

BEST PRACTICES LOW BARRIER, HOUSING FOCUSED SHELTER

SESSION ONE: THE ROLE OF EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY SHELTER

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Your Trainers

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Housekeeping



What We Do

Policy and Programs

- Carries out the vital work of educating policymakers and the field about key strategies and policies for ending and preventing homelessness.
- Keeps federal policymakers and legislators informed of the needs of people experiencing homelessness and the programs serving them.
- Leads advocacy efforts on a grassroots level.

Capacity Building

- Supports efforts to end homelessness by offering training and technical assistance tailored to communities' unique needs.
- Helps design and implement crisis systems, improve systems' performance, and utilize data to end homelessness, particularly with an equity lens.
- Provides online courses, trainings, and webinars to inform the field of best practices to end homelessness.

Homelessness Research Institute

- Analyzes data to identify homelessness trends on national, local, and Continuum of Care levels.
- Publishes research that ensures policymakers, practitioners, the media, and the public have the best information about trends and emerging solutions to the problem.
- Uses an equity lens to identify disparities in homelessness data.

Lived Experience Innovation + Strategic Communications

National Alliance to End Homelessness Statements for Participation

The Alliance works to ensure that diverse voices are included as facilitators, attendees, and guests in our training forums. All voices are welcome.

The organization has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of discrimination or abusive behavior. The Alliance is committed to ensuring that all its events are safe and respectful for all participants.

Participants acknowledge that any form of discrimination, violence, or abusive behavior may result in removal from an office hour or forum depending on the situation.

If any discrimination is witnessed or experienced during the training, or if you feel unsafe, please notify any member of the Alliance staff.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness strives to create a diverse, inclusive, accepting, and safe space for everyone.

Training Series Overview

Week One

- Effective Homeless Response Systems
- Role of Emergency Shelter
- Housing First Approach in Shelter Pt. 1

Week Two

- Housing First Approach in Shelter Pt.2
- Role of Shelter in Diversion and Problem Solving
- Transitioning Shelter to a Low Barrier Model

Week Three

- The role of rules and guidelines for effective shelter
- Housing Focused Shelter with Rapid PH Exits
- Creating a Housing Focused Environment pt. 1

Week Four

- Creating a Housing Focused Environment pt.2
- Using Data and Outcomes to Measure Success
- Taking Action



Virtual Session Logistics



Why an Emergency Shelter Training?

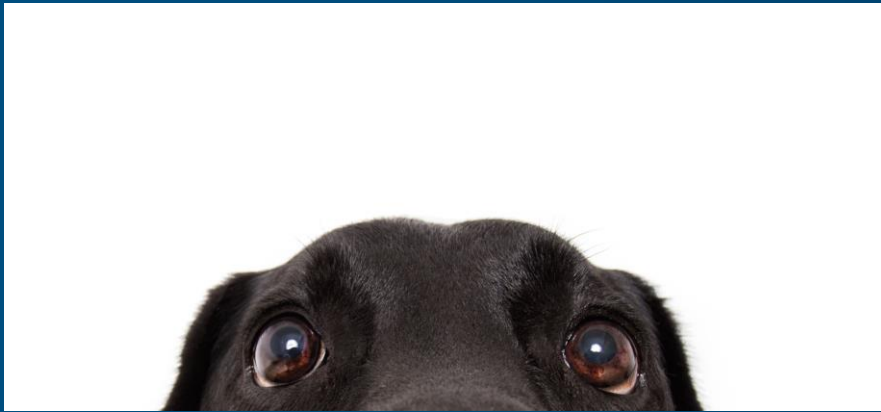
- **Implement** a system-wide approach to ending homelessness
- **Align** emergency shelter's goals with the CoC goals to end homelessness
- **Provide** low-barrier, safe, and housing-focused shelter that people will use
- **Increase** the number of people that exit from shelter to permanent housing (and decrease the number exiting back into homelessness)
- **Shorten** the length of time people experience homelessness



Breakouts: Get to Know your Colleagues

- Introduce yourself including organization and role
- Identify the top 3 takeaways you as a group hope to gain from participating in this training

First...when you arrive your breakout room, turn on your cameras, identify the note taker, and identify the reporter for the debrief



Debrief Takeaways

- Best Practices
- New Practices
- Networking – getting to know everyone (lots of staff change)
- Better communicate with shelter providers
- Populations served
- How to coordinate better
- How to make shelters to be more productive – maximize peoples time to get connected to housing
- History of shelters – how can city help
- Connecting students to shelter when homeless
- Shelters that suit the needs of people with serious mental illness/disabilities
- Youth transitioning out of foster care system and end up in adult shelters which may not be appropriate –systems are coordinated
- Threading the needle between making shelter safe and desirable while making it housing focused”
- Incorporate wellness activities into shelter program

Thoughts...

