



Housing Problem Solving: Creative Housing Solutions

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Agenda

- 1. Introductions - fill out linked Google form in chat!**
- 2. Housing Problem Solving Overview**
- 3. Key Terms and Distinctions**
- 4. HPS in the Coordinated Entry System**
- 5. HPS Practice Considerations**

QUICK POLL!

Quick Note: Understanding the Impacts of Stress

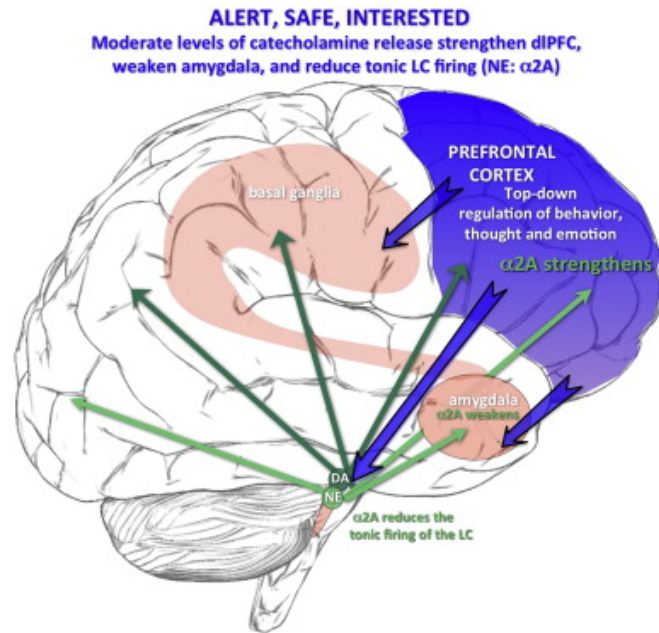
Think about a time when.....

- You faced a very difficult situation
- It was critically important
- You didn't feel you had much (or any) control
- The problem(s) continued for more than a month

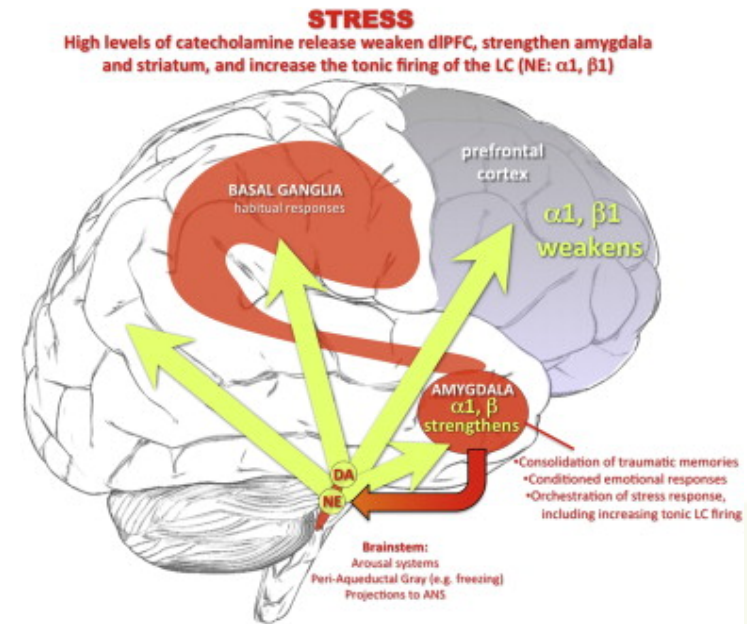
Try and remember how you felt and acted

This is Your Brain!

YOUR BRAIN, FEELING GOOD



YOUR BRAIN ON STRESS!



