Housing Problem Solving at Every Step of the Way!

A special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor:
Kay Moshier McDivitt, National Alliance to End Homelessness
Diiv Sternman, National Alliance to End Homelessness

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HOUSING PROBLEM SOLVING AT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY!

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diiv sternman
Senior Technical Assistance Specialists

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Who We Are

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonprofit, non-partisan, organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States.
## What We Do

### Policy and Programs
- Carries out the vital work of educating policymakers and the field about key strategies and policies for ending and preventing homelessness.
- Keeps federal policymakers and legislators informed of the needs of people experiencing homelessness and the programs serving them.
- Leads advocacy efforts on a grassroots level.

### Capacity Building
- Supports efforts to end homelessness by offering training and technical assistance tailored to communities’ unique needs.
- Helps design and implement crisis systems, improve systems’ performance, and utilize data to end homelessness, particularly with an equity lens.
- Provides online courses, trainings, and webinars to inform the field of best practices to end homelessness.

### Homelessness Research Institute
- Analyzes data to identify homelessness trends on national, local, and Continuum of Care levels.
- Publishes research that ensures policymakers, practitioners, the media, and the public have the best information about trends and emerging solutions to the problem.
- Uses an equity lens to identify disparities in homelessness data.

### Lived Experience Innovation + Strategic Communications
National Alliance to End Homelessness Statements for Participation

The Alliance works to ensure that diverse voices are included as facilitators, attendees, and guests in our training forums. All voices are welcome.

The organization has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of discrimination or abusive behavior. The Alliance is committed to ensuring that all its events are safe and respectful for all participants.

Participants acknowledge that any form of discrimination, violence, or abusive behavior may result in removal from an office hour or forum depending on the situation.

If any discrimination is witnessed or experienced during the training, or if you feel unsafe, please notify any member of the Alliance staff.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness strives to create a diverse, inclusive, accepting, and safe space for everyone.
Session Objectives

• Outline the important role and impact of Housing Problem Solving in ending homelessness at any stage
• Recognize the interconnected elements of an effective homeless response system
• Concretize the integration of Housing Problem Solving into our work in all programs
Who is Here?

• City/County/State Government/Funder
• CoC/CAN staff
• Executive Director
• Program Managers
• Case manager/ Housing Navigator/ Service Coordinator
• Diversion Specialists
• Outreach Specialists
• Advocate/ Peer Specialist
• Person With Lived Experience
• Other
Who does Housing Problem Solving in your job?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure
HOUSING PROBLEM-SOLVING: WHY?
Housing Problem-Solving

is a **strength based, person-centered, flexible** intervention **focused on identifying solutions in conversation with people** to support them in resolving their own housing crisis as quickly as possible by **any means available** to them.
Ramping Up Housing
Problem Solving
The Housing Reality

- Majority of sheltered and unsheltered folks will not get a subsidy
- Majority of people that have the same economic and health challenges as our clients are NOT homeless
- We need to move people beyond shelter into housing quickly to open up beds for newly homeless people
- Client centered is not focusing just on the person in front of us (our client) but on the next person in our community falling into homelessness that needs a shelter bed
- PSH “must” be used for the most vulnerable populations
- People CAN find housing options without vouchers
- It takes commitment and creative thinking
Stages of Housing Crisis

- At risk
- Imminently homeless
- Newly housed
- Newly homeless
- Homeless for some time
- Prevention/Diversion
- Rapid Exit
- Stabilization
- Housing Plan/Options
Problem-Solving Conversation

The Basics:

Create a Comfortable, Safe Meeting Environment → A Conversation Not a Checklist → Be Clear and Transparent in your Conversation → Listen without judgement

Normalize their experience → Display open, responsive body language → Explore strengths and resources

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**What all Housing Problem Solving has in common**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What all Housing Problem Solving has in common</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Locates</strong> <strong>POWER and responsibility</strong> for resolution with the person in housing crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicates</strong> <strong>confidence</strong> in the person's abilities to resolve their housing crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supports the person’s</strong> <strong>creativity and autonomy</strong> in identifying solutions and removing barriers to housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grows shared</strong> <strong>understanding</strong> of what they need to resolve the housing crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is grounded in the understanding of</strong> (continued) <strong>homelessness as a trauma</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When People Experience Crisis

- **Fight**: Affirm & redirect anger → removing barriers
- **Flee**: Slow down & help identify strengths
- **Freeze**: Show care & affirm, build confidence
- **Fawn**: Emphasize options & encourage autonomy
Housing Problem Solving interrupts trauma response to becoming homeless

