

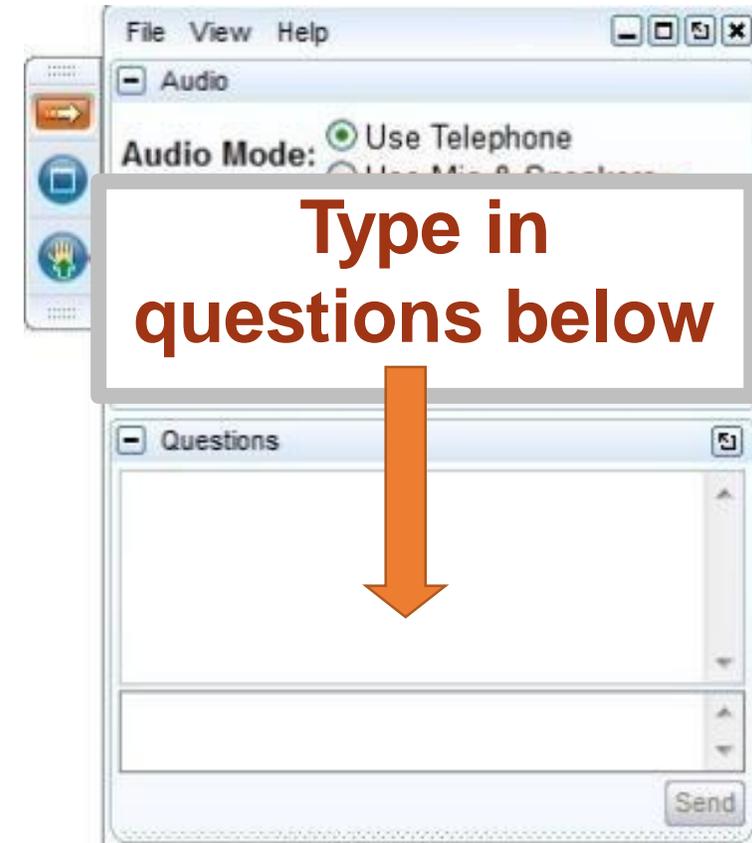
# Utilizing Remote Shelter Diversion Practices During the COVID-19 Crisis

5/6/2020

# House Keeping

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- Attendees are muted
- Please type any questions you have into the Questions Box
- We are recording this webinar and will send out the link to everyone who registered at a later date.



# Speakers

Diana Berube

*Program Manager for Prevention and Exit Strategies*

Tashmia Bryant

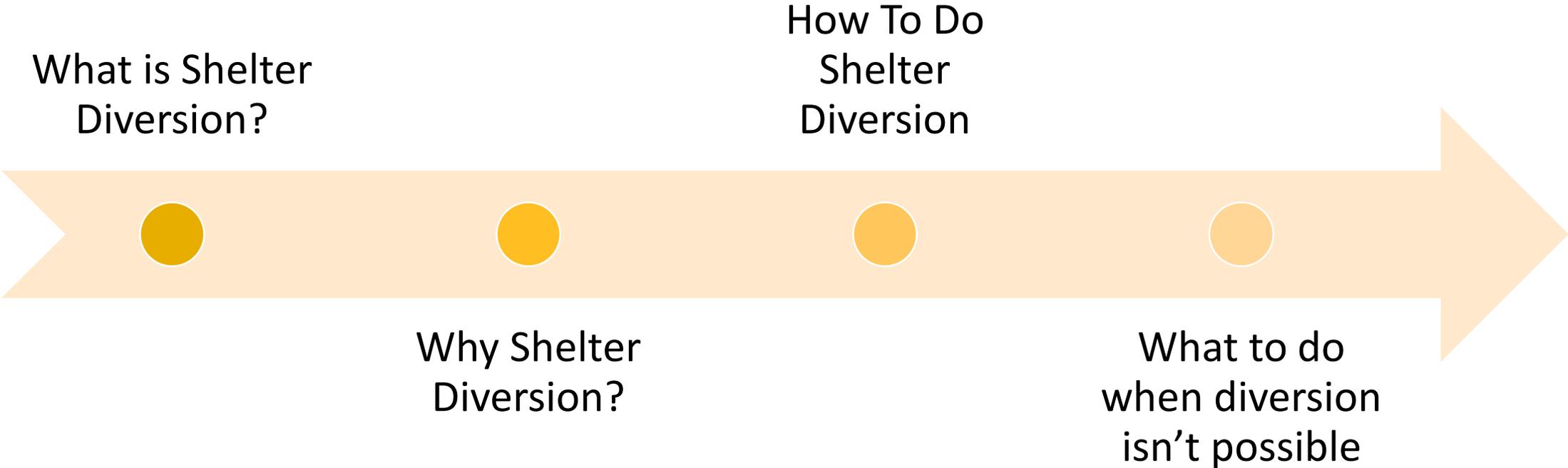
*Capacity Building and Equity Program Manager*

