

# DIVERSION TOOLS and STRATEGIES: USING CLIENT STRENGTHS AND SUPPORTS

CT Coalition to End Homelessness  
Annual Training Institute  
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# Presentation Today...

## GOALS:

1. Provide information on statewide work on diversion
2. Give an overview of diversion strategies, and
3. Share some successful diversion techniques


- Presenters:
- Mimi Haley, CT Coalition to End Homelessness
- Kara Capobianco, Department of Housing
- Jomarie Vargas, Alpha Community Services YMCA

# **BUILDING DIVERSION INTO OUR CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEMS**

- Importance of Diversion
- Diversion Points (211, CAN, Outreach)
- Diversion Training and Technical Assistance
  - Trained trainers
  - Schedule of Diversion Training
- Partners in Diversion (SSVF, DOC, CSSD, Hospitals, DCF, DMHAS, mediation providers)

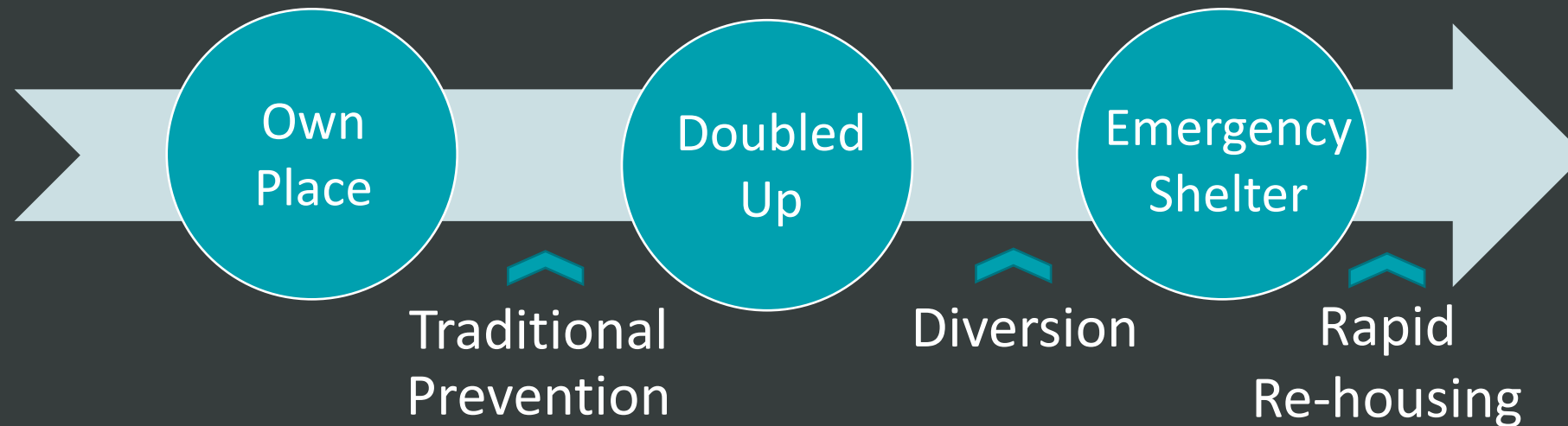
# Conflict Resolution Approach & Empowerment Theory

- **Homelessness is a crisis** – as in **conflict**, persons in **crisis** are less able to clearly think through problems and advocate for themselves than they are when **not in crisis**.
- First **listen** and **validate** their experience. Be non-judgmental.
- **Client-centered**. Don't assume what people need; help them articulate their needs.



Can we apply similar strategies to people in crisis that we do to people in conflict?

# When and Where Diversion Can Happen



Prevention can be any time before shelter stay.

**Diversion is a prevention activity** - moving prevention right to the shelter door.

Diversion can happen in person, on the phone, or a combination of both.

# How Can We Help Change The Dynamic?

## Diversion Is...

- **Empowering** persons facing imminent homelessness to identify safe and appropriate housing options (other than the street/car/shelter), and assisting them in avoiding shelter and returning immediately to housing.
- NOT a barrier to shelter.
- Focus is on empowering persons in crisis to begin **regaining control** over their situation and lives.

We start the empowerment process by \_\_\_\_\_.

# National Alliance to End Homelessness: Principles for Homeless Prevention

- Principle **ONE**: Crisis resolution
- Principle **TWO**: Client choice, respect, and empowerment
- Principle **THREE**: Provide the minimum assistance necessary for the shortest time possible
- Principle **FOUR**: Maximize community resources
- Principle **FIVE**: The right resources to the right people at the right time

# Coordinated Assessment Analogy

Think of Coordinated Assessment as the emergency room of homeless services.

1. Patient (client) comes for emergency service.
2. Patient is triaged (Coordinated Assessment).
3. Multi-disciplinary approach to treating and releasing.
4. ER's and hospitals in general operate from a treat and release as soon as possible approach.

