

2023 VA Permanent Housing Conference

Homelessness Prevention Targeting and Best Practices

Agenda

- Homelessness Prevention
- Rapid Resolution
- Targeting Homeless Prevention Assistance
- Effective Service Strategies
- Implementing Effective Homelessness Prevention Activity

Who is in the room?

- **SSVF Staff**
- **HUD-VASH Staff**
- **VA leadership**



Homelessness Prevention

Homelessness Prevention

The goal is to prevent *literal homelessness*. *Homelessness Prevention is NOT the same as eviction prevention.*

- **Homelessness Prevention Meaning:** Preventing loss of current housing (including doubled-up situations) and helping Veterans to avoid entry into emergency shelter (incl. Health Care for Homeless Veterans), Safe Haven, hotel with voucher, or transitional housing (incl. Grant and Per Diem), or avoid staying overnight in unsafe or other place not meant for human habitation.
- Many people who are evicted or lose current housing do not become literally homeless

Why Is Homelessness Prevention (HP) Important

- Homelessness is a traumatic experience that creates long term complications.
- Preventing homelessness helps slow the flow of new Veterans into the homeless response system and reduces pressure on the Veteran homeless response system
- Homelessness disproportionately impacts Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Veterans and Veterans who represent other marginalized communities including the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex Asexual + (LGBTQIA+) community.

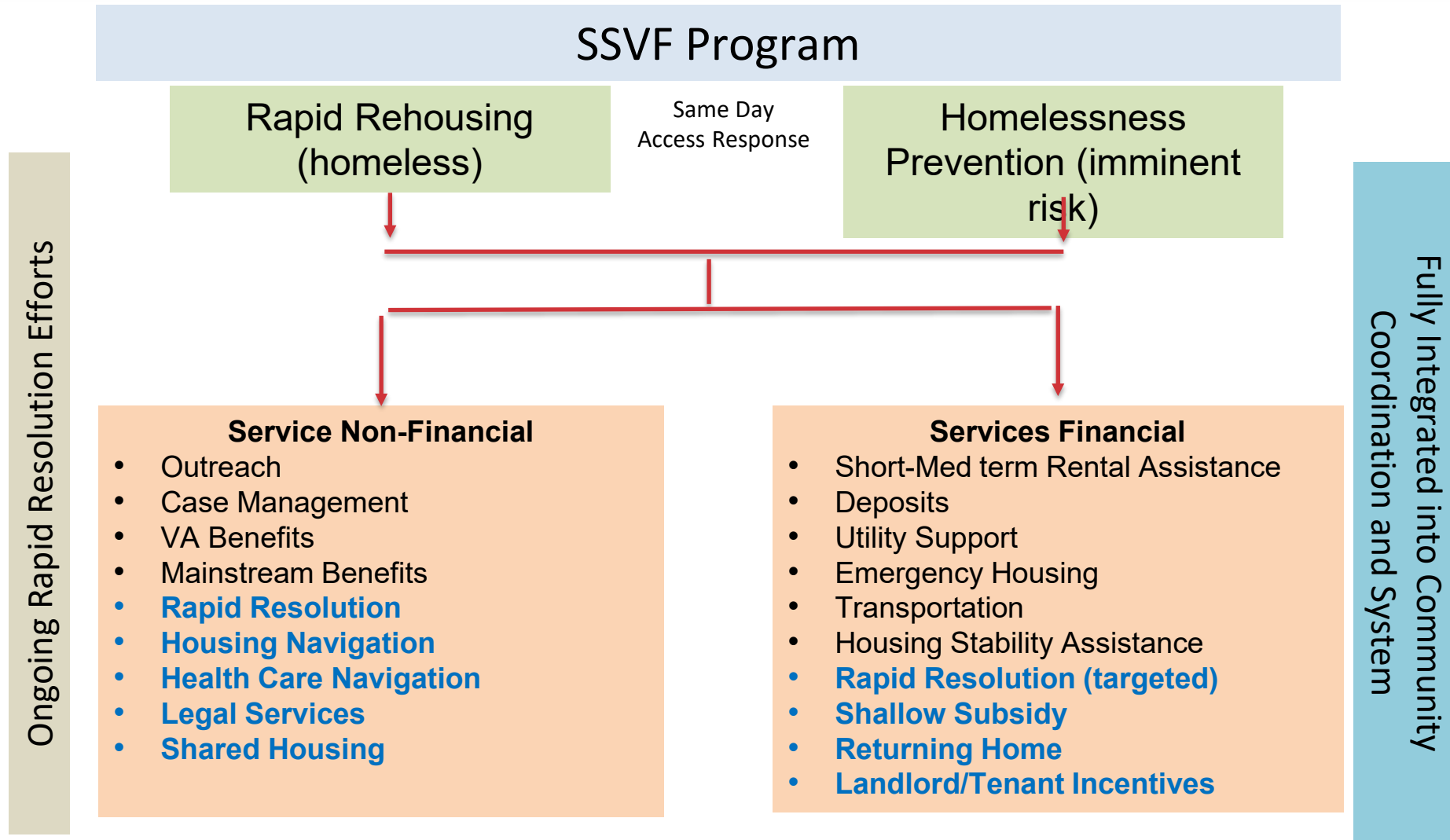
Equity-Driven Prevention Strategies for Effective Outreach and Engagement