Respond to each of the following...

- When I think of emergency shelter across our continuum of care, the first word that comes to mind is...
- I wish our emergency shelter/s would...
- The greatest obstacle facing our unsheltered neighbors is...

AND Finally

- A word that describes how I am feeling about participating in the Emergency Shelter Training is...



**BUT FIRST
AN EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT, AND EQUITABLE
HOMELESS RESPONSE SYSTEM**

That ends homelessness...



Effective, Equitable and Efficient Homeless Response System: **GOAL**

House people as quickly as possible and
divert people from imminent homelessness whenever possible



Effective, Equitable and Efficient Homeless Response System: **APPROACH**

Use a systemic approach

to align interventions and resources across programs in a coordinated way around this common goal



Effective, Equitable and Efficient Homeless Response System: **ENDGAME**

Homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time

- People in a housing crisis have access to immediate help, including a safe place to go
- People are not unsheltered
- People do not spend long periods of time homeless
- People exit homelessness quickly and do not quickly cycle back into homelessness
- Black people are not overrepresented in those experiencing homelessness



Effective, Equitable and Efficient Homeless Response System: **PERFORMANCE**

Establish systemic performance measures

1. Reduce in-flow into homelessness
2. Increase exits to permanent housing
3. Decrease average length of homelessness
4. Decrease returns to homelessness



An Effective Homeless Response System: **PRACTICE**

Practice Standards Across all Programs

- **Housing First** approach across all interventions within the system
- **Diversion** from imminent homeless system when safe and appropriate
- **Rapid identification and engagement of people** experiencing unsheltered homelessness to connect them to crisis services and housing assistance

An Effective Homeless Response System: **PRACTICE**

Practice Standards Across all Programs

- **Quick, accessible, low-barrier pathways to shelter** and other crisis services with **short stays** in shelter
- **Rapid connection to permanent housing** for all sheltered and unsheltered people, *whether or not* they are matched to a housing resource through coordinated entry

An Effective Homeless Response System: Increase System Flow

System Flow:

An efficient and coordinated **process** that moves people from homelessness to housing as quickly as possible



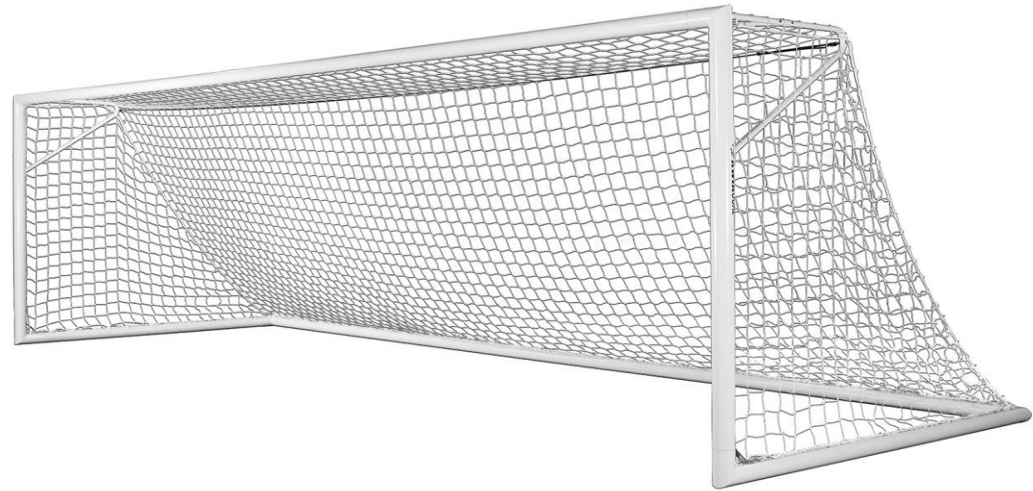
The “**process**” means that all interventions need to work as one system to create flow.

