

FOOD, SHELTER AND A FUTURE

Diversion

for Homeless Families

OUR MISSION

We connect with the community to
end homelessness and fight poverty
by offering

FOOD, SHELTER AND A FUTURE

to neighbors in need.



What is Diversion?

Prevention activities that help a family avoid a shelter stay.

Why is Diversion Important?

Average cost of shelter (facility) per night = \$58

Ideal length of stay for a family in shelter is 90 days
90 days of shelter = \$5220

Average amount spent per family for Diversion =
\$1500

Many families that are diverted do not receive financial assistance

UMD receives private funding for Diversion. Private funds are ideal for flexible spending options.

Types of Diversion Assistance

- ▶ Groceries
- ▶ Gas Cards
- ▶ Rental Assistance
- ▶ 1st Month's Rent
- ▶ Rental Deposit
- ▶ Other Housing Start up Cost
- ▶ Short Term Hotel Stay
- ▶ Landlord Mediation

Diversion is a Conversation

(Diversion is a conversation, not an intake)

- ▶ Focused on open ended questions
- ▶ Client centered
- ▶ Strength based

Things to help the family think through

- ▶ How they've avoided homelessness in the past
- ▶ Prioritizing current needs
- ▶ Conflict resolution with family & friends

How do I know what to ask?

- ▶ Questions should range from general to specific
- ▶ Asking a series of more specific follow up questions can be helpful to better identify needs

Many families do not know what Diversion is, and enter the homeless system seeking shelter.

General Questions to Ask

- ▶ “What do you need most right now?”
- ▶ “What can be done to keep you from needing shelter?”
- ▶ “Do you have people in your life that help you when you need help?”
- ▶ “What would you need to stay with family longer term?”
- ▶ “Are you able to stay with family/friends until you get on your feet?”
- ▶ “Is your family aware of your situation?”
- ▶ “What would you need to make this happen?”

More Specific Questions to Ask

- ▶ “Do you currently have income?”
- ▶ “Have you recently been approved for housing?”
- ▶ “Were you recently evicted?”
- ▶ “Based on your current income, can you afford and/or maintain housing?”

Typical Responses

- ▶ “Well, I really just need shelter so I can save my money to get this apartment. The man said I can rent from him.”
- ▶ “I wish I had support here. All of my family is in another city.”
- ▶ “My grandma said she can’t afford for my kids to keep eating all of the food in the house. She’s on a fixed income anyway.”
- ▶ “I just had my own place, but I lost it. It was a blessing for me to even that apartment, and they put me out yesterday.”

Living situations

Where are families coming from?

- ▶ Doubled up with friends or family
- ▶ Housing with an eviction notice
- ▶ Already padlocked out of housing
- ▶ Safely housed but unhappy

Diversion Case Example 1

- ▶ Mom works as a CNA 40 hours per week with no benefits. Mom became ill and was hospitalized for 1.5 weeks. Mom struggled to get her hours back after missing work. Mom and her husband separated. Mom pays rent late too many times and gets behind, and the landlord evicts her for nonpayment.

Diversion Case Example 1 (cont'd)

- ▶ Diversion staff was able to contact the landlord to discuss options regarding payment arrangements, future rentals, and returning to the unit if it was still vacant. The landlord agreed not to throw away the families belongings, and to let the family return to the unit once the balance was paid

Diversion Case Example 2

- ▶ A family was displaced by a fire. The family was doubled up with a family member, Mom had full-time employment to return to, and also had a Housing Choice Voucher. Mom lost all of her work uniforms (scrubs) in the fire and needed them to return to work. Not having proper uniforms was preventing her from earning an income.
- ▶ Diversion staff verified employment and uniform needed, and provided financial assistance to purchase new uniforms.

Diversion Case Example 3

- ▶ 2 Parent household- Dad works odd jobs, Mom recently started a job earning \$12/hour, 40 hours per week. Mom will not get paid until 2 weeks later. The family is staying with Mom's grandmother in public housing. The family identified that they just need help “getting their foot in the door” of a new place so that the grandmother does not lose her housing.
- ▶ Diversion assisted with a rental deposit and first month's rent allowing the family to secure permanent housing before the Mom's first paycheck was received.

Diversion Case Example 4

- ▶ A Mom with 2 children under presented for shelter on a Wednesday. She reported that she had family in Wilmington that could come get her Friday and she'd be able to stay until she found housing.
- ▶ The arrangement was verified, and Diversion assisted with a temporary hotel stay. However, when the family member came to Durham to pick up the family, Mom refused to go. Mom came back to see Diversion staff on that Monday. She entered shelter in Raleigh on Monday evening.

What a great conversation!

Remember, you cannot always tell who can be diverted based on income or family supports.