- You can't reach those in most need without a targeted outreach strategy including proactive outreach to culturally-specific organizations (e.g., immigrant services, faith-based organizations) and neighborhoods with high rates of housing instability.
- Utilize the screening process to ensure Veterans with the greatest needs are connected to sufficient resources, even if they don't meet the local HP threshold score or cannot otherwise be assisted with financial assistance
- Partner with those that have lived expertise to support effective outreach

Homelessness Prevention

- **Rapid Resolution:** Brief crisis intervention for eligible Veterans who appear to need shelter or transitional housing, or who will otherwise be unsheltered tonight, focused on avoiding need for emergency or interim shelter resources. This intervention requires use of housing problem solving conversations and can include diversion or rapid exit.
- **Homelessness Prevention:** Short to medium-term intervention and stabilization supports for eligible Veterans who have less than 30 days left in *any* safe, available housing – ***including doubled up*** – and have no other resources “but for” SSVF to avoid imminent literal homelessness.

Flexibility of Prevention Services in SSVF



SSVF Homeless Prevention Framework

- Diversion and Rapid Resolution the most targeted form of Homelessness Prevention
- SSVF Stage 1 Screener: Screen Veterans into Supportive Services if indicating anticipated housing loss within 30 days enrolled for basic service coordination without significant temporary financial assistance (TFA)
- Stage 2: Targets TFA assistance for those who demonstrate highest vulnerabilities or other targeting factors
- Exceptional Circumstance Waiver to allow professional judgment in unique cases

Rapid Resolution

Housing Problem Solving and Diversion

Rapid Resolution Key Features

- Using **Housing Problem Solving** (HPS) approaches with the primary goal of avoiding homelessness (diversion) or ensuring it's as brief as possible for those recently entered into shelter, transitional housing, or who are unsheltered (rapid exit).
- Rapid Resolution strategies promote immediate same day access to services and/or safe accommodations and reduce delays in care even while pursuing longer term options.
- Rapid Resolution services are employed continually to support safety and an end to the housing crisis at hand. The level of services and options provided temporary financial assistance (TFA) can increase as needed, through a Progressive Engagement approach.
- Rapid Resolution is not a separate program and not a one-time conversation, but a set of approaches to be considered at all points in a homeless crisis to ensure rapid reconnections to available housing options.

Housing Problem Solving Key Features

- HPS immediately and intentionally builds trust and rapport through an exploratory, non-judging stance of active listening and question asking designed to discover a Veteran's strengths and existing resources.
- Mediates concerns helping resolve conflicts between Veterans and their family, friends, and other support systems. This may result in temporary housing options while SSVF continues to support a permanent housing solution.
- Uses a strength-based exploratory stance for immediate crisis resolution and to expedite longer-term housing goals and pathways.
- Treats each Veteran individually by recognizing their potential past trauma and their current unique crisis.
- Help identify what longer term housing supports are appropriate and feasible as immediately as possible

Rapid Resolution Strategies

- Connecting to safe temporary housing while looking for PH unit – avoid trauma and stress of shelter or streets
- Rental situations within social or family networks
- Identify those willing to have roommate or reconnect with partners to enter permanent housing situation
- Target connections to longer term subsidy resources or needs to be explored during the period of support
- Identify assets and opportunities to support housing goals that may not be apparent on traditional assessments
- Inform prioritization and case conferencing discussions to identify best, immediately available intervention(s) for Veteran family

General Discussion

How do you use rapid resolution, mediation and problem-solving techniques to support Veterans in avoiding literal homelessness?

What other services or approaches have worked for you when tenancies are put at risk?

Targeting Homeless Prevention Assistance

Targeting Homeless Prevention Assistance

The single ***best predictor*** (*the highest risk factor*) of becoming homeless is having been ***homeless previously***.

