

Housing Focused Shelters in Action

Track: **Optimizing Our System To
End Homelessness**

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New Opportunities

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Housing Focused Shelters in Action

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The State of Connecticut Department of Housing

Moderator

Sarah Dimaio, The Salvation Army

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Immediate and Low Barrier Access

Philosophy

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



Practice

- Few to no prerequisites to shelter – no drug and alcohol testing
- Referrals through coordinated entry - no waiting list
- Prioritize households with the most needs
- 24/7 access
- Equal Access Rule compliance
- Rules should only pertain to safety

Housing Focused Services in Shelter

Shelter environment is housing focused

- All signage reflects a housing message
- Sense of “urgency” in moving to housing is reflected
- “You Can Find Housing”

All written materials reflect housing-focused practice:

- Mission statement: is it about permanent housing?
- Re-writing policy and procedures
- Client handbook
- Voluntary service participation
- Clear messaging to community and clients

Housing Focused Services in Shelter

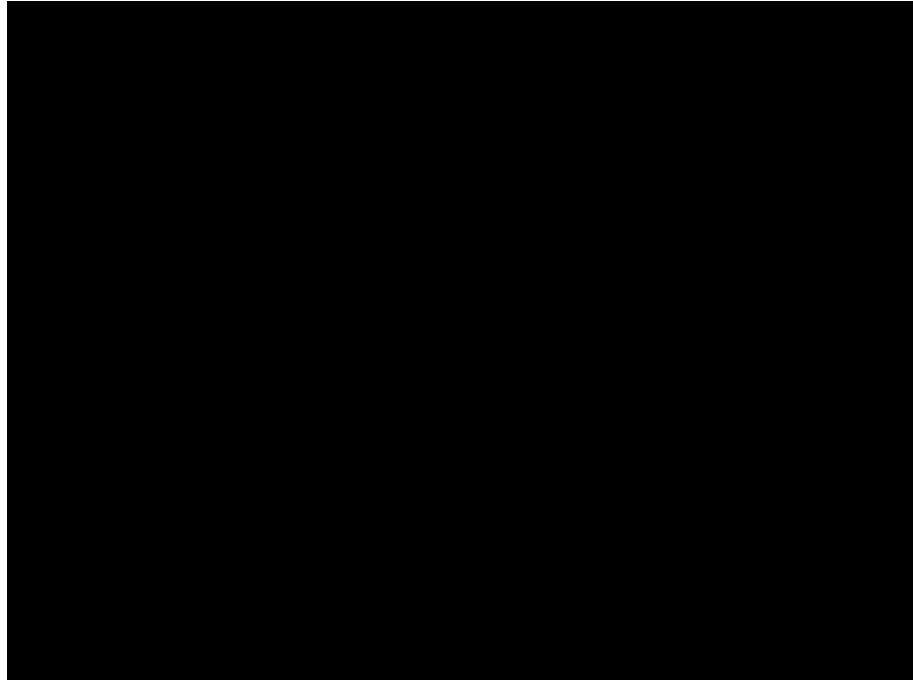
- Everyone develops a housing plan as soon as they enter shelter (DAY 1)
 - Message that shelter is part of a process to get housed
 - Develop client-centered housing plans immediately
 - Facilitate self-resolution
 - Connect clients to housing supports
 - Strong connections to internal and external system partners, services, and mainstream agency benefits and networks to promote longer-term housing stability

“ I tell my staff, ‘if you’re not talking about housing, you’re having the wrong conversation.’

Deronda Metz, Salvation Army, Charlotte, NC

Marshall House

Sarah Dimaio





ImmaCare Inc.

Improving lives since 1981



Becoming Low-Barrier

Low-barrier shelter is a cornerstone of a functional crisis response system.

Criteria.

