

# **Coordinated Entry & Progressive Engagement**

## Transforming Your System

Kay Moshier McDivitt

Senior Technical Assistance  
Specialist

# Session Objectives

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- I. Understand Progressive Engagement as a System-Wide approach
- II. Using the Progressive Engagement Model from the Front Door of the Homeless System
- III. Understand the Nuts and Bolts of Progressive Engagement at the Program Level

# PROGRESSIVE ENGAGEMENT

At the System Level



## Progressive Engagement

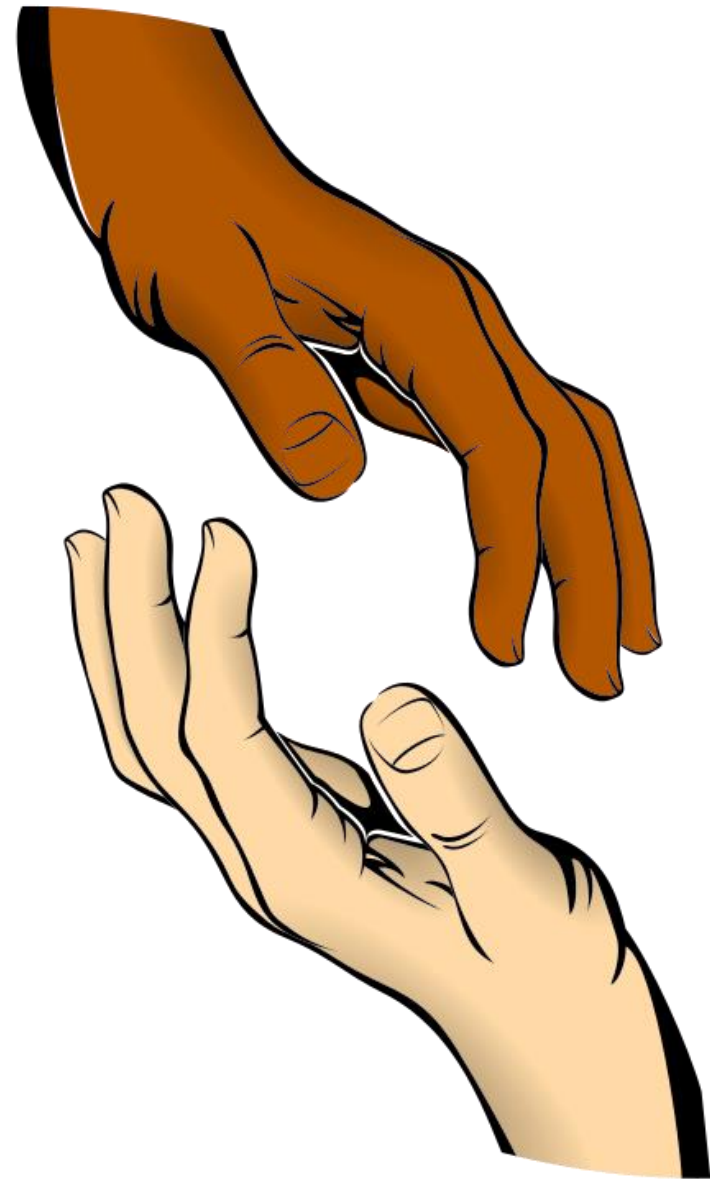
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A different kind of  
design:

The lightest touch  
possible

OR

“You can always add  
more, but you can’t take  
it away.”




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# What is Progressive Engagement?

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Progressive Engagement is the practice of helping households end their homelessness as rapidly as possible, despite barriers, with minimal financial and support resources. More supports are applied to those households who struggle to stabilize.

It doesn't depend on a "number" or "score" to determine what a household needs.