THE ROLE OF EMERGENCY SHELTER IN SYSTEM FLOW

THE ROLE OF EMERGENCY SHELTER



Sooo, just what is the goal of emergency shelter?



Break Out Discussion:

What is the **ROLE** of Emergency Shelter in Your Homeless Assistance System?

1. What is the purpose of emergency shelter?
2. Who is emergency shelter for?
3. Who does emergency shelter not work for?

Debrief

Purpose

- Regrouping point for individuals
- Connect with support
- Temporary safe space
- Should be available for everyone (including severe mental illness)

Who is shelter for or doesn't work for

- Should be for everyone
- It's for everyone – certain shelters are tailored for certain household types
- What does community care coordinator look like after someone exits shelter/housed from shelter – follow-up

Can't work for...

- People who cannot care for themselves
- People with pets
- Clients with mental health issues
- Those that get cut off from shelter services when they leave but still need the shelter services
- Someone not ready to be housed

Purpose of shelters/crisis housing?

- To provide temporary shelter
 - Hostel-like environment (check-in and check out every day)
 - Meets basic needs
 - Shower/bathroom
 - Laundry
 - Mail
 - Self-directed resource/information and referral
 - Light services



- To end homelessness
 - Resolve housing crises permanently
 - Facilitate self-resolution
 - Re-house people quickly
 - Reduce unsheltered homelessness
 - Create better system flow
 - Connect people to coordinated entry
 - Connect people to housing search and other resources to help stabilize them once housed

Role of Emergency Shelter

What role does it play in achieving the goal?

- Ensures individuals and households experiencing homelessness have a safe, decent place to stay that is immediately accessible while focusing on quickly exiting people to housing
- Provides housing support within shelter or connections to rapid re-housing and other housing resources for rapid exits to housing.

Why Are Shelters So Important?

- People in a housing crisis will always need a safe and decent place to go that is immediately available
- Shelters will most likely be the only place people receive help to resolve their housing crisis and get connected to permanent housing
- Shelter eligibility, policies, and stays impacts performance outcomes and **system flow**



Break time!

See you b



POLL

Which of the following system performance measures does shelter impact?

1. Reduce in-flow into homelessness
2. Increase exits to permanent housing
3. Decrease average length of homelessness
4. Decrease returns to homelessness

Chose all that apply

Effective Shelters Create System Flow

- Systemic Alignment of Practice Across Shelters
 - Analysis of Why Some People Refuse Shelter
 - Engage and Listen to People with Lived Experience
- And...
- Then Make Changes!

Before adding more beds, look at what you currently have in your system. What are barriers? How are people exited? Does your shelter options align with systemic needs?



WHAT DOES DATA TELL US?

Impact of shelter practice in Austin/Travis County
System Flow



Where are you in your Transformational Change?

Old Shelter Model

New Shelter Model

Need for Change

Confusion

Anxiety/Loss

Clarity

New Vision

Integration

Restructuring

What Do We Know About Shelter Stays?

Significant portion of people self-resolve or seek help from another system

Most people can exit homelessness with a light touch of services and assistance, and exit homelessness for good

People who have highest needs often lose shelter beds due to non-compliance issues

Minority of people need more intensive services and long-term housing supports

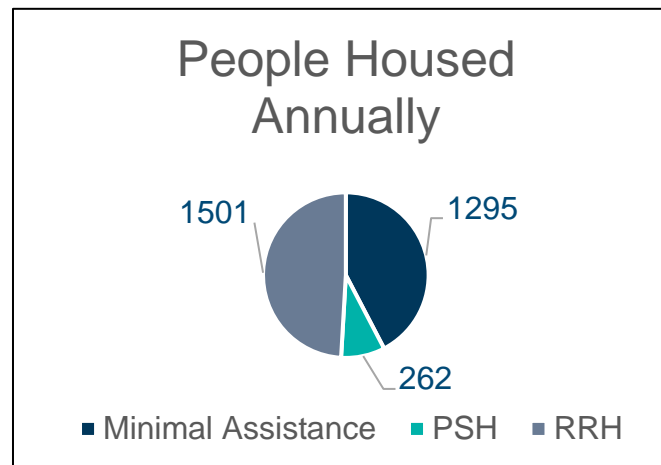
Reality of the numbers

2023

- AHAR (annual):
 - 2374 people experiencing homeless
 - 3,175 people experiencing for the first time

