

HOMELESSNESS

PREVENTABLE • SOLVABLE • UNACCEPTABLE



Homelessness Task Force of Great Kansas City

Building a Common Agenda Series: What is Housing First?

Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible – 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:

- A focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible without time limits;
- A variety of services delivered to promote housing stability and individual well-being on an as-needed basis; and
- A standard lease agreement to housing – as opposed to mandated therapy or services compliance.

A Housing First approach rests on the belief that helping people access and sustain permanent, affordable housing should be the central goal of our work with people experiencing homelessness. By providing housing assistance, case management and supportive services responsive to individual or family needs (time-limited or long-term) after an individual or family is housed, communities can significantly reduce the time people experience homelessness and prevent further episodes of homelessness. A central tenet of the Housing First approach is that social services to enhance individual and family well-being can be more effective when people are in their own home.

While there are a wide variety of program models, Housing First programs all typically include:

- Assessment-based targeting [service prioritization] of Housing First services
- Assistance locating rental housing, relationship development with private market landlords, and lease negotiation
- Housing assistance – ranging from security deposit and one month’s rent to provision of a long-term housing subsidy
- A housing placement that is not time-limited
- Case management to coordinate services (time-limited or long-term) that follow a housing placement.




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While all Housing First programs share these critical elements, program models vary significantly depending upon the population served. For people who have experienced chronic homelessness, there is an expectation that intensive (and often specialized) services will be needed indefinitely.


For most people experiencing homelessness, however, such intensive services are not necessary. The vast majority of homeless individuals and families fall into homelessness after a housing or personal crisis that led them to seek help from the homeless assistance system. For these families and individuals, the Housing First approach is ideal, as it provides them with assistance to find permanent housing quickly and without conditions. In turn, such clients of the homeless assistance networks need surprisingly little support or assistance to achieve independence, saving the system considerable costs. *(from National Alliance to End Homelessness)*

Housing First is currently endorsed by the United States [Interagency Council on Homelessness](#) (USICH) as a "best practice" for governments and service-agencies to use in their fight to end chronic homelessness in [America](#).^[6]

What is Housing First?

 NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS
SOLUTIONS BRIEF | NOVEMBER 27, 2006
FILES: [PDF](#) | [134 KB](#) | [6 PAGES](#)

Housing First Partnership and Accountability Matrix

 NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS TOOLKITS
NOVEMBER 19, 2009

This tool helps communities identify possible partners and accountable agencies within their Housing First system.

1. [SAMPLE OF COMPLETED PARTNERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX \(PDF | 338 KB | 3 PAGES\)](#)
2. [PARTNERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY MATRIX WORKSHEET \(DOC | 131 KB | 3 PAGES\)](#)