



Housing First 101

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Introduction

Housing first is a philosophy that homelessness can be most efficiently ended by providing someone with access to safe, decent and affordable housing.

Although, an individual experiencing homelessness may benefit from supportive services such as mental health or substance use counseling, participation in these services is not a prerequisite to access housing or a condition of maintaining it.



Previous Model Overview:

Someone enters shelter



For those who qualify, Transitional Housing was usually the next step



If the participant can graduate from the TH program, next step would be to find permanent housing

Why this one-size fits all approach wasn't working:

- Some participants were cut out of the system due to various reasons, usually not complying with shelter rules, not being able to manage program requirements while enrolled in TH.
- If they were unable to successfully graduate from the program, participants were returning to homelessness.
- These previously used programs contained bias and participants were often judged based on their backgrounds.
- Some requirements for program participation would interfere with other personal obligations like childcare, employment, or important appointments.

The Comparison:

TYPICAL "HOUSING READINESS"



HOUSING FIRST



Why the Housing First Model works:

- Participants will have the supports they need to maintain their housing and eventually the goal is to become self-sustaining.
- This is an approach that sees people as people because everyone deserves a roof over their head and a place to call home.
- There is more flexibility to do what the participant needs like to focus on their employment, education, mental health while not having to worry about where they'll be able to sleep each night.

It's Housing First, NOT
Housing Only!

Core Elements of Housing First:

Safe and affordable permanent housing is a basic human right:

Safe:

- Potential housing should pass housing quality standards (HQS) or habitability standards before the participant(s) move in. Having safe space means one less thing that person has to worry or think about.

Affordable:

- Typically, a unit cannot exceed rent reasonableness or fair market rate (FMR) depending on program requirements. Participants with zero income should still be housed, this does not mean it must be affordable at program entry, the participant has potential to gain income while enrolled.

Permanent:

- The participant holds the lease and will have the capabilities to renew it even without "being in a program."
- The lease should not involve any additional restrictions beyond what normally found in a lease.

Core Elements of Housing First:



Everyone can achieve housing stability! And everyone's supports will look different:

- Let's not forget... People who struggle with mental health and substance use disorders ALREADY live in permanent housing.
- Staff and case managers must believe that participants can find and become stable in housing. Help them believe it is possible!

Try this:

- Ask participants about times they were previously housed in the past and learn what factors contributed to that experience

Core Elements of Housing First:



Everyone is housing ready! There is no need to wait for someone to reach a certain goal before looking for housing:

- This includes being 'document ready'- Navigators and case managers should work on securing any necessary documents that are needed, to the best of their ability, for the housing search and not wait till a participant has their documents.
- There are potential programs out there that will allow participants to enter a program with only a percentage of their documents which can continue to be procured during the program enrollment.
- Work on obtaining documentation immediately, while the participant focuses on other important factors to maintaining their housing

Core Elements of Housing First:

Improved quality of life, health, mental health, and employment can be achieved through housing:

- It's difficult for people to work on these issues while in crisis. Especially if they are resorting to substance use to cope with their current situation.
- Once housed, it's not uncommon for individuals to realize they no longer need to rely on these things to cope with everyday life and they can begin to truly work on themselves in a healthy way.
- It becomes much easier for participants to be able to attend meetings, gatherings, or appointments centered around recovery now that they have permanent housing.
- Transitional and emergency shelter do not offer the same effect as permanent housing because of the underlying theme of how temporary of a solution these options are to an individual who is struggling.

Core Elements of Housing First:



Right to self-determination, dignity, and respect:

- People are the experts of their own lives, treat them as such. Seek guidance from them.
- Engage people through a trauma informed lens; you don't know their trauma, goals, or how it has impacted their life.
- Do not ever think that their effort demonstrates if they want housing or not. Again, everyone deserves a roof over their head.

Core Elements of Housing First:

There is NO one-size fits all approach that is successful!

Configuration of Housing and services is based upon the participants needs and preferences:

- Case managers should be useful to participants. Participants will be more likely to want to have you engaged in THEIR work and progress.
- Decisions we make about what to do with our own lives are the ones that stick!
- A participant has a better chance to be successful if the unit they move into if it is one they chose themselves and like.

**Remember, it's
Housing First, not
Housing only!**





Thank you

