports. Outreach often begins where people are staying rather than requiring people to come to an office or program site.
Transitional Housing	A temporary housing pathway that provides housing and supportive services for a defined period of time. Participants may receive or be expected to engage in services, case management, and planning supports while working toward a longer-term housing option.
Permanent Supportive Housing	Permanent housing paired with supportive services, generally for people with disabilities and significant histories of homelessness, including people experiencing chronic homelessness. There is no time limit as long as the tenant meets basic lease obligations. Services are encouraged but are not a condition of tenancy.
Extra / Added or Converted Program	The extra board is a flexible board that is used when the group adds a program or converts an existing program type during the simulation. Participants should write the added or converted program name on the board and follow the cards for the selected program type.