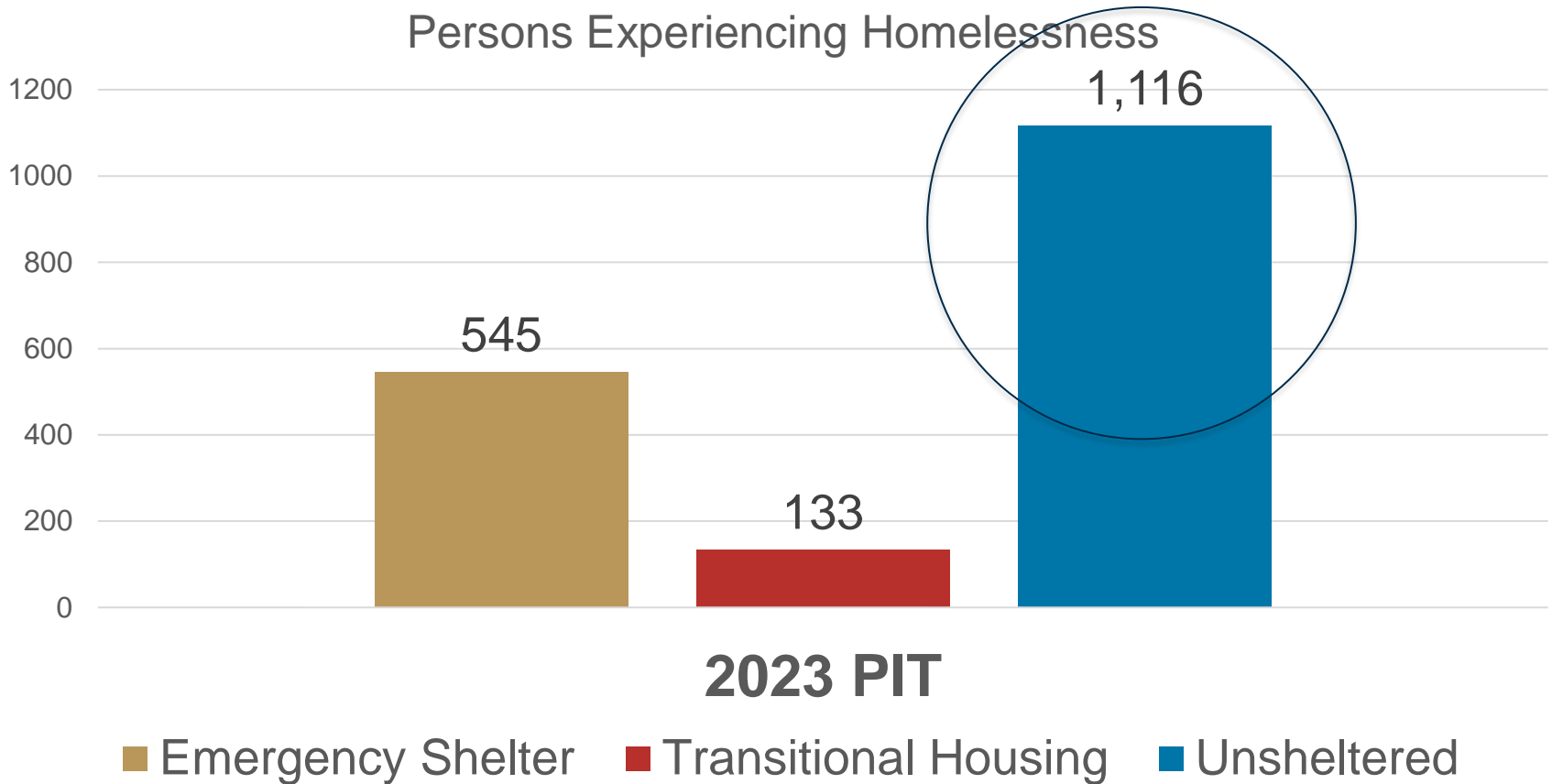
2024

- CES numbers:
 - 795 on average new and reassessed HH monthly
 - 98 on average RRH (49) and PSH (49) HH Monthly