Other than cost/insurance coverage, why is there such a focus on quickly releasing back home?

Why is this also true for shelters?



## **Diversion Session Steps**

- Introductions
- Active and Empathetic listening
- Strengths Exploration
- Moving Forward

# Listening

- Why do it? What might listening accomplish?
- What is hard or easy about this?
- What is active listening?
- What is empathetic listening?

## National Alliance on Mental Illness:

*Empathy* is the intimate comprehension of another person's thoughts and feelings without adding our own judgment or expectations.

# Listening Skill Building

What helps you prepare, get centered to listen?

- Physical Preparedness:
  - R - Relaxed
  - O - Open
  - L - Leaning towards the speaker
  - E - Eye Contact
  - S - Squared toward speaker
- Note Taking

# Listening Skill Building (cont.)

Acknowledge by:

- Paraphrasing
- Open-ended questions help the speaker illuminate what they are saying. Examples: Can you tell me more about... ? Has this happened before?
- Helpful, non-judgmental questions include: What has worked well for you in past similar experiences? What options are you thinking of? How do you best make decisions?

-This is not to pry information, but to give them a chance to say more if they would like.

-This is not to ask about motives (“Why did you do it this way”) – “Why” questions can make people defensive and can even escalate the conflict.

# Getting Clearer (partner activity)


Pair off with another person.

- Each person think for a moment about something that is on your mind – a decision you need to make, a problem, or something you are trying to figure out.
- The purpose is to have someone listen to you, not give you advise, but help **you feel clearer, gain insight, help you think through** or be more confident about your situation.
- Take about 10 minutes each telling your story to the other, and then we switch listener/speaker roles.
- Listeners: Do not offer opinions or give advice.

## Step Three: Strength Exploration

Explore past strengths – this step has two purposes:

1. Help identify times when **they have been of help or support to others.**
2. Begin to identify networks and support persons that may be able to help them with income or housing.



What were things like for them when things were going better?

Who have they helped?

Who are their allies, friends, and family members?

Our clients may feel dependent – we can help them remember times of **interdependence.**

## Step Four: Moving Forward

After we have listened, then explored past strengths, what **housing options** do they want to pursue:

1. Going back to live with friends and family.
2. Returning to their own residence.
3. Temporarily diverted as they seek new housing.
4. Relocating to a safe, permanent place out-of-town.

What other needs has the client identified?

# Things To Consider

Always find out about:

1. Housing History
2. Income
  - Current
  - Past

Are options:

1. Safe?
2. Appropriate for client?



# Diversion Outcomes

Permanently back  
with friends or  
family

Return to their  
own residence

Temporarily  
diverted as they  
seek new housing

Relocating  
permanently to  
safe place out of  
town

# Outcome One

Permanently back  
with friends or  
family

When? Under what circumstances?

- No better option
- No housing history
- No income history

How can our client contribute to the household?

How can our client use this time to further education and/or employment opportunities?

**When is a doubled up situation safe and appropriate?**

## Outcome Two

When? Under what circumstances?

- Walk-Aways (have lease but cannot pay current or back rent)
- Non-DV relationship issues (significant other is in home)
- Previous places they have lived are options (i.e. parents)

Return to their  
own residence

# Outcome Three

When? Under what circumstances?

- Wish to live on their own and have done so before
- Current or past income

Temporarily  
diverted as they  
seek new housing


# Outcome Four

When? Under what circumstances?

- Safe, appropriate host
- Support systems – family, friends, employment, education

How?

- Confirm with host (30 day minimum)
- What travel and other logistics do we need to work out?



Are the clients support systems elsewhere?



Relocating permanently to safe place out of town

# Reality Testing Decisions

- The agreements and decisions need to work for the parties (not for us).
- By starting with what has worked previously, we increase the odds of it working again.
- If you have a concern – do not ignore it – use that as an opportunity to help our client **think through** their options and decisions.

# Questions, Suggestions, Ideas?

- Remember to **listen first**, understand, validate. Be empathetic.
- Leave no stone unturned in helping people think of safe places they can live or stay other than the street or shelter.
- Help people think through options – help them clarify their choices and the steps needed to carry out their plan.

## If a client is **difficult**:

- Remember that homelessness is a crisis and people are usually not at their best when under this stress.
- Help them realize strengths and resources they have forgotten.
- Visualize sitting next to them, supporting them in how they choose to address the problem.