Source: Effects of stress exposure on prefrontal cortex... (Arnsten, Raskin, Taylor, Connor 2014)

Stress Has a Major Impact on People's Ability to Independently Resolve Crisis

Neurohormones triggered by **stress affect the brain** and directly diminish the ability to:

- ▶ Solve Problems
- ▶ Modify behavior in response to new information
- ▶ Follow through with plans
- ▶ Override impulsive behaviors and emotions to engage in goal-directed
- ▶ Remember and retrieve important information

Applying an Understanding of Stress

How might your style and practice reduce or escalate people's stress overload?



- **What should you DO** when assisting someone who is in crisis and may be experiencing stress overload?
 - ▶ What can help reduce their stress?
- **What should you NOT DO** when assisting someone who is in crisis and may be experiencing stress overload?

Housing Problem Solving In Context

Acknowledging Realities

- ✓ There are more people who need housing assistance than we have housing assistance to provide.
- ✓ People should be empowered to help us end their homelessness.
- ✓ We will not end homelessness with one bedroom apartments.
- ✓ Homelessness is a situation, not a condition. (Re)connection to family, friends and natural community supports is critical.
- ✓ Services can be as or more important than financial assistance in some situations.
- ✓ Some people will not gain access to housing without deeper support.

Defining Housing Problem Solving

Strategies and services that assist households to **use their strengths, support networks, and community resources to find safe, decent and appropriate housing as soon as possible outside of the homeless crisis response system, even if temporarily.** These strategies should be used with everyone interacting with the homelessness services system, often more than once and as conditions change. Housing Problem Solving is a core set of strategies and features that should be employed throughout the homeless crisis response system.

Defining Further

- Focus is on empowering persons experiencing a housing crisis to begin **regaining control** over their situation and lives
- **Recognize that homelessness is a crisis** – persons in **crisis** are less able to clearly think through problems and advocate for themselves than they are when **not in crisis**
- First: **listening** and **validating** their experience - being non-judgmental
- **Client-centered** - don't assume what people need, help them articulate their needs
- Represent the first step in a **progressive assistance, housing-focused** approach



A Paradigm Shift

BEFORE	NOW
Are you willing to enter shelter or receive a motel voucher?	What can we do to keep you from becoming or remaining homeless?
What programs are you eligible to enter and who has a bed?	What would resolve your current housing crisis?
Assessment/eligibility	Brain Storming and structured problem solving conversation about household situation and resources.
Intake or put on waitlist	Support crisis resolution to avoid shelter entry. Allow for client centered empowerment.

This shift in perspective is hard...

Not about who is “eligible” or a “good fit” for HPS...

- ✓ *Rather*, about what we can learn about the person that will help empower them to resolve the situation with our help.
- ✓ All clients engaged in HPS – even most vulnerable may have alternatives

