

Creating a Low Barrier Shelter Environment

Housing Focus While Addressing An Immediate Need

Traditional Shelter Environment

Focus on:

Overall safety of
staff and guests

Views
intoxication as a
threat to shelter
safety

Increasing
income as a
means to
housing

Limited
accommodations
for people with
special
circumstances

Low-barrier, Housing Focused Shelter Environment

Focus on:

Safety of
guests if
otherwise
unsheltered

Meeting
guests where
they are at

Quick exits
to permanent
housing

Assisting those
who may be
hardest to
house

Greater emphasis on guest: safety, housing, positive outcome

Shelter is a safe environment that meets an immediate need. It should be seen as a very short-term solution to a very temporary situation.

Montessori Classroom

Shelf

Table

Shelf

Shelf

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Table

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Shelf

Table

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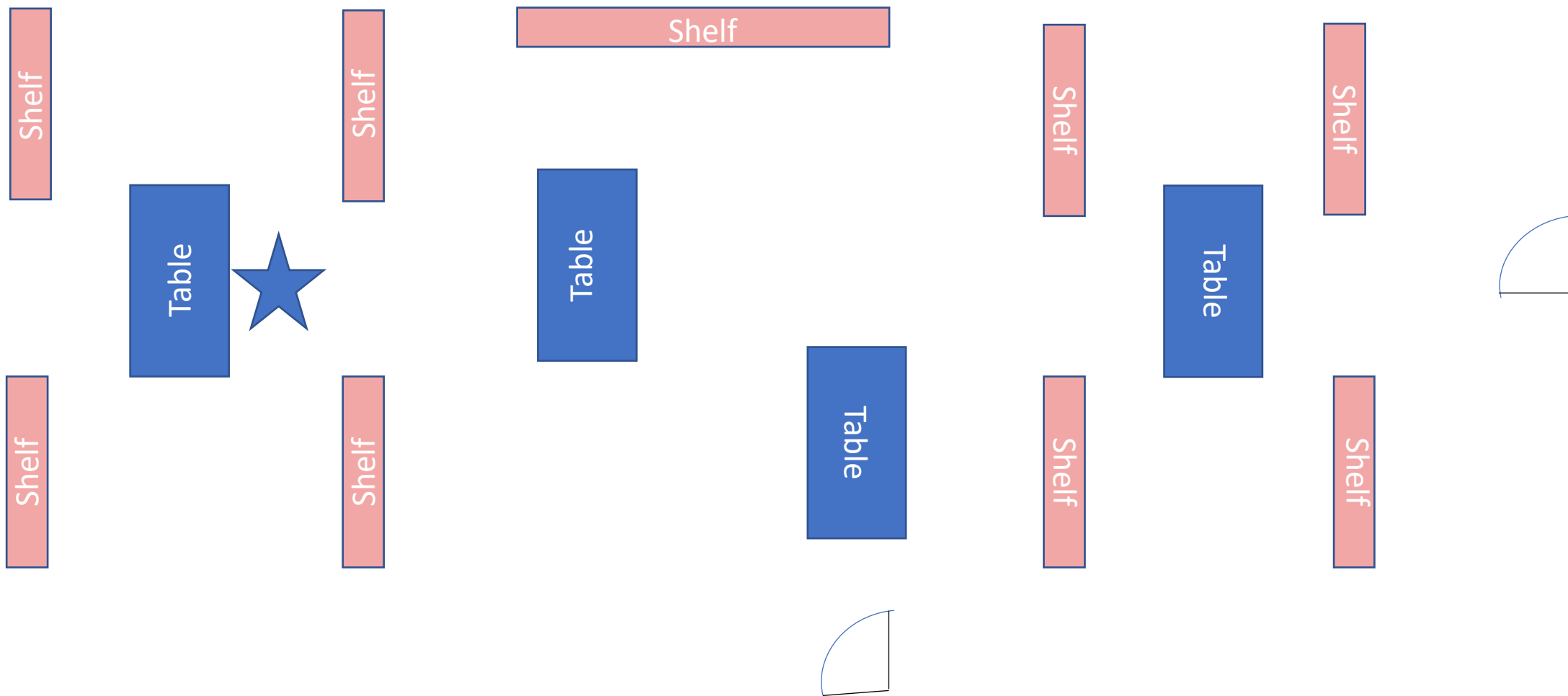
Shelf

Table

Shelf



Montessori Classroom



How to create an environment that encourages peace, safety, and positive engagement

(How to avoid creating a litany of rules to enforce and issuing consequences, aka head-banging)

In every case,

Look at your environment!

I don't feel safe without my partner near me!



You and your partner are welcome to sleep near one another.

Mixing genders is ok!
It's safer than sleeping outside!

I want to spend the holiday with my family, but I don't want to lose my bed.



You can take some nights out.

Encourage relationships outside the shelter, which might lead to housing.

