

Austin/Travis County Rapid Re-Housing Best Practices Week 2

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What We Do



Policy and Programs

- Carries out the vital work of educating policymakers and the field about key strategies and policies for ending and preventing homelessness.
- Keeps federal policymakers and legislators informed of the needs of people experiencing homelessness and the programs serving them.
- Leads advocacy efforts on a grassroots level.

Capacity Building

- Supports efforts to end homelessness by offering training and technical assistance tailored to communities' unique needs.
- Helps design and implement crisis systems, improve systems' performance, and utilize data to end homelessness, particularly with an equity lens.
- Provides online courses, trainings, and webinars to inform the field of best practices to end homelessness.

Homeless Research Institute

- Analyzes data to identify homelessness trends on national, local, and Continuum of Care levels.
- Publishes research that ensures policymakers, practitioners, the media, and the public have the best information about trends and emerging solutions to the problem.
- Uses an equity lens to identify disparities in homelessness data.

Lived Experience Innovation + Strategic Communications

National Alliance to End Homelessness Statements for Participation

The Alliance works to ensure that diverse voices are included as facilitators, attendees, and guests in our training forums. All voices are welcome.

The organization has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of discrimination or abusive behavior. The Alliance is committed to ensuring that all its events are safe and respectful for all participants.

Participants acknowledge that any form of discrimination, violence, or abusive behavior may result in removal from an office hour or forum depending on the situation.

If any discrimination is witnessed or experienced during the training, or if you feel unsafe, please notify any member of the Alliance staff.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness strives to create a diverse, inclusive, accepting, and safe space for everyone.

Training Series Overview

Week One

- Effective Homeless Response Systems
- Role of Rapid Re-Housing
- Foundations of Effective Rapid Re-Housing
- Core Components of Rapid Rehousing

Week Two

- Housing First Principles
- Importance of housing identification in client success
- Creative housing solutions in a difficult housing market
- RRRH Rent and Financial Assistance Principles and Program Standards

10/8/2024

Week Three

- Role of the Case Manager in providing financial assistance using an individualized and flexible approach
- Progressive Engagement
- Rapid Re-Housing Case Management Principles and Program Standards
- Role of RRRH Case Manager in housing stabilization
- Effective and Empowering RRRH Case Management Practices

Week Four

- Principles and Program Standards of RRRH data collection
- Using system and program data to inform practice
- How to collect and measure program level data, understand the “story” that it tells, and use it to inform performance improvement
- Develop Action Plans for continuous improvement and Wrap Up

Virtual Session Logistics



Breakout Rooms Who's Here?

- Your name
- Identities, Pronouns
- Role/Organization
- What was an aha moment you had from last Tuesday's training...
- Something you did after last weeks session...

Aha!



REVIEW

Remember Session One?



Homeless Response System: **ENDGAME**

Homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time

- People in a housing crisis have access to immediate help, including a safe place to go
- People are not unsheltered
- People do not spend long periods of time homeless
- People exit homelessness quickly and do not quickly cycle back into homelessness



The Foundation for Successful Rapid Re-Housing



1. **Belief** that clients can be successful regardless of housing barriers
2. Positive **engagement** starts at first contact
3. **Empowering** clients

What is RRH? How Do We Do It?

An evidence-based, proven, cost effective model that quickly moves homeless individuals into stable housing, reducing strain on emergency services and fostering long-term community stability.

A safe, nonjudgmental, short-term intervention program that does not have prerequisites and assists individuals experiencing homelessness in acquiring the skills necessary to achieve independence and stability.

Rapid =  Re-Housing =
Fast New Housing

Dignity and respect...while continually working to motivate them toward independent living.

Work to quickly build rapport, build an (appropriate) sense of urgency/momentum, & provide an honest description of the landscape ahead.

Be flexible

Keep client voices at the forefront

Trusting our clients EXPERTISE!!!

Letting clients know we're to get them housed but it's up to them to keep their housing.

Key Takeaways: RRH's Impact in Austin

Find

- Message: We get clients housed – it is up to them to keep their housing!

Pay

- Trust clients' **EXPERTIES** in their own life!

Stay

- 85% of folks in our community don't return to homelessness! 🤖

As a community,
we have what it
takes to make our
Rapid Rehousing
intervention
Stronger 🦊

We are making an impact!!
Shocked by the success
rate! Relieved... I feel
supported that I'm not
alone...

LET'S TALK ABOUT HOUSING FIRST

Housing First and Rapid Re-housing



In Menti...

Using one word, describe the first feeling/thought that comes to mind when you think of housing first?



Housing First Approach: Rapid Re-Housing

Philosophy

- Not a “program,” it is a system-wide orientation and response
- ***Everyone is ready for housing***
- Homelessness is a housing problem
- Housing First means housing fast