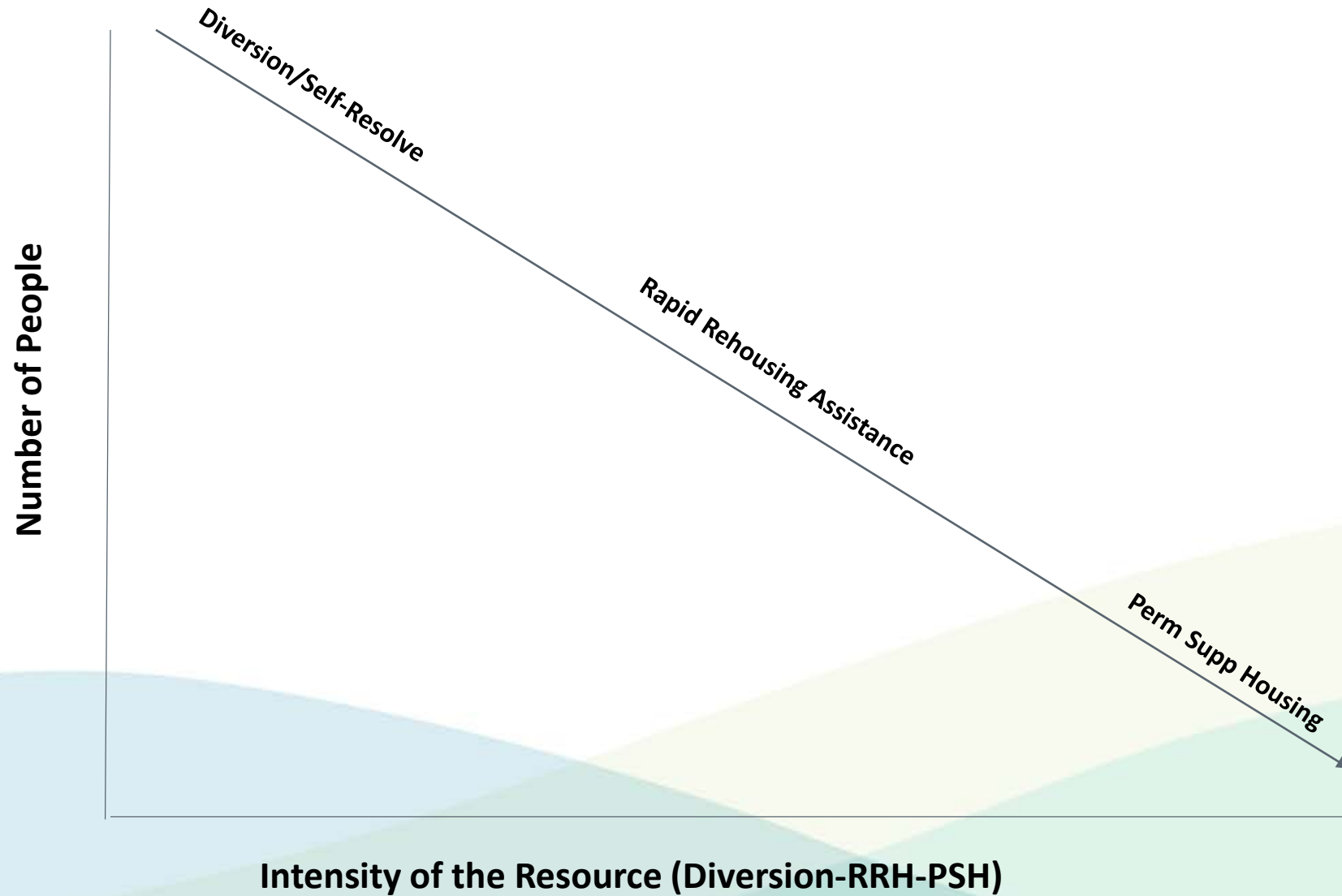
Not about completing a checklist or form...

- ✓ *Rather*, about listening deeply to find the possible silver lining that they may not be able to see.
- ✓ Phased “assessment” doesn’t mean a checklist

Not about how much we can spend...

- ✓ *Rather*, about providing targeted assistance including our case management supports and other services
- ✓ Focusing on low cost options to keep funds for higher need clients

Resource Realities



Other Key Terms

- **Diversion:** Diversion strategies and practices seek to assist people to resolve their immediate housing crisis by accessing a safe and appropriate housing alternative versus entering emergency shelter or otherwise staying in a place not meant for human habitation that night. This typically occurs at the point people request emergency services, such as entry into emergency shelter, or could take place in a day center or through outreach before a person spends a night unsheltered. A household is “diverted” if they present for emergency housing assistance and are instead supported and able to identify a safe and appropriate alternative to literal homelessness.
- **Rapid Exit:** Rapid exit strategies are appropriate after a household has entered emergency shelter or stayed in an unsheltered setting and serves to help them move as quickly as possible back into safe, appropriate temporary or permanent housing with the support of services and a minimal level of financial assistance. A household is “rapidly exited” if they have entered literal homelessness are supported in quickly accessing other safe alternatives, even if temporary, to remaining in emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation.
- **Homelessness Prevention:** Homelessness prevention strategies represent a wide array of efforts to prevent housing crises from occurring and to prevent people who face such crises from experiencing homelessness. Targeted homelessness prevention (i.e., SSVF) is a type of secondary prevention that offers more focused assistance for households who face imminent housing loss and literal homelessness.
- **Rapid Resolution:** Rapid Resolution services are specific SSVF allowable activities and costs associated with employing Housing Problem Solving strategies and limited financial assistance to help Veterans resolve their immediate housing crisis, even if temporarily, and where no current lease is in place. Rapid Resolution activities can be applied in homelessness prevention, diversion, and rapid exit situations.

