Resources to Implement Housing First

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What Housing First Means to Us

- Housing First (HF) is a **proven method** and **clinical practice** to end homelessness.
  - Works for individuals and families
  - Works in many different program models

- Housing First programs offer:
  - Immediate, low-threshold access to permanent housing
  - No admission requirements for treatment, sobriety, program compliance or income

- Yields better housing retention, lower returns to homelessness and reduced crisis services and institutional care
Guiding Principles

- Everyone is “houseable.”
- One size does not fit all.
- Our work is to end homelessness, not to operate programs.
- Asking and listening.
- Creative engagement, not coercion
- Challenge the status quo.
Evolution of the Housing First Approach

Origin
- A reaction against “earning” permanent housing

Growth
- A distinct approach for permanent supportive housing

Evolution
- Community approach to ensure that, people with highest-needs are prioritized
USICH on Housing First

- Housing First identified as a core strategy for ending homelessness in *Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness*

- Identified as an Evidence-Based Practice within the USICH Solutions database, which provides 56 programmatic examples

- Support motivated by evidence, not ideology
## How about You?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing First Community</th>
<th>Housing First Program</th>
<th>Partial Implementer</th>
<th>Unsure or Opposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Broad adoption</td>
<td>• High fidelity to Housing First principles</td>
<td>• Adopts some elements of Housing First</td>
<td>• Weighing the evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shared vocabulary and understanding</td>
<td>• Known as a community asset to assist Veterans other programs won’t serve</td>
<td>• Maintains some criteria not based on tenancy, e.g., mandatory services</td>
<td>• Bound by existing policies, requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regularly assesses and removes barriers</td>
<td>• Focused on housing outcomes</td>
<td>• May not have reviewed program fidelity</td>
<td>• Not sure how program fits in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focused on housing outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Suspects that Housing First doesn’t work for everyone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USICH’s Housing First Checklist

- Intended to help programs, policymakers, and communities assess if a program is using Housing First
- Includes both “core” and “additional advanced” elements
- Also describes community-level implementation
- [Link](http://bit.ly/HFchecklist)
Housing First Checklist: Project-Level Elements

Core Elements

- Tenant selection promotes acceptance regardless of sobriety, use of substances, treatment completion and participation in services.
- Applicants not rejected based on credit history, rental history, minor criminal convictions or other so-called indicators of “housing readiness.”
- Accepts referrals directly from shelters, street outreach, drop-in centers and other parts of crisis response system.
- Services emphasize engagement over therapeutic goals. Services plans highly tenant-driven without preset goals. Participation in services not a condition of tenancy.
- Use of alcohol or drugs in and of itself not considered a reason for eviction.
Housing First Checklist: Project-Level Elements

Additional Elements Found in Advanced Models:

- Applicants prioritized based on duration/chronicity of homelessness, vulnerability or high utilization of crisis services.
- Tenants given flexibility in rent payments; given special arrangements for arrears such as payment plans or financial management (e.g. rep payee).
- Case managers trained in motivational interviewing and client-centered counseling.
- Harm reduction-informed services engages tenants in non-judgmental communication regarding drug/alcohol use and offers education on avoidance of risky behaviors.
- Building/apartment includes physical features that accommodate disabilities, reduce harm and promote health.
Housing First Checklist: Community-Level Elements

- Crisis response system recognize roles in housing advocacy and rapid connection to permanent housing.
- Strong referral linkages between crisis response system and permanent housing.
- Unified, streamlined, and user-friendly process for applying for rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing and/or other housing interventions.
- Coordinated assessment system for matching people to the most appropriate housing and services.
Housing First Checklist: Community-Level Elements

- Community-level data-driven approach to prioritize highest need cases for housing assistance (lengths of homelessness, vulnerability or high utilization of crisis services).
- Policymakers, funders and providers collaboratively plan and direct resources to increase affordable and supportive housing and ensure a range of options and models.
- Policies and regulations aligned with the Housing First approach.
- Every effort made to transfer a tenant from one housing situation to another, if a tenancy is in jeopardy. Whenever possible eviction back into homelessness is avoided.
What Does Housing First Mean for Transitional Housing?

- Housing First is not just for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).
- Transitional Housing also aims to help participants live stably and independently.
- Transitional Housing programs can incorporate Housing First into their programs by:
  - Providing low-barrier admission
  - Delivering housing-focused services
  - Helping residents transition to appropriate housing quickly
- Where participants transition to depends on their needs – to PSH or to other affordable housing
USICH’s Solutions Database

- Summary of research
- List of model programs
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

http://usich.gov/usich_resources/solutions/explore/housing_first/
VA’s Housing First Implementation Brief

- Summary of VA’s transformation to adopt Housing First approaches across its homelessness programs
- Reviews findings and lessons learned from HUD-VASH Housing First pilot, including key outcomes and cost impacts

USICH & NCHV Webinar Series

- Four-part series focused on:
  - Impact of Housing First on outcomes
  - Removing barriers to services
  - Placement and retention strategies
  - Coordination with other community resources

Housing First conference sessions

- Two national conferences hosted by Pathways to Housing and DESC in 2012 and 2014.
- Presentation materials from many sessions available online.

http://www.hfpartnersconference.com/sessions-2014/
NAEH’s Housing First Toolkit

- Tool-kit provides practical advice based on Housing First principles
- Encompasses a diverse range of programs
Where to Go from Here

- Be clear about what you intend and unflinching in self-reflection.
- Consult abundant national resources.
- Engage your colleagues in honest dialogue.
- Take risks in trying Housing First approaches and see how they perform.
- Remember you are not alone!
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United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
No one should experience homelessness. No one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.

Ending Veteran Homelessness

April 25, 2013

Pushing to the Goal: 3 Ways to Accelerate Ending Veteran Homelessness

With less than 1,000 days until the 2015 goal, here are three important ways to accelerate progress.

The Administration’s commitment to end homelessness among Veterans and their families remains steadfast. The President’s FY 2014 budget proposal continues to increase investment in effective strategies including a $75 million for the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program and $200 million for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. The Administration’s previous investments in ending Veteran homelessness continue to show significant results: homelessness among Veterans is down 18 percent since the launch of Opening Doors.

During the April 16 meeting of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, along with representation from the White House’s Domestic Policy Council and Office of Management and Budget, Council leadership reviewed progress at ending Veterans homelessness, recognizing that even with the progress to date, efforts must be accelerated to meet the goal of ending Veterans homelessness by 2015. Ending Veteran homelessness remains possible with the right investments focused in

“Opening Doors to Innovation: Improving Client Outcomes Using Housing First”

Wednesday, May 8