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5. Combinations/Hybrids. Many systems use both call in and physical location, typically having the client begin with an initial call but then move to a physical location for further intake and assessment. Some systems use a combination of a physical location for less vulnerable clients combined with outreach/mobile assessment for those considered most vulnerable or most disconnected from services.

4. Shelter Diversion and Homelessness Prevention

In many communities that have successfully implemented CA-CI there is a strong shelter diversion program. This system element is critical for ensuring that people who are still housed but on the verge of homelessness and likely have lower barriers to being housed can be diverted from entering costly emergency shelters and transitional housing programs and reserving those slots for those with higher needs.

Shelter Diversion is similar to but distinct from Homelessness Prevention; the line between them is narrow and can be confusing. The main activity of prevention programs is generally to provide rental subsidy and/or other supports at a level that will keep a very poor household in housing for a period of time. The main activity of diversion programs is generally to provide very limited assistance, just enough to keep or get people into permanent housing. The former tends to cost more and be less well targeted, so in general is more expensive with lower return on investments. The latter is focused, deeply targeted, and has strong evidence from a limited number of communities using this approach that it works well for very little investment. Below are definitions of prevention and diversion:

- Homelessness Prevention is a strategy for preventing homelessness in which people who are still housed may receive help to prevent eviction from their rental unit. Eligibility for prevention assistance is often limited to households that have their own rental unit, hold their own lease and have received a 30-day notice or other notice of impending eviction. Services provided typically include payment of back rent and/or legal assistance. While this form of assistance has been demonstrated to help prevent housing loss, there is little evidence it actually prevents homelessness as most households who are evicted will find alternative housing on their own rather than entering a homeless shelter or living outdoors.
- Shelter Diversion is a strategy for preventing homelessness that targets households at the point at which they contact the homeless system seeking emergency assistance. Typically households are only eligible for shelter diversion if they are already unsheltered (living in a vehicle or outdoors) or are imminently going to be homeless within one to three days. Generally these are households who do not have their own rental unit but are living informally with friends or family or in a motel. Shelter diversion programs provide problem solving, mediation, and small amounts of flexible financial assistance to help “divert” these households from entering shelter, either by: (1) helping them remain where they are currently housed (for example, by providing mediation services to repair relationships with family members in the household where the person has been staying); or (2) helping them move directly to alternative housing (for example, by helping locate a friend they can stay with and providing a small amount of money to help establish a shared living situation where the individual informally rents a room or rooms from his or her friend). The purpose of diversion is to prevent unnecessary entries into emergency shelter or other homeless housing programs by helping people retain or obtain a safe housing situation, even if only