Progressive engagement recognizes that there is **no way to accurately predict** how much help someone may need to end their homelessness and avoid a return to the streets or shelter

# Rational for Progressive Engagement

- **Avoids false assumptions:** people who are very poor and may be disabled – including those who score high on assessment tools – *do not all need or want* more intensive or longer-term assistance. People who initially appear to need more may end up needing less – and vis-versa.
- **Individualization:** when a participant shows s/he needs more help, more help can be provided. Programs should offer the right amount of assistance for the right amount of time to meet individual needs.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program - 2016

# Rational for Progressive Engagement

- **Efficiency:** by avoiding more assistance than is required to end homelessness and prevent an immediate return to streets or shelter, programs can help more people, close housing placement gaps, and reduce the time people remain homeless.
- **Effectiveness:** programs that use Progressive Engagement show high rates of success serving people with a wide range of needs. Programs take risks, frequently have to make tough decisions, and assume some will fail – meaning the program may need to do something different if they help the same participant again.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program - 2016



# What About Coordinated Entry and Common Assessment?

- Conversation is critical: need knowledge of the client's relevant history, their current plans and desires
- Understand housing barriers to be able to assist, not to refuse assistance
- Developing a realistic approach to finding landlords and housing situations
- Ability to link clients to supports in the community

## **BUT**

- Assessment up front may not be a good way to **size** the financial assistance or length of time services are offered


*Example: Let's all go on a job hunt...*

# Prioritization and/or PE?

Don't rely only on a "needs score"

- Every household is different with strengths
- Using a score to put people on waiting lists limits their options for success
- Assess only for housing barriers
- Based on the belief and expectation that every household can be successful with little to short term assistance (RRH)
- The household helps determine the point of stability
- "We are bad predictors of success and stability"

Salt Lake City – The Road Home



Helping others  
solve their own  
problems is

more effective than  
solving problems  
for them.

## Next Steps

Making it happen

# Making it Happen Across Your System

## **STEP ONE: Paradigm Shift Across the System**

- Requires a belief that people are the best solvers of their “problems”
- Belief that the “light touch” approach can work across the system interventions
- Belief that putting people to be put in “intervention buckets” based on scores, and having them sit in shelter “waiting” for their name to come to the top is NOT the approach that works
- Willingness to shift to a new approach

# Making it happen

## **STEP TWO: Create your system message:**

- “Our approach is “light touch” and problem solving conversations across interventions”
- Waiting lists are NOT the solution
- People who are very poor and may be disabled – including those who score high on assessment tools –*do not all need or want* more intensive or longer-term assistance
- Message the system’s belief and expectation that every household can be successful with little to short term assistance

# Making it happen

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## **STEP THREE: Create the structure**

- Start with the problem solving conversation with every persons that call's the crisis response system **BEFORE** an assessment – Divert to safe alternatives
- For those not diverted, a significant portion of households in the CoC are referred to RRH as the primary intervention.
- When RRH doesn't work the first time for a household, continue to offer it.

# Making it happen

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## **STEP THREE: Continued....**


- Reserve service rich interventions such as PSH and vouchers only after continued assessment determines households needs additional support beyond what RRH can provide.
- For households truly in need of the supports offered through PSH, communities should ensure that resources are available at the back end of the system to offer this intervention to households.

# PROGRESSIVE ENGAGEMENT

At the Program Level







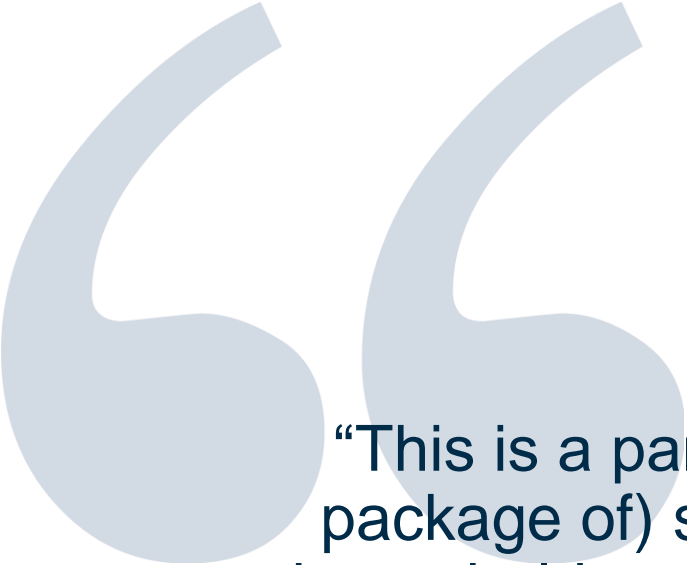
**Progressive Engagement is the practice of helping households end their homelessness as rapidly as possible, despite barriers, with minimal financial and support resources. More supports are applied to those households who struggle to stabilize.**

**Melanie Zamora NAEH Presentation 2015**

# Implementing at the Program Level

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- Programs using Progressive Engagement regularly re-assess housing barriers and seek to close cases as soon as housing retention barriers are resolved.
- Assistance is provided on an “as-needed basis” to keep a participant housed
- Programs offer more intensive support, additional rental assistance, or step-up referrals and help to access community-based assistance as needed



“This is a paradigm shift from providing (a package of) services/case management to households experiencing homelessness and therefore, staff may need to be re-trained to be able to successfully make this change.