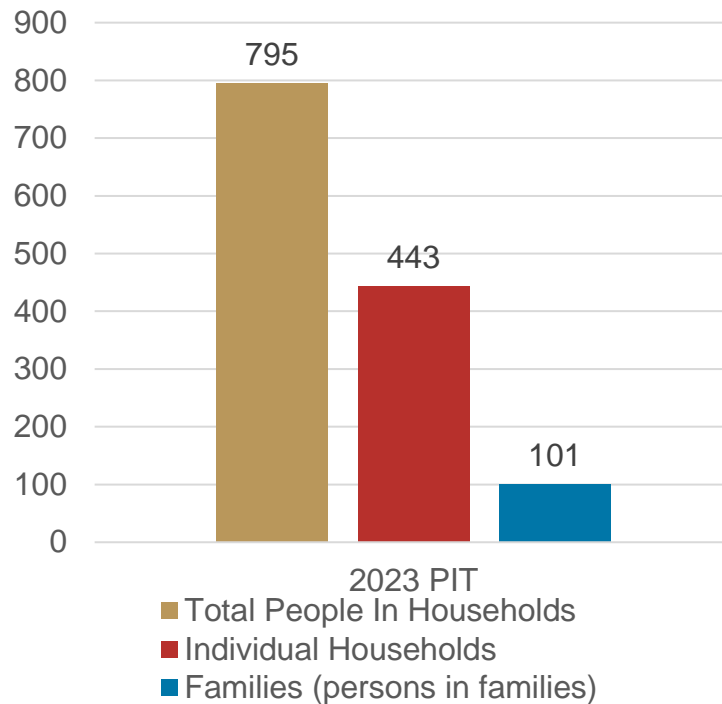
Local Data

Austin/Travis County 2023 PIT

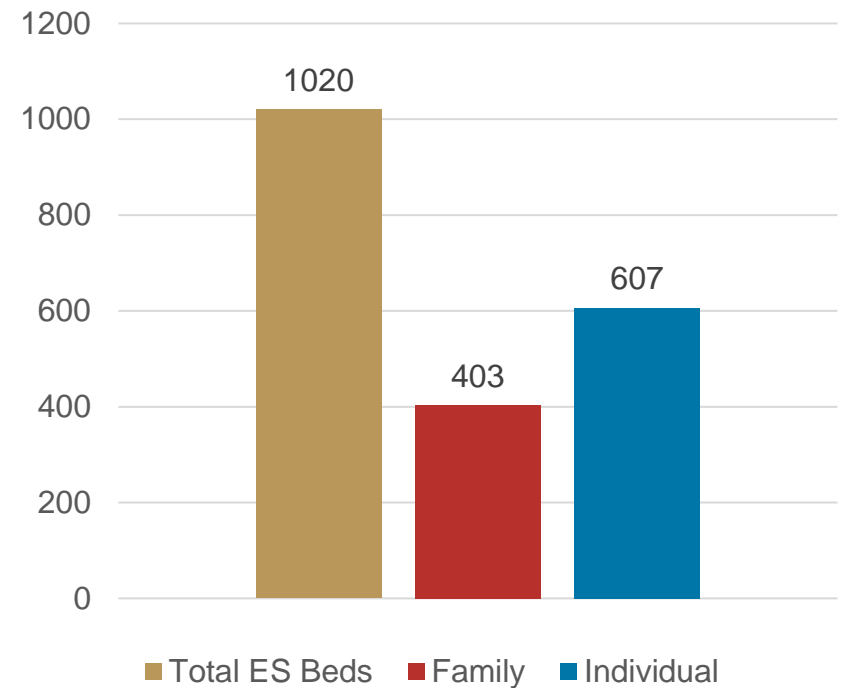


Do We Have the Right Mix?

