



Connecticut Emergency Shelter Learning Collaborative

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Why is shelter so important?

- People in a housing crisis will always need a safe place to go that is immediately available
- **Shelter** plays an **important role** in a system's response to homelessness
- The effectiveness of emergency shelter greatly impacts your system's performance
 - Average length of homelessness
 - Exits to permanent housing
 - Returns to homelessness



Key Elements of Emergency Shelters in an Effective Crisis Response System

- ✓ Housing First Approach
- ✓ Immediate and Low-barrier Access
- ✓ Housing-focused Services
- ✓ Rapid Exits to Permanent Housing
- ✓ Using Data to Measure Performance



1. Housing First Approach

Philosophy

- Not a “program,” it is a system-wide orientation and response
- Everyone is ready for housing
- Homelessness is a housing problem
- Housing First means housing fast

Practice

- Few to no pre-requisites to permanent housing
- Rapid entry into permanent housing
- Services are voluntary

2. Immediate and Easy Access

Philosophy

- Shelter is life saving
- It should be easy to access
- It should be easiest for the most vulnerable

Practice

- Few to no prerequisites to shelter
- No waiting list
- Coordinated entry
- Diversion when safe and appropriate
- Prioritize households with the most needs
- 24/7 access
- Equal Access Rule compliance
- Rules should only pertain to safety

3. Housing-Focused Services

Philosophy

- Everyone is ready to be housed immediately
- Clients are the captains of their housing plans
- Shelters are not employment, recovery, or mental health programs

Practice

- Plan for housing exit at entry
- “If you’re not talking about housing you’re having the wrong conversation”
- All policies, procedures, job descriptions, signage, client handbooks, etc. reflect focus on housing

4. Rapid Exits to Housing

Philosophy

- Moving people out of shelter quickly reduces the trauma of homelessness
- Empower clients to take charge of their housing

Practice

- Invest in rapid re-housing
- Connection to mainstream resources
- Family reunification
- Roommate matching

5. Using Data to Improve Performance

Philosophy

- There is always room to improve

Practice

- Measure outcomes, not outputs
 - Decrease length of stay in homelessness
 - Increase exits to permanent housing
 - Decrease returns to shelter



The Connecticut
Emergency Shelter
Learning
Collaborative





The Connecticut Teams

- Holy Family Home and Shelter
- Covenant Shelter of New London
- Northwest YMCA
- Friends in Service to Humanity of Northwestern Ct (FISH)
- Spooner House

Learning Collaborative Goals

- Provide shelter that is:
 - housing-focused
 - low-barrier
- Reduce average length of stay
- Increase number of exits to permanent housing

CT's Learning Collaborative Benchmarks

- 1) Totally Eliminate Drug and Alcohol Testing by July 20th (6 months)
- 2) Review and Revise Program Rules by April 20th (3 months):
 - Housing First
 - Immediate and Easy Access
 - Housing-Focused Services
 - Rapid Exits to Permanent Housing
- 3) Plan to Transition Staff to New Approach by April 20th (3 months)
- 4) Increase Monthly Exits to Permanent Housing by 25% (over baseline) by July 20th (6 months)
- 5) Decrease Average Length of Stay by 10% if current base line is 90 days or less; or
 - Decrease Average Length of Stay to 90 days or less if current baseline is higher than 90 days by July 20th (6 months)

Where are you in your Transformational Change?