# Diversion in Action





# Diversion Techniques Put Into Practice

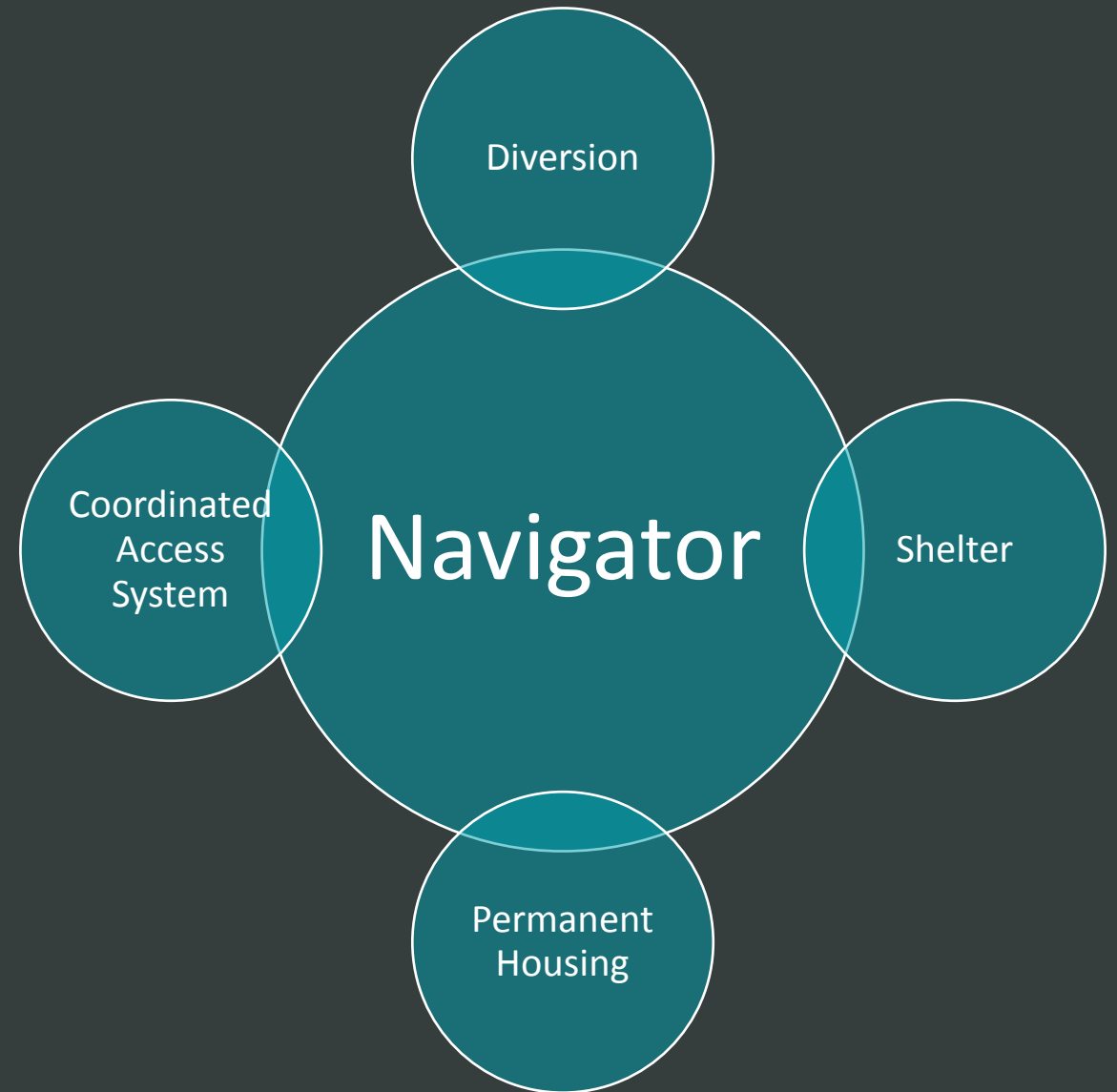
How can you implement diversion in your work?

- Navigator Role
- Toolbox ideas
- Accomplishments
- Examples of Success Stories

# Navigator

## WHO IS A NAVIGATOR AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

- Bridge the gap between households' crises, entry into the Coordinated Entry System, and their entry into shelter or return to permanent housing in the community.
- Engages clients at the moment of crisis to support their transition towards a housing solution or into shelter.
- This allows for fewer entries into homelessness through more exhaustive prevention/diversion efforts, and shorter durations of homelessness.





