Diversion: High Impact/Low Cost Funding

Human Services Campus – Central Arizona Shelter Services – Arizona Housing Coalition
What is Diversion?

An evidence-based practice that involves a guided conversation with individuals seeking shelter, to identify immediate alternative housing arrangements and - in some cases - connect with services and/or financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing.
Defining Terms

- **Diversion: strategy** for those who are trying to access emergency housing services just prior to spending a night unsheltered. Goal is to assist people to resolve their housing crisis and ensure homelessness is avoided or as brief as possible.

- **Rapid Exit: strategy** for those already in shelter, transitional housing or an unsheltered situation; using same principles as Diversion.

- **Rapid Resolution: Intervention** for homeless veterans, eligible for SSVF, that uses Diversion and Rapid Exit strategies.

- **Housing Problem-Solving: strategy** used to support effective implementation of Homeless Prevention, Diversion and Rapid Exit strategies.
Who is Diversion for?

**Individuals in crisis and seeking emergency housing**

**Individuals already homeless - in shelter or unsheltered (in this case, called Rapid Exit)**

Every individual/household in the above situations should be given the opportunity to explore Diversion options, without discrimination.
When might Diversion be difficult?

- Chronic homeless
- Serious Mental Illness
- Domestic Violence
- Elderly
When and Where does Diversion happen?

- Shelter entry points
- Outreach team encounters
- Churches, schools, food kitchens
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families entry points
- Shelters (Rapid Exit)

Diversion should be attempted at the “Front door” of homeless services as the first intervention with every person who presents with a housing crisis.
# Assessment vs. Diversion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Approach</th>
<th>Diversion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete VI-SPDAT to determine appropriate homeless services intervention</td>
<td>Engage client in a Diversion conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check eligibility for shelter/housing program</td>
<td>Make a housing plan and complete any mediation work or referrals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make a referral to shelter/housing programs</td>
<td>If client cannot be diverted, complete VI-SPDAT and proceed with relevant referrals</td>
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Diversion 101:

- Build Rapport
- Introduce the concepts of Diversion
- Explore the client's situation, their resources, their strengths
- Guide a client in discovering their own solutions
- Create a Diversion plan based on client choice
- Support their plan by offering mediations and resources as needed
- Follow up

Always ensure client safety!
Diversion is Necessary

- High demand
- Increased Inflow into our system
- Limited program funds
- Long wait lists
- A lack of willing landlords
- No shelters in some towns/cities
- An Affordable Housing Crisis and Eviction Epidemic
Diversion is Creative

- Problem-solving exploration of resources and strategies
- Maximizing resources outside shelter/housing services
- Possible housing out of state (Returning Home)
- Shared living as a viable and realistic option
Diversion is Empowering

- Puts the crisis back in the hands of the client
- Emphasizes client choice
- Supports client’s housing plan
- Helps clients find positive alternatives to entering the shelter system or staying outdoors
**Myth:** Diversion turns people away from or declines to provide shelter

**Reality:** Diversion helps families find long-term solutions to housing crises
The Mindset Shift

Think Outside the Box
HSC Diversion Program

Cole Hickman
Welcome Center Manager
HUMAN SERVICES CAMPUS
HSC Diversion Program

How effective is diversion to family or friends?

- In last 12 months 88% do not return to homeless services.
- In last 36 months 80% do not return to homeless services.
- $189 average cost per client
- Reduces demand for shelter beds
- Reduces demand for housing vouchers
6,600 clients visit Welcome Center annually to access Campus services

Use shelter, food, job services, medical care, mental health, ID programs, other services

Housed w/ Rapid Rehousing

Housed w/ Permanent Supportive Housing

Housed without financial assistance
HSC Diversion Program

What is required?

- There is housing available for the client that we can confirm.
- The client has a realistic plan for stable housing there.
- We believe they will make it to the destination.
- Diversions has not already been tried.
- Cost is reasonable (up to $350).
- The client is ready to leave now.
HSC Diversion Program

Reasons diversion purchases are denied?

- No realistic plan to address other barriers to housing.
- Have traveled before and homelessness continued or recurred.
- Client has legal or family issues here that will derail diversion.
- Have income and could easily purchase own transportation.
- Client unlikely to make it to destination.
- Not traveling to housing.
Do clients want to be diverted?

- YES. This program is in high demand. Clients are not coerced but rather want to use their social capital to end their homelessness.
What does diversion require of the program?

- Willingness to discuss the client's social networks with them, and address pride.

- Willingness to say no, or to take risks with a good housing plan.

- Separate the client advocate from the decision maker.

- Review data to validate effectiveness.

- Work quickly to be effective.

- Funds, but can be minimal.
CASS Diversion and Rapid Exit

Mary Glennon
Programs Manager
Central Arizona Shelter Services
CASS Diversion and Rapid Exit

- 2016- a gap in services, a new funding opportunity
- 2017- 162 provided with move in assistance
- 2018- A partnership opportunity with HSC
  - 184 provided move in assistance
    - Average cost: $434
  - 135 provided travel assistance
    - Average cost: $200
CASS Diversion and Rapid Exit

2019 and Beyond

New funding sources

Expanded programs
  ◦ Diversion
  ◦ Move in assistance
  ◦ Prevention
  ◦ Families with children
Diversion Funding Panel

- **CASS Diversion Funds** – Mary Glennon (CASS)
- **Human Services Diversion Funds** – Cole Hickman (HSC)
- **SSVF Rapid Rehousing** – Greg Faust (UMOM)
- **Quicken Loans Flex funds** – Joanna Sagar (AZHC)
- **Going Home (TAC)** – Cherylyn Strong (SVDP)