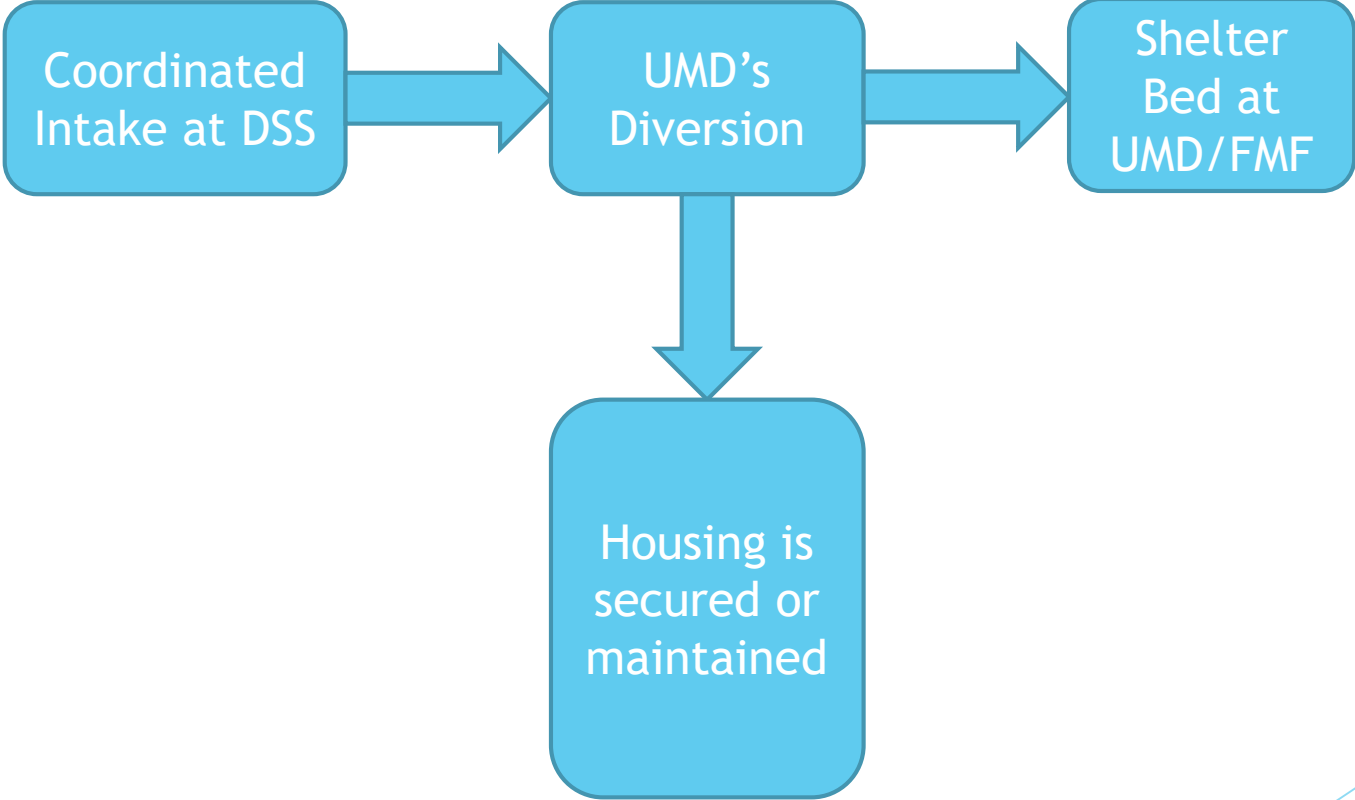
- ▶ The family with great income may have multiple evictions
- ▶ The family with no income may have supportive family members

How does the Diversion process
flow through the “system”?

Diversion happens at the front door of the shelter, or point of system entry.

- Diversion can be a phone conversation, in person, or a combination of both.
- The goal of diversion is to prevent a shelter stay, and offer the lightest touch.
- Diversion activities empower and encourage client choice.

Diversion Flow Chart



Coordinated Intake

Homeless families seeking emergency shelter are triaged at DSS

- ▶ Coordinated Intake staff assesses the family
 - ▶ Gather demographic information
 - ▶ Education, employment, household size, criminal background, disabilities, etc
- ▶ Assess the family for other mainstream benefits
- ▶ Refers the family to Diversion via HMIS

What if the family can not be diverted?

- ▶ Referral to shelter is made via HMIS by Diversion staff
- ▶ Shelters in other counties can be contacted when needed

Stats

What do the numbers say?

From 1/1/18-3/31/18

Total families served through Diversion = 88

Total families actually Diverted from shelter = 36

41%

Totals include financial and no financial diversion.

Training

- ▶ Ed Boyt
Cleveland Mediation Center, Cleveland, Ohio
- ▶ Durham's family Diversion is staffed by 1 Family Case Manager
- ▶ As Diversion efforts grow, support staff will continue to be important

Questions

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