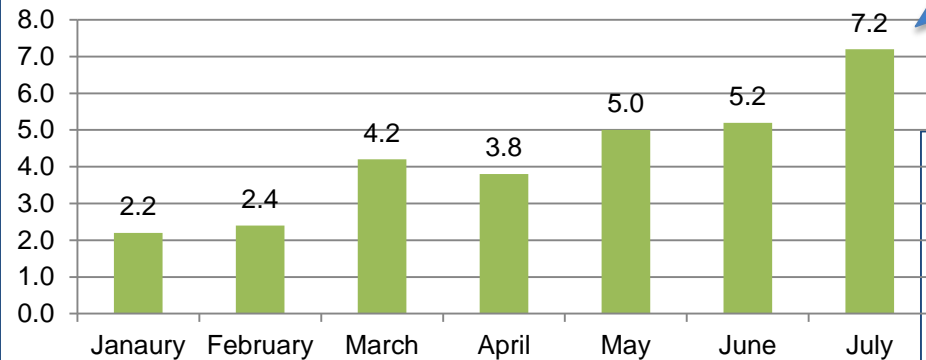
Old Shelter Model

New Shelter Model



Households Exiting to Permanent Housing

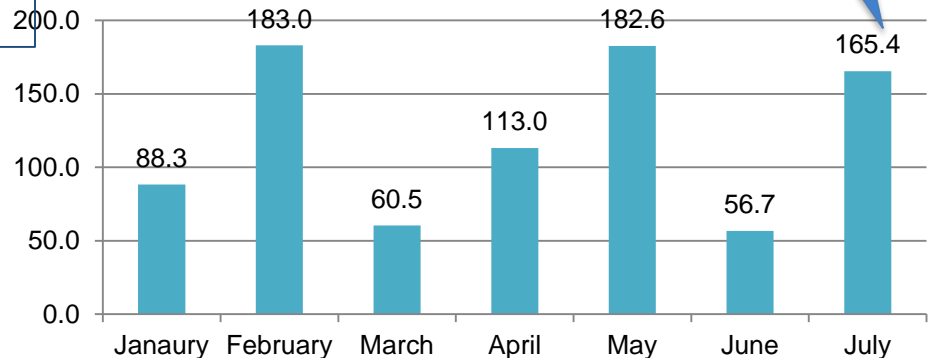
Average number of household exiters that exited to a permanent housing destination.



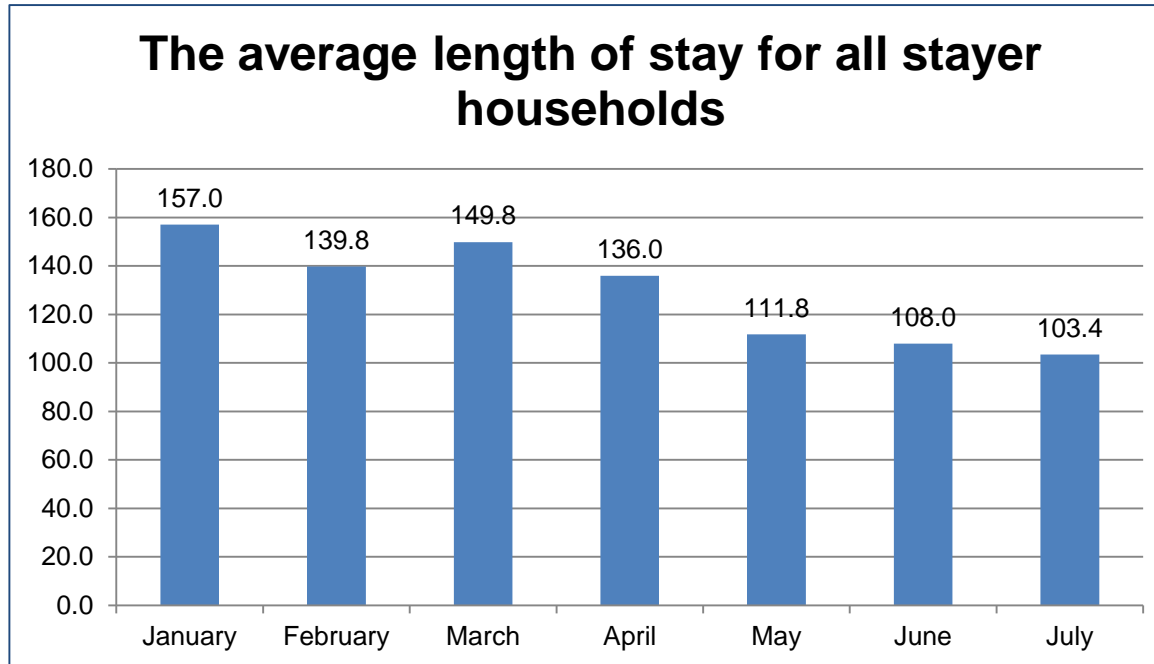
That's a 227% increase in 6 months

Long Stayers are finally moving to PH

Measure: The average length of stay for exiters who moved to permanent housing.