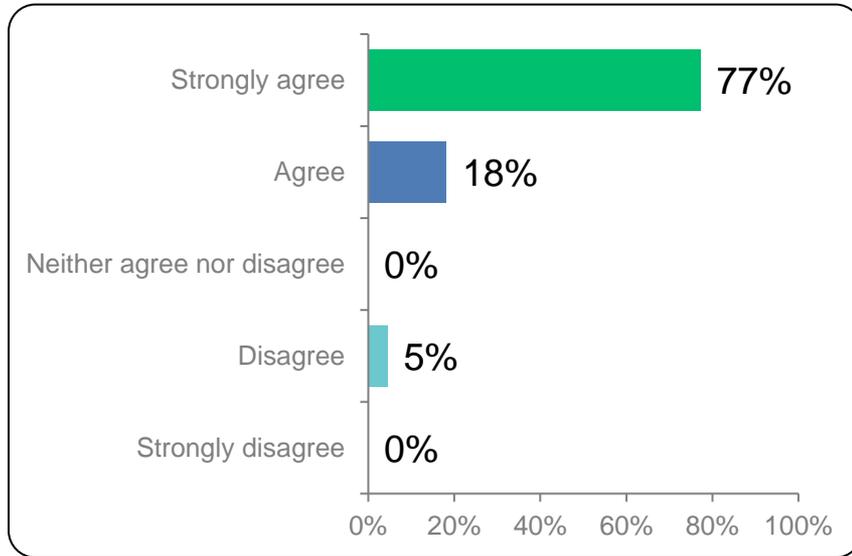
Practice

- Few to no pre-requisites to permanent housing
- Rapid entry into permanent housing
- Services are voluntary

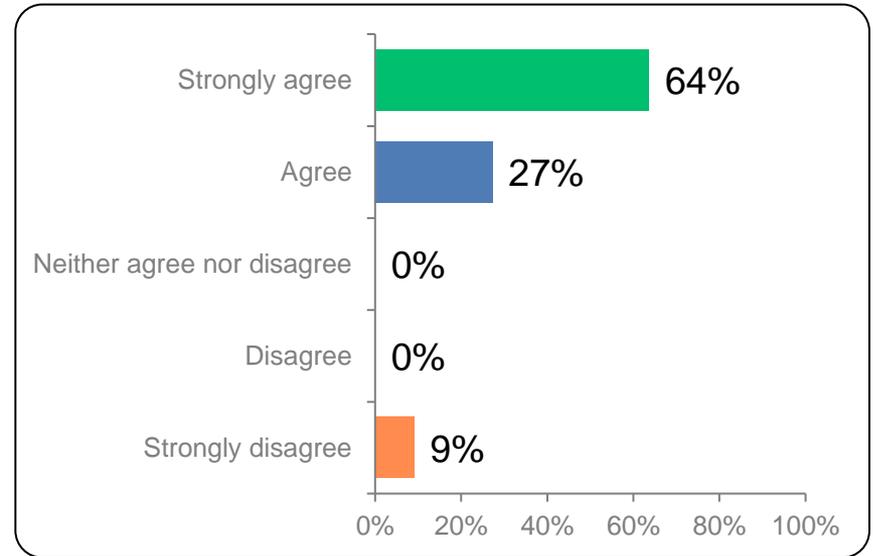


I understand the definition of Housing First

Provider

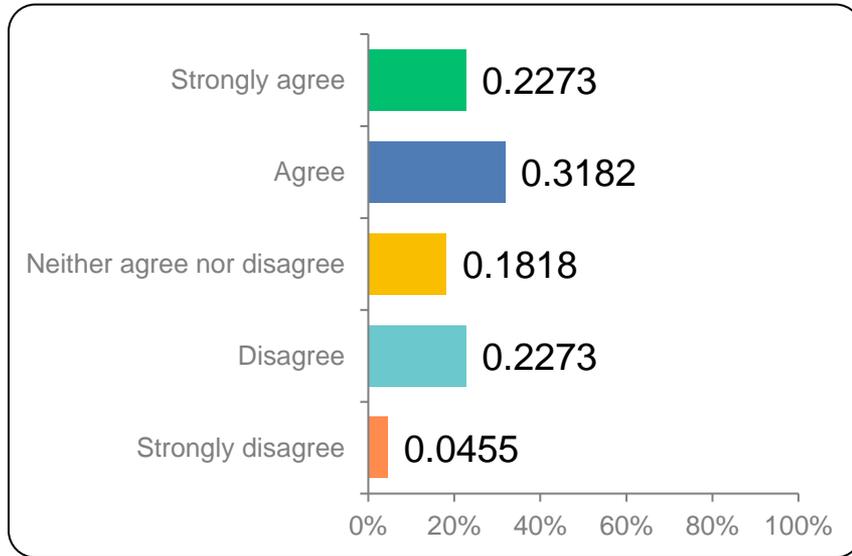


Leadership

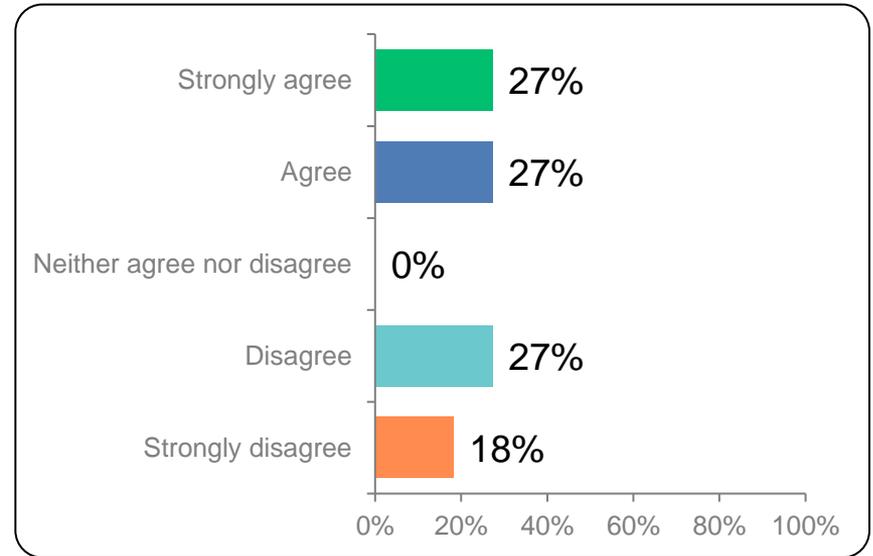


Our community has adopted a Housing First approach that helps people access shelter and permanent housing quickly regardless of any perceived barriers they may have to tenancy or housing stability.

