

## Housing Crisis Resolution System Briefs:

### Part 2: What is a Housing Crisis Resolution System?

#### A System to End Homelessness

A Housing Crisis Resolution System is different from what most communities have in place today. Most communities have a collection of homeless programs that provide services and housing to some people who are experiencing homeless. A Housing Crisis Resolution System responds to the needs of *all* people who are without housing in a given community. This change is fundamental – and every word is critical:

1. **Housing** – the entire system is about getting *every* person or household with nowhere to live into housing. It recognizes the lack of housing as a temporary condition, not a personal failing or an inherent characteristic as the word “homeless” implies. It recognizes that having housing is better than no housing and that many people who are poor do not live in ideal housing situations. Helping people return to a safe and secure housing situation is a success, even if it might not be the housing we would wish for them to have.
2. **Crisis Resolution** – the system understands that being without housing is a crisis, and that the focus is solely on regaining housing to resolve that particular crisis, whatever other needs a household may still have. Helping people exit from unhoused situations and reduce their trauma and instability is not a failure if we can help them reach a safe place from which to reasonably negotiate the next steps in their own lives, as all people should be able to do.
3. **System** – the programs and resources to address homelessness function together as a system with a common set of goals and performance measures, and the entire system’s resources are deployed to meet its goals.

To be effective, the Housing Crisis Resolution System must provide an appropriate response to *everyone* who needs it, especially those with the greatest needs. It must not screen out from assistance anyone experiencing literal homelessness – that is, living outside, on the streets, or in shelter. This also means limited system resources must not be used to serve people more appropriately served elsewhere. In other words, the system must target and prioritize.

The Focus Strategies [Housing Crisis Resolution System diagram](#) shows a model system in which people who are currently housed, even if temporarily, are diverted from homeless services and helped with other resources, and people without housing are quickly directed to the most appropriate housing-focused intervention.

#### Key Features of a Housing Crisis Resolution System

In a Housing Crisis Resolution System, all of the parts of the system work together toward a common goal. Every actor in the system regardless of the role they play views each person who is literally homeless as someone with a housing need that can be addressed within 30 days. There are no

“hopeless cases” or people who are not “housing ready.” When a person enters the system, we figure out where they can live and provide the appropriate amount of assistance to help them re-enter housing. Data systems are used to continuously collect and analyze information about who remains housed and who does not. If patterns emerge these are analyzed and adjustments are made.

A Housing Crisis Resolution System has the following three main components:

1. **System Entry - Coordinated Entry and Diversion.** An HCRS must have a Coordinated Entry System (CES) designed to streamline access into housing for people who do not have a place to live. An effective CES:
  - Includes intensive outreach and engagement with people who are unsheltered and do not seek help from the Housing Crisis Resolution System.
  - Screens people who approach the front door of the HCRS to identify those who are literally homeless and those who are not.
  - Connects people who are not literally homeless to other systems that can meet their needs. People who are doubled up with family or friends are not connected with homeless services but rather are connected to other programs that can help them stabilize.
  - Integrates a robust diversion approach at every entry point, so that when literally homeless people first approach the system, the initial intervention is to problem solve to find a no-cost or low-cost solution to their housing crisis.
  - Uses standardized tools and processes to assess housing needs and match people to the most appropriate and least intensive intervention possible;
  - Prioritizes people who have the highest housing barriers for assistance from the HCRS.
  - Has no side doors - access to the HCRS is only through the CES.
  - Is integrated into HMIS so that data may be collected on all people who come into contact with the HCRS and this information can be used to assess system performance and make adjustments.

See Part 5 of this series for more information about Coordinated Entry Systems

2. **Shelter and Other Interim Forms of Housing.** In an HCRS, shelters are where people go to get housed. An effective shelter and interim housing component:
  - Includes a robust diversion approach, so that shelter capacity is preserved for people who have no other places they can safely go.
  - Provides people with a safe place to stay while they resolve their housing crisis.
  - Has minimal barriers to access and program participation requirements.

- Offers all shelter residents help with devising and executing a plan to secure housing quickly and provides access to trained and knowledgeable housing locators or housing specialists. This can be provided directly by the shelter or through partnership with other providers who work with shelter residents.
  - Offers other crisis services and connections to other service systems, but the main focus is on helping residents secure housing.
3. **System Exits – Housing Interventions.** An HCRS has an array of interventions available to help people exit from literal homelessness or a shelter stay into a safe and permanent housing situation. These should include:
- **Rapid Re-Housing.** Data suggest that the vast majority of homeless people can exit homelessness through rapid re-housing: a combination of problem solving, expert housing location and stabilization services, and in many cases, short term or medium term rental assistance. Like diversion, rapid re-housing is a major components of the HCRS – not a standalone “program.” A progressive engagement approach is used so that people do not receive more assistance than they need to end their homelessness. An HCRS should offer rapid re-housing for all population types (families, single adults, youth, etc.) and have minimal barriers to participation.
  - **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).** PSH is reserved for those chronically homeless people who have very high service needs and high levels of functional impairment. In an HCRS, new and turnover PSH units are targeted to this population. In an HCRS, PSH is operated using a housing first approach. Chronically homeless people are screened in, not out, and there are low barriers to entry. To free up capacity in existing PSH units, move-on strategies are used to help those who are in PSH and have minimal service needs to transition to mainstream housing subsidies.