- Deep Listening
- Ground in Strengths
- Brainstorm Solutions
- Trouble-shoot Barriers
- Reality Test
- Connection
- Confidence
- Creativity/Options
- Self Efficacy
- Resilience

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How Does Housing Problem Solving Work?
Examples of Services Offered…

- **Creative Problem-Solving Conversation** focused on immediate housing options & removing barriers
- (Re)Connections to Family and Natural Supports
- Grounding in Strengths, Skills & Assets
- Conflict Resolution/Mediation
- Housing Search/Unit Identification
- Landlord/Tenant Advocacy & Rights
- Connection to Mainstream Resources
- Tenant Legal Services
- Credit Repair
- Financial Assistance (flexible, as needed)
- Individualized support
Examples of Successful Resolutions

- Permanently Back with Friends or Family
- Return to Current or Recent Residence
- Identified New Safe Residence
- Temporarily Housed While Seeking New Housing
- Permanent Relocation To Safe Place Out of Town
- Stability Plan Established to Keep New Housing
HOUSING PROBLEM SOLVING: A SYSTEM WIDE APPROACH
Effective Housing Problem-Solving Practice: Four Fundamentals “Cs”

- Community-Wide Buy In
- Problem Solving Conversation
- Creating Connections
- Continuous Practice
System Orientation: Using Housing Problem Solving to End Homelessness

- **Reduce Entries**: prevent and divert households safely back to housing whenever possible
- **Reduce Returns to Homelessness**: reality test housing solutions and troubleshoot issues
- **Reduce Length of Time Homeless**: rapidly exit households and speed up progress towards housing at every opportunity
- **Increase Exits to Housing**: generate and expand viable housing options at any point

End Homelessness
People Make Housing Work

- Fewer than 3% of renters below 50% AMI become homeless in CT annually¹
  - Including fewer than 4% of renters below 30% AMI
- When almost half of renters statewide in CT are making less than 50% of AMI
  - Including 30% who make less than 30% of AMI

**State Facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Wage</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Bedroom Housing Wage</td>
<td>$31.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Renter Households</td>
<td>471,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Renter Households Below 30% AMI</td>
<td>141,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Renter Households Below 30% AMI</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Renter Households Below 50% AMI</td>
<td>231,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Renter Households Below 50% AMI</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Affordable Rent for Low Income Households**

- Minimum Wage Worker: $780/mo
- Household at 30% of Area Median Income: $922/mo
- Household at 50% of Area Median Income: $1,536/mo

**Fair Market Rent**

- 1-Bedroom Fair Market Rent: $1,347/mo
- 2-Bedroom Fair Market Rent: $1,660/mo

¹ Data estimated from 2022 LSA

NLIHC Out Of Reach
It Works!
Connecticut Data

Exits from Literally Homeless Projects, by year

Enrollments in Emergency Shelter (ES), Transitional Housing (TH), and Outreach (SO)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Feb-20</th>
<th>Feb-21</th>
<th>Feb-22</th>
<th>Feb-23</th>
<th>Feb-24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,788</td>
<td>3,318</td>
<td>1,652</td>
<td>1,306</td>
<td>1,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Housed</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Housed</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td>1,282</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>1,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housed (Self-Resolved)</td>
<td>2,913</td>
<td>1,585</td>
<td>1,851</td>
<td>1,928</td>
<td>2,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housed (Resource)</td>
<td>2,224</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>1,288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Not Housed)</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>2,022</td>
<td>2,365</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>2,680</td>
<td>2,680</td>
<td>2,680</td>
<td>2,680</td>
<td>2,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Alliance to End Homelessness
Housing Program Spots are Scarce

People Experiencing Homelessness

- 4,979 total people currently¹
- 4,244 sheltered
- 735 unsheltered

Housing Program Beds Annually

- 2,659 total²
  - PSH 370³
  - RRH 1,454
  - Other PH 835

3,997 newly homeless annually³
= 8,976 people competing for 2,659 (potential) housing bed placements

1. Data from 6/5/2024 By Name List
2. Data estimated from 2023 HIC, est. 5% annual turnover in PSH
3. Data estimated from 2022 LSA
Problem Solving across interventions

Prevent/Divert
Households before they become homeless

Rapidly Exit
Households newly homeless from shelter and unsheltered location

Generate Options
Keep brainstorming options and removing barriers until a solution sticks