# A Navigator's Toolbox

## Smartsheet

- Regional Shelter Waitlist
- Diversion Caseload

## Resource Binder

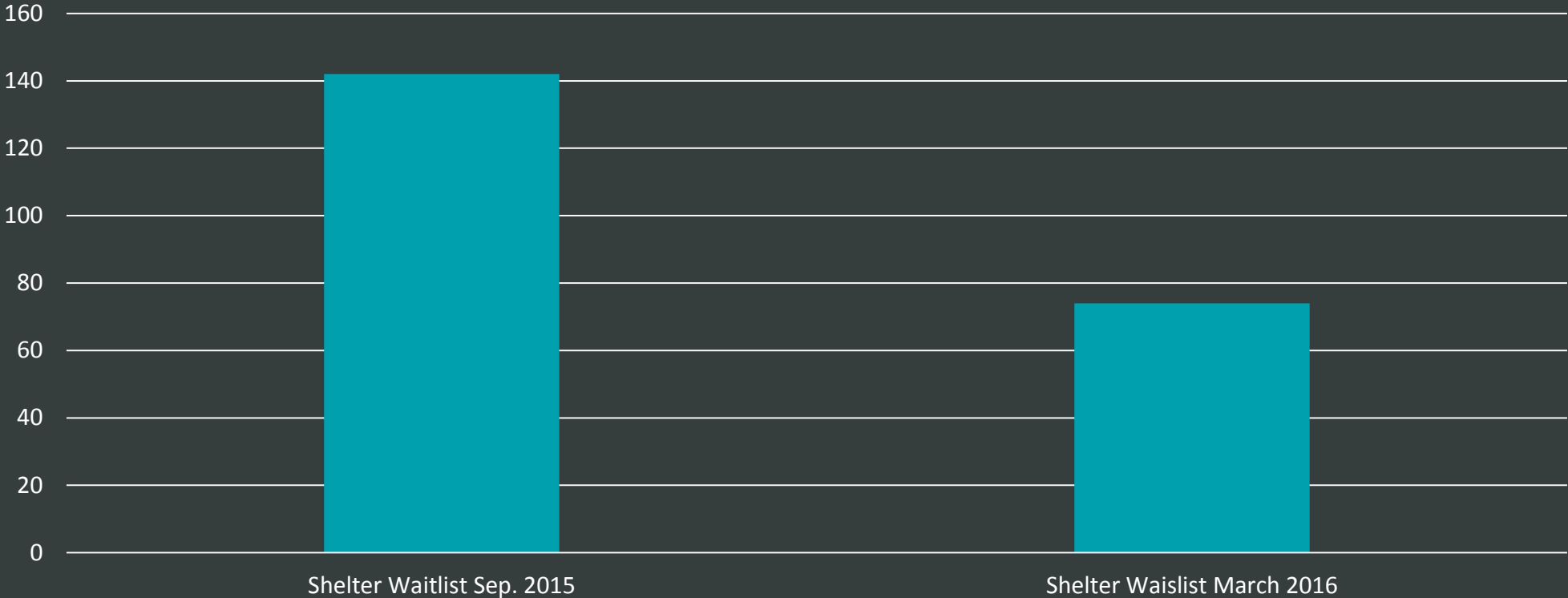
- Prioritization Standards
- Scripts
- Diversion Options/ Resources

## Community Partnerships

- Security Deposit Guarantee: Greater Bridgeport Area
- CAN/Navigator Team Meetings
- Case Conference
- Ongoing Trainings

# Accomplishments

48% Decrease in Regional Shelter Waitlist for Families in Fairfield County





# Success!

- Diverted through Community Resources

## Joyce :

- At moment of CAN Appointment, Joyce had been paying for a motel for three months, storage for their personal items and had already lost all their furniture.
- She had income and housing history and was referred to a navigator who connected her to Off the Streets and ABCD for rental assistance services.
- Joyce received assistance in gathering documents and connections with landlords in the area.
- After a month, client had a leased signed, she received first months rent from ABCD, security deposit, furniture and household items from Off the Streets and was able to move with her two children successfully.
- Navigator served as the middle person between the client, community resource and landlord. This interaction facilitated and streamlined the way towards a permanent housing solution.

# Success!

- Diversion through Funding Source



## Christina:

- Christina is a single mother of 9y/o son who relocated from Florida to live with family. Once she had to move out, she thought she was left with no options but to seek shelter.
- Navigator outreached client, who was identified on shelter waitlist with housing history and income.
- Navigator met with her to work on clients budget, to cover first months rent and she was connected to landlords in the area.
- Once apartment was identified, navigator collected lease, w9 and documentation to refer client to Neighbor Help Neighbor funding.
- Client received full security deposit through this source and was able to move in with her son just in time for Christmas.

# Success!

- Diversion at CAN Appointment



## Leah:

- Single mother of three, at moment of CAN appointment, was living with her sister. Her sister had covered all cost to move and asked Leah to contribute to the move or she couldn't come with.
- Client was going to school and may have a job lined up but lacks income at the moment.
- Navigator utilized MI and Strength Exploration to better assist client in identifying how she can find alternatives to a monetary contribution.
- Navigator provided meal cards, information on public transportation, government benefits, childcare, WIC programs and diaper banks, to cut her costs down in the household.
- Family was referred to a furniture bank for items to contribute to the move.
- The extra resources that the family received at CAN Appointment, helped both sisters get settled into their new apartment and gave Leah more time to get the callback for work.

# Thank You!

Mimi Haley, CT Coalition to End Homelessness  
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