



Thursday, April 13th, 2022 | 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Hybrid Meeting

Physical –UWDC Community Room: 1314 Teasley Lane, Denton, TX 76205

Virtual – Zoom Video Conference Link Attached in Email

Agenda:

I.	Welcome	Thomas Muir	5 min.
II.	February Meeting Minutes	Thomas Muir	3 min.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VOTE – Approval of Meeting Minutes		
III.	Diversion Committee Presentation	Andy Richardson & Megan Ball	30 min.
IV.	New workgroup	Dani Shaw	10 min.
V.	Workgroup Updates		20 min.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing• Denton County Homeless Coalition• Data• Healthcare	Terry Widmer Daphne Houston Leia Atkinson Alex Reed	
VI.	Backbone Support Update	UWDC	10 min.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UWDC Homelessness Initiatives• Denton County Behavioral Health Leadership Team Update• Denton County Workforce Success Leadership Team Update		
VII.	Public Comment	Chair	5 min.
VIII.	New Business	Chair	5 min.
IX.	Adjourn	Chair	2 min.

Next Meeting Date:

Thursday, June 8th, 2022 | 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. | Hybrid Meeting

Physical – United Way of Denton County, 1314 Teasley Lane Denton TX 76205

Virtual – Zoom Video Conference Link Attached in Email



Date: Thursday, February 9th, 2022 | 8:00am – 9:30am

Hybrid Meeting

Physical - Center for women at Texas Health Denton (Conference rooms A&B), 3000 N I-35 Denton TX
76201

Virtual – Zoom Video Conference Link Attached in Email

Meeting Minutes

Welcome

Dani Shaw initiated introductions. Sonny Muniz-Blake introduces himself as the director of the SSVF program at the Recovery Resource Council.

Strategic Planning Committee update

Megan Ball reported that the committee has met twice and plan to meet in at the beginning of March. Megan Ball also discussed efforts to make a SWAT evaluation to receive feedback from the workgroups and create an 'At a Glance' document.

Emergency Rental Assistance 2

Olivia Mata-Williams presented the ARPA ERA2 Eviction Prevention and Housing Stability results by explaining what the program does as well as recognizing fellow agencies that have helped. Olivia Mata-Williams reported that there have been 1,100 applications submitted, and that recent updates have been implemented for priority applications including an AMI of 30% or lower and if the applicant is receiving disability benefits. Olivia Mata-Williams brings attention to an increase in spending levels, lack of applicants asking for housing stability assistance, and the underutilization of the monthly housing stability assistance budgets. Key takeaways including funding returning to pre-pandemic levels, having ERA2 staff push ERA2 applicants to use housing stability funds, pushing case managers to identify non-rent payment strategies, and the emphasis on case management programs building better relationships with the county.

Teddy Yan addressed a question regarding the causation of asking for renter's assistance with three reasons. These reasons included disease related causes, most of the homeless population's lack of ability to work, and those from fixed incomes.

Dawn Cobb commented on a plan to do an analysis to determine root causes and report next meeting.

Leia Atkinson emphasized that the majority of Denton's population that experiences homelessness are disabled.

Workgroup Updates:

Housing -

Terry Widmer raised concern for a change in conversation for applicants who are stressed. No questions were asked for Terry Widmer.

Denton County Homeless Coalition

Daphne Houston discussed a shift in focus towards improved communication with the help of former chair Dr. Jones' podcast. Daphne Houston reported that no funding was received from the COC grant. Daphne Houston stated that the next meeting will be on the 22nd of February.

Data Workgroup

Leia Atkinson presented the Homelessness Data Dashboard as it was updated in December 2022 with 394 reported people experiencing active homelessness. Leia Atkinson continued to present data which reported no improvement in number of veterans and those with chronic illnesses experiencing homelessness. Leia Atkinson introduced a new metric that included how long clients have been experiencing homelessness. Leia Atkinson also presented data reporting students experiencing homelessness in Denton County and surrounding counties.

Diversion Workgroup

Megan Ball discussed plans to have a presentation ready in April. Megan Ball emphasized the mission of the group which is to prevent people from having to get on the entry list for shelters. No questions were asked for the group.

