Housing First: Making the Change

September 18, 2019: San Luis Obispo Continuum of Care

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Introductions

HomeBase has been working with Continuums of Care and homeless service providers throughout the country for three decades on eradicating homelessness.

We help CoCs design and implement Housing First, Coordinated Entry, and other major system changes.

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Why are We Here?

Each person and program has a crucial role to play in ending homelessness

This is a community facing a challenging housing crisis

You are helping people in urgent crisis navigate the housing market

A system is only as strong as each component

How can you help strengthen the system of care?

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Goals for Today

- Understand and be able to explain Housing First and how it can be implemented across program types and throughout the system of care

- Create a network of peers to support each other in implementing best practices in Housing First

- Identify challenges to Housing First implementation and new resources and collaboration needed to serve the most vulnerable in your community

- Support systemwide alignment and shared policies to improve housing outcomes and promote system effectiveness

- Define challenges to systemwide implementation of Housing First and begin planning to overcome barriers

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WHAT IS HOUSING FIRST?

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HUD Definition

Housing First is an approach where homeless persons are provided *immediate access* to housing and then **offered the supportive services** that may be needed to foster long-term stability and prevent a return to homelessness. This approach removes unnecessary barriers and assumes that supportive services are more effective in addressing needs when the individual or family is housed – when the daily stress of being homeless is taken out of the equation.

Ann Marie Oliva
Director, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs
August 21, 2016

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Four Overarching Principles:

Homelessness is a housing problem and should be treated as such.

Persons should be stabilized in permanent housing as soon as possible – and then connected to resources to sustain that housing.

Underlying issues that contributed to a person's homelessness are best addressed after that person is in a stable housing environment.

All persons experiencing homelessness are "housing ready."

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Definitions Without Jargon

Accept participants regardless of sobriety.

Participants will be supported in ways that meet their individual needs.

Participants will not be evicted for not complying with their service plan.

Participants are not required to take classes before being placed in housing.

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WHY HOUSING FIRST?

Why Housing First?

- **Evidence-based:** Identified as a core strategy for ending homelessness in *Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness*

- **Funder/community priority:** Reinforced through program grant competitions/awards (local and state) and grantee performance reports as well as local CoC written standards

- **Core practice: Required** for ESG-funded programs in California (Section 8409)

- **State law**: In 2016, the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 1380 requiring all state-funded housing programs to adopt the core components of Housing First model (including RRH and PH)

- **Helps people:** Communities that implement system-wide housing first practices are more **cost-effective, successful, and better serve people** experiencing homelessness