2023 PIT Families VS Singles in shelter

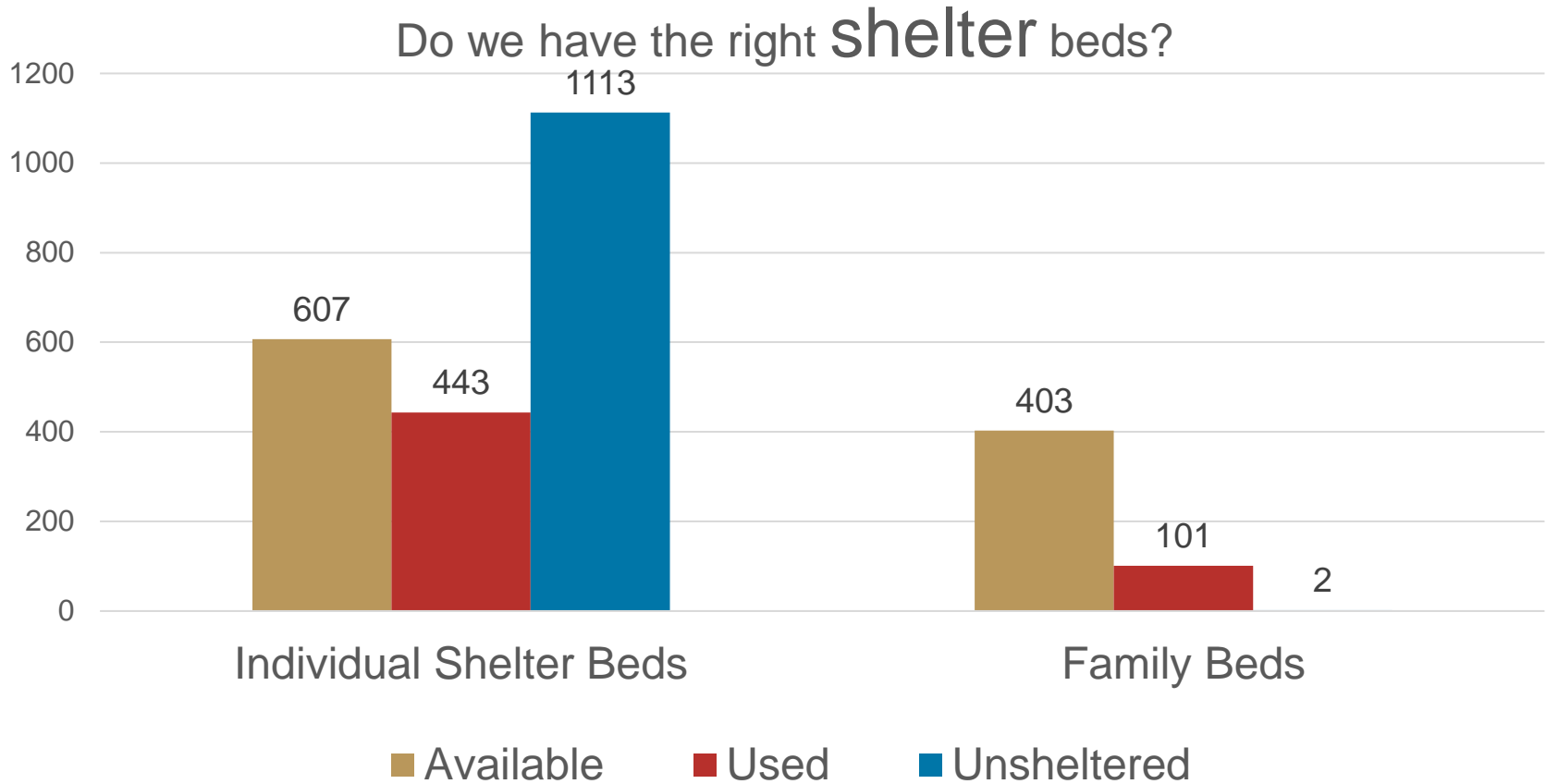


2023 HIC Shelter Beds



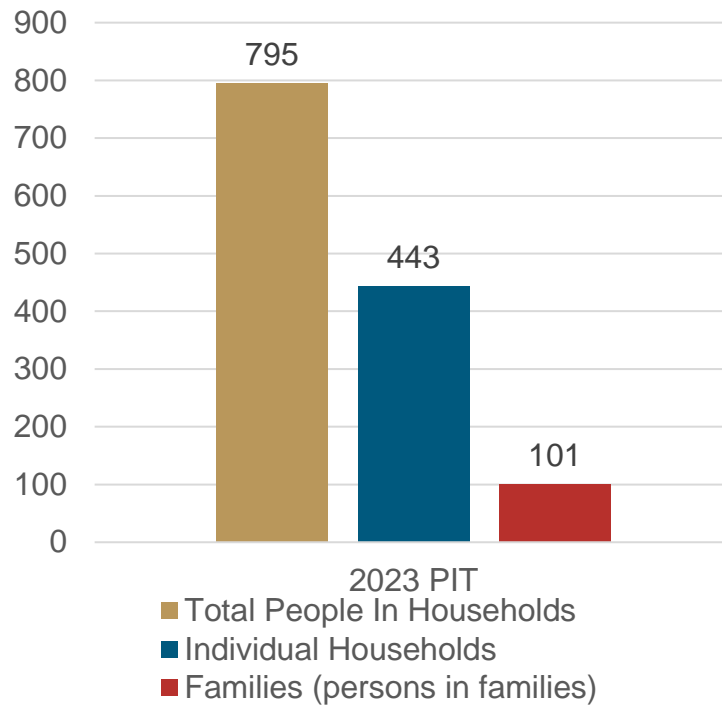
Housing Inventory

Beds Available vs Beds Used 2023