Backbone Support Updates:

UWDC Homelessness Initiatives

Olivia Mata-Williams discussed the funding opportunity for mortgage assistance from the City of Lewisville.

Denton County Behavioral Health Leadership Team Update

Shanan Spencer reported no progress on mental health navigators and preparations for upcoming proclamations in the city municipalities. Shanan Spencer also mentioned planning an informative/fun event for those in recovery.

Denton County Workforce Success Leadership Team Update

Shelby Redondo stated that the strategic plan committee has been meeting to update the pre-pandemic plan. Shelby Redondo also mentioned collaborating with a Tarrant County childcare subsidy entity under workforce in order to create a data dashboard around homelessness particular to Denton County. Shelby Redondo announced the upcoming trip to Austin with United Way of Texas in regards advocacy for bills that will advocate mental health and Medicaid reimbursements.

Public Comment - There were no reported public comments.

New Business – A member of the meeting mentioned a possible DART initiative on a homelessness program.

Meeting Adjourned – The meeting was declared adjourned at 9:30am.

DCHLT Workgroup Reports

DCHLT HOUSING WORKGROUP | CHAIR: TERRY WIDMER

FEBRUARY 2023-MARCH 2023

The DCHLT Housing Workgroup has convened 8 times between March 2023 and April 2023 for Case Conferencing. During each case conferencing meeting, members discussed clients that each agency is actively working with, including client strengths, barriers, and housing-focused actionable next steps, as well as received updates on available homelessness prevention funding and programming in Denton County. Workgroup members are provided an opportunity to report clients who have gained housing during each meeting to maintain quality community wide data, as well as receive training and guidance on how to document a client's "housed" status in HMIS.

Case Conferencing for recent months was strictly virtual due to UWDC flooding in December, which will be revisited as soon as UWDC conference room facilities are once again fully functional. The Housing Workgroup implemented sharing agency updates at the start of each meeting and has been taking time to discuss specific case management issues such as voucher usage and referral processes. Additionally, the workgroup re-implemented taking time at the end of Case Conferencing to discuss the highest – need clients by HPL prioritization.

Housing Workgroup will continue to meet Mondays from 3-4 PM with a hybrid option either in person at United Way of Denton County or virtually via Zoom.

- 1st Monday – Veteran CC
- 2nd Monday – General CC
- 3rd Monday – Veteran CC
- 4th Monday – General CC
- 5th Monday – Families CC

SHORT-TERM ACTION ITEMS

- Review and discuss Diversion Rollout
- Continue to increase consistent attendance across agencies.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Dedicated increased time to agency collaboration on a program level & transparency.
- Re-balanced agenda between clients with highest need & clients engaged in services.

CONCERNS

- Service provider capacity to conduct follow up on action items identified in Case Conferencing
- Ability to remain in contact / locate clients with little means of communication and transportation for service follow up
- Onboarding for new agency staff

NEXT MEETING DATES

April 17th, April 24th, May 5th, May 8th, May 15th, May 22nd

DCHLT Workgroup Reports

DENTON COUNTY HOMELESS COALITION | CHAIR: DAPHNE HOUSTON

FEBRUARY 2023-MARCH 2023

The Denton County Homeless Coalition met twice from February 2023 to March 2023. The following was discussed:

- Improved collaborative communication of live resources across our agencies and community partners
- Behind the Scenes Podcast planning was launched, initiated by Dr. Jones to increase communication of the work that is being done to solve homelessness in the county.
- Community Events planning committee to increase volunteerism for agencies through Memorial Planning and PIT planning.

SHORT-TERM ACTION ITEMS

- Community partners and service providers will continue to update the livespreadsheet monthly to communicate any priority programming available.
- Daphne Houston has served as Coalition chair for 4 wonderful years and will be stepping down and a search for a new chair is to come.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Increased collaboration and sharing of active information between service providers and community partners.
- Dr. Jones heading the Panel Discussion Initiatives completed the first discussion on *Perspective on Life on the Street* on March 20th on Zoom.

CONCERNS

Agencies continue to report an increase in housing assistance requests while local shelters remain at capacity (both in Denton and in the broader DFW area).