Amber Freeman

*Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator*

# Agenda

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# **What is Shelter Diversion?**

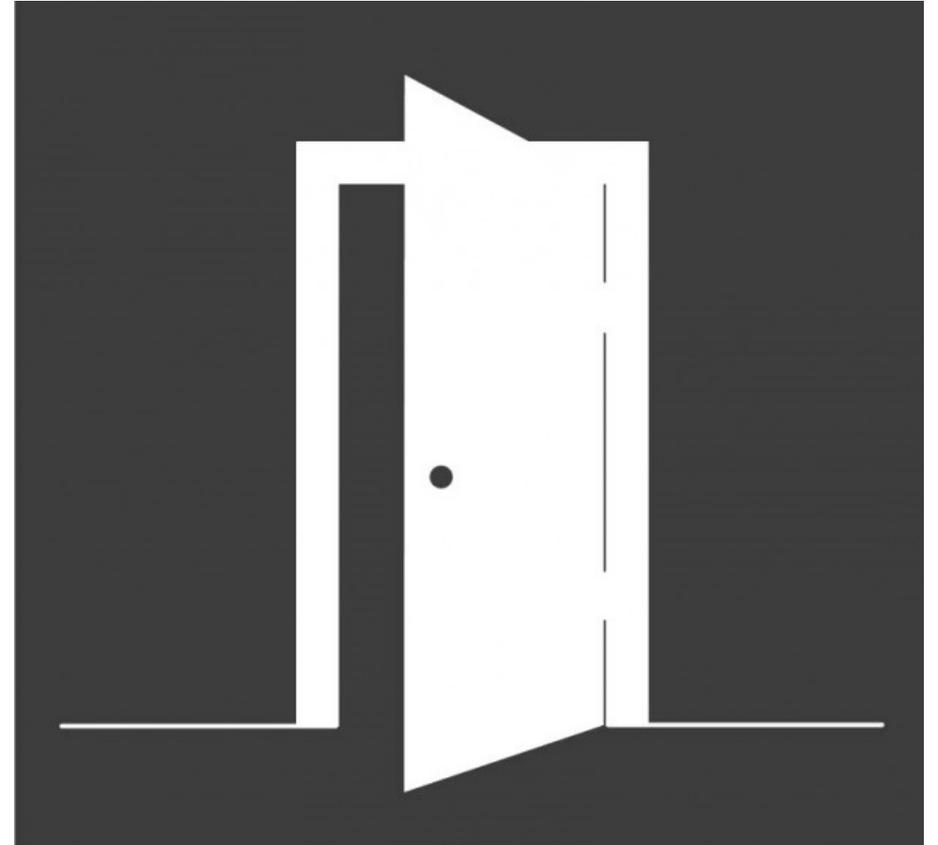
# Prevents and Ends Homelessness

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**Shelter Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness at the front door of shelter**

**Goals:**

- Help people identify immediate alternative housing arrangements
- Connect them with services and/or financial assistance to help them secure and maintain permanent housing.
- Develop long-term housing plan



# Housing First

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**People experiencing homelessness deserve housing FIRST, without any precondition** (*such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety*).

