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