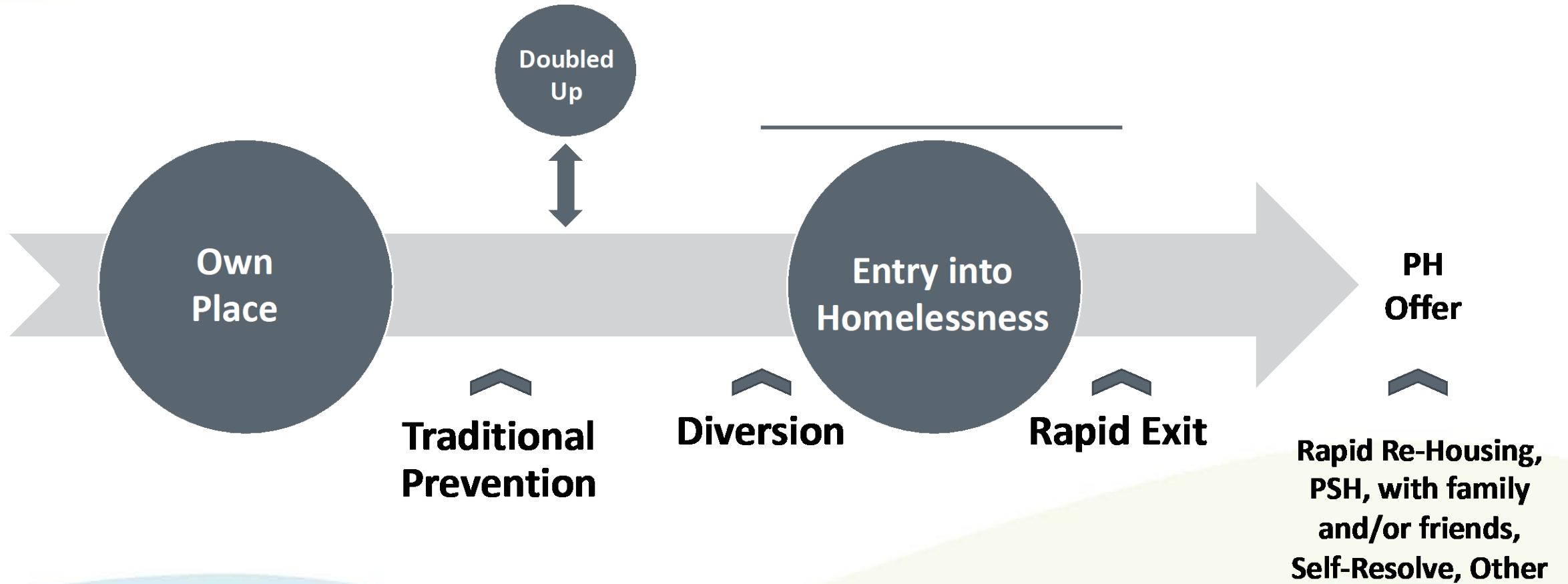
Housing Problem Solving A System-Wide Approach