- Homelessness is a crisis – persons in crisis are less able to clearly think through problems and advocate for themselves than they are when not in crisis.
- People more likely to succeed when no longer in crisis.
- Fight or Flight response.

# Shelter Diversion is a Conversation

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## You

- Listening
- Identifying Natural Supports and Resources
  - Identifying and Highlighting Strengths
- Providing information and guidance
- Myth busting & Reality Testing

## Person in Housing Crisis

- Sharing their Story
- Developing their own housing plan
  - Asking Questions
  - Taking steps (with guidance, as needed) to secure and maintain permanent housing

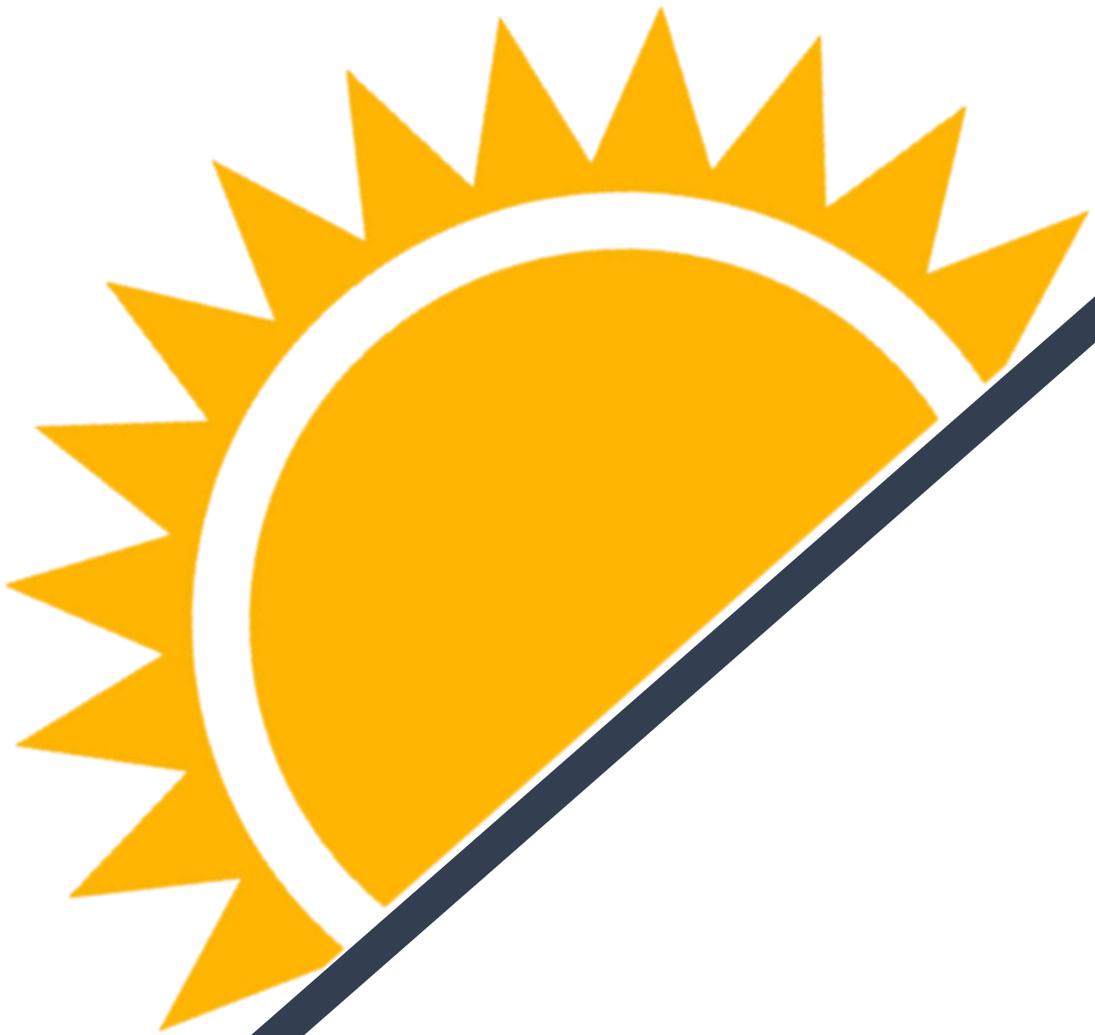
# Types of Homelessness

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- “Literal” homelessness refers to people sleeping out on the street or in a place that is not meant for human habitation (ex. In a car or abandoned building)
- “Imminent” homelessness refers to the risk of losing housing within a short time period (ex. Facing eviction or family/friends kicking someone out of a home)

# What is couch surfing?





# **Why Shelter Diversion?**

# Cost Effectiveness of Diversion

## Diversion assistance can be:

- Simple phone conciliation (no assistance funds)
- Mediation + small amount of food (\$35)
- Greyhound bus ticket (\$30-\$500)
- Other assistance like utility bills or back fees (\$200)
- First Month Rent + Deposit (\$1000+)



## Less expensive than:

- Rapid Rehousing (\$5000 +)
- Shelter stay (Shelter bed is \$8600 more than Sec 8 subsidy)
- Street homelessness (\$2414 more in hospitalization vs. housed person)



# Shelter Realities during COVID 19

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- Congregate living
- Low-barrier
- Wet shelter
- Reduction of rules/policies
- Privacy
- Safety
- Minimal Staffing

# Reducing ACES In Children

## Children who experience homelessness:

- Greater negative health outcomes <sup>1</sup>
  - Asthma, allergies, respiratory infections, ear infections, inflammation, etc.
- More hospitalizations