# A Shift in Program Culture

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- SHIFT:
  - Idea of doing the least for each household rather than the most
- SHIFT:
  - Believing people can make it without us
- SHIFT
  - Staff get rewards from seeing people leave and helping more people
- *Shift*
  - *The pace is fast and relationships light*

# Coordinated Entry and Progressive Engagement



FROM	TO
What programs are you eligible to enter and who has a bed?	What would resolve your current housing crisis?
Assessment/eligibility	Structured problem solving conversation about household situation and resources
Intake screening and shelter waitlist	Support crisis resolution to avoid shelter entry

# Progressive Engagement in Practice

- A call/walk-in to Coordinated Entry does NOT start with an assessment
  - Instead of immediate intake/assessment, engages clients in a conversation and identifies safe alternatives to shelter
- Assists in connecting to community resources to avoid a shelter stay/referral to waiting lists
- If household (after being diverted) returns to CE, another conversation happens
- Only add in flexible resources if needed to assist in an alternative housing option outside of homeless assistance
- NEVER offer “financial resources” or a “package deal”  
Uses a strength based assessment vs. a needs assessment

# Why Diversion at the System Front Door?

- System does not have enough resources for everyone “scoring” for them
- People can often best solve their own problems with a thought driven conversation
- Coordinated Entry that has incorporated the progressive engagement model with diversion conversations at the front door are seeing a reduction in homelessness
  - Mystic Connecticut was able to close a family shelter by implementing progressive engagement with coordinated entry and diversion

# Emergency Shelter and Progressive Engagement



- Light Touch at Shelter Entry
  - Belief in a strength based approach – clients are the best resource for problem solving
  - Allow time to self re-solve – 14 days
  - Do NOT conduct assessment at entry
  - Every conversation is “housing focused”
- More supports are provided in a progressive approach who are unable to exit on their own
  - “Housing Plan vs. Case Management Plan
  - Message rapid exits to housing
  - Don’t let a “score” get in the way
  - Connect to other community resources



# Rapid Re-Housing And Progressive Engagement



- Belief that everyone can be successful with a small amount of financial assistance and case management
- Program design is not a one size fits all; starts with minimal assistance
- A **progressive approach** is used to determine the duration and amount of rent assistance and case management on a monthly basis.
- Financial assistance is **not a standard “package” and is flexible enough to adjust to households’ unique needs** and resources, especially as participants’ financial circumstances or housing costs change
- Gear up and add more through regular assessment
- “We are not good at predicting who will need what”