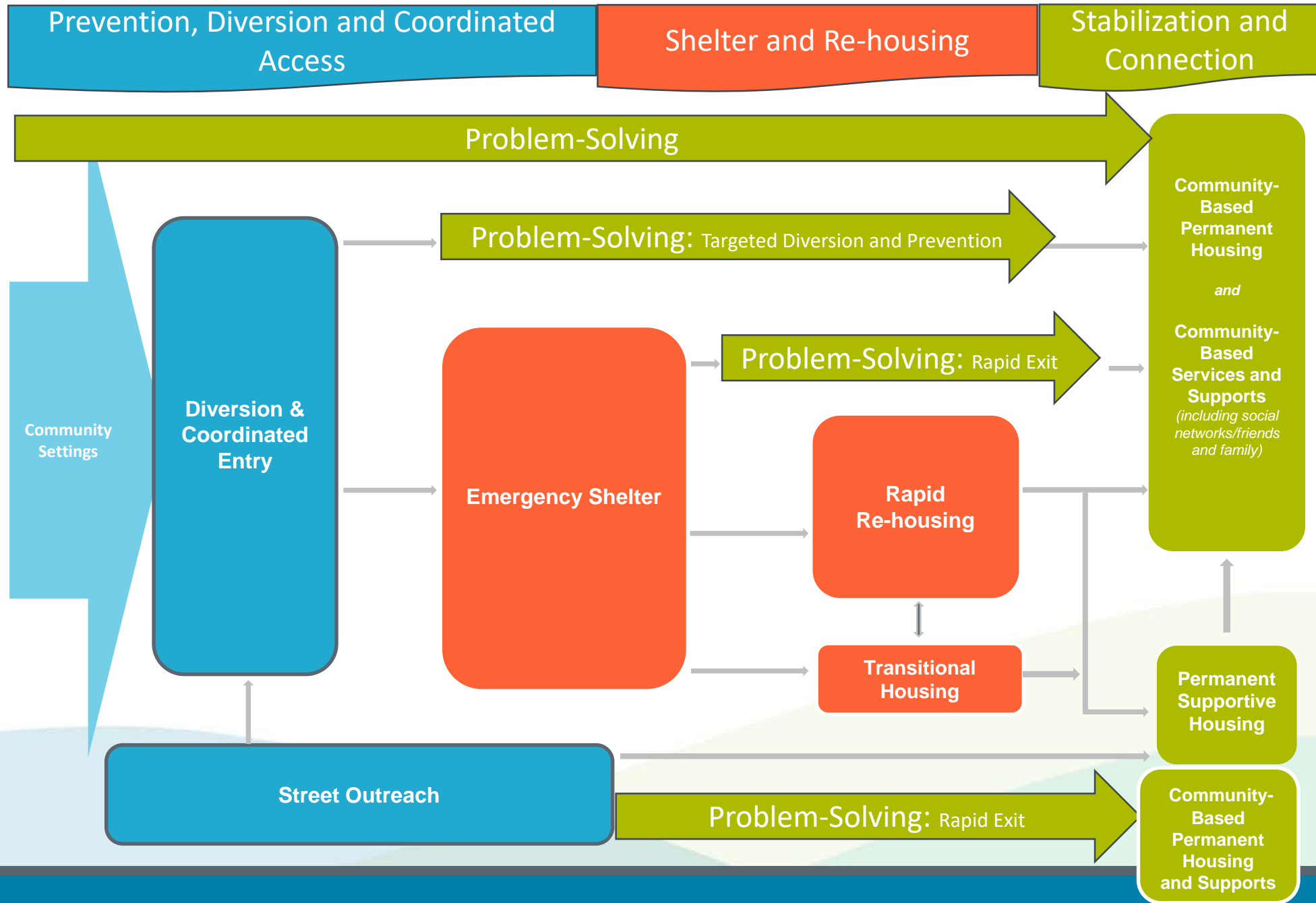


HPS and Coordinated Entry

- HPS should be a **community-wide system intervention**, both in formal CE access points and elsewhere
- HPS happens at first points of contact, which **may be before formal Access Points**
- HPS is the first (**and ongoing**) step in a phased approach (NOT a checklist!)
- Seeks to relieve the CE and housing resources by **reducing inflow and backlog pressure on scarce resource**
- Allows CE to focus effort on those **who truly have no other alternatives**