- Predicts future episodes of homelessness <sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Cutuli, J. J., et al. "Adversity and Children Experiencing Family Homelessness: Implications for Health." *Journal of Children and Poverty*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2016, pp. 41–55., doi:10.1080/10796126.2016.1198753. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6171526/>

<sup>2</sup> Glendening, Z., & Shinn, M. (2018, September). Predicting Repeated and Persistent Family Homelessness: Do Families' Characteristics and Experiences Matter. Retrieved July 2, 2019, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/predicting-repeated-and-persistent-family-homelessness-do-families-characteristics-and-experiences-matter>



**Putting Key Principles  
into Action**

# Creating a Safe Space

## **Briefly introduce yourself**

- Name, organization, role
- Describe the conversation
- Physical vs. Emotional space

This begins with  
creating trust and  
how you introduce  
yourself!

# Using Foundational Principles to Stay Housing Focused

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## Motivational Interviewing

- Open-ended questions
- Change Talk
- Affirmations

## Trauma Informed Care

- Choice
- Empowerment
- Safety

## Active and Empathetic Listening

- Body language
- Not adding your own judgement

# A Culture Shift: The Core Values of a Trauma-Informed System of Care

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Safety

Ensuring physical and emotional safety

Trustworthiness

Making tasks clear and maintaining appropriate boundaries

Choice

Prioritizing choice and control

Collaboration

Maximizing collaboration and sharing of power

Empowerment

Prioritizing empowerment and skill-building

Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural, historical, and gender issues

*Adapted from Roger Fallot, PhD and Maxine Harris, PhD, Community Connections, Inc.*

# Client-Driven

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**H**elp – Support the person in developing their own housing plan

**O**wnership – When person makes their own housing plan, they will feel a sense of ownership and are more likely to follow through

**U**nderstanding – No one is perfect, and we all will make mistakes. Allow for shelter guests to make mistakes by giving them the room and support to try.

