System Design

Menu of Change Strategies for a Best Practice Crisis Response System
Coordinated Entry with Diversion and Prevention

**STRATEGY: COORDINATED ENTRY**

**Description:** A coordinated entry system provides a single or coordinated method by which people at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness can find and access shelter, housing and services. Typically, the intake process includes outreach, a basic assessment, initial system intake (including eligibility determinations such as housing status), and program referral or program placements or reservations (such as shelter bed reservations.) The primary goals for an effective coordinated entry process are that assistance be allocated as effectively as possible and that it be easily accessible no matter where or how people present.

**Benefits:**
- Clear entry point for homeless and at-risk people in the community
- Improved fit between clients and programs and services
- Greater opportunity for up-front diversion from homeless entry
- Faster access to beds and services for clients
- Reduction of duplication of effort for intake and data collection burden at participation agencies
- Better data and feedback about trends in demand, needs and gaps

**Considerations:**
- Consider different access options, including single location, phone-based (e.g. 211) paired with secondary intake at a site, or multiple locations using common assessment and intake process.
- Make decisions about placements into homeless assistance programs through the coordinated entry process instead of by individual providers.
- Use a common barrier assessment and prioritization tool and process for identifying resources and barriers to housing, and for targeting interventions to meet people’s needs.
- Prioritize people with the greatest needs for any type of housing and homeless assistance available in the CoC, including PSH, Rapid Rehousing (RRH), and other interventions.
- Avoid screening people out for assistance because of perceived barriers to housing or services, including, but not limited to, lack of employment or income, drug or alcohol use, or having a criminal record
- Lower screening barriers for housing and homelessness programs in partnership with the coordinated entry process

**Needed for implementation:**
- Funding for central functions and identified operator(s)
- Agreement on basis for a referral or placement to each program participating
- Common data system
• Common training
• Ability to maintain and revise tools and process
• Written eligibility and prioritization standards

Resources:

**STRATEGY: SHELTER DIVERSION**

**Description:** Provides rapid assessment and immediate assistance to prevent shelter entry at the point of coordinated entry. For example, relocation to family or friends or relocating people being discharged from institutions that would otherwise enter shelter.

**Benefits:**
- Prevents the need for shelter entries
- Prevents disruptions to clients
- Preserves shelter beds for those who most need them
- Preserves housing situations that may be viable

**Considerations:**
- Directing prevention resources to the front door of coordinated entry
- Eviction prevention vs. homeless prevention

**Needed for implementation:**
- Diversion training and tools for coordinated entry staff
- Services and assistance that can be provided decoupled from shelter entry
- Landlord relationships
- Flexible financial assistance

**STRATEGY: TARGETED PREVENTION**

**Description:** Improving prevention programs to better target people likely to become homeless by using system data, targeted outreach methods, screening and greater program flexibility. Targeted prevention directs prevention resources to households *most likely* to enter the homeless system, not all households in danger of eviction or housing loss.

**Benefits:**
- Targets limited resources to those most likely to benefit from them
- Reduces homeless episodes
- Uses flexibility to provide the right amount of assistance instead of predetermined approach
Considerations:
- Prediction methods are challenging
- Commitment to constant refinement
- Stand-alone programs versus links to other prevention and re-housing assistance

Needed for implementation:
- System data system to develop targeting information and tools
- Flexible resources and ability to refer to more extensive services if needed
- Flexibility to adjust as necessary

Resources:
Crisis Housing and Services

**Strategy:** Use emergency shelter and congregate transitional housing beds for crisis housing and services with a rapid-rehousing focus

**Description:** Implement a crisis housing system to alleviate a consumer’s immediate housing crisis as a first step to being re-housed that includes emergency shelter, street outreach, and emergency health and crisis services.

**Benefits:**
- Shortens lengths of stay in homelessness system
- Reduces trauma
- Enables existing shelter beds to serve more people
- Assists households in accessing permanent housing quickly
- Provides a way to use existing housing stock of congregate transitional housing facilities to meet the crisis needs

**Considerations:**
- 24 hour crisis beds
- Low demand shelters
- Create a strong link between crisis housing and permanent housing resources
- Comprehensive street outreach
- How to best utilize existing congregate TH beds as crisis beds

**Needed for implementation:**
- Linkages to permanent housing
- Permanent housing is part of the initial assessment
- Strategies to feed persons from crisis beds into rapid re-housing quickly
- Strong linkages between street outreach and crisis beds

**Resources:**

*The Role of Long Term, Congregate Transitional Housing in Ending Homelessness*

Rapid Re-Housing

Expand Rapid Re-Housing

**Description:** Implement a systemic plan to take the rapid re-housing intervention to scale by developing and expanding rapid re-housing strategies that quickly re-house families or individuals when they become homeless, generally to private market housing in the community.

