

Income Supports: Program and Community Assessments

Assessment for income needs as well as referrals to the appropriate mainstream resources and employment supports is critical in helping individuals and families maintain permanent housing. Lack of income should never be a reason to screen someone away from rapid re-housing services. Pursuing opportunities for increased income while concurrently focusing on identifying a permanent housing unit is possible. Starting conversations early around income support can be helpful in learning about a household's individual experiences, strengths, fears, and needs.

Program-Level Assessments

1. Do you know how many people in your program do not have income from employment and/or disability benefits?	
Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of individuals (single or in families) who do not have income: How many of these report having severe medical or behavioral health conditions and are not currently receiving or in the application process for SSI/SSDI? 	Locate this information using HMIS reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HMIS data element 4.2 (Income and Sources) HMIS data elements 4.5-4.9 (Disability Elements)
Best practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask about income from employment and disability benefits at intake; begin the discussion early about income opportunities Continually assess the income needs of program participants using HMIS reports and track progress towards income acquisition 	

2. When a program participant does not have income from employment and/or disability benefits, are they immediately connected with income support services?	
Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the process for connecting someone to assistance with employment or disability benefits? For participants eligible for disability benefits, are they also encouraged to simultaneously pursue employment opportunities? Do you have a system in place to track outcomes of these referrals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What programmatic barriers are preventing an immediate connection to income support services? Does your program have a clear, written referral process for income support services? Is your staff aware of the variety of income supports and eligibility criteria for programs?
Best Practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a clear, written referral plan for income support services; refer an individual immediately upon program entry Conduct staff awareness training on income support programs and eligibility criteria Encourage program participants who are eligible for disability benefits to also simultaneously pursue their employment goals Track outcomes of referrals to ensure connection with appropriate resources 	

3. Does your program have in-house resources or staff to provide application assistance for SSI/SSDI or VA disability benefits, or connection with competitive employment?	
Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What in-house services are currently available to rapid re-housing participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SSI/SSDI benefits assistance (e.g. SOAR specialists): - VA disability benefits assistance: - Employment specialists: Are these resources and staffing levels sufficient to meet the need for services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If no, in what ways could your program expand partnerships or staff capacity to meet this demand? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What partnerships are currently in place for increasing access to income supports? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SSI/SSDI benefits assistance (e.g. SOAR specialists): - VA disability benefits assistance: - Employment specialists: Are these partnerships sufficient to meet the need for services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If no, in what ways could your program explore additional partnerships or increase internal staff capacity to provide these services?
Best Practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a written list of in-house and partner services for assistance with employment and disability benefits; identify new partners if gaps in services exist - Evaluate if the current resources and staff capacity is sufficient to meet the need for income support services for your program participants - If the need for services exceeds available capacity, create an action plan for how to increase internal capacity or external partnerships - Explore dedicating staff time for employment and disability benefits assistance 	

4. Are questions about income support needs incorporated into your case conferencing about housing needs for program participants?	
Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has this been successful in increasing access to income for program participants? Do partner agencies who provide income support services need to be invited to the case conferencing process? Have you encountered any barriers to addressing income support needs during case conferencing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What programmatic changes could you make to begin reporting on income needs during case conferences? Which partner agencies who provide income support services need to be invited to the case conferencing process?
Best Practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During case conferencing, integrate income needs into discussions about housing needs for program participants - Invite partner agencies that provide assistance with employment or disability benefits to be a part of the case conferencing process - Explore solutions for permanent housing and income stability simultaneously 	

Community-Level Assessments

1. Do you know how many individuals and families (sheltered or unsheltered) in your community do not have income from employment and/or disability benefits?	
Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of individuals (single or in families) who do not have income: How many of these report having severe medical or behavioral health conditions and are not currently receiving or in the application process for SSI/SSDI? 	<p>Locate this information using community data repositories or HMIS reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HMIS data element 4.2 (Income and Sources) HMIS data elements 4.5-4.9 (Disability Elements)
<p>Best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all community providers are asking a common set of questions about employment and disability benefits at intake Continually assess the income needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and those in housing programs using HMIS reports, and track progress towards income acquisition 	

2. Is there a clear, written referral process in your coordinated entry system for connecting an individual with employment and disability benefits assistance immediately upon intake, if those needs are identified?	
Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the process for connecting someone to assistance with employment or disability benefits? For participants who are eligible for disability benefits, are dual referrals made for disability application assistance and employment support? Does your coordinated entry system track outcomes of these referrals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What systemic barriers are preventing an immediate connection to income support services? What steps are needed to develop a clear, written referral process to income support services for your coordinated entry system? Is there clear guidance in your community about the variety of income supports available and eligibility criteria for local programs?
<p>Best Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a clear, written referral plan for income support services; refer an individual immediately upon program entry Conduct training for staff awareness about income support programs and eligibility criteria Encourage dual referrals to disability benefit application assistance and employment supports for those who may be eligible for disability benefits Track outcomes of referrals to ensure connection with appropriate resources 	

3. What employment and disability assistance resources are available in your community?

Employment supports (job training/placement):

Disability application assistance (SSI/SSDI, VA benefits):

- Using the above list, can you identify any gaps in community resources for income support services?
- Does your community have sufficient resources and staff to meet the need for services?
 - If not, in what ways could your community explore funding additional positions or creating new partnerships?
- Are representatives from Vocational Rehabilitation, employment services, VA disability, and SSI/SSDI disability (SOAR providers) part of your rapid re-housing initiative?
 - If not, who should be invited to the table?

Best Practices:

- Develop a written list of community services that assist with employment and disability benefits to use in your coordinated entry system
- Ensure representatives from income support services are part of your community's rapid re-housing initiative
- Evaluate if the current resources and staff capacity is sufficient to meet the need for income support services; if not, create an action plan for increasing capacity at community agencies and/or developing new partnerships
- Explore funding dedicated to employment and disability benefits specialists
- Create a speaker's bureau of peers who have experienced homelessness and share how they increased their income through disability benefits and/or employment

4. Are questions about income support needs incorporated into your community case conferencing process during discussions about housing needs?

Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has this been successful in increasing access to income for participants in rapid re-housing programs? • Do partner agencies who provide income support services need to be invited to the case conferencing process? • Have you encountered any barriers to addressing income support needs during case conferencing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What systemic changes could you make to begin reporting on income needs during case conferences? • Which partner agencies who provide income support services need to be invited to the case conferencing process?

Best Practices:

- During case conferencing, include information about income in discussions about housing needs for individuals experiencing homelessness, should include information about their income
- Invite partner agencies involved in providing assistance with employment or disability benefits, to be a part of the case conferencing process
- Explore solutions for permanent housing and income stability simultaneously