# In a Nutshell: Structuring the Financial and Case Management Assistance

Initially provide basic amount of assistance

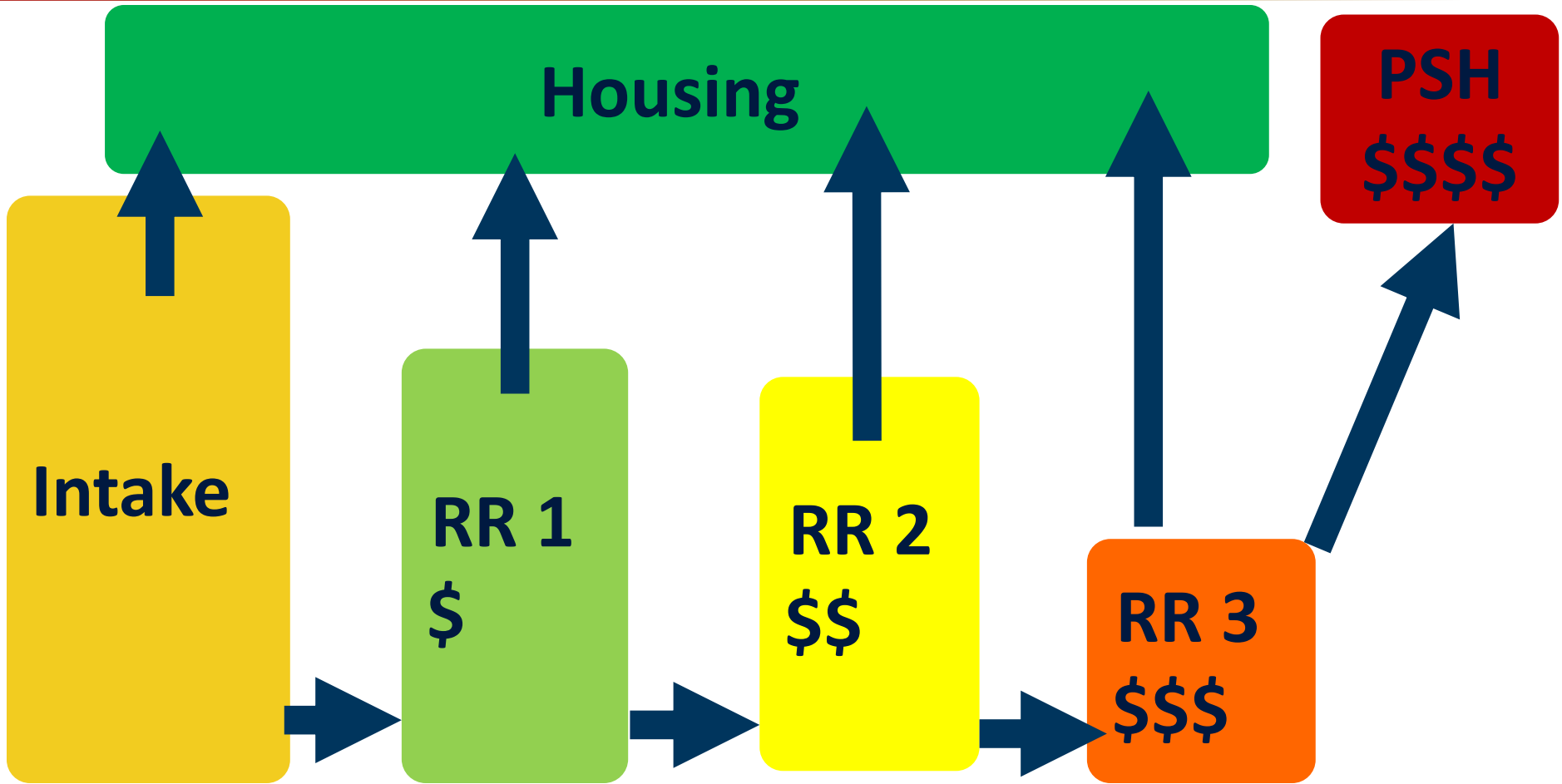
Periodically assess path to self-sufficiency

Determine whether to extend assistance

Extend assistance as needed; proactive case management

Determine when another intervention is needed

# Progressive Engagement in RRH



# And Yes, Even PSH and Progressive Engagement

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- Use PSH for those that are not able to exit shelter and those that RRH has not worked
- Even those that move into PSH may not need the long term or intensive supports
- Start with “light touch services
- Message “move on” strategies and opportunities
- Add more intensive services as needed

# PROGRESSIVE ENGAGEMENT

Summary and Next Steps



# Leading the Shift in Program/System Culture

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- Learn about successful approaches
- Hear from clients about what they want
- Take things step by step
- Offer staff lots of support and training, but...
  - be open to staff changes
- Use agency data to evaluate and adjust

# Steps for Success – Working with Clients

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- Strengths-based approach
- Frame the programs expectations and the help they'll get to achieve them
- Make clear you won't abandon them but don't over-invite more assistance than needed
- ***Set up to succeed!***

# Summary

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Research shows it is hard to predict who will succeed in permanent housing (even among those with high barriers to housing)

It is difficult to anticipate at outset how much assistance a household will ultimately need.

Progressive Engagement approach lets each household *demonstrate what they need* through frequent reassessments with their provider while in their own permanent housing.

Using the approach allows a system to serve more households, reduce lengths of homelessness and ultimately reduces homelessness across the system



# Contact Us

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Kay Moshier McDivitt

kmoshiermcdivitt@naeh.org

202-942-8242

[www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org)

**Questions?**