A Hennepin County Collaboration: The Housing First Partnership

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• 1.2 million residents
• Over 4,000 homeless on any given night
• 4,216 Permanent Supportive Housing Units
Together, Our Partnership Accomplished

• Housed over 1,000 households
• Less than 1 percent have been evicted
• 77% have remained with the program since its inception in 2006
Housing Status and Length of Stay for Housing First participants

- Still housed: 391
- Less than 6 months: 47
- 6 months — 1 year: 45
- More than 1 year: 116
- More than 1 year: 171
- 6 months — 1 year: 199
What Makes Housing First Unique

Early Partnerships
- Strong commitment to capital funding
- Rapid Exit and landlord relationships
- Group Residential Housing

New Partnerships
- State, county, providers, landlords, faith communities, businesses, tenants
Mission Statement

To end long-term homelessness and stabilize lives and communities through collaboration and public-private partnerships using a “Housing First” approach to provide safe and affordable housing.
Why Create Housing First?

- Clients want housing choice
- Limited capital resources
- State funding opened up
How We Built Housing First

- Relationship building
- Decision making
- Communication
- Shared resources, responsibilities & accountability
- Recognition and gratitude
Relationship Building

- Housing First is a collaboration
- We share mission and goals
- Relationships built one person at a time
- Develop an agency point person
Decision Making

• Growing pains pushed to specialization
• Diversifying leadership - responsibility facilitates ownership & buy-in
• Consultant versus supervisor role
• Flatten structures out
Communication

- Project lead is switch board
- Large, rapid rate of information exchange
- Written materials
  - Housing First manual
  - Landlord pamphlet
  - Monthly Housed report
  - Weekly rental building list
Shared Resources, Responsibilities & Accountability

- Combined policy & implementation meeting
- Standardized guidelines for working with landlords and tenants
- Shared rental buildings
Recognition & Gratitude

- Landlord appreciation event
  - Annual event
  - Team building in the being
  - Thank you for the landlords
  - Recognition of housing agencies work

- Recognition of contribution
- Thank you
How Housing First Operates

- For tenants
- For landlords
- For providers
- For government
- For funders
Tenants

• Can change apartments without leaving program
• Stay with providers through family changes
• Transfer between Housing First Partnership providers
Landlords

• Guidelines established – landlords know what to expect from
  ❖ Tenant
  ❖ Housing First provider
Landlords & Rental Buildings

• Buildings must be registered
  – One housing provider registers a building
  – Shares with all HFP providers

• Program standard 20% of units

• Clients are lease holders

• Shared costs of registration fees
Providers

• Large housing provider base
• Specialized target populations
• Housing agencies — added, removed and merged over time
• Combined policy & implementation meetings - monthly
Guidelines for …
Working with Landlords

• Screen client, identify appropriate apartment and accompany client to see apartment
• Manage how rent will be paid
• Check in with landlords regularly
Working with Landlords, cont.

• Manage conflict
• Provider may pay eviction or excess damage costs
Guidelines for … Working with Clients

- Outreach, obtain, maintain housing
- High staff to client ratio so can check in regularly
- Services are voluntary
Working with Clients, cont.

• Crisis management plans in place
• Housing Retention Plan is in place
• Harm Reduction service model
• Intermediary - landlords and tenants
For Government

- KISS principle
- Partnership with State DHS - adapt group housing rules to scattered site rental
- Partnership with Eligibility Supports
- Rules and guidelines only where needed
- Flexibility creates discomfort
For Funders

• New initiative added new partners to Housing First
  - Downtown Business Community
  - Downtown Congregations

• Raised over $350,000 for staff start-up

• Housed 150 long-term homeless

• Raised funds to open rental buildings
Growth of Housing First: People

Number of People Housed with Housing First

Dec 2006: 8
June 2007: 68
Dec 2007: 123
June 2008: 171
Dec 2008: 214
June 2009: 249
Dec 2009: 351
June 2010: 409
Dec 2010: 605
June 2011: 734
Dec 2011: 789
Feb 2012: 823
Growth of Housing First: Buildings

Rental Building Registered as Housing with Services

Dec 2006: 4
June 2007: 35
Dec 2007: 50
June 2008: 68
Dec 2008: 78
June 2009: 92
Dec 2009: 133
June 2010: 187
Dec 2010: 201
June 2011: 254
Dec 2011: 265
Feb 2012: 293
What Makes Housing First Work?

- Commitment to the vision
- In synch with our 10-year plan to end homelessness
- Client choice
- Program flexibility
- New partners, especially business and faith communities
What Challenges Have We Met?

• Low-vacancy rates make it hard to recruit landlords
• Funding for start-up costs
Outcomes for Housing First Families

• Demographics of Participants:
  – Long-term homeless
  – Disabled
  – Low income
  – Most have criminal histories and multiple barriers to housing
Outcomes continued…

• Less panhandling reported
• Reduction in police involvement –
  – as victims
  – as perpetrator
• Improved quality of life
Outcomes: Housing

- 77% still in Housing First
- 8% left-negative
- 2% left-neutral
- 6% left-positive
- 7% left-missing
Outcomes for Participants

• 77% are still in program
• Of the 23% who left, more than half stayed more than one year
• 24 people transferred from another housing program or transferred within Housing First
Outcomes: Those who Left for Positive Reasons

- Income increased – 64%
- Received another subsidy – 26%
- Moved in with others on lease – 15%

(can have more than one reason)
Outcomes: Those who Left for Neutral Reasons

- All went to treatment
Outcomes: Those Who Left for Negative Reasons

- Criminal activity – 46%
- Unsafe to others – 40%
- Unknown – 35%
- Refused to pay rent – 27%
- Jail - 15%
- Shelter – 11%

(can have more than one reason)
Future Directions

• Regional approach – metro wide
• Landlord advisory group
• Increase number of families served
• Hennepin Health (health care home)
For More Information

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  www.headinghomeminnnesota.org/hennepin/

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