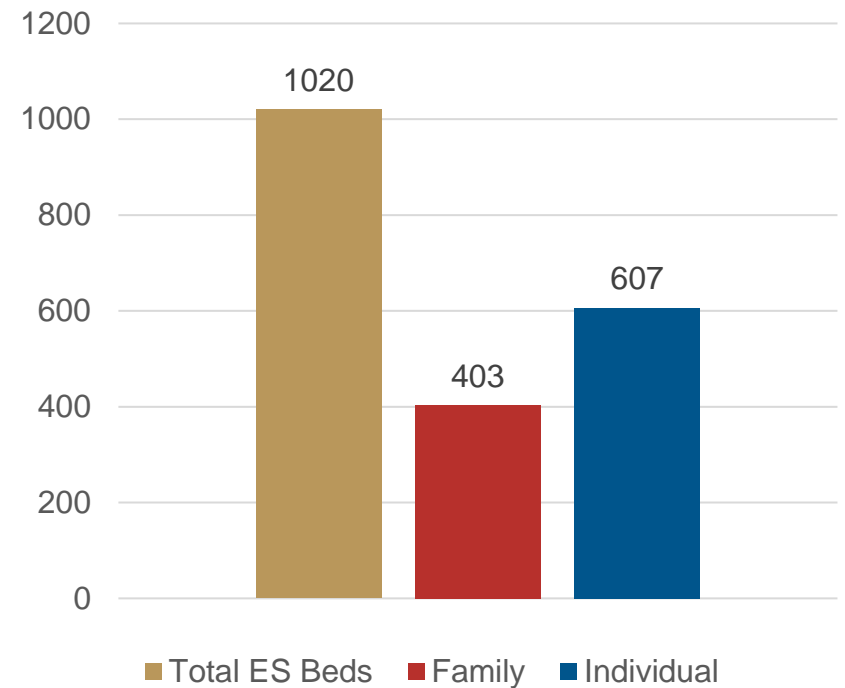


Do We Have the Right Mix?

2023 PIT Families VS Singles in shelter



2023 HIC Shelter Beds



SOOO....

Ideally, Emergency Shelter...