NEXT MEETING DATES

April 26th (Lewisville; Next Steps), May 31st (Denton; Giving Grace)

DCHLT Workgroup Reports

DCHLT DATA WORKGROUP | CHAIR: STEPHEN COFFEY

FEBRUARY 2023-MARCH 2023

The data dashboard has been updated with data up to March 2023. As of March 2023, there are currently 352 households actively experiencing homelessness on our Housing Priority List. The 352 total number for December breaks down into:

- 49 families
- 303 individuals
- 24 fleeing domestic violence
- 30 Veteran households
- 146 households experiencing chronic homelessness

Denton County school districts' data was updated in February 2023. The two largest school districts reported the following:

- Denton ISD: 587 students (increase from October 22; 347)
- Lewisville ISD: 1,024 students (increase from October 22; 820)

Housing intervention prioritization breakdown:

- Diversion Services: 20 households (5.4%)
- Rapid Rehousing Intervention: 192 households (53%)
- Permanent Supportive Housing Intervention: 140 households (41.5%)

Short-term action items

- Continue supporting diversion subcommittee on how to track diversion outcomes.
- Address errors with HMIS export by advocating to CoC leads and cross checking inflows with agencies.
- Identify goals for 2023 dashboard improvement and collaboration with other workgroups.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Data Dashboard has been updated with new categories for 'Homeless Start Date' & Disability/Chronic Illness
- System Performance Measure around 'Length of Time Homeless' has been adjusted for greater consistency and more accurate portrayal.

CONCERNS

- Data accuracy from agencies utilizing HMIS continues to be a concern UWDC staff supports in resolving.
- Software errors in the export are an ongoing risk UWDC staff & HMIS participating agencies will take new efforts to mitigate.

DCHLT Workgroup Reports

DCHLT HEALTHCARE WORKGROUP | CHAIR: ISABEL RODRIGUEZ

JANUARY 2023-MARCH 2023

The Healthcare workgroup has met 4 times since 2023 began. It's primary goals are to increase healthcare services, as well as awareness & access to those services, for Denton County's community experiencing homelessness, in addition to continually identifying unhoused healthcare system gaps. Since its establishment, the group's main goals have been goal setting, long term planning, and recruiting to ensure rounded perspectives are represented. This group has capitalized on the momentum and celebrated the recent establishment of both a medical triage program at Our Daily Bread Shelter and a Mental Health Navigator program with Denton County Public Health.

This group is currently in the knowledge-gathering phase, identifying gaps in the current healthcare system as it relates to the unhoused population and determining what can be done on a local level to address these gaps. The ultimate goals of this group are to reduce emergency room visits that could be handled in primary or urgent care, increase funding for primary care and community health services targeted at this population, increase number of options for patients experiencing homelessness with acute needs at discharge, and increase the unhoused population's awareness of healthcare services, measured by repeatedly administered knowledge survey.

Short-term action items

- Administer survey of community health care providers to get database on services available and their accessibility to the unhoused population.
- Plan for study of unhoused population and agency staff's knowledge of healthcare services.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Procured representation from hospitals, community health agencies, street outreach, shelter staff, permanent supportive housing staff, and community organization entities.
- Drafted community health provider survey to gather information on services and services accessibility, which will be administered and translated into a database accessible to case managers.

CONCERNS

- There are currently very few pathways for a person experiencing homelessness to access medical care other than utilizing the emergency room.
- Few options are available for the aging population with long term needs, few facilities prepared to meet this need accept Medicaid or Medicare.

Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Diversion

FINDINGS REPORT

April 2023

BACKGROUND

- DCHLT approved Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Diversion June 2022
- Subcommittee met 15 times from July 2022 to March 2023
- **Current Environment:** returning to pre-pandemic budgetary constraints
- **\$600,000/year vs. \$20 million/year**
- ERA 2 current expenditures are near \$600,000 a month

SUBCOMMITTEE AGENCIES



SUBCOMMITTEE PROCESS

Interagency meetings that discussed:

- Six different program models
- What diversion looks like now in Denton County
- What a coordinated diversion effort could look like in the future

WHAT IS DIVERSION?

A process to quickly address the needs of someone who has either lost their housing OR is at risk of losing their housing.

Diversion is intended to...