Position of HPS in the System





Housing Problem Solving Example Outcome Paths

Housing Problem Solving Example Outcomes

Able to Prevent, Divert or Rapid Exit

Unable to Divert or Rapid Exit

**Longer Term
back with
family or
friends**

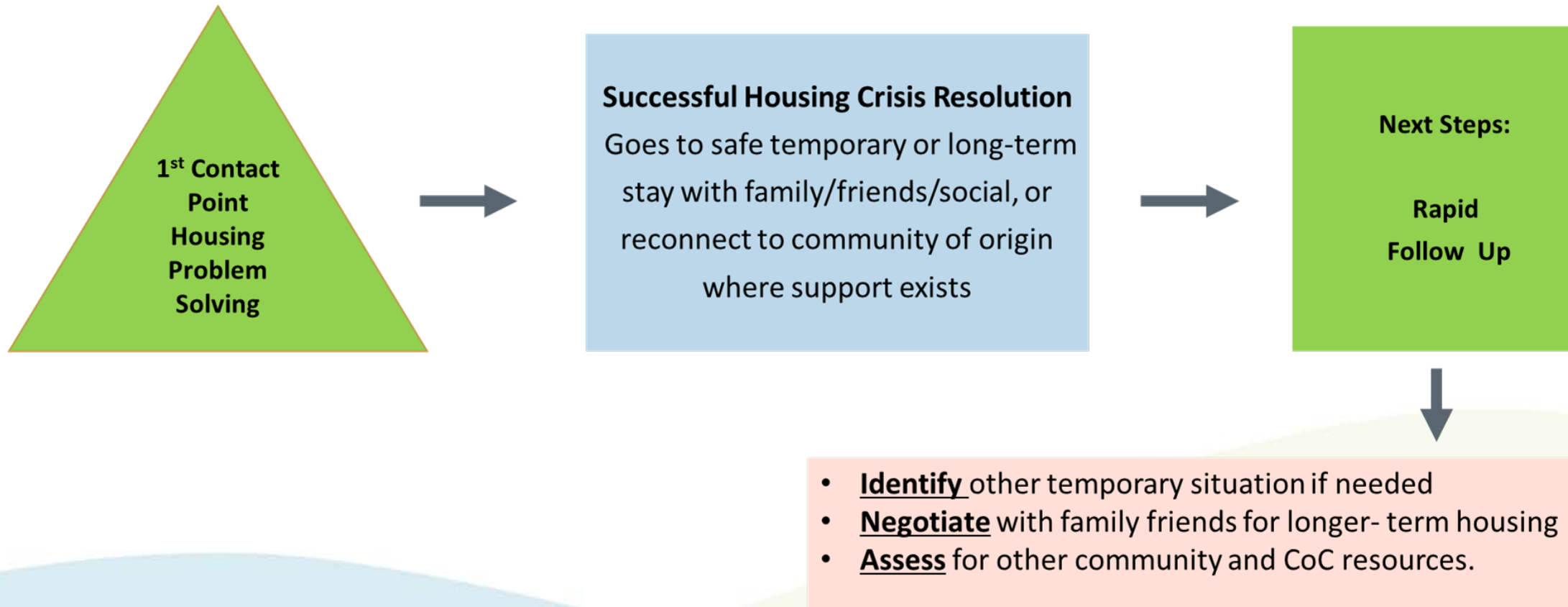
**Temporarily
diverted as
they seek
new
housing**