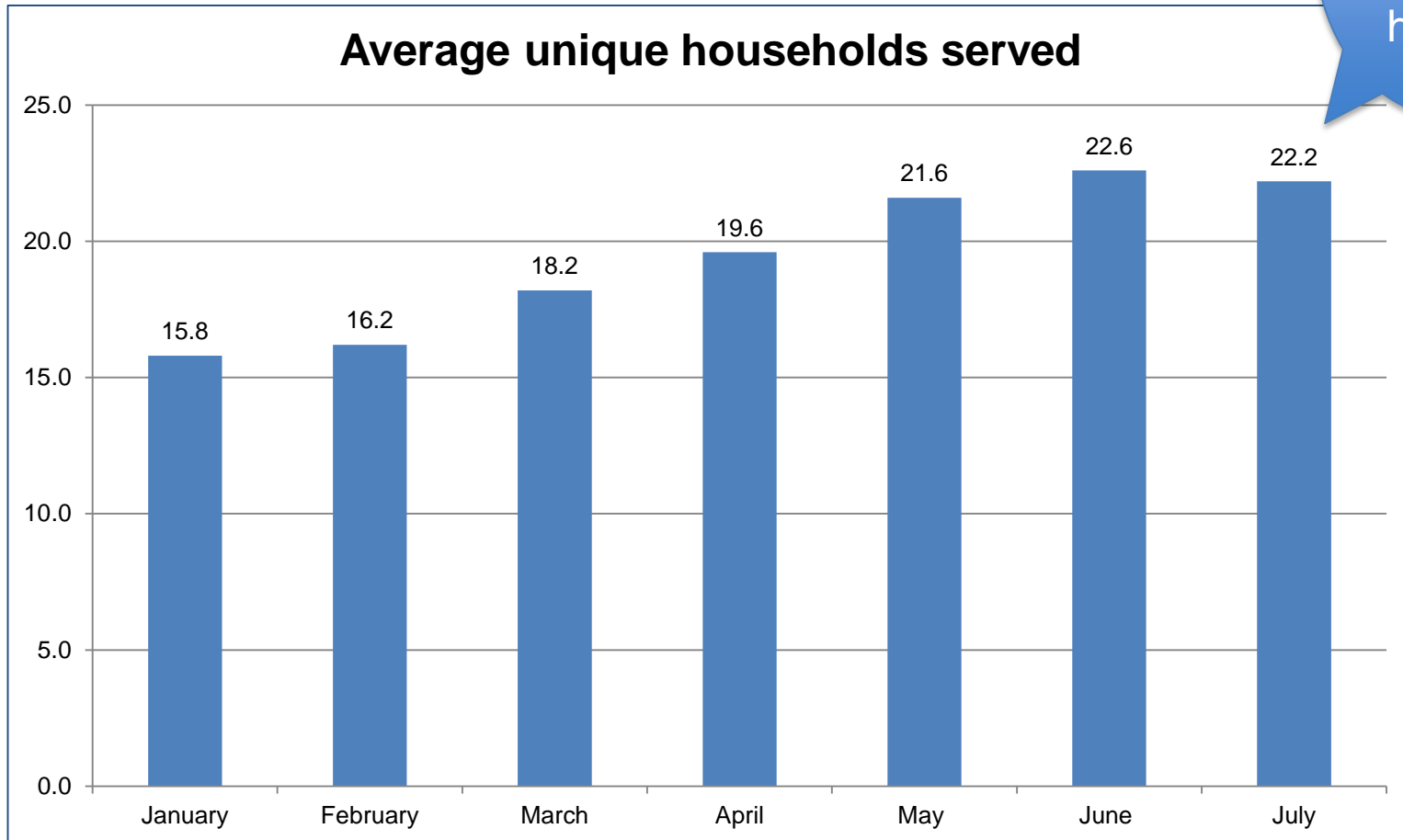
Reduced Average Length of Stay



Almost at
90 days!