Housing First: Ensuring No One is Locked Out of System
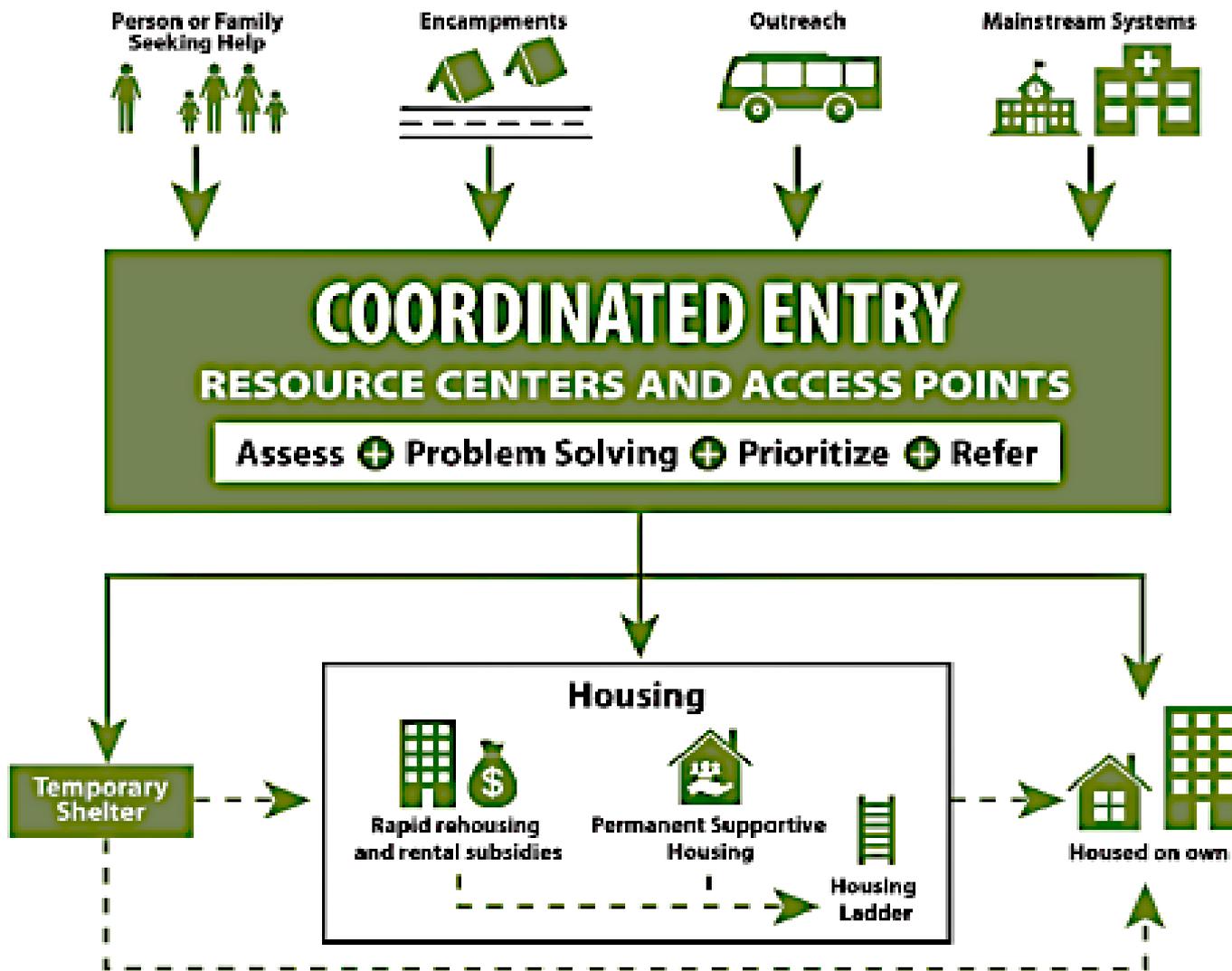
A Housing-First System

- **All programs** lower barriers – shelter, services, and housing

- Most vulnerable – **including those with complex service needs, disabilities, mental health and active substance abuse issues** – prioritized for and admitted to shelter and housing programs

- **Housing-focused** services and engagement begin immediately – on the street and in shelters

- Services are **client-focused and voluntary**

- Programs engage in **evidence-based practices**: harm-reduction, trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, and other evidence-based approaches

- **Client choice and voice** are engaged and respected

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Housing First – Allowing Access

- Uncouple service provision from leases or tenancy

- Examine rules – both written and unwritten – across system

- Alcohol or drug use – without other lease violations – is not a basis for exclusion or eviction

- Provide systemwide support for lowering barriers

- Ensure leadership, managers, and staff understand and have tools to implement principles of housing first

- Institute program and community-wide monitoring

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Housing First - Increase Supportive Services for Success

- Leverage existing community resources and find ways to train across programs; provide support

- Analyze and promote best practices in staffing and staff support

- Systemwide trainings in client-centered practices like harm reduction, housing stability plans, motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care

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Housing First Prioritization

Housing First is mandated or encouraged across the system of care:

COC WRITTEN STANDARDS

Housing, shelter, prevention, outreach, other CoC programs or those with reference in grant agreement

STATE-FUNDED HOUSING PROGRAMS

Permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, No Place Like Home, CESH, HEAP, CalWORKS HSP, CDSS programs, new state funding (CA Welfare and Institutions Code Section 8255)

ESG

Shelters, outreach, prevention, rapid rehousing (25 CCR 8409)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

1 Tenant screening and selection practices that promote **accepting applicants** regardless of their **sobriety or use of substances, completion of treatment, or participation in services**.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

2

Applicants are **not rejected** on the basis of **poor credit or financial history, poor or lack of rental history, criminal convictions** unrelated to tenancy, or behaviors that indicate a **lack of "housing readiness."**

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

3

Acceptance of referrals directly from shelters, street outreach, drop-in centers, and other parts of **crisis response systems frequented by vulnerable people** experiencing homelessness.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