**Relocating
permanently
to safe place
in another
community
with
supports**

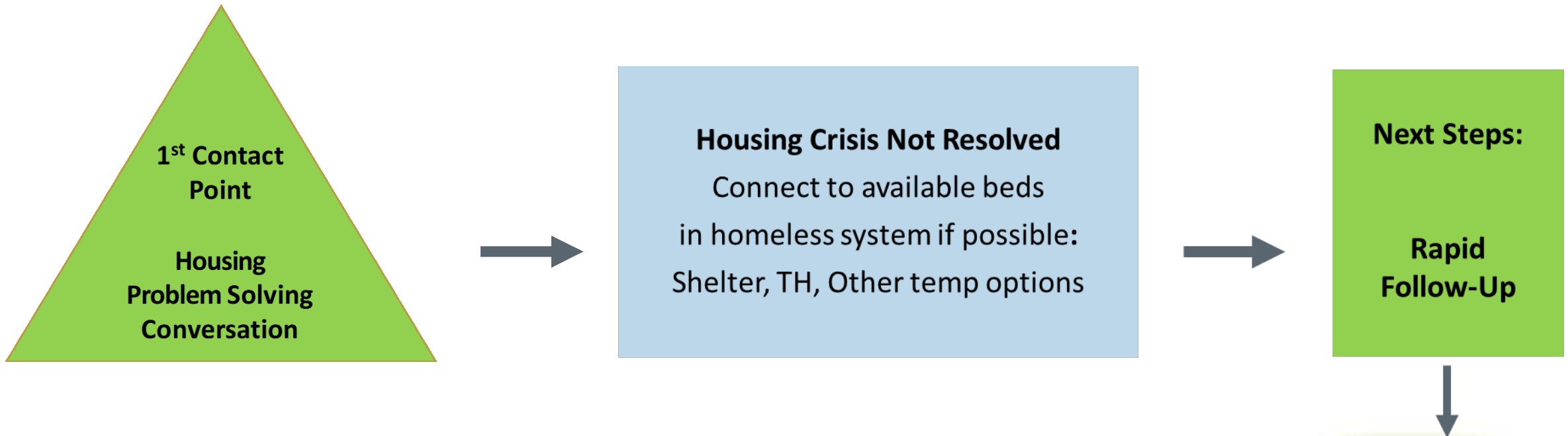
**Ongoing
HPS,
Offer of PH
and
CE
Assessment
Protocol**

**Follow up and services as needed to support
Permanent Housing needs**

Successful HPS Path



Unsuccessful HPS Pathway



It is likely that many/most households' situations **will not** be rapidly resolved, but practice still expedites path toward housing assistance and planning.

- **Continue** to attempt to identify temporary or longer-term housing situation with family or friends, if appropriate
- **Connect** to Coordinated Entry Process and/or Other PH Intervention

Housing Problem Solving Core Principles

Housing Problem Solving Interventions

- Focus is on empowering persons experiencing a housing crisis to begin regaining control over their situation and lives
- Recognize that homelessness is a crisis – persons in crisis are less able to clearly think through problems and advocate for themselves than they are when not in crisis
- First - listen and validate their experience - being non-judgmental
- Client-centered – do not assume what people need, help them articulate their needs
- Represent the first step in a progressive assistance, housing-focused approach

Strength-Based Approach

Help people identify and mine current and past strengths, successes and resources

Support and trust that people want to succeed

Collaborate with people to use their strengths, knowledge and capabilities to help resolve the current crisis

Building Equity Practices

- Hire staff that reflect the people being served
- Build flexibility into processes, procedures and resources to be responsive to BIPOC, LGBTQI+, Youth and other vulnerable groups or those with more specialized service connection needs
 - ▶ These groups have added burden of facing overt discrimination and unconscious bias
- Track outcomes by demographics
 - ▶ Adjust practice if equitable outcomes are not being achieved



Core Principles and Features of Housing Problem Solving

1. Housing First
2. Crisis Response/Resolution
3. Client Choice
4. Progressive Assistance
5. Community Resources

EQUITY PRACTICES EMBEDDED THROUGHOUT

1. HPS and Housing First

What is it?

- Secure safe, appropriate housing
- Don't screen people out based on income, sobriety, etc.
- Focus on alternatives to literal homelessness and housing loss
- HPS may only be the first step in a longer term housing intervention

What it is Not?