Served More Households


We helped 41% more households



The 90 Day Housing Challenge



House 88
Households in 90
days



100%
Increase

January 1 – March 31
44 Households Housed

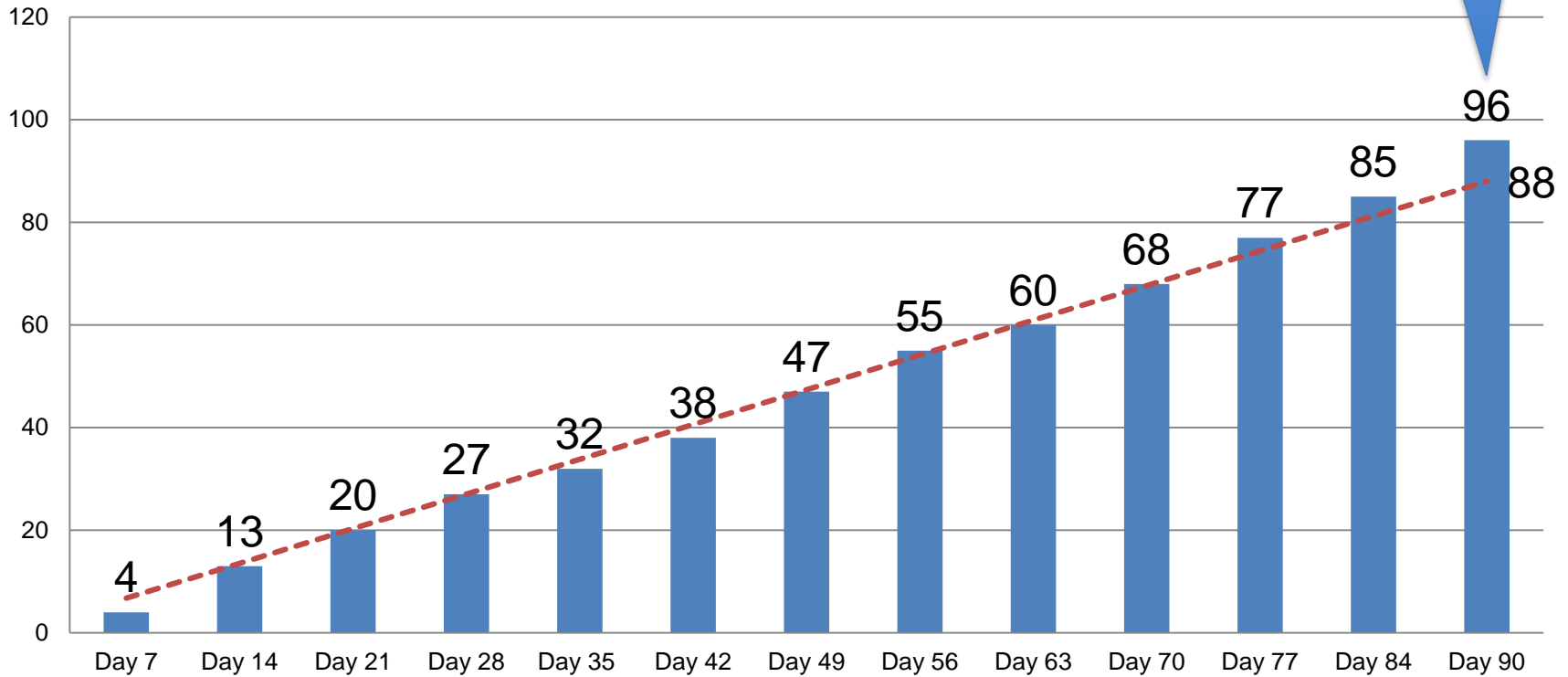
May 1 – July 31 (Our Goal)
88 Households Housed

ACHIEVED!

Exceeded the goal by 9%

Cumulative Total All Organizations

Actual Goal



FISH/Friends in Service to Humanity of Northwestern Connecticut, Inc.

- 35 beds
- Serve families
- Serve veterans

Before

- Drug and Alcohol Testing
- Rules
- Long lengths of stay
- Lower % of exits to permanent housing

Everything MUST Change – “*Shift MUST Happen*”

After

- Housing Focused Services
- Eliminated Drug and Alcohol Testing
- Staff training
- Different appeals to donors
- **118% decrease in Avg. LOS for stayers in 6 months**
 - From **222 days** in January 2016 to **102 days** in July 2016
- **13% exits to PH**
- Tracking shelter outcomes including # of HH's exiting to PH with Substance Use issues

Spooner House

- Single Men
- Single Women
- Families with Children
- Two 5-bed units
- Two 13-bed units

Before

- Drug and Alcohol Testing
- Rules
- Support Service Focused
- Challenges with volunteers, Board of Directors, Funders
- Long-stayers
- Lower % of exits to permanent housing

Everything MUST Change – “*Shift MUST Happen*”

After

- Eliminated Drug and Alcohol Testing
- Bi-weekly Housing Focused Meetings
- Weekly Self-Help Sessions
- Resident Focus Groups
- Food Diversion Program
- Welcome Home Baskets
- Community Appeals
- Client Focused Staff Meetings
- **100% increase of permanent housing exits in 3 months**

“Move quickly from shelter to permanent housing, rapidly rehousing as many families as we can”