**S**hare – Share helpful resources and tips with person, and help them to navigate accessing them.

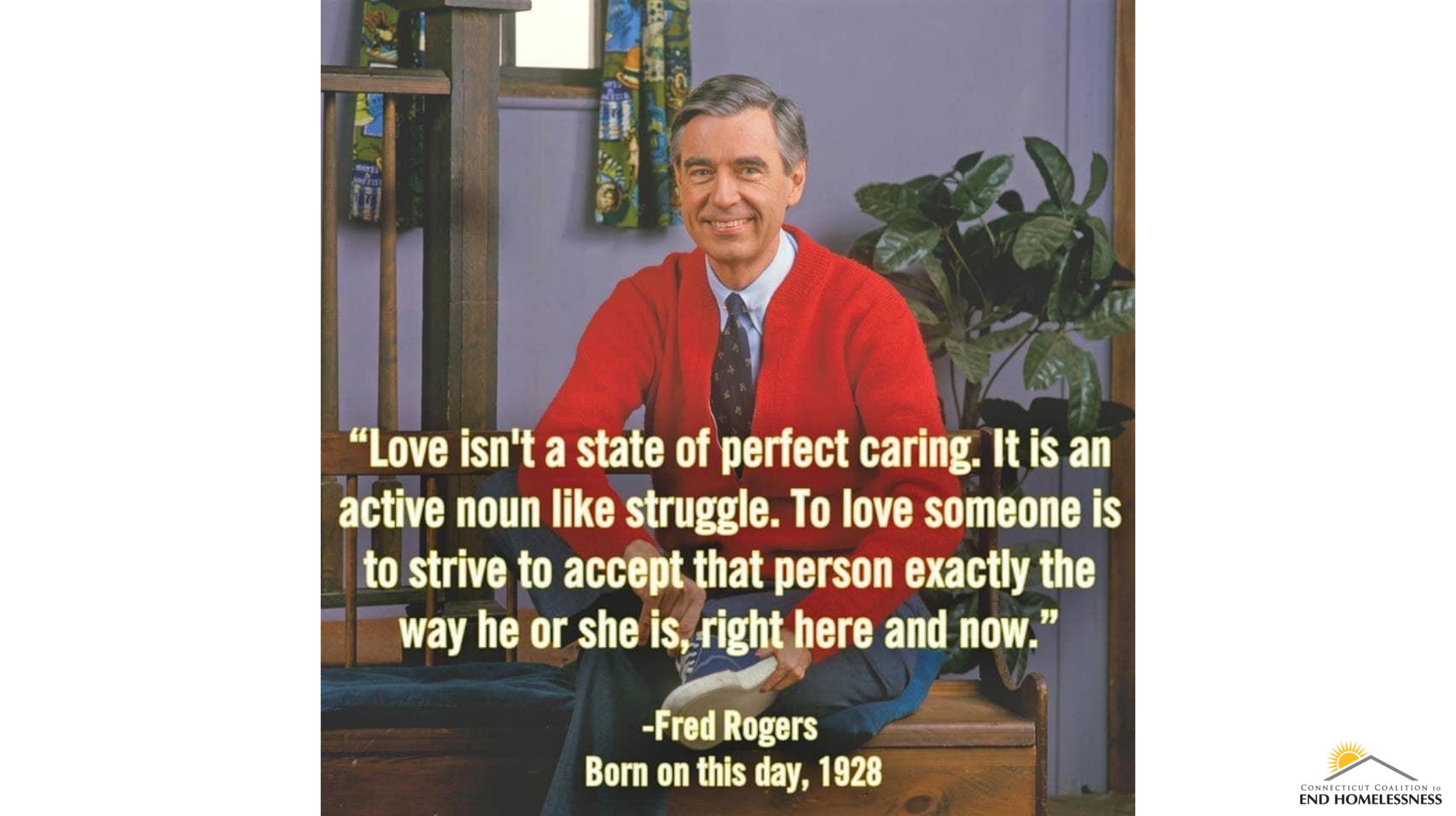
**E**ngage- Every chance you get, engage person in conversations about their housing plan and any recent success and challenges they're experiencing.