Provider

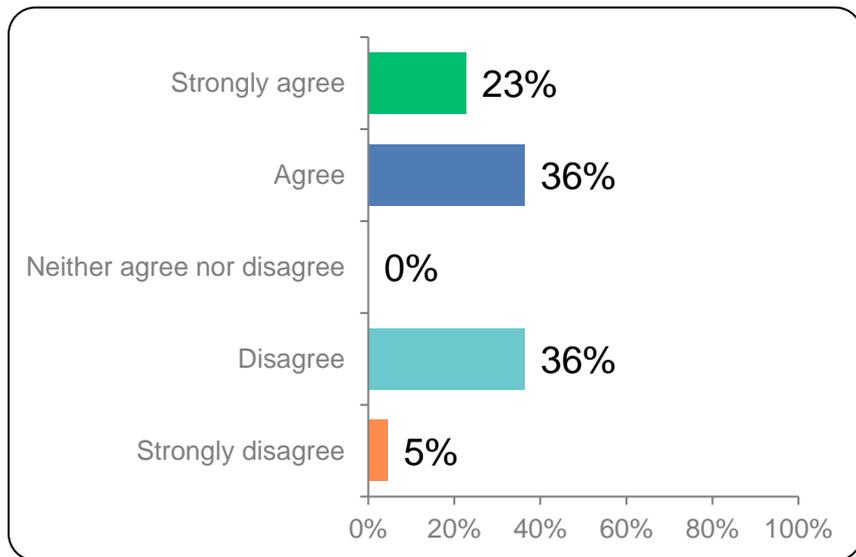


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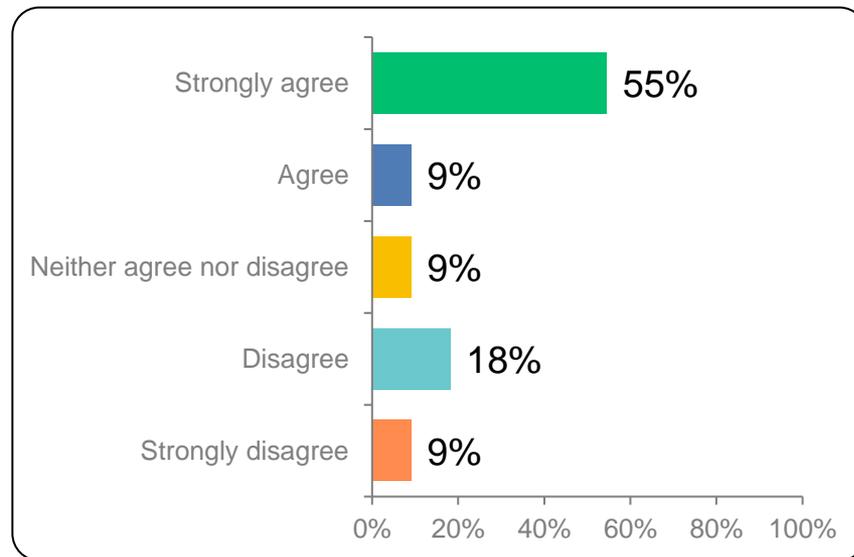


All persons experiencing homelessness are ready for housing and should be connected to housing quickly while at the same time connecting them with services to assist in their housing stability.