- HPS does not limit further, different housing supports
 - ▶ It is a means of expediting the most effective, efficient assistance
- There are no client characteristics that have been linked to success or failure in housing

2. Crisis Resolution

- Rapid triaging and intervention
- Focus on personal safety as the first priority
- De-escalation of the person's emotional reaction as needed
- Definite action steps the individual can successfully achieve
- Returning the person to control over their own problem-solving



3. HPS Client Choice

- Help people regain a sense of control
- Focus on the client's goals, choices, and preferences
- Offer unwavering respect for their strengths, and reinforcing progress are essential for empowerment
- Alternative pursuits must be agreeable to client - Effort to secure alternative options comes second to client's choices

4. HPS and Progressive Assistance

- Different people have different needs
 - ▶ Needs will likely change over time
- Cookie cutter services fail to be empowering
 - ▶ They may offer too much – or too little – assistance for a person
- HPS is one part of the homelessness response system.
 - ▶ Each person may need a different (more intensity, longer duration) level of assistance to resolve housing crisis
- Individual Progressive Assistance
 - ▶ Flexing assistance up or down based on clients needs, strengths and preferences
- Program Progressive Assistance
 - ▶ Start with conversation but leave option for longer term rehousing support if needed and desired.

Progressive Assistance

Progressive Assistance (sometimes referred to as “Dynamic Assistance”) approaches recognize the **inherent challenge in accurately predicting the level of assistance a household may need to end their homelessness**. In this approach, participants are initially offered more limited assistance first, including use of Housing Problem Solving approaches services prior to planning for longer term service packages. **Systems using a Progressive Assistance approach ensure assistance is provided on an “as-needed basis” to keep a participant housed and programs offer more intensive support, additional rental assistance, or step-up referrals to a project that offers a deeper subsidy or longer-term services as needed.**

Rational for Progressive Assistance

- Avoids false assumptions: people who are very poor and may be disabled – including those who score high on assessment tools – do not all need or want more intensive or longer-term assistance. People who initially appear to need more may end up needing less – and vis-versa.
- Individualization: when a participant shows s/he needs more help, more help can be provided. Programs should offer the right amount of assistance for the right amount of time to meet individual needs.
- Efficiency: by avoiding more assistance than is required to end homelessness and prevent an immediate return to streets or shelter, programs can help more people, close housing placement gaps, and reduce the time people remain homeless.
- Effectiveness: rapid re-housing programs that use Progressive Engagement show high rates of success serving people with a wide range of needs. Programs take risks, frequently have to make tough decisions, and assume some will fail – meaning the program may need to do something different if they help the same participant again.

5. Coordination with Community Resources

- Awareness of community resources
 - ▶ Determine what people may need and want to stabilize housing
- Fast-track referral procedures for critical community resources
 - ▶ Organizations can and should negotiate revised process
- Close relationships with emergency resources,
 - ▶ Need to maintain relationships with shelters for those whose crisis cannot be immediately resolved with HPS

HPS and Community Resources

- Some people (but not all) will need community resources to meet their **immediate or long-term** housing needs
- Referrals are **housing-focused** and subject to **client choice**
- Staff across all organizations can access and refer to resources
- Community connections could **include referrals or coordination with:**
 - ▶ community housing options,
 - ▶ options for increasing income (benefits and/or employment)
 - 🔗 *Helps to prepare for a move from time-limited, shared housing to independent housing,*
 - ▶ connections to basic needs like food & utility assistance and health insurance, and
 - ▶ connections to community support systems

Housing Problem Solving Further Training and Planning Needs

Training and Support

Specialization: Skills set and deployment of staff assets confined to a few highly trained/skills people who rotate or move between access points

Broad Based: All or nearly all front line staff training and provided tools needed to engage in HPS with any client engaging with system

Mixed Implementation: Using HPS Specialists as primary intervention and broader group with capacity of lighter touch delivery or triage

Piloting and Targeting: Decisions on where in your system seeing most inflow, certain subpopulations, other considerations for a phased roll out.

DO NOT make perfect the enemy of the good.

Positioning Staff

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Closing and Questions