4 Supportive services that e**mphasize engagement and problem solving** over therapeutic goals and service plans that are **highly tenant-driven** without predetermined goals.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

5 **Participation in services** is **not a condition** of permanent housing tenancy.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

6 Tenants have a **lease** and **all the rights and responsibilities** of tenancy, as outlined in California's Civil, Health and Safety, and Government codes.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

7 The **use of alcohol or drugs** in and of itself, without other lease violations, is **not a reason for eviction**.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

8

In communities with **coordinated assessment and entry systems**, incentives for funding promote tenant selection plans for supportive housing that **prioritize eligible tenants based on criteria other than "first-come-first-serve,"** including, but not limited to, the **duration or chronicity of homelessness**, **vulnerability to early mortality**, or **high utilization of crisis services**. Prioritization may include triage tools, developed through local data, to identify high-cost, high-need homeless residents.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

9 Case managers and service coordinators who are **trained in and actively employ evidence-based practices for client engagement**, including, but not limited to, motivational interviewing and client-centered counseling.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

10

Services are informed by a **harm-reduction philosophy** that recognizes drug and alcohol use and addiction as a part of tenants' lives, where tenants are engaged in nonjudgmental communication regarding drug and alcohol use, and where tenants are offered education regarding how to avoid risky behaviors and engage in safer practices, as well as connected to evidence-based treatment if the tenant so chooses.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Core Components of Housing First

Under California state law, the "core components" of Housing First include:

11

The project and specific apartment may include **special physical features** that accommodate disabilities, reduce harm, and promote health and community and independence among tenants.

Citation: Section 8255(b) of the California Welfare & Institutions Code (emphasis added)

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Housing First – in Shelters, ESG

1 Ensuring low-barrier, easily accessible assistance to all people, including, but not limited to, people with no income or income history, and people with active substance abuse or mental health issues

2 Helping participants quickly identify and resolve barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing

3 Seeking to quickly resolve the housing crisis before focusing on other non-housing related services

4 Allowing participants to choose the services and housing that meets their needs, within practical and funding limitations

5 Connecting participants to appropriate support and services available in the community that foster long-term housing stability

6 [When] offering financial assistance and supportive services,… the type, duration, and amount of assistance offered shall be based on an individual assessment of the household, and the availability of other resources … to resolve their housing crisis and stabilize them in housing

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NPLH Guidelines

- NPLH Guidelines Section 211 Tenant Selection

    - Tenants shall be selected in compliance with Housing First requirements consistent with the core components set forth in Welfare and Institutions Code Division 8 Chapter 6.5 Section 8255 subsection (b)

ACTIVITY - HOUSING FIRST **QUIZ**
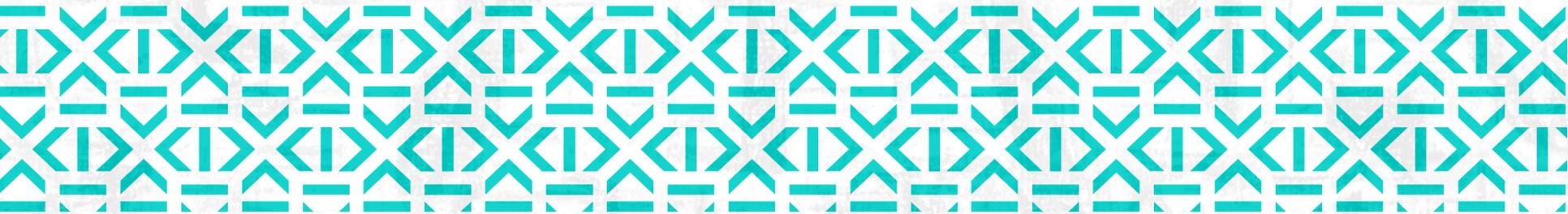
Quiz Instructions

- To play, join at **www.kahoot.it** or with the **Kahoot! App**

- Enter the **Game PIN** shown on the screen

- Select your **Team Name**

- Enter **team member nicknames**

- Click **"Ready to join!"**

- Once all teams are on the screen, we'll start the quiz!

- You'll have **30 seconds** to consider answers and deliberate with your team

- Click on one of the **colored boxes with symbols** to make your choice

- **The top 4 teams with the most correct answers will appear on the screen!**

Thank You!