Provider

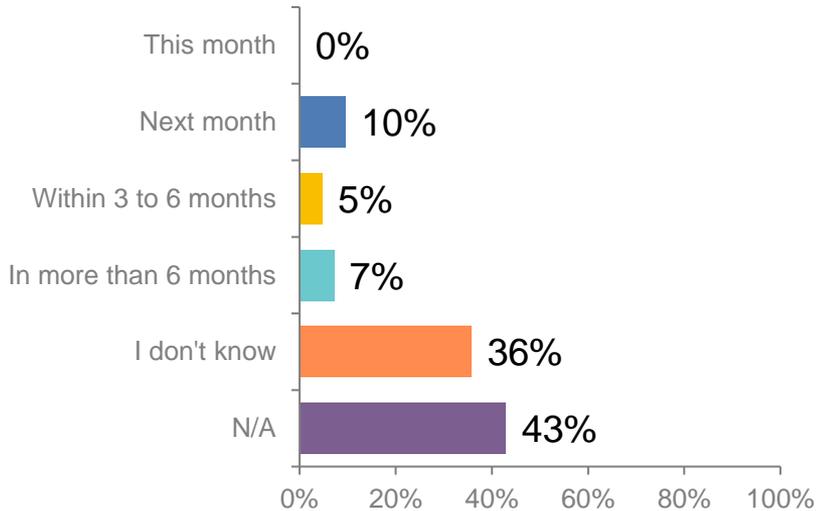


Leadership

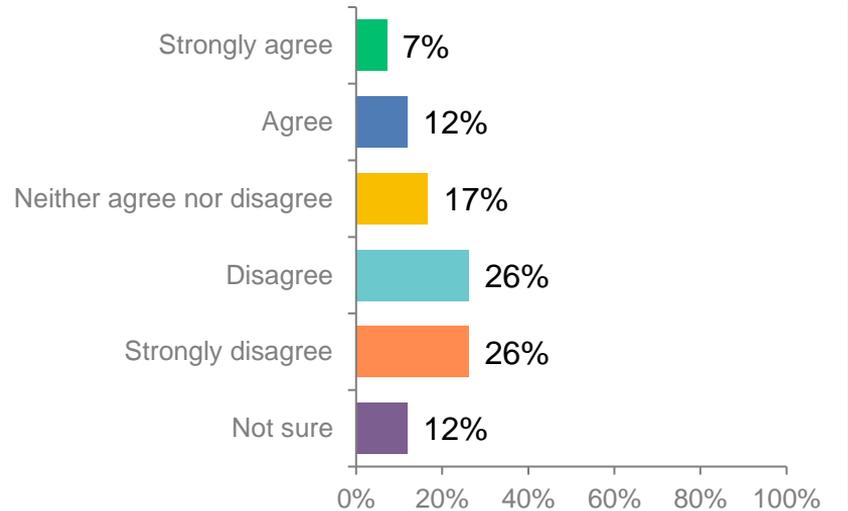


Lived Experience

If you are currently NOT housed, when do you expect to be housed?



When I first became homeless, I was assisted in developing a plan to find permanent housing within the first month of connecting with services.



Housing First and Rapid Re-Housing Principles



Homelessness is a housing problem

Permanent housing is a right

People should be returned to permanent housing quickly and connected to resources needed to stay there

Issues can best be addressed once people are permanently housed

Housing is critical regardless of barriers

Embedding the Housing First Approach in Rapid Re-Housing

Assess current agency/program to ensure:

- Mission statement and policies/procedures **REFLECT** a Housing First Approach to providing RRH services.
 - Job descriptions, roles, and staffing clearly **SUPPORT** a Housing First Approach
 - RRH program **DOES** provide training to board, staff, donors, clients, volunteers, community members on the effective use of a Housing First Approach to end homelessness.
- All staff **BELIEVE** that everyone is ready for housing and **DO NOT** impose participation in services as a pre-requisite to permanent housing.

Housing First

HOUSING FIRST IS NOT	HOUSING FIRST IS
Just one type of program (not just PSH)	A system-wide philosophical approach to many types of homeless assistance interventions
One-size fits only	A philosophy that values flexibility, individualized supports, client choice, and autonomy
Housing only	Supportive services that people choose for themselves are a critical part of a Housing First approach
Setting people up for failure	The provision of a foundation of stability and health through permanent housing
A way to prioritize one population over another	A way to provide a housing intervention for everyone regardless of the severity of their needs

RAPID RE-HOUSING CORE COMPONENTS

Component One: Housing Identification

National Standards



FIND HOUSING

Help people quickly find housing within one month or less.

PAY FOR HOUSING

Help people pay for housing short term; longer-term help an option.

STAY IN HOUSING

Help access services so people can stay in housing.



FIND FAST HOUSING IDENTIFICATION



Build relationships with landlords to have access to as many housing units as possible.



Find and secure housing as quickly as possible after a person or family becomes homeless.



Limit the time a family or individual spends homeless. Move people into housing within **30 days or less**.

Core Components

- Not linear
- Each piece is critical
- Cannot work in silos
- RRH Case Management is an integral part of housing identification and financial assistance



Advancing the Role of RRH in Reducing Homelessness

Philosophical Shift

Operational Shift

Practice Shift

Shift Happens

“It takes a lot of advocacy for someone to get into the housing. Without a case manager, without an advocate, these people would still be out in the streets. And that’s just the reality of it.”

-Case Manager in Denton, TX

Source: <http://www.dentonrc.com/newsrss/newsrss/2018/04/21/annual-point-time-count-shows-new-increase-homelessness-denton-county>

Housing Identification: Rational

- One of the primary activities under housing identification is the recruitment of landlords, which is essential to having rapid access to permanent housing.
- Programs should not knowingly place households with negligent landlords and should also help explain tenant/landlord rights and responsibilities.
- Programs must match households to appropriate housing—that means it's decent, safe, meets the safety needs of survivors of domestic violence and **affordable after financial assistance ends.**

Housing Identification Standards

There are nine standards related to program staffing, policies and activities including:

- ❑ Actively recruit and retain landlords
 - ❑ Clear written policies
- ❑ Find housing that participants can maintain
 - ❑ Facilitate shared housing
- ❑ Help participants access desirable and affordable units



HOUSING IDENTIFICATION PUTTING STANDARDS INTO PRACTICE

Incentivizing Landlords to Rent to Your Clients



FIND: Housing Identification and Practice

Philosophy

- Everyone is ready to be housed immediately
- Households need assistance to locate housing
- Landlord recruitment is essential to successful rapid re-housing

Practice

- Actively recruits and retains landlords
- Provides support during housing search
- Identifies and mitigates barriers to entering housing
- Ensures “good fit” between landlord and client
- Assists client to realistically identify the “right” housing option
- Facilitates shared housing

Landlord Engagement: Leave No Stone Unturned



Build Landlord Partnerships...

- Your program has a good landlord outreach strategy
- Your program offers attractive incentives for landlord partners

AND

- Your program knows landlord concerns and needs and responds accordingly
- Your program creates a Win-Win for landlords and clients via tenant and landlord supports

Landlord Recruitment Brainstorm:

- **Break out rooms (Fire starter, Note taker & Reporter);**
- **You have five minutes to brainstorm a list of ALL the places where you could potentially find units for rent. BE SPECIFIC!!!**
- **How many ideas did your group identify? Share the new ideas!**

Systemic Rapid Re-Housing Conversation Starters

How can we do this together?