Stabilize
Continue problem solving to address challenges to keeping housing

At CAN
In Shelter & Street Outreach
In housing

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HOUSING PROBLEM SOLVING: INTEGRATION WITHIN PROGRAM PRACTICES
**Housing Problem Solving Practice Requires**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BELIEF</th>
<th>CREATIVITY</th>
<th>POWER</th>
<th>CONNECTION</th>
<th>REALITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That resolution is possible</td>
<td>Model creative thinking, support people in tapping into their own</td>
<td>Let go of the false notion that service providers or systems are the solution</td>
<td>“People don’t become homeless when they run out of money, but when they run out of relationships”¹</td>
<td>Radical honesty about what housing resources do and don’t exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That people are best positioned to identify and execute their own solutions</td>
<td>Openness to all possibilities, everyone’s solution will be different</td>
<td>Knowledge is power: give over your toolkit – info, tools, etc. to support their plans</td>
<td>Relationships and natural supports are more valuable than formal resources</td>
<td>Comfort talking through the viability of different solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In each person’s fundamental creativity, resourcefulness, &amp; capability</td>
<td>Persist in brainstorming, not all options will work, but you only need one</td>
<td>Self advocacy and problem-solving practice sets people up for future success</td>
<td>Deep listening, validation, care and respect matter more than your ideas</td>
<td>Remember most people figure it out!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Meghann Cotter, Micah Ministries, Fredericksburg, VA
Examples of Community Service Connections from Housing Problem Solving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Building</th>
<th>Mainstream Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Conflict resolution</td>
<td>• Income supports (SNAP, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitate reconnect w/ family</td>
<td>• Workforce development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help disclose to trusted friend</td>
<td>• Emergency $ assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Advocacy</th>
<th>Remove Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Tenant legal services</td>
<td>• Credit and financial coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Landlord mediation</td>
<td>• Criminal record expungement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tenant’s rights education</td>
<td>• Healthcare (incl. MH/BH)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Search</th>
<th>And so much more…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Roommate identification</td>
<td>• Anything that supports and empowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unit search tools</td>
<td>progress towards a safe housing option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tenancy screening preparation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And so much more…
Reminder

Housing Problem Solving…

is a **strength based**, **person centered**, **flexible** intervention **focused on identifying solutions** in **conversation with people** to support them in resolving their housing crisis by **any means available** to them.
What needs to change in your program for Housing Problem Solving to be embedded in all your practices?
Prevention/Diversion (CAN)

• Crisis intervention to avoid homelessness altogether

• Unique Housing Problem Solving opportunities:
  o Leverage current housing/prevent traumatic loss
  o Tap into what has been working to stay housed
  o Build on/back to recent stability
  o Inherent motivation to avoid the trauma of homelessness completely
  o Mainstream $ assistance for housing costs or other income supports
Problem Solving in Street Outreach

• Crisis intervention to end homelessness ASAP and reduce harm in the meantime

• Unique Housing Problem Solving opportunities:
  o Building relationships in outreach settings uses the same approach – listening non-judgmentally, seeking to understand
  o Tap into survival skills
  o Experiential understanding of the scarcity of formal supports and the need for creative solutions
  o Inherent motivation to get off the streets/out of the elements
Problem Solving In Shelter/Transitional Housing

• Crisis intervention to end homelessness ASAP
• Unique Housing Problem Solving opportunities:
  - Leverage frequent interactions with shelter staff to align towards generating housing solutions
  - Opportunities to witness skills/strengths in day-to-day interactions to uplift for use in Housing Problem Solving
  - Motivation to exit institutional shelter setting
  - Institutional resources and relationships to support and bolster Housing Problem Solving efforts
Housing Stabilization

• Crisis prevention to ensure no return to homelessness
• Unique Housing Problem Solving opportunities:
  o Leverage recent success in acquiring housing
  o Motivation to keep the housing they have
  o Build on recent successes and new elements of stability
  o Tap into new stability to rekindle memory and connection to previous successful tactics for retaining housing
  o Housing environment supports longer term healing, community building, support service continuity
Wrap Up

Prevent/Divert
Households before they become homeless
At CAN

Rapidly Exit
Households newly homeless from shelter and unsheltered location
In Shelter & Street Outreach

Generate Options
Keep brainstorming options and removing barriers until a solution sticks

Stabilize
Continue problem solving to address challenges to keeping housing
In housing
Remember…

• No matter your position/organization, YOUR job is problem solving…
  • Rework job descriptions
  • Message and train
  • Embrace problem solving as the most effective way to end homelessness across the system…regardless of intervention
Reminder…one last time...

Housing Problem Solving...

is a **strength based, person centered, flexible** intervention **focused on identifying solutions in conversation with people** to support them in resolving their housing crisis by **any means available** to them.
Questions????

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