The ***ability to predict*** a potential participant's outcomes based on risk and protective factors is ***limited***.

Even if the ability to predict is limited, it's still more effective to use an ***empirically-based screening tool*** than to rely entirely on caseworker judgment.

Targeting Homelessness Prevention

Well targeted homelessness prevention...

- Often serves Veterans who are doubled up after losing their own housing
 - Programs must be capable of providing effective intervention and stabilization supports for doubled-up Veterans
- Reduces the overall number of Veterans experiencing homelessness (“inflow”)
- Increases community’s ability to shelter those with no alternatives by reducing unnecessary shelter entry/use

SSVF Staged Screening Process

- The SSVF Homelessness Prevention (HP) Screening Form is designed to help staff assess, document, and determine whether a Veteran household applying for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance is:
 - Eligible for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance (i.e., “Stage 1”), and;
 - A priority for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance in the event there are not sufficient resources to assist all eligible Veterans (i.e., “Stage 2”).
- The SSVF screener is for all persons applying for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance (i.e., Category 1, imminently at risk of literal homelessness).
- Questions included on the form are intended to be a starting point for a conversation between program staff and the applicant household. That conversation should establish program eligibility, discuss ways to resolve the current housing crisis and obtain necessary information to target homelessness prevention assistance.

Screening Into SSVF

- All Veteran households presenting will be screened and triaged for immediate support and need.
- Where capacity allows, screen in using Stage 1 enrollment to provide services and other referrals (same day enrollments where possible)
- Veterans who don't qualify for full HP financial assistance after the complete assessment may still benefit from program support, mediation services, connections to legal services, and coordinated referrals
- The HP Screener Version 2.0 assumes all Veterans who meet basic qualification criteria will receive a housing problem solving conversation and further screening and support

Complimentary Services

Effective Service Strategies - Legal Aid

Legal Aid is not limited to eviction prevention, can be valuable in the following ways:

- Negotiating reasonable accommodations
- Mitigate against or delay evictions, including illegal evictions
- Fair Hearing representation for public benefits such as housing vouchers, SNAPs and/or city welfare resources
- Income maximization and money management
 - Address garnishments
 - Interpreting and understanding credit reports for advocacy purposes with landlords
 - Represent clients on old debt matters
- Legal services may be an appropriate intervention for Veterans eligible for HP Services while in HUD-VASH or other supportive housing programs

Effective Service Strategies – Landlord Negotiation

- Practice has shown that often landlords are willing to negotiate
- Evictions can be very costly and often landlords would prefer to work things out with current tenants than proceed with evictions.
- Other negotiations could include:
 - Lease amendments for things like reasonable accommodations or roommates
 - Repayment plans for past rent
 - Additional time before move-out to find alternative housing for a household where eviction is inevitable

Relocation or Other Needs

- Relocation Veterans to new housing situation that is more sustainable
- Discussing roommates, including negotiating with landlord
- Broad, robust access to other VA and non-VA benefits and subsidy programs including fuel assistance, food assistance, transportation, childcare and other systems that cut costs
- Ensuring lease review and full understanding of tenant responsibilities
- Cost sharing with other mainstream programs
- Others?

Implementing Effective Homelessness Prevention

Planning and Coordination

- SSVF HP targeting should reflect community need, overall capacity for literal homelessness, equity considerations and geographic position
- SSVF grantees must coordinate and communicate availability of HP resources for clarity within the community, including distinction between limited service supports and providing financial assistance
- HUD-VASH can leverage Rapid Resolution approaches to help mitigate reoccurrences of homelessness for Veterans in housing

Group Discussion

- How has your community implemented Homelessness Prevention resources, and how do you make ongoing adjustments based on demand and targeting criteria?
- What have you done to use data and other insights to inform your HP strategy, including combatting any inequities locally related to those who enter homelessness?
- How do HP principles support housing retention for those Veterans recently housed via VA homeless programs?
- How do SSVF and HUD-VASH Collaborate to ensure Veterans do not return to homelessness again?

Small Group Discussion & Report Back

- Take a couple of minutes by yourself to think of two things you plan to take back to your community from this session regarding HP Targeting and Effectiveness. If possible, offer homeless prevention strategy to address disparities among Veterans experiencing homelessness.
- Then take 5 minutes at your table for each person to discuss these insights.
- We will take 10 minutes to Report out to the larger group on common themes or questions you plan to take back to your community from this session regarding HP Targeting and Effectiveness.

Questions