- Ensure that the homelessness experience is as brief as possible
- Prevent or end unsheltered homelessness
- Avert or reduce stays in emergency shelters
- **Improve system outcomes by reducing entries into homelessness**

DIVERSION = INTENSIVE SERVICE INTERVENTION

Skills & Foundations

Client-led Problem-solving techniques:

- Motivational interviewing
- Trauma-informed care
- Strengths-based approach

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 a long-term housing plan

EXAMPLES OF DIVERSION SOLUTIONS

HOUSING

Rent/deposit/fees

Temporary hotel stays

Landlord mediation

TRANSPORTATION

Car repair

Gas cards

Bus tickets

EMPLOYMENT

Work clothing/uniforms

Personal ID applications

Childcare assistance

Job training/licenses

Workforce referrals

FOOD

Grocery cards

SNAP navigation

DISABILITY SERVICES

Occupational therapy
referral

Vocational rehab program

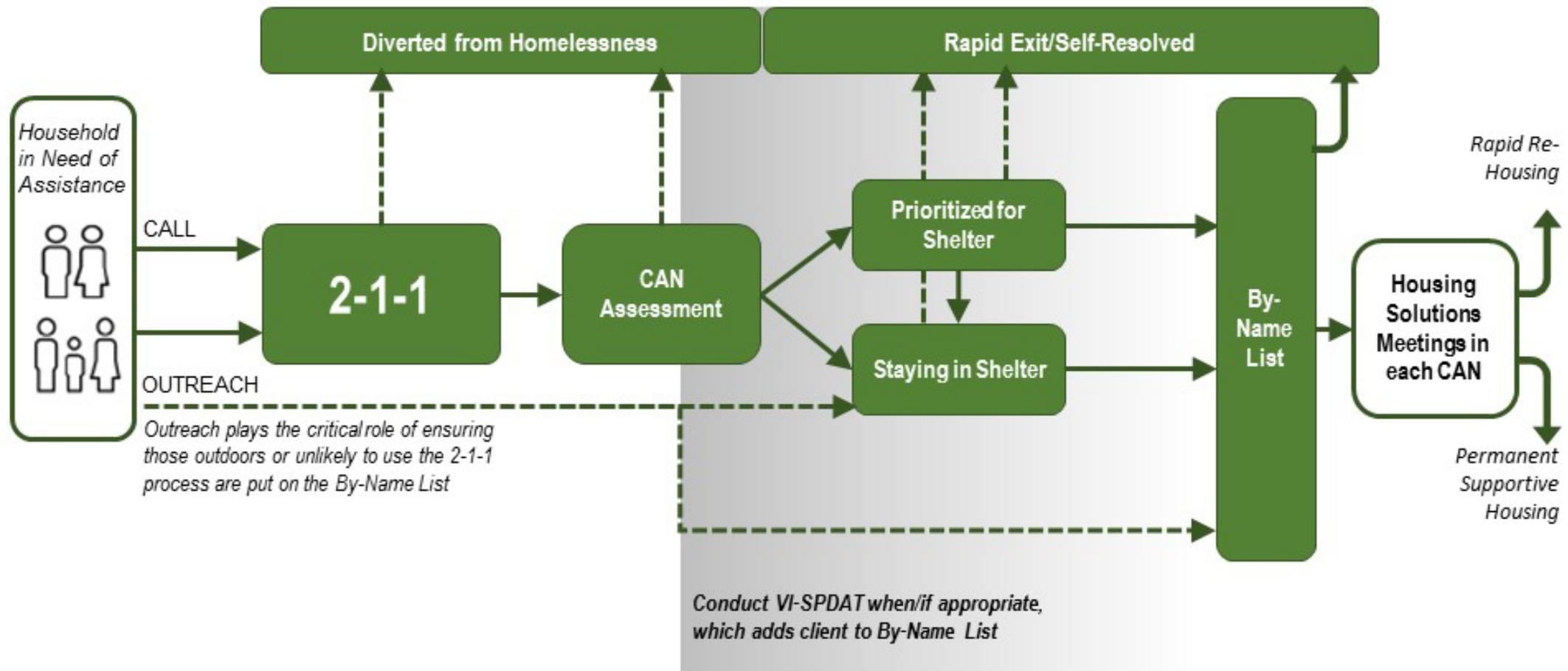
SOAR navigation

MISC

Mediation with
friends/family

CAN System Overview

A high-level diagram of the coordinated access process from entry to exit



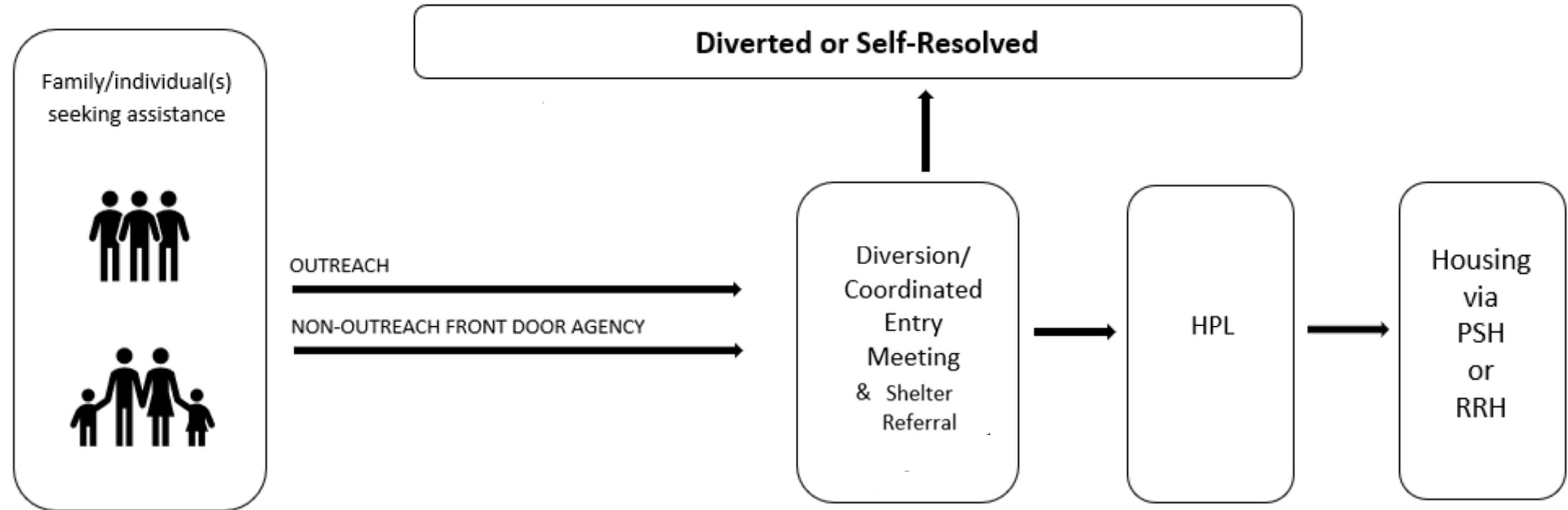
PROPOSED DENTON COUNTY MODEL

Diversion is a trauma-informed, client-driven strategy to prevent or end someone's homelessness as quickly as possible.

- It involves problem-solving conversations with individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis.
- When available, flexible funds are used to help connect households with stable housing arrangements.