**Benefits:**
- Shortens lengths of stay in homelessness/low cost per housing placement
- Reduces trauma
- Enables existing shelter beds to serve more people
- Provides support to households in their own housing

**Considerations:**
- Decision: Combine with shelter or operate as standalone programs?
- Identify funding for rental assistance and flexible resources
- Braid various funding sources together to take rapid re-housing to scale
- How to best utilize existing service network

**Needed for implementation:**
- Systemic standards for best practice including integration of the three core components of rapid re-housing
- New or reallocated funding resources
- Build community housing capacity by developing strong landlord relationships
- Home-based voluntary support services once people are housed

**Resources:**
*Rapid Re-Housing: Creating Programs that Work,*
http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/rapid-re-housing-creating-programs-that-work

**STRATEGY: TRANSITIONAL HOUSING RETOOLING**

**Description:** A method for modifying transitional housing programs to provide other forms of assistance, including rapid-rehousing, transition-in-place, short-term crisis housing (emergency shelter), or permanent supportive housing.

**Benefits:**
- Shortens lengths of homeless stays for programs and communities
- Increases numbers of households that can be served with existing resources
- Brings system into better alignment with goals of the HEARTH Act and Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness

*National Alliance to End Homelessness*
Considerations:
- Requires buy-in from stakeholders, including program staff, board, funders
- Contract amendments for CoC and other funding
- Possible changes to target population

Needed for implementation:
- New staff job descriptions with staff training
- Restructuring plan

Resources:

**STRATEGY: REALLOCATING FUNDING RESOURCES TO INCREASE RAPID REHOUSING CAPACITY**

**Description:** Shifting traditional shelter and transitional housing resources (such as ESG funds, CoC funds, state and private dollars) to expand rapid rehousing. When people who become homeless receive rapid re-housing assistance, beds turn over more quickly, and a reduced number of shelter beds can potentially serve the same number of people or possibly more.

**Benefits:**
- Moves clients from homelessness to housing faster and shortens lengths of stay
- Reduces need for shelter beds
- Possibly more community support because of reduced number of shelter facilities

**Considerations:**
- Challenging to convert fixed location costs to flexible costs
- Mobile services rather than site-based services
- Targeting rapid re-housing services to people who would have been medium or long term shelter users

**Needed for implementation:**
- Ability to redirect staffing and/or other shelter resources to RRH;
- Strong landlord relationships;
- Mobile services capacity;
- Quick access to flexible funds that will help with housing placement and upfront costs
PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

**Strategy: Target Permanent Supportive Housing to the Most Vulnerable**

**Description:** The chronically homeless are given priority for non-dedicated PSH beds as vacancies become available through turnover. All new and turnover beds are targeted to the chronically homeless populations with the highest needs.

**Benefits:**
- Increase progress towards ending chronic homelessness
- Preserves scarce PSH chronically homeless persons/families with the highest need
- Ensures that the homeless individuals and families with the most severe service needs within a community are prioritized in PSH

**Considerations:**
- How will you identify those with the highest need for prioritization
- Would family PSH beds be better utilized for singles who are chronically homeless

**Needed for implementation:**
- Prioritization standards that are adopted by the Continuum of Care that all PSH providers must adhere to
- Systemic identification of the most vulnerable
- Assessment of all existing PSH units and re-use of all non-dedicated units as chronic beds
- Available housing units that are affordable to PSH tenants

**Resources**

*Notice on Prioritizing Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness and Other Vulnerable Homeless Persons in Permanent Supportive Housing and Recordkeeping Requirements for Documenting Chronic Homeless Status*


**Strategy: Increasing Positive Exits from Permanent Supportive Housing**

**Description:** Assistance for tenants of permanent supportive housing who no longer need intensive services to move to other affordable (frequently subsidized) housing. Turnover and new beds targeted to chronically homeless populations with the highest needs.
Benefits:
- Preserves scarce PSH resources for chronically homeless persons/families with the highest need
- Builds on recovery movement approach to helping tenants continue to move toward greater independence

Considerations:
- How to identify PSH tenants ready and wanting to move to other housing

Needed for implementation:
- Assessment process to identify and determine readiness for tenants to move on
- Available housing units that are affordable to PSH tenants

Resources:
*Moving On: Facilitating Tenants’ Ability to Move from Permanent Supportive Housing to Other Housing,*