1. Who does landlord recruitment and how do they find landlords/units?
2. How do you share availability of identified units internally and externally?
3. How do you determine who gets what units if there are multiple requests?
4. What do you do with units you are unable to utilize?
5. What would be the benefits and challenges involved in community-wide housing location?
6. How do we ensure continuity of LL engagement and retention?

Find: Finding and Keeping Landlords in a Difficult Market

- Developing and maintaining landlord relationships must be someone's full time job
- Housing search is proactive and continuous
- Landlord incentives are well-designed to minimize landlord risk
- Program and staff ALWAYS do what they promise
- Calls from landlords are returned within one business day
- Checks are cut quickly

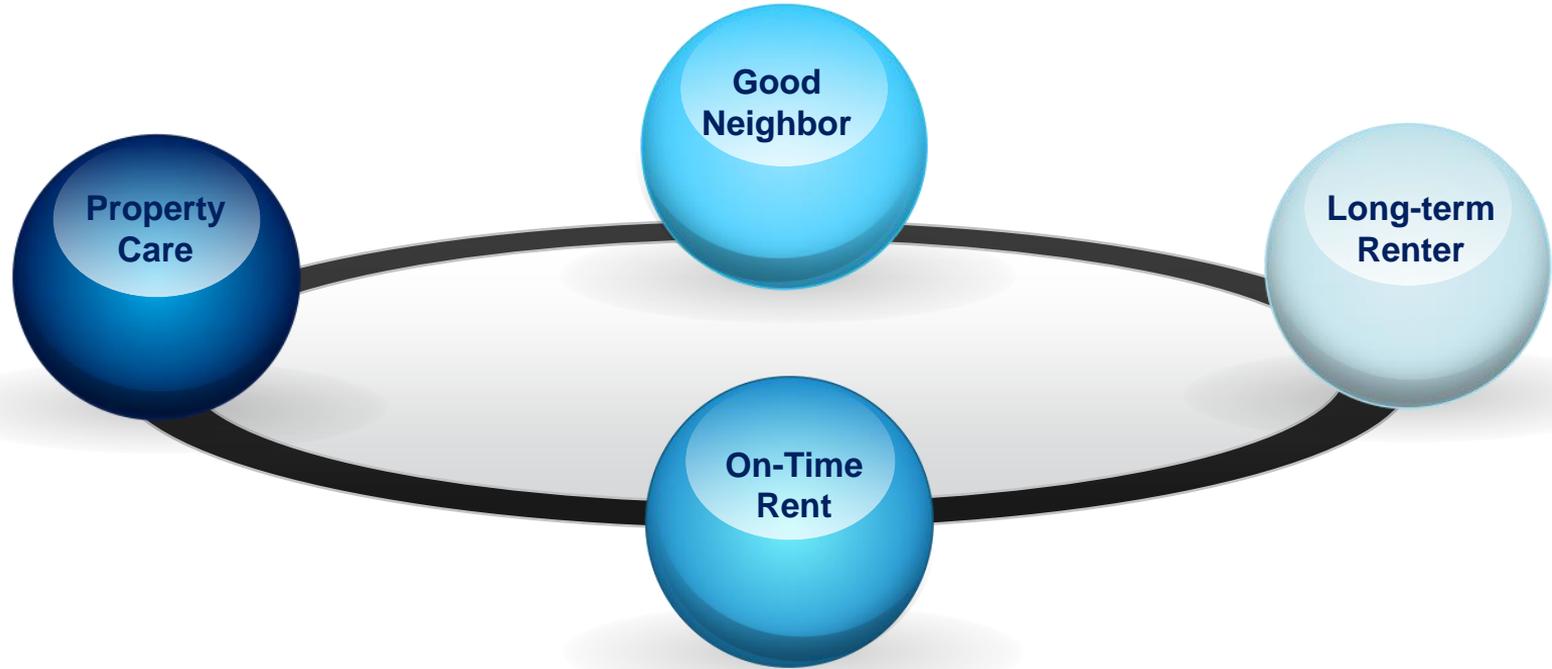


What are the Four Things that Landlords Want?



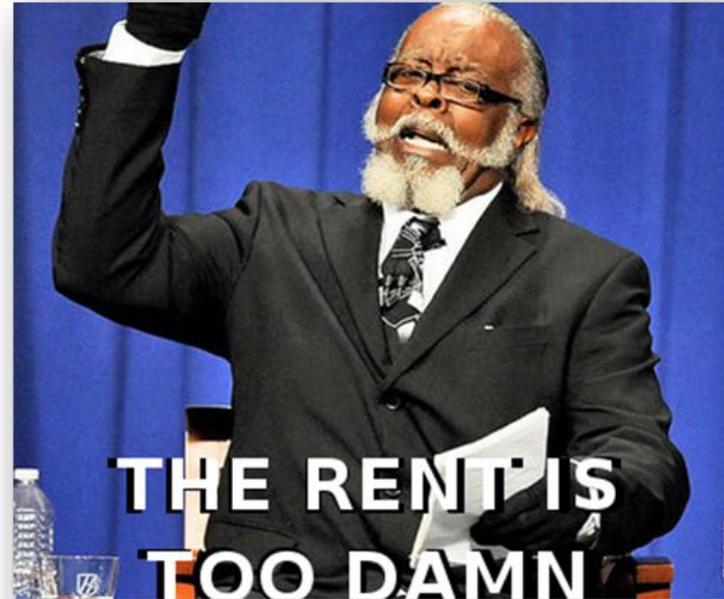
Landlord Incentives: Get them to a YES!

