B5. Unsheltered to Housed: A Housing-Focused Approach

2018 Rapid Rehousing Institute

WELCOME

Session Objectives

- Learn about strategies for rapidly housing people from the streets or encampments
- Learn what communities are doing to respond to encampments
- Hear from actual practitioners to learn about their experiences in this work

1. How many of you have a program that works to house people directly from the streets?

2. How many of you have faced (or are facing) concerns about encampments in your community?

3. How many of you have had to deal with efforts to criminalize homelessness in your community?

Let's Share

QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

SUCESSES/EXPERIENCES

What is the challenge?
UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

- On any given night, over 175,000 people are unsheltered (2016)
- Unsheltered homelessness has been declining nationally for several years, although some jurisdictions report increases
- 10% of people who are unsheltered are in families with children
- 33% are Veterans
- 44% are individuals
- 46% are Youth under 25
- 68% are chronically homeless individuals

What is the challenge?
UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

In sum, single individuals, including unaccompanied youth, Veterans, and chronically homeless individuals account for a combined **89% of the unsheltered people on a given night.**

(NAEH June 2017)

What is the challenge?
UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

- More likely to be unsheltered in western and southern sections of the country (66% and 39%)

- Unsheltered people in the Midwest (18%) and Northeast (13%)

- Unsheltered homelessness is concentrated in a few states:
  - California: 44% of all unsheltered people are in CA
  - Florida: 9% of all unsheltered people are in FL
  - Washington: 5%
  - Oregon: 5%
  - Texas: 4%

NAEH June 2017

Influences on high or increasing unsheltered counts

- Median Cost of Rent
- Cost of Rent for the Lowest 10% of Units
- Ratio of Rent to Income
- Vacancy Rate
- Number of Available, Affordable Units for Extremely Low-Income Renters
- Lack of Permanent Housing Resources (RRH, Perm Supportive Housing)
- Lack of Interim Housing (shelter, transitional housing, safe haven programs)
  - In 2016, only 3 year-round interim beds existed for every 4 people experiencing homelessness
  - Imbalance of population appropriate interim housing (only 49% of interim housing beds are designated for individuals, but 65% of people experiencing homelessness are individuals.)

Influences on high or increasing unsheltered counts

Barriers to Assistance:

- Fear of shelters due to theft, assault, intimidation, substance use, lack of cleanliness, etc.
- Noise and anxiety in shelter environments
- Early wake-up hours and curfews
- Pets, Partners, and Possessions – all inhibit access to shelter

Rules:

- First-come first-served (73%)
- Time limit (59%)
- Not open 24 hours (56%)
- Single gender only (44%)
- Requires job search (36%)
- Requires sobriety (31%)
- Requires faith-based activities (24%)

Temperature

- States with higher average temperatures in January 2016 reported higher proportion of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness

Strategies—Increase Housing Placements

- In 2016, 59% of all PSH beds were dedicated to people experiencing chronic homelessness
  - Increasing this share will result in more placements
- Increase Problem-Solving/Rapid Exit/Diversion strategies
- Increase use of Rapid Re-Housing for people with higher service needs and long histories of homelessness
  - Requires reconfiguring services and possibly increased staff training
- Create partnerships with PHA, multi-family housing providers and other affordable housing providers to develop strategies to help people “move on” when they no longer need PSH to make room for more people with higher needs
- Support shared housing as a legitimate housing option

Strategies—Improve Shelter/Crisis Response

- Increase shelter access and bed turnover
  - 2016 AHAR shows that only 85% of shelter beds for individuals and 90% of beds for families are being occupied with an average length of stay of 50 nights for individuals and 91 for families
- Increase paradigm shift to low-barrier/low demand shelter operations making shelter a more appealing possibility
  - Include people with lived experience in examining shelter practices to make them more accommodating/attractive
  - Shelters should be housing-focused as the primary intervention
- Examine system flow from the point of view of participants. Look for inefficiencies, places where there are bottle necks and ways to move people more quickly into housing.

Why do People Avoid Shelters?