USHCH Federal

Benchmark

Practice Shift

- Few to no prerequisites to shelter •
- No sobriety requirement
- No waiting list
- Coordinated entry
- Prioritize households with the most needs
- 24/7 access
- Equal Access Rule compliance
- Rules should only pertain to safety

Moshier

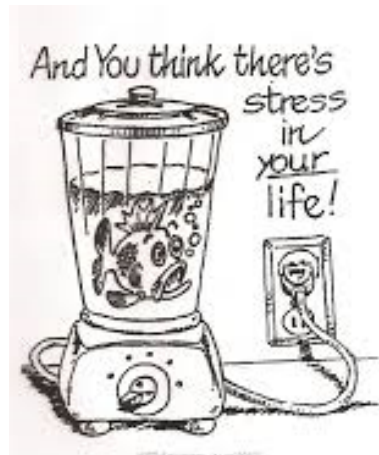
Hartford Connecticut Emergency Shelter Learning Collaborative: Shifting Shelter: Putting Best Practice into Action. Kay McDivitt and Ben Cattell Noll

Working with Challenging Clients

Patience

Persistence

Problem-solving



On 4/23/19

75 people enrolled in shelter

53 have prior shelter stays in HMIS

27 have prior shelter stays within 30 days prior to coming to ImmaCare

11 people have prior RRH or PSH enrollments

Where do we go from here?

Renovations on the horizon

Retooling how we operate low-barrier

Housing Focused



Shelter NOW

Revise Staff Job Description

- Shelter NOW's message had to be clear and focused on housing individuals and families in a timely manner
- Job function being aligned with a "Housing Focused" mindset – Offering "light-touch" assistance, including help creating a realistic housing placement/stabilization plan, housing information and support resources
- Individualized Person Center Service Plan
- Case Management Support – Based on a community collaborative with other community providers with the understanding that homelessness in the City of Meriden is not a Shelter NOW problem but a city health concern
- Willingness to integrate CAN functions in our shelter operations – Performing CAN assessments – staff has the opportunity to establish a trusting relationships from the onset – eliminates the person from having to retell their difficult situation repeatedly to different people
- Baseline Assessment & Initial Housing Plan – Focusing on barriers directly related to obtaining/maintaining housing which includes short-term, actionable goals – monthly budget, Housing Savings Plan, seeking gainful employment, and/or mental & physical health concerns

Previous “Curfew” Policy & Protocol

- Shelter clients were allowed entry at 4:30pm
- Once a “client/resident” entered the shelter they were pretty much in for the night
- Family curfew was at 7pm
- Curfew for our single men and women was at 9pm
- Two 15 minute smoke breaks; 7:45pm and 10pm

Policy Change to Eliminate “CURFEWS”

- Clear Messaging – Shelter “Guest” – they’re not residents nor are they clients
- Expectations – Our guest are adults so they’re treated as such – The understanding of responsibility and accountability is established at the shelter intake
- We promote responsible and healthy life style choices
- Shelter entry is still 4:30pm but the 7 and 9pm curfews have been eliminated
- After re-entering the shelter guest are allowed to exit at their leisure up until 10pm
- Only guests with verified documented employment are allowed to leave the shelter after 10pm

Policy Change to Eliminate “CURFEWS”

- Minimum Six hour sleep requirement
- Shelter Now has since become a smoke free environment. When our guest exit the building to smoke a cigarette they're to vacate the property
- Strict policy – Failure to return and be in their bunk by 1am will be counted as a “No-Show”. Three No-Shows is grounds for immediate discharge
- Parents of minor children are informed of the importance of making sure their children get the necessary amount of sleep so they're provided with the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) guidelines outlining recommended sleep duration for children from infants to teens (AAP Endorsement of Support)

St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Waterbury

Low Barrier Changes

No longer breathalyze residents

Focus on safety rather than substance use

Eliminated curfews

Reduced policy manual

Housing Focused Changes

Case conference with community providers

Weekly Supervision of staff

Weekly review of each case

Message Housing is the goal of shelter

Questions?

Visit: <https://www.cceh.org/ati-2019/> or
contact training@cceh.org

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