Four Things Landlords Want



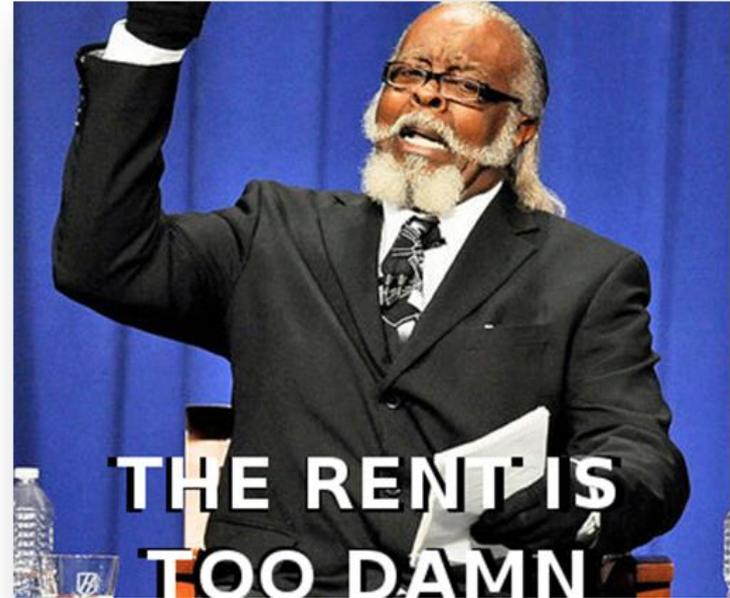
Find: More Incentives for a Landlord in a Difficult Market

- Steady referral source of new tenants; no need to advertise
- Staff teach “good tenant” skills
- If problems can’t be solved, assist tenant to move out without an eviction
- Annual recognition event, positive media exposure



Find: Incentives for a Landlords in Difficult Market

- Double damage deposit if/when needed
- Risk Mitigation Fund for damages caused by tenant
- Help with minor repairs



Landlord Outreach Brochure



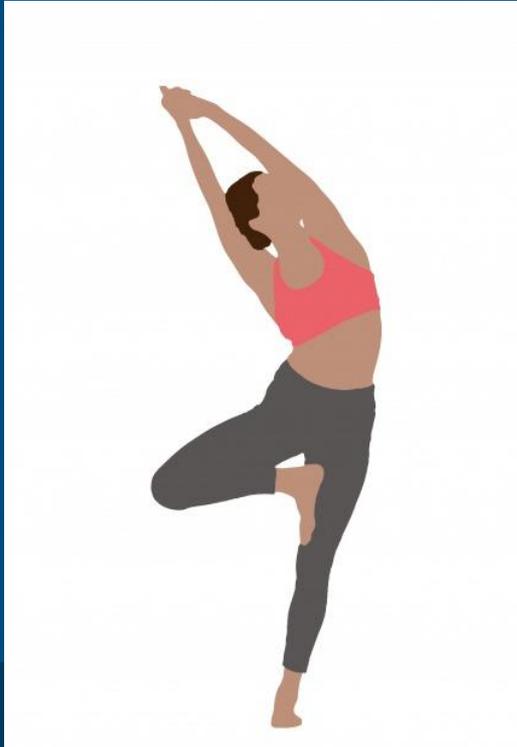
Breakout Rooms: Landlord Incentives

Create a list of key points/incentives to hook a landlord. (Fire starter, Note taker & Reporter);



3 Minute Stretch Break!

Or go grab more coffee....



HOUSING IDENTIFICATION PUTTING STANDARDS INTO PRACTICE

Match Households to Appropriate Housing



FIND: Housing Identification

Philosophy

- Everyone is ready to be housed immediately
- Households need assistance to locate housing
- Landlord recruitment is essential to successful rapid re-housing



Practice

- Actively recruits and retains landlords
- Provides support during housing search
- Identifies and mitigates barriers to entering housing
- Ensures “good fit” between landlord and client
- Assists client to realistically identify the “right” housing option
- Facilitates shared housing

Advice From a Housing Locator: Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Giving the client a list of vacant units
- Sending the client with literature on the program to explain to landlords
- Explaining too much over phone/email before viewing the unit
- Taking too long to follow-up with financial requests
- Being negative/critical of the prospective tenant, program, or unit
- Accepting “no” too quickly
- Providing no guidance to clients on personal presentation at apartment viewing

-Samantha Stewart, Supportive Housing Works, CT 2016

Standard: Find housing that participants can maintain

- Assist client to realistically identify the “right” housing option
- Client choice and a reality check!!!!
 - Right solution that works for each individual household (not a one size fits all)
 - Within the realm of reality
 - Creative solutions in the current housing market
- Ensure a “good fit” between landlord and client
- Provide support during the search



