

PROGRAM METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Lakeshore CAP has adopted the “Housing First” model with all funding.

Housing First is an approach that centers on providing those that are homeless with housing quickly and then providing services as needed. What differentiates a Housing First approach from other strategies is that there is an immediate and primary focus on helping individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing. This approach has the benefit of being consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness want and seek help to achieve.

Housing First programs share critical elements. There is a focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain rental housing *as quickly as possible* and *the housing is not time-limited*:

1. A variety of services are delivered primarily following a housing placement to promote housing stability and individual well-being;
2. Such services are time-limited or long-term depending upon individual need; and
3. Housing is not contingent on compliance with services. Instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and supports necessary to help them do so successfully.

Source: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/what-is-housing-first>

What is Housing First?

Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues. Additionally, Housing First is based on the theory that client choice is valuable in housing selection and supportive service participation, and that exercising that choice is likely to make a client more successful in remaining housed and improving their life.

How is Housing First different from other approaches?

Housing First does not require people experiencing homelessness to address all of their problems including behavioral health problems, or to graduate through a series of services programs before they can access housing. Housing First does not mandate participation in services either before obtaining housing or in order to retain housing. The Housing First approach views housing as the foundation for life improvement and enables access to permanent housing without prerequisites or conditions beyond those of a typical renter. Supportive services are offered to support people with housing stability and individual well-being, but participation is not required as services have been found to be more effective when a person chooses to engage. Other approaches do make such requirements in order for a person to obtain and retain housing.

Who can be helped by Housing First?

A Housing First approach can benefit both homeless families and individuals with any degree of service needs. The flexible and responsive nature of a Housing First approach allows it to be tailored to help anyone. As such, a Housing First approach can be applied to help end homelessness for a household who became homeless due to a temporary personal or financial crisis and has limited service needs, only needing help accessing and securing permanent housing. At the same time, Housing First has been found to be particularly effective approach to end homelessness for high need populations, such as chronically homeless individuals.

What are the elements of a housing first program? Housing First programs often provide rental assistance that varies in duration depending on the household's needs. Consumers sign a standard lease and are able to access supports as necessary to help them do so. A variety of voluntary services may be used to promote housing stability and well-being during and following housing placement.

Two common program models follow the Housing First approach but differ in implementation. Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is targeted to individuals and families with chronic illnesses, disabilities, mental health issues, or substance use disorders who have experienced long-term or repeated homelessness. It provides long-term rental assistance and supportive services.

A second program model, rapid re-housing, is employed for a wide variety of individuals and families. It provides short-term rental assistance and services. The goals are to help people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and remain housed. The Core Components of rapid re-housing—housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and case management and services—operationalize Housing First principals.

Does Housing First work?

There is a large and growing evidence base demonstrating that Housing First is an effective solution to homelessness. Consumers in a Housing First model access housing faster and are more likely to remain stably housed. This is true for both PSH and rapid re-housing programs. A variety of studies have shown that between 75 percent and 91 percent of households remain housed a year after being rapidly re-housed.

More extensive studies have been completed on PSH finding that clients report an increase in perceived levels of autonomy, choice, and control in Housing First programs. A majority of clients are found to participate in the optional supportive services provided, often resulting in greater housing stability. Clients using supportive services are more likely to participate in job training programs, attend school, discontinue substance use, have fewer instances of domestic violence, and spend fewer days hospitalized than those not participating.

SOURCE: <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/>

In addition, the WI Balance of State Continuum of Care, explains Housing First this way:

Housing First –an approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such

as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals prior to permanent housing entry. Housing First is premised on the following principles:

- Homelessness is first and foremost a housing crisis and can be addressed through the provision of safe and affordable housing.
- All people experiencing homelessness, regardless of their housing history and duration of homelessness, can achieve housing stability in permanent housing. Some may need very little support for a brief period of time, while others may need more intensive and long-term supports.
- Everyone is “housing ready.” Sobriety, compliance in treatment, or even criminal histories are not necessary to succeed in housing. Rather, homelessness programs and housing providers must be “consumer ready.”
- Many people experience improvements in quality of life, in the areas of health, mental health, substance use, and employment, as a result of achieving housing.
- People experiencing homelessness have the right to self-determination and should be treated with dignity and respect.
- The exact configuration of housing and services depends upon the needs and preferences of the population.

Housing First core features include:

- Few to no programmatic prerequisites to permanent housing entry
- Low barrier admission policies
- Rapid and streamlined entry into housing
- Supportive services are voluntary, but can and should be used to persistently engage tenants to ensure housing stability
- Tenants have full rights, responsibilities, and legal protections
- Practices and policies to prevent lease violations and evictions
- Applicable in a variety of housing models

SOURCE: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HousingFirstPermanentSupportiveHousingBrief.pdf>