

Rapid Re-housing: *Why does it work so well?*

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What does "work so well" mean?

- Families that have no housing get housed, and do not return to homelessness in a defined time period
- Not 100%...
- But better than everything else we do, except permanent subsidies (i.e. shelter, transitional, services only, some PSH)

WAIT... Apples and Oranges??

Concern: Rapid re-housing not serving the same kind of households...

- Not clearly the case - needs to be looked at
- Some places “creamed” with rapid rehousing - limited to those employed or with “low” barriers
- But, places that didn’t also have had high success rates (ex. Sacramento, Salt Lake)
- Some places “cream” with transitional housing and PSH
- Local data can help study this question



But there's no housing...

- Have you heard, or said: "No family in our community with minimum wage income [or SSI, or TANF...] can afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment."
- What's the matter with this statement?

How can it work??

> 95% of people in poverty are housed at a point in time – *how do they do it?*

- Fair Market Rents - Generally set at the 40th Percentile (some at 50th)
- Very low income families typically rent-burdened. Most pay > 30% and many pay > 50% of income for housing but remain housed.
- Our families typically have incomes at 10-15% of median - not going to live in median cost housing

How can we expect it to last?

- For most families, homelessness is the result of a crisis
- Factors that lead to the crisis can be resolved - parent gets a job, people get better
- Time is on their side
- Lots of changes we attribute to programs are really the result of time and getting back in the housing door.
- It's Housing First in action!

Rapid re-housing's potential is great

- Based on typical costs, we can successfully rehouse five times as many people with rapid rehousing as with transitional housing, with equal or better outcomes



What's essential to rapid re-housing?

- Flexible resources (money and staff)
- Relationships with landlords
- Links to other services in the community
- Skill managing a flexible program
- Partnership with clients to make realistic plan



Design questions: how much is enough?

- Programs of varying length and depth have had similar success rates
- Longer stays look good, especially for income changes, but shorter stays look good too, especially on housing stability
- Shorter stays let us help more households with the same amount of resources

What about assessment?

- Assessment is critical: need knowledge of the client's relevant history, their current plans and desires
- Understand housing barriers to be able to assist, not to refuse assistance
- Develop a realistic approach to finding landlords and housing situations
- Ability to link clients to supports in the community

But:

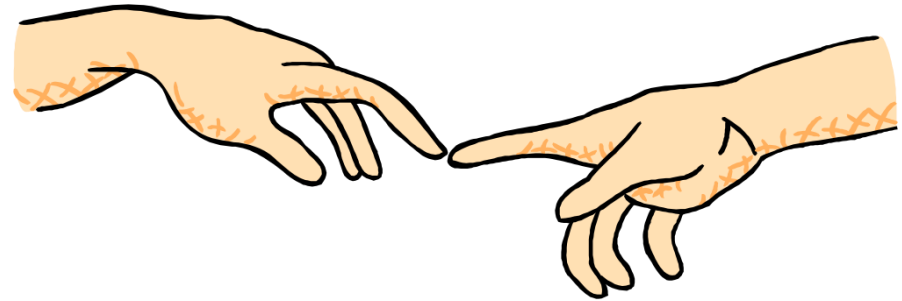
- Assessment up front may not be a good way to **size** the financial assistance or length of time services are offered

Example: Let's all go on a job hunt...



Progressive Engagement

A different kind of design:



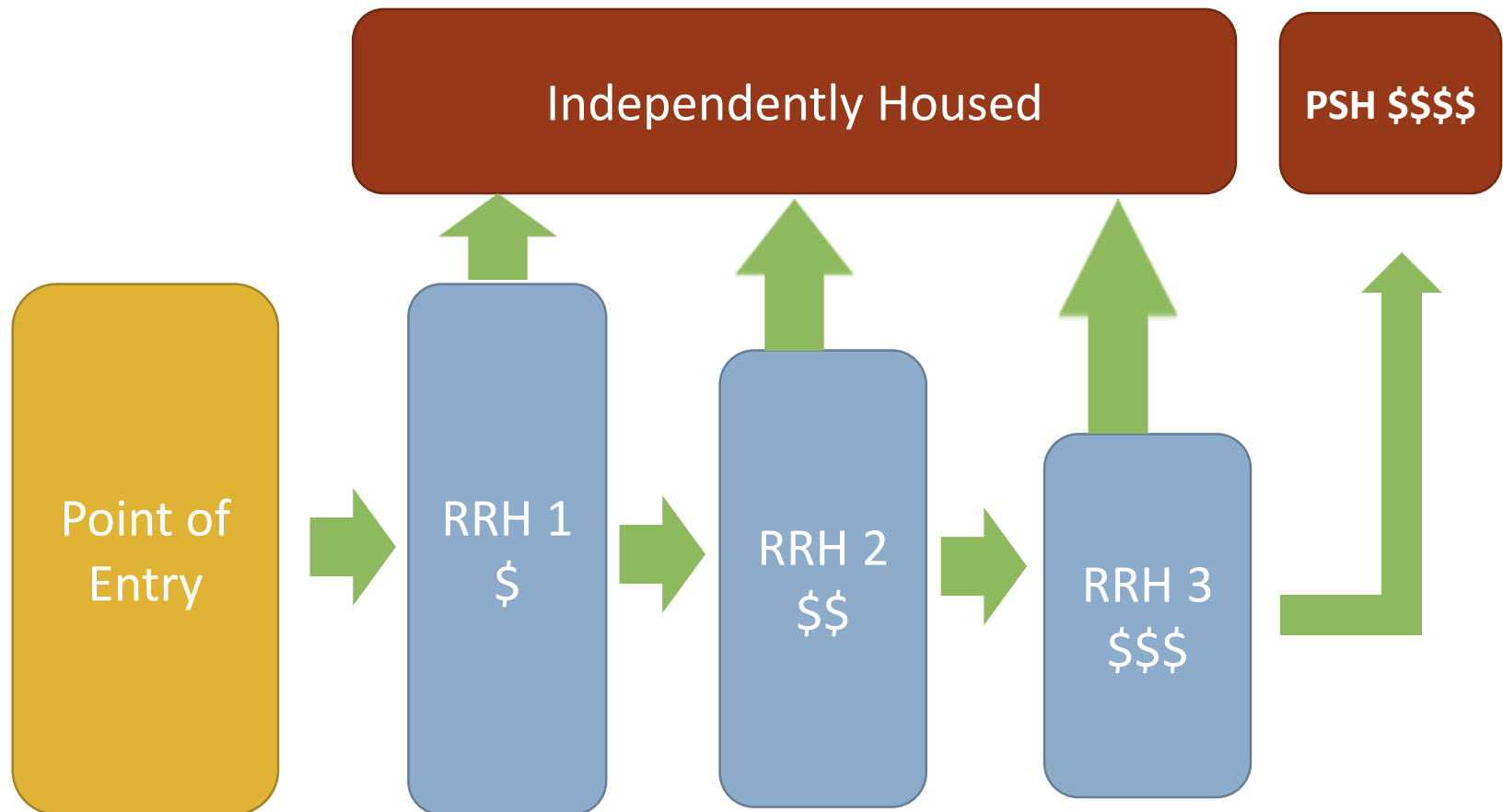
Lightest touch possible first

or

“you can always add more, but you can't take it away”



Progressive Engagement approach



A change in philosophy and culture

- Take as the goal ending the housing crisis
- Idea of doing the least necessary
- Believing people can make it without us
- Getting rewarded by seeing people leave, and helping more
- *The pace is fast*



Leading the culture shift

- Learn about successful approaches
- Hear from clients
- Offer staff support and training
but also be open to staff changes
- Use agency data to assess and adjust



Using data to adjust

- Unacceptable losses or rates of return?
Maybe resize, assist longer, check-in more, develop new partnerships
- Everybody sticks?
Maybe try less
- Some succeed and some don't?
What factors can we look at: e.g. family size, income source, histories of homelessness, staffing?

For more information

- National Alliance to End Homelessness
www.endhomelessness.org
- United States Interagency Council on Homelessness www.usich.gov
- Focus Strategies www.focusstrategies.net
- Contact us: katharine@focusstrategies.net