# Shelter Diversion Steps

# Problem-Solving Conversation

- Can you tell me about why you are seeking emergency shelter today?
- What are all the other things you tried or thought about trying before you sought shelter today?
- How long have you been staying there?
- What is the primary/main reason that you had to leave the place where you stayed last night?
- Are there additional reasons why you can't stay there any longer?
- Where did you stay before that?
- Do you think that you/you and your family could stay there again temporarily if we provide you with some help or referrals to find permanent housing or connect with other services?
- What resources do you have right now that could help you and your family find a place to stay temporarily or find permanent housing?



**“Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like struggle. To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now.”**

**-Fred Rogers  
Born on this day, 1928**

# Highlighting Strengths

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.

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

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

Who have they helped?

Who are their allies, friends, and family members?

# Housing Possibilities

Stay with family,  
kin, or other  
natural support

Rent or get their  
own residence

Sober Living Home

Temporary lease  
(month to  
month, 6  
month)

Relocating  
permanently to  
safe place out of  
town

Shared housing

# Staying with family/friends

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- This may require some mediation
  - What can the person contribute to the household?
    - Child care
    - Food
    - Take over a bill
  - Social distancing considerations



# Discussing Safety Concerns with Doubled-Up Families & Individuals

## Sleeping Arrangements

Ask about the sleeping arrangements for the whole family and individual family members.

*“We want you (and your children) to be safe. Please think about the home where you could stay tonight”*

## Physical Space

- Are the heat, lights, running water, and plumbing all working reliably?
- Are there any problems with rodents, bugs, animal(s) or any other pests?
- Do you have any concerns about getting in or out of this home? (reference to having safe access and unrestricted exit)

## Behavioral Health

- Is there drug or alcohol use or sales in the home that could hurt you or your child(ren)?
- Can the parent decide who has access to their child(ren)?
- Is there anything you need to do in order to stay in this home that makes you uncomfortable? Are there any “strings” attached to living there?
- Does anyone in this household physically hurt or threaten you, your child(ren), or anyone in the home?
- Does anyone in this household verbally or emotionally hurt you or your child? (belittling you, extreme sarcasm or put downs, negative comments that hurt your self-image)
- Is domestic violence or trafficking a reason that they are seeking housing assistance today?

# Helping to Relocate out of town



**This should only be done when verification of safe and stable housing has been achieved!**

# Shared Housing

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- Each party understands rules and financial obligations
- Can be achieved through formal written roommate agreement
- Landlord may allow for separate leases



# Determining Service Provision

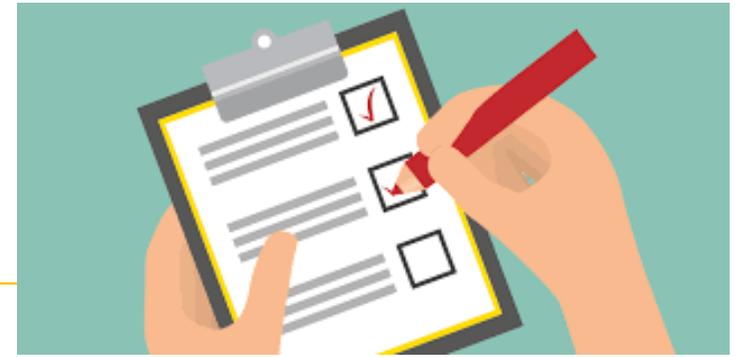
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- Consider how your organization can limit in-person contact in the provision of services while maintaining standard operations.
- Determine which services can be provided by phone or virtually, such as through a video conferencing or a meeting software.
- Determine when an in-person appointment is necessary
- Put safety precautions in place for yourself and your participants

# Screening Appointment Tips

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Begin each appointment/ phone call with your client explaining to them that until the coronavirus pandemic is over you will be putting safety measures in place for yourself as well as the individual. Ask the individual if they are currently experiencing:

1. Shortness of breath (if person has this, call 911 and have the person talk to the nurse triage)
2. Fever
3. Cough

If they answer YES to any of the questions, do not have an in-person meeting, encourage them to seek medical attention

# Safety & Case Management

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## Take Safety Precautions

(ask the screening questions, use PPE, stay 6 feet apart, have good hygiene)

## Be Creative

(scheduling, meeting locations, technology, shelter diversion options)

## Optimize Technology

(text messaging, video conferencing, scanning documents, online resources)

## Prepare

(in person contact, documentation, technology, devise a plan)

## Be Resourceful

(do your research, educate, empower, build rapport)

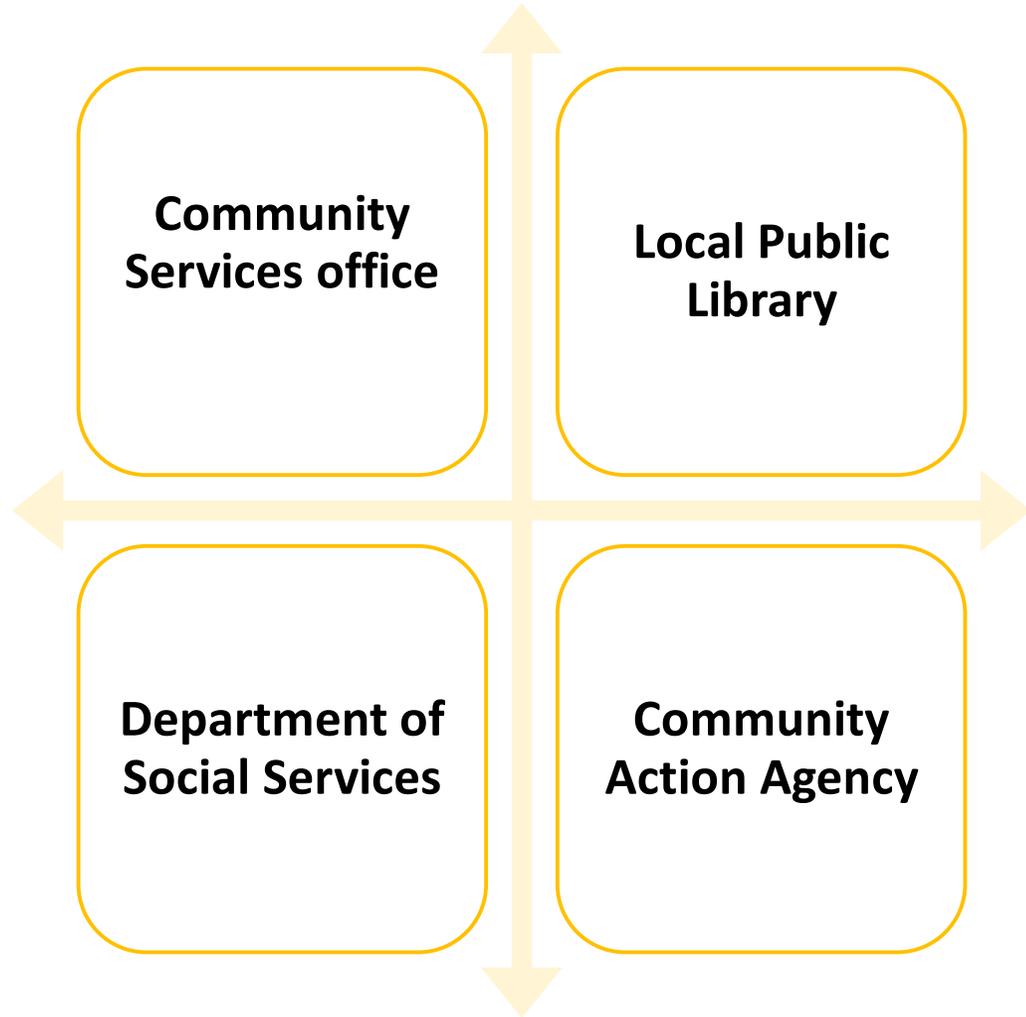
# Job-Seeking During COVID-19

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- Exploring employment is an important component of shelter diversion
- During the COVID-19 crisis a lot of companies *are* still hiring —and they need to fill essential roles more than ever
- Educate on employment & the job-seeking process
- Highlight strengths & utilize employment assessment tools
- Link to employment services



# Who else to connect with...



Municipal offices can be a great resource and have a wealth of knowledge about their unique cities/towns. Have locations, contact information readily available for clients.