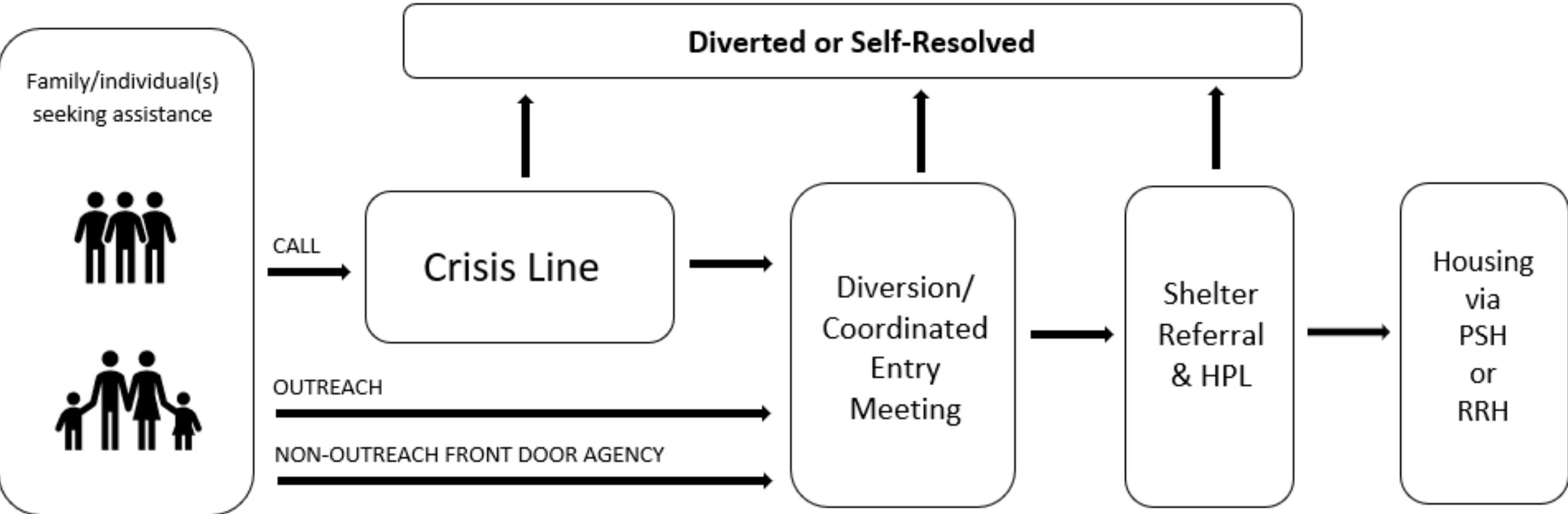
CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

DENTON COUNTY DIVERSION FLOWCHART



PROPOSED DENTON COUNTY MODEL

DENTON COUNTY DIVERSION FLOWCHART



CONSIDERATIONS

Agency capacity – Existing staff balancing multiple responsibilities

Grant requirements – Service provider staff often limited by the outcome metrics of the grants funding their positions

Training gaps – Currently no standard, local diversion training available to housing & homeless service providers

SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-term:

- Adopt Diversion into the existing Housing Crisis Response System
- Training for HMIS Diversion Workflow to track diversion data

Medium-term:

- County-wide rollout and training
- Implement diversion policy and procedure updates as needed
- Create a Diversion Impact Report in 2024

Long-term:

- Ensure all front door agencies have ongoing access to flexible diversion funds
- Diversion trained staff are at every front door agency
- Expand existing help lines to include diversion solutions (ex: www.findhelp.com or 2-1-1)

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT: AD HOC SUPCOMMITTEE ON DIVERSION

BACKGROUND

In alignment with their mission to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in Denton County, the Denton County Homelessness Leadership Team formed the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Diversion in June of 2022. The Subcommittee, comprised of representatives of seventeen (17) Denton County nonprofit organizations and local municipal staff, met fifteen (15) times from July 2022 to March 2023 to answer three key questions:

- 1) How is diversion currently being practiced across Denton County?
- 2) What would a coordinated, county-wide approach to diversion look like?
- 3) What is needed to make a county-wide approach to diversion possible?

WHAT IS DIVERSION?

Diversion is an intervention designed to immediately address the needs of someone who has lost their housing or is at imminent risk of losing their housing. Diversion is a client-driven approach aimed at helping households find safe alternative housing solutions immediately. It is intended to ensure that the homelessness experience is as brief as possible, to prevent unsheltered homelessness, and to avert stays in shelter.

When successful, diversion reduces client trauma, reduces bottlenecks with the Housing Crisis Response System (HCRS), and reserves critical emergency resources—such as

shelter beds, staff time, and housing program funding—for the households with the greatest need.

THE DUAL BENEFITS OF DIVERSION

Diversion is an intervention that can both reduce the trauma associated with an episode of homelessness or housing instability while also saving on program costs. Mediating a rapid resolution to someone’s housing crisis can help empower clients to find solutions that, in the long term, reduce the stress and fear that can persist the longer someone lacks a stable place to call home. Additionally, costs associated with diversion are significantly smaller when compared to more intensive services. For example, a diversion intervention that focuses on family reunification can cost as little \$200—the cost of a bus ticket—whereas a shelter stay can cost as much as \$8,600 per individual client¹.

HOW DOES DIVERSION WORK?