Emergency Shelters in the CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

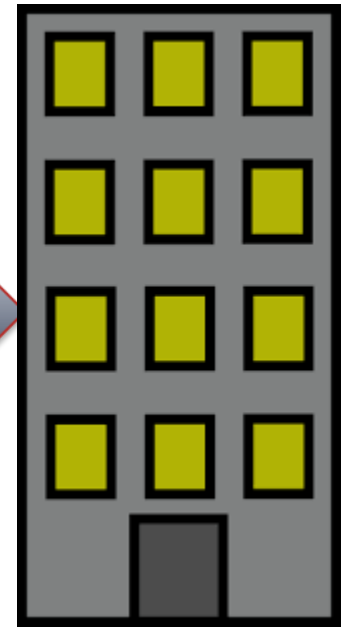
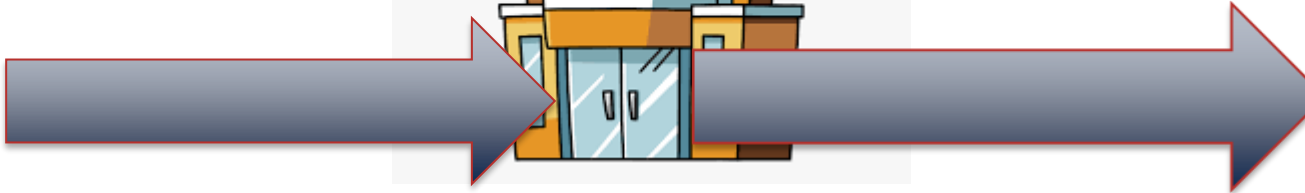
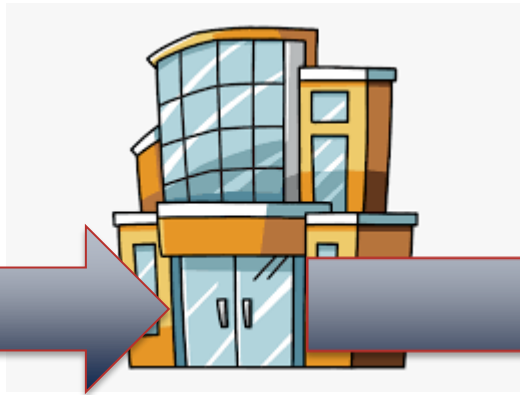
- Housing crisis resolution
- Shared Housing
- Family and Friends
- Rapid Re-housing
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Market rate housing
- Voucher

The Role of Shelter in the Crisis Response System...Ideally

- Integrated with coordinated intake system (accepts referrals, provides real-time data)
- Diverts people who can safely maintain their current housing
- Prioritizes shelter for those who need it most
- Provides immediate and low-barrier access through coordinated entry to shelter and crisis services without barriers to entry, as stable housing and supports are being secured
- Practice must align with what unsheltered people need
- Quickly connects people who experience homelessness to housing assistance and/or services tailored to the unique strengths and needs of households



People have to be able to get *in*...
...and be able to get *out* (to housing).



Breakout Discussions

1. What are some of the biggest challenges to getting into shelter in your community?

- *How do people access shelter?*
- *How do you determine who will enter shelter?*
- *What do you do when shelter is full?*



2. What are some of the biggest challenges to successfully getting out of shelter in your community?

- *How long does it take for people to exit to housing?*
- *How do you support clients to successfully exit to housing?*

First...when you arrive your breakout room, turn on your cameras, identify the note taker, and identify the reporter for the debrief

Challenges

Getting in shelter

- Non-compliant coming back
- Full
- Not accept folks under 18
- Pets
- Intake process
- Outdated assessment
- People don't want the rules – like having their freedom
- People come back that have been housed and process didn't work

Getting out of shelter to stable housing options

- People “not fond” of employment
- People see shelter as the last stop, not wanting to leave shelter
- People not accepting what's available for them, choose to not use housing options provided to them
- Addictions makes it hard to focus on the housing goal
- People waiting for disability determination and not eligible for resources...sit and wait

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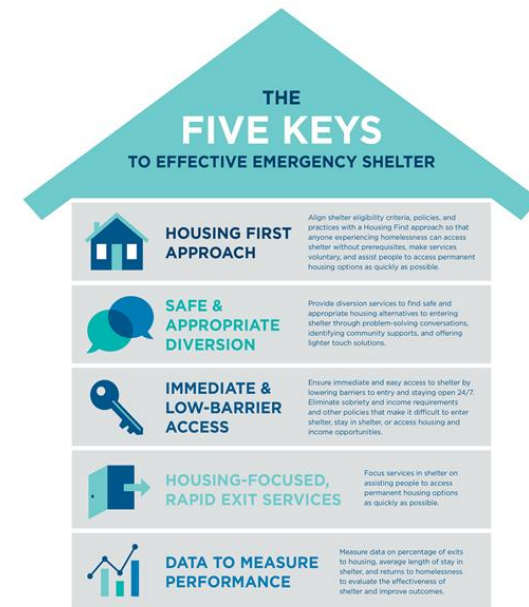
Week Four

- Creating a Housing Focused Environment pt.2
- Using Data and Outcomes to Measure Success
- Taking Action



Key Elements of Emergency Shelters in an Effective Crisis Response System

- Housing First Approach
- **Safe & Appropriate Diversion**
- **Immediate and Low-barrier Access**
- Housing-focused, Rapid Exit Services
- Data to Measure Performance



Q&A



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