Check their websites for timely information!

# What do you need help with?

Search resources in Connecticut

|  |   |                                       |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="text" value="Search services or programs"/> | <input type="text" value="ZIP code, city, or address"/>  | <input type="button" value="Search"/> |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|

To find resources outside Connecticut, use your state's 211. [Find your local 211](#)

# If Your Shelter Diversion Efforts Don't Work

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## Call 211 !

- **If you can, assist the person with the phone call**
- **Keep in mind, many shelters are full and have wait lists**
- **A homeless outreach worker may be available to help keep the individual connected to additional resources**

# CCEH Emergency Assistance

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## Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project

- Rapid Exit and Shelter Diversion funds for **18-24 year olds**

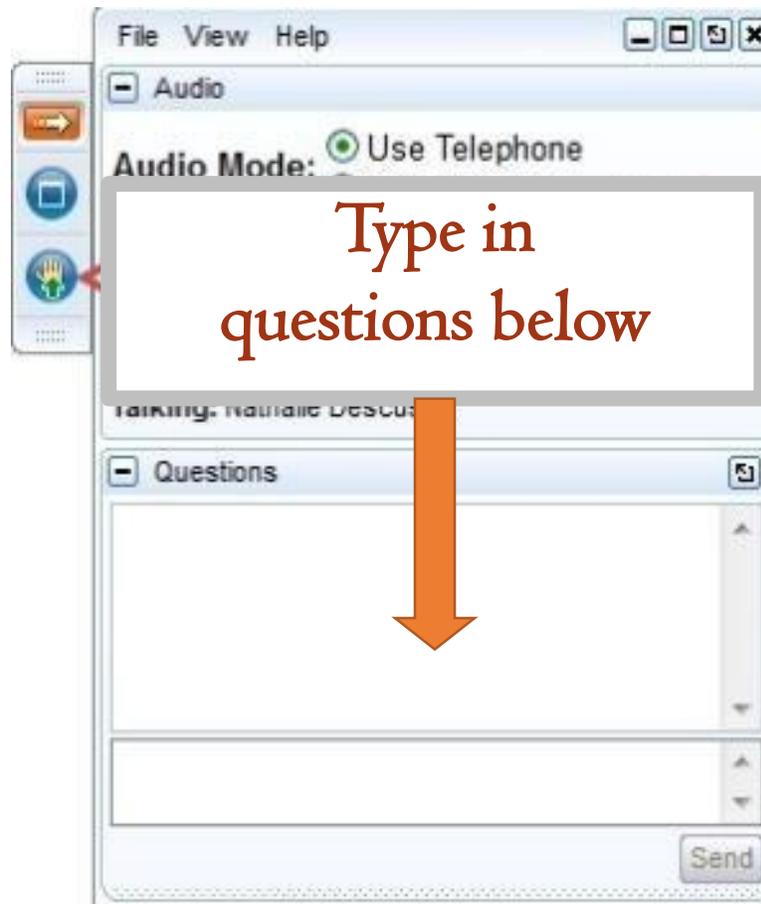
## Shelter Diversion

- Funds to keep **individuals and families** from experiencing episodes of homelessness and entering shelter

## Rapid Exit

- Funds to keep episodes of homelessness as brief as possible for **families and individuals**

# Questions?



**Additional Questions and Training Needs?**

Contact [training@cceh.org](mailto:training@cceh.org)