Diversion is a strategy used in client-facing settings to resolve someone’s housing crisis as quickly as possible. It involves a structured problem-solving conversation that attempts to help a client make an emergency housing plan using low-cost, light-touch interventions to prevent households from entering the Homeless Crisis Response System (HCRS).

Through an interactive problem-solving conversation with the client, staff seek to:

¹ Fundamentals of the Connecticut Homeless Response System. Amber Freeman. Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. August 2022.

- understand what caused a person’s housing crisis;
- explore what immediate solutions to the crisis may be possible; and
- help them pursue a solution(s).

Diversion calls for an investment of about one hour to discuss a client’s potential housing plan. The conversation is client-driven, with the service provider providing fact-based information about available resources and employing motivational interviewing and conflict management techniques. After the initial meeting, clients work on their housing plan, with agency representatives providing support—typically in the form of one-time financial assistance—when a solution has been reached.

The idea is to immediately get the client into a safe housing alternative, which may be short- or longer-term. Some of these options may include:

- a negotiated return to their previous housing;
- short-term, non-shelter accommodation;
- apartments or homes, (including shared housing);
- returns to family.

Examples of successful diversion include, but are not limited to, connection with income supports such as employment or childcare, bus, or train fare to live with family or friends, connection with an inpatient rehabilitation program, and rental deposit assistance.

Diversion is a process that can be used in any client-facing setting, and is not:

- a denial of services;
- a standalone program; or

- the sole responsibility of front door agencies responsible for conducting Coordinated Entry.

DIVERSION IN DENTON COUNTY

To date, Diversion in Denton County has been practiced as resources are available by case management staff at designated Front Door agencies for Coordinated Entry. There have been an estimated 65 successful Diversion cases in Denton County between April 2022 and April 2023, with an estimated one-time cost of about \$500 per household.

OTHER DIVERSION PROGRAM MODELS

The Subcommittee reviewed and discussed six different diversion processes from across the country. Due to the comprehensive nature of the State of Connecticut's approach to diversion, many of the elements in the Proposed Denton County Diversion Model mirror the Connecticut Model.

PROPOSED DENTON COUNTY DIVERSION MODEL

“Diversion is a trauma-informed, client-driven strategy to prevent or end someone’s homelessness as quickly as possible. It involves problem-solving conversations with individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis. When possible, flexible funds are used to help connect households with a stable housing arrangement.”

- Definition chosen by The Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Diversion

This expansive approach empowers all client-facing organizations in Denton County –not just traditional housing and homelessness service providers—to practice diversion. Under the

Denton County model, professionals in areas such as education, health care, and law enforcement can also be a part of the coordinated effort to help people in crisis find a solution to their housing solution as quickly as possible.

Given the complex nature of housing crises, the Subcommittee determined that it would be appropriate to attempt diversion with any type client's housing crisis:

- At-risk of homelessness
- At imminent risk of homelessness
- Newly experiencing homeless
- Experiencing chronic homelessness

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Despite the existence of local and national data that suggests that diversion can be an effective tool to rapidly resolve a client's housing crisis, there is much work that still must be done for diversion to be truly successful in Denton County. The following represent what is currently needed to improve upon current efforts to divert clients experiencing a housing crisis:

- 1) **Consistent data tracking** to better understand how diversion works in Denton County.
- 2) **Additional investment in dedicated intake staff** at front door agencies.
- 3) **Specialized training** is needed to ensure all efforts to divert clients are coordinated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-Term:

- Adopt Diversion into the existing Housing Crisis Response System
- Utilize the existing HMIS workflow to improve diversion data quality.
- Provide periodic progress updates to HLT on diversion efforts.

Medium-Term:

- Create a Diversion Impact Report in 2024.
- Allow for policy and procedure updates based on “lessons learned.”
- Support county-wide rollout and training efforts.

Long-Term:

- Ensure all front-door agencies have regular access to flexible diversion funds.
- Support for dedicated diversion staff training at every front door agency.
- Leverage existing crisis line(s) to improve diversion implemented solutions.