HOUSING SOLUTIONS IN A TIGHT RENTAL MARKET



Creativity – Brainstorm

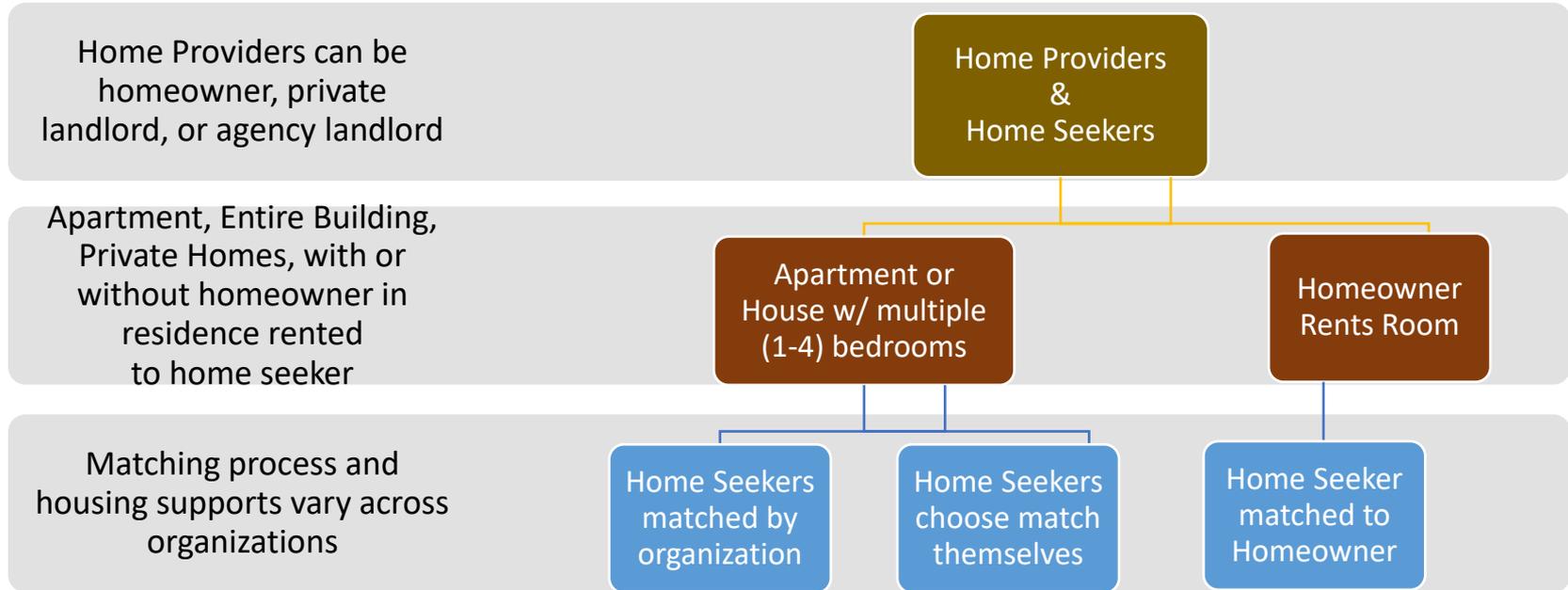
- Shared Housing, Co-Housing and Roommates
- Room Rentals
 - Community Members with extra space
- Cultural Considerations
 - What is “housing”
- Client-led Options
 - Relocating
 - Connecting with Family and Friends
- Re-configuring or Co-locating for Family/Friends option
 - Furniture/Space Arrangements
 - Larger unit to house with family/friends

Why Shared Housing?



Source: Northern Virginia Family Service

Shared Housing Models



Housing Discrimination and Fair Housing

01

Know Federal
and Travis
County, TX
protected
classes

02

Distinguish
between
discrimination
and landlord
rights

03

Don't perpetuate
racism and
discrimination

<https://texaslawhelp.org/article/housing-discrimination-in-texas-renters-and-homebuyers>

RAPID RE-HOUSING CORE COMPONENT #2

[Rent and Financial Assistance National Standards](#)



Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)
ends homelessness for
families and individuals.

RRH HELPS



FIND HOUSING

Help people quickly find housing within one month or less.

PAY FOR HOUSING

Help people pay for housing short term; longer-term help an option.

STAY IN HOUSING

Help access services so people can stay in housing.

The **Core Components** of Rapid Re-Housing help people **find** housing fast, **pay** for housing, and **stay** in housing.

FIND HOUSING

Help people quickly find housing within one month or less.

PAY FOR HOUSING

Help people pay for housing short term; longer-term help an option.

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HELP PAY RENT AND MOVE-IN ASSISTANCE



Pay for security deposits, move-in expenses...



... and/or rent and utilities.



Length of assistance varies, but often **4 to 6 months**.

Poll

- True/False

Rent and Financial Assistance: Rational

- The rent and move-in assistance component was designed to enable the quick resolution of the immediate housing crisis. Programs should start out by **assuming that households**, even those with zero income or other barriers, **will succeed with minimal subsidy and support** which can be extended if necessary.

Financial Assistance: Principles

- Rent and move-in assistance should be flexible and tailored to the varying and changing needs of a household while providing the assistance necessary for households to move immediately out of homelessness and to stabilize in permanent housing.
- A rapid re-housing program should make efforts to maximize the number of households it is able to serve by providing households with the financial assistance in a **progressive manner**, providing only the assistance necessary to stabilize in permanent housing.

Rent and Financial Assistance: Rational

- Programs should be attentive to the ability of a household to maintain housing once subsidy ends but **should not be entirely constrained by attempts to reach a rent burden of only 30** percent of a participant's income.
 - Instead, they should recognize that once housed, the participants will be in a much better position to increase their incomes and address their other needs.
- By not over-serving households, programs can **maximize the impact of available resources to serve the largest number** of people possible.

