



North Carolina Coalition

securing resources ■ encouraging public dialogue ■ advocating for public policy change

to End Homelessness

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Homeless Prevention Fund Activities

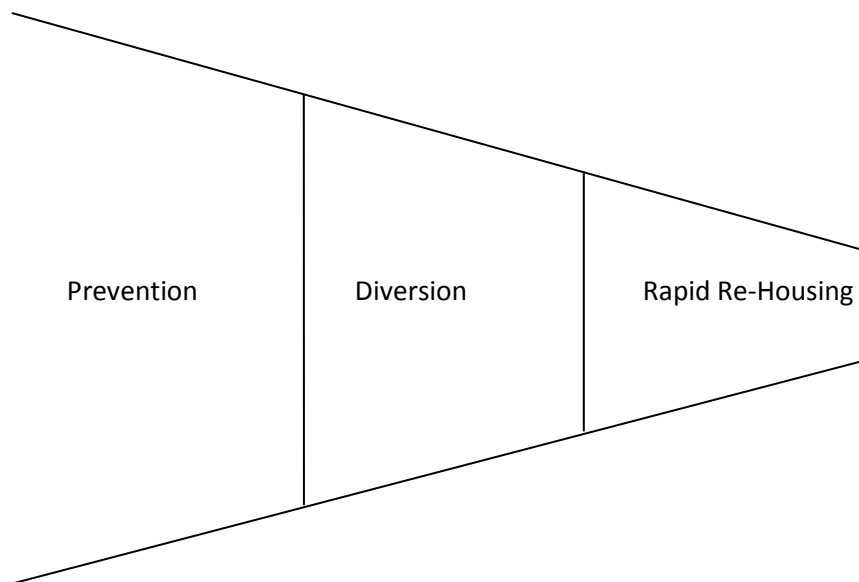
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The Housing Prevention Fund provides us with an opportunity to recreate and innovate the homeless system to be more effective and efficient. This resource can be used to shift the focus from providing shelter and managing homelessness to preventing homelessness and quickly re-housing people who do become homeless.

In recreating our homeless system, we have to take on a new ethos: ALL cases of homelessness can be prevented or re-housed.

In order for a system to be effective, it must have three components: Prevention, Diversion and Rapid Re-Housing.

Number of Clients



Need & Cost

Interventions listed above gradually serve fewer people as there are fewer people in each situation while the intervention becomes more expensive as client's needs increase.

Prevention

Purpose: To prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless. First attempt is to stabilize current housing situation. If current housing is not appropriate or cannot be stabilized, alternative housing is sought.

Eligible Population: Housed individuals and families at high risk of becoming homeless.

Targeting: At a minimum, should be targeted to people who have extremely low incomes (below 30% of Area Median Income), who have demonstrated a housing crisis, and lack protective factors, such as friends or family members who can help them. Use HMIS data or common Risk factors identified in research:

- Have income below 15 percent of area median income
- Are families with children and are a secondary tenant (doubled up)
- Have experienced 2 or more moves in the past year
- Have a young child (under age 2)
- Are under age 24 and were in foster care at some point
- Have a prior episode of homelessness
- Have an eviction from public or assisted housing
- Have experienced domestic violence in the past 30 days
- Have missed 2 or more appointments with a caseworker
- Have a serious mental illness

Common Activities: Flexible financial assistance, case management (offered, but not required), housing location, short-term rental assistance

Length of Assistance: One-time or short-term

Common Concerns: Housed Individuals and Families often do not know where to seek help or have trouble navigating the system. There must be an outreach component in order to ensure that high risk persons are being offered assistance. Must address tendency to cherry-pick. Programs should strive to provide just enough assistance to prevent homelessness. In this way, resources will serve more people and prevent more episodes of homelessness.

Diversion

Purpose: Diversion programs attempt to prevent homelessness for people who are seeking shelter. Diversion attempts to return people to their prior living situation, if it is appropriate and safe. If they cannot return, new housing is sought.

Eligible Population: Individuals and families seeking shelter (imminently homeless)

Targeting: This population is easier to target, as they are presenting for shelter and it is obvious they have an immediate housing crisis.

Common Activities: Flexible financial assistance, case management (offered, but not required), housing location, short-term rental assistance

Length of Assistance: One-time or short-term

Common Concerns: Diversion should not prevent entry into shelter for people who are homeless. Preventing people from entering shelter is not the same as diverting people from shelter.

Rapid Re-housing

Purpose: Rapid Re-housing programs work with currently homeless individuals and families to help them quickly move into rental housing.

Eligible Population: Individuals and families who are currently homeless

Targeting: All currently sheltered or unsheltered individuals and family are eligible

Common Activities: Flexible financial assistance, case management (offered, but not required), housing location, short-term rental assistance, coordination with other community resources

Length of Assistance: short-term or medium-term (up to 15 months)

Common Concerns: Rapid re-housing programs must coordinate with other community resources to ensure that participants are linked to ongoing services, such as housing vouchers, intensive case management, or assertive community treatment.

Prevention, Diversion, and Re- housing Functions

Housing Location. Housing locators identify affordable housing, encourage landlords to rent to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, help negotiate good rents and lease terms, work to address credit issues with a potential tenant, and are generally available to the landlord and tenant in case there are problems.

Flexible Financial Assistance. This activity includes assistance for first and last months rent, deposits, utilities, rental assistance for a final month at a location, moving cost assistance, or other activities that will directly help a person stay in his or her current housing situation or quickly move to a new location. Disbursements should be requested by the housing locator or home-based case manager and based on whether funding will help overcome an immediate barrier to entering or maintaining housing. Average grants will be approximately \$1,500, but depend greatly on the circumstances.

Short/Medium- Term Rental Assistance. Rental assistance is provided for 3-18 months depending on the needs of the household. Rental assistance may be deep (tenant contributes no more than 30 percent of income for rent) or shallow (subsidy pays for a smaller portion of the rent). Rental assistance should target people who will likely not be able to move quickly into permanent housing without it (even if they receive one time financial assistance).

Case Management. Case Managers work with people to ensure that their housing situation is stable and that they access the benefits and services they need for long-term self-sufficiency. Case managers also help mediate disputes between tenants and landlords. Case managers should refer participants to other providers that can better address other service or self sufficiency needs.