APPENDIX A

HOUSING CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM [WITHOUT DIVERSION]

HOUSEHOLD IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE

[OUTREACH, SHELTER, HOUSING PROVIDER,
OTHER COMMUNITY INSTITUTION]

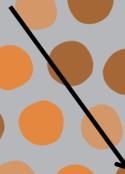


**COORDINATED
ENTRY**



**ADDED TO HOUSING
PRIORITY LIST**

**CRITICAL DOCUMENTS,
INCREASE INCOME,
REFERRALS TO WRAPAROUND
SERVICES**



**CONNECTED
TO HOUSING
SOLUTION**

**RAPID
REHOUSING**

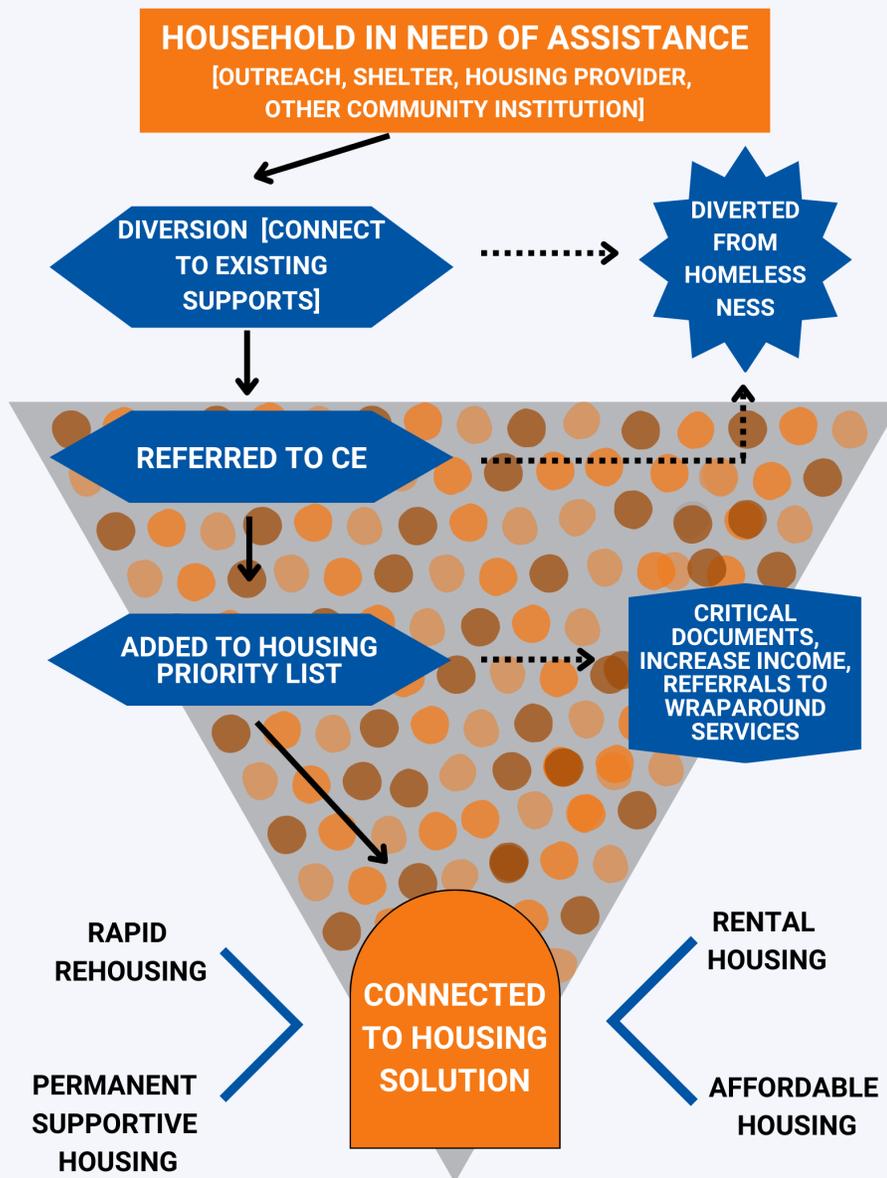
**PERMANENT
SUPPORTIVE
HOUSING**

**RENTAL
HOUSING**

**AFFORDABLE
HOUSING**

APPENDIX B

HOUSING CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM [WITH DIVERSION]



APPENDIX C

Example from Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness; Coordinated Access Networks

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)