Financial Assistance Standards

Nine Standards Including:

- ❑ Provide assistance for participants to move immediately out of homelessness
- ❑ Provide the minimum necessary to maximize the number of households housed
- ❑ A progressive approach is used to determine the duration and amount of rent assistance
- ❑ Not a standard “package” - must be flexible enough to adjust to participants’ unique needs and resources



RAPID RE-HOUSING CORE COMPONENT TWO

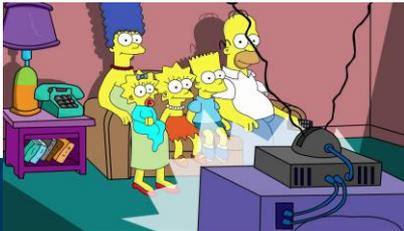
Rent and Financial Assistance – Putting the Standards
into Practice



3. Pay: Financial Assistance

Philosophy

- Individualized assistance helps house more people
- Clients are resilient and can figure it out
- Financial assistance is to pay for housing, not alleviate poverty
- **NOT a one-size-fits-all**



Practice

- Individualized assessment to determine the “right” individual financial assistance (only what’s necessary)
- Encourages client contribution from the start
- Focuses on the \$\$ amount that household needs to pay for rent
- Identifies **all** potential resources of \$\$ to pay towards rent
- Client assumes maintaining housing – identifies and pursues what is needed

Breakouts – 3 Discussions

- Discuss with your colleagues:
 1. What do you tell your clients about financial assistance?
 2. How do you determine the amount and length of assistance?
 3. When do you expect clients to take over paying their rent?

Philosophical Shift



Expectation that people will maintain their housing



Realistic expectations of % of income towards housing costs



Just because its an “eligible expense” doesn’t mean it’s the most effective use of financial resources



What is the “right” housing that people can sustain

Why Flexible Financial Assistance

- Individualized assistance helps house more people
- Do not forget about client resiliency
- Financial assistance is to pay for housing, not alleviate poverty
- Do not count on a permanent subsidy
- **Remember, it is NOT a one-size-fits-all**



Flexible Assistance in Practice

- Individualized assessment to determine the “right” individual financial assistance (only what’s necessary)
- Encourages client contribution from the start
- Focuses on the \$\$ amount that household needs to pay for rent
- Identifies all potential resources of \$\$ to pay towards rent
- Client assumes maintaining housing – identifies and pursues what is needed

Making Projections: Putting the Flexible Assistance into Practice*

- At move in: most landlords will take a letter of commitment showing what you expect for the next three months.
- Ask the client what they think they can pay.**
- Always estimate the client's share as the highest reasonable amount (it can change)**
- Communicate changes to all involved at the earliest point possible.
- Signing on for a year isn't a good idea for you, the client or the landlord.

**Reflective of a flexible model.

*Advice from Micah Ministries- Meghann Cotter

Role of Case Manager and Financial Assistance

Role IS:

- Empower Client to assume keeping the housing
- Assists to determine the “right” individual financial assistance
- Help identifies all potential resources of \$\$ to pay towards rent
- Client assumes maintaining housing – identifies and pursues what is needed
- Equal in relationship to the client

Role is NOT

- Use financial assistance as a reward for program participation
- To assume everyone must have the full 12-18 months of financial assistance for success
- To determine that the maximum amount of assistance is equal to client success

Use Data to Adjust Level of Assistance

Unacceptable rates of return to shelter?

- Recalculate case management and/or financial assistance, assist more intensively or longer, check-in more often, develop new partnerships

Almost zero recidivism?

- Try giving less support; maybe they don't need as much
- Examine admissions criteria-- are you "creaming"?

Some succeed and some don't?

- Is there a pattern (household, staff, etc.) that can help you improve outcomes?

The Process for Payment - Streamline

Ensure Clear Payment Set Up and Monthly Disbursement that Identify:

- Internal process
- External process and landlord communication
- Client process and communication
 - If a client does not pay their portion, assist the client in setting up a payment plan with the landlord

Financial Assistance in Practice

Summary

- Individualized assessment to determine the “right” individual financial assistance (only what’s necessary)
- Encourages client contribution from the start
- Focuses on the \$\$ amount that household needs to pay for rent
- Identifies all potential resources of \$\$ to pay towards rent
- Client assumes maintaining housing – identifies and pursues what is needed

TIP: Your job is to help them obtain housing – their job is to keep it; involve them in paying for housing from the start to increase *RAPID SUCCESSFUL EXITS*

What about our policies and procedures?



Rent and Move-in Assistance

Do our written policies and procedures, and our practice currently reflect the **progressive engagement and flexible best practice model** for our RRHI financial assistance?

- a) What can we change/add/get rid of?
- b) Does assistance end at the same time for each household? How can we reflect an individualized model?
- c) Who decides if financial assistance can be extended? What is that determination based on?
- d) Is our recertification practice in the best interest of effectively preparing households to stay housed after the subsidy ends?

How do we evaluate each household to develop an individualized plan for assistance for the shortest term possible? How do we communicate this?

- a) Do our policies clearly reflect that households do not get a “package” of assistance?
- b) What does our “practice” look like?

How do we assist households in preparing for the end of financial assistance?

- a) How might our current policies affect the long-term success?
- b) What steps can be taken to gradually increase the portion of rent that the client pays?

What can we change to help more households?

- a) How can we be more effective with the resources we have?
- b) What additional resources can we leverage to add to our program?

WRAP UP



Assignment



Before next week morning, be ready to share something you did regarding “finding” housing after hearing today’s session.

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10/15/2024

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- Using system and program data to inform practice
- How to collect and measure program level data, understand the “story” that it tells, and use it to inform performance improvement
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Q&A

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