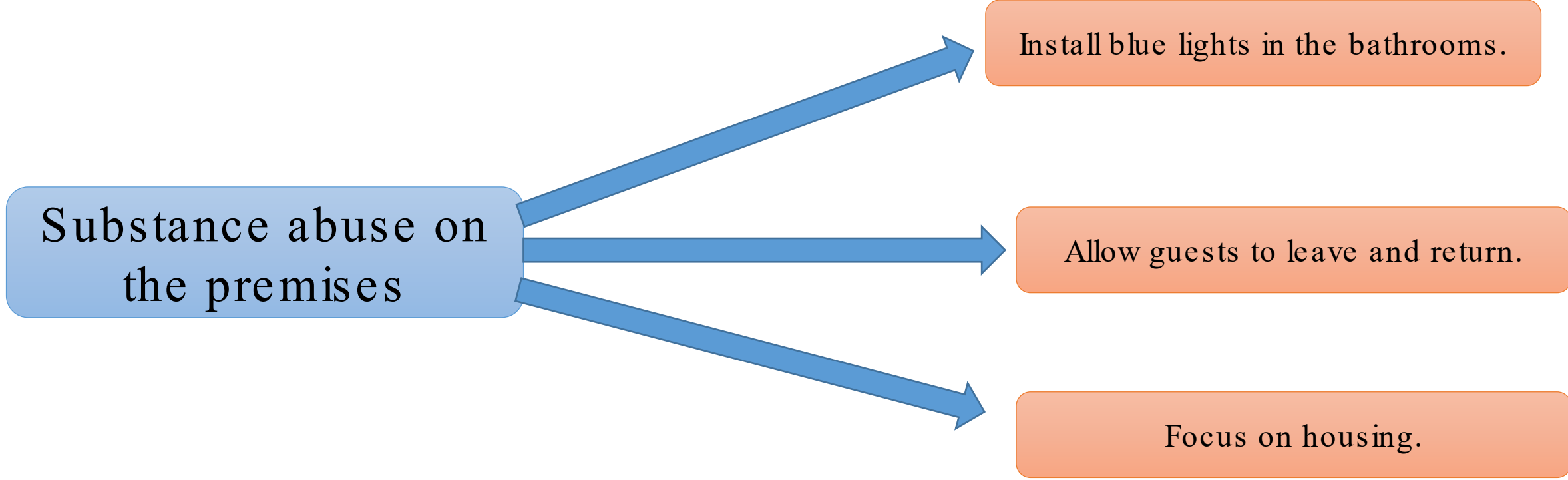
I can't live without my pet boa constrictor!



Let's talk about how quickly we can get you housed!

Common concerns and ways to solve them

Substance abuse on
the premises



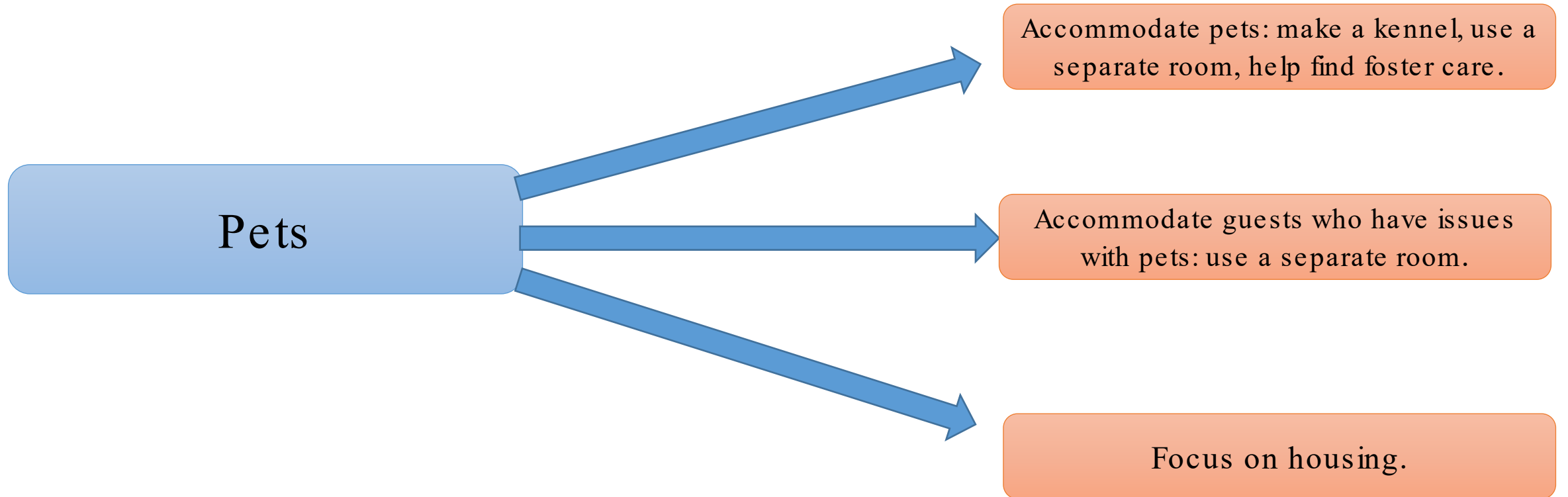
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graph LR; A[Substance abuse on the premises] --> B[Install blue lights in the bathrooms.]; A --> C[Allow guests to leave and return.]; A --> D[Focus on housing.]
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Install blue lights in the bathrooms.

Allow guests to leave and return.

Focus on housing.

Common concerns and ways to solve them



Housing Focus means:

Every intake begins with creating a housing plan.

Every conversation is about housing.

The response to every complaint is a question about housing.

Messaging is important!

Create a culture in your environment that encourages guests to see the hope in housing!