Creating a Low Barrier Shelter Environment

Housing Focus While Addressing An Immediate Need
Traditional Shelter Environment

Focus on:

- Overall safety of staff and guests
- Increasing income as a means to housing
- Limited accommodations for people with special circumstances
- Views intoxication as a threat to shelter safety
Low-barrier, Housing Focused Shelter Environment

Focus on:
- Meeting guests where they are at
- Safety of guests if otherwise unsheltered
- 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
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!

You can take some nights out.

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

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

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

I can’t live without my pet boa constrictor!
Common concerns and ways to solve them

Substance abuse on the premises

- Install blue lights in the bathrooms.
- Allow guests to leave and return.
- Focus on housing.
Common concerns and ways to solve them

 Pets

Accommodate pets: make a kennel, use a separate room, help find foster care.

Accommodate guests who have issues with pets: use a separate room.

Focus on housing.
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!