They are too crowded	37%
Bugs	30%
There are too many rules	28%
They are full	27%
I can’t stay with my partner/family	23%
Germs	22%
They don’t accept my pet	22%
There is nowhere to store my stuff	19%
They are too far away	18%
I can’t stay with my friends	13%

Housing-Focused Shelters

- All services focus on helping participants obtain housing as quickly as possible

- Housing Plan with placement target date
  - Laser focus on most important things (income, housing applications, private market housing location)

- Appropriate staffing and job descriptions to provide housing-focused/rapid exit services

- Staff knows how to provide case management that is focused on creating a housing plan

- Participants are assisted to create a rapid exit housing plan with staff within one week of entering shelter

Low-Barrier Shelters

- Eligibility criteria does not exclude people with criminal histories, lack of income, or current use of drugs and/or alcohol
- Shelter does not permanently ban people for anything other than violence or theft
- Compliant with HUD Equal Access Rule and open to all regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status
- Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Do NOT make participants leave every morning at a certain time, stay outside, line up for beds, etc.
- Pet friendly
- Storage available for belongings

Poll:

1. How many of you have worked to create more housing-focused, low barrier shelters?

Let's Share….

QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

SUCESSES/EXPERIENCES

Case Study: San Francisco Navigation Centers

- Provides access to shelter for long-term, highly vulnerable residents living on the streets who have not been accessing traditional shelters.
- Entry is through either the SF Encampment Resolution Team (ERT) or the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT).
- Additionally,
  - 5 beds are maintained for police emergencies
  - 5 beds are maintained for short-term use by individuals participating in the Homeward Bound Program

Case Study: *San Francisco Navigation Centers*

- Provides shelter for long-term, highly vulnerable residents living on the streets who had not been accessing traditional services
- There are currently 5 Navigation Centers with 366 beds for individuals
- Most beds within the **Navigation Centers are Pathways to Housing Beds** or **Temporary Stay Beds**

- **Pathways to Housing** is a permanent housing placement for people identified through the CES as high priority
- **Temporary stay beds** are for people who ***do not*** have CES priority status and typically stay for up to 60 days.
- Housing is priority from Day 1 regardless of which program they enter in
- Case managers work with people to create a plan for housing placement

SF Navigation Centers = *Low Barrier Shelter*

Intensive support approach for individuals who are exiting encampments who are highly vulnerable and experiencing long-term homelessness

- Few barriers to entry
  - ✓ **Less Rules and Restrictions**
    - ✓ Rule violations addressed through case management and behavior modification, NOT termination of assistance
  - ✓ **No Curfew:** participants may come and go as they please; beds are only released if they don't check in for 72 hours
  - ✓ **24 hour Operation**
  - ✓ **Meals:** Ready to eat meals , kitchen accessible 24 hours a day
  - ✓ **Possessions**: Lockers for small possessions; on site storage for larger
  - ✓ **Pets:** Pets allowed to stay in dormitories with their owners; have outside space and CM connect pets to services
  - ✓ **Partners:** Mixed gender dormitories, clients can request beds next to a partner of any gender.

SF Navigation Centers = *High Support*

- Small scale allows staff to get to know and work with every participant
- Communal spaces offer comfort and opportunity for interactions
- Physical Layout: promotes a tranquil and welcoming environment
- Intensive Case Management: case loads kept small to allow adequate time to spent with each participant
- Co-Locate benefits and health care: benefit eligibility specialists from County provide on-site assistance; nurses from Shelter Health program available for wound care and medication management

Case Study: City of Santa Rosa, CA

Homeless Encampment Assistance Pilot (HEAP)

To address the health, safety and shelter needs of people living in encampments, as well as to mitigate impacts to the surrounding communities.

HEAP Task Force Includes:

- Police
- Fire
- Housing & Community Services
- Transportation & Public Works
- Parks & Rec
- Water
- City Attorney
- City Manager
- Community Engagement & HOST Teams

Case Study: Santa Rosa HEAP

Together, the City and the Host Teams developed a list of 44 encampments and identified:

- Number of people on the site
- Assessment of vulnerability based on VI-SPDAT and outdoor living
- Associated health and safety risks (including pests, waterways, busy roadways, etc.)
- Fire risks (brush in the encampment, reported emergency fire incidents, accumulation of flammable materials
- Property ownership: City, County, multi-jurisdictional

Santa Rosa HEAP -- Three Phase Approach

1

Once a site has been selected, an action plan is developed to meet the needs of the people living there and close down the encampment

- Develop a housing placement plan including both temp and perm housing
  - Timing of adequate resources drives the overall timeline of the strategy
  - Create an Encampment Action Plan
    - Organization assignments
    - Timeline
    - Roles and Contact Info
    - Safety Message
    - Map
    - Communication Plan
    - Plan for re-securing the area
    - When notice is given to individuals, Outreach is involved and immediately begins intensive services

Santa Rosa HEAP -- Three Phase Approach

2

- Assess all persons including their preferences for housing options
- Create a Transition Plan for each person (2 options for each)
- Assertive outreach and engagement to all individuals
- Property Storage offered to everyone by Outreach
- Documentation of each individual's plan

Santa Rosa HEAP -- Three Phase Approach

3

- Encampment Closure: Day begins and ends with partner briefing
  - Outreach accompanies whomever is doing the enforcement
  - Outreach continues to attempt engagement with all individuals even after closure
- Re-Secure Site
  - In-depth clean up effort of debris and hazardous materials removal
  - Once clean, fencing or landscaping is implemented
- ***Relocation follows Housing First protocols*** to either Housing-focused shelter, hotel vouchers, and resources to connect with family and supports or housing placement.

Santa Rosa HEAP--- Cost: $2.2 million 2017-2018

- Repurposed one shelter into a ***housing-focused/low barrier shelter*** with 75 beds (out of 213) prioritized for individuals identified through HEAP
- Outreach workers educated individuals about changes at the shelter and ***even offer tours so they can observe the changes.***
- Reunification funds (to return to supportive family or friends)
- Hotel vouchers
- Housing assistance (security deposits, rental payments)
- Extended services at the Homeless Services Center

Santa Rosa HEAP-- Lessons Learned

- ✓Coordinate with advocates and activists to prevent their interfering with the process. Members of HEAP actively work with the advocates and activists to find common ground.
- ✓Every encampment is different and may require different approaches and partners
- ✓Work with encampment leaders: many have their own “mayors” or leaders. Outreach works to connect with these leaders at the beginning of the process.
- ✓Flexible funding is key to quickly serving people in encampments

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Q&A

Strategies—Begin or Increase use of Diversion and/or Rapid Exit

- Diversion/Rapid Exit should be a system-wide practice to find safe alternatives to shelter. It can also be done as a practice of some programs if the system is not yet ready.
- Can be done at ***any*** entry way to the system either before they have entered the system (Diversion) or soon after they have entered the system (Rapid Exit)
- While relatively new, there are many communities who have been doing this and finding excellent success
  - Learn from those who have done it (Phoenix; NYC; Tacoma, Washington; San Francisco….)

Strategies---Develop Housing-Focused Street Outreach

- Prioritize/direct funding for outreach
- Create more/better integrated, coordinated outreach teams across sectors including homeless sector, public health, mental health, etc.
- Outreach staff focus on knowledge of and access to housing resources, how they work, how to connect someone to them.

Strategies—Prevent Criminalization of Homelessness

- Local ordinances that criminalize sleeping in public, panhandling, feeding people , etc.
- Results of ordinances: placing people experiencing homelessness into the criminal justice system making their housing connections even more difficult
- Homelessness system leads efforts to prevent these kinds of ordinances by helping political leaders understand that a focus on outreach activities would have a better impact

Strategies--- Respond to Encampments

- Work with police and political entities to develop a unified, human-centered response to encampments
  - **NO**: clearing out encampments without a plan;
  - **NO**: seizing property
  - **NO** arresting inhabitants
- Focus strategies on how to house those living in encampments safely and with dignity
- Work with community about how to ensure encampments are safe and sanitary
- Create a community-coordinated response to finding housing for those living in encampments

Strategies---Manage and Prevent Public Health Crises

- Hepatitis A
- Shigella
- Tuberculosis

- Need easy access to public bathrooms
- Bring Public Health Department to the table to develop partnership

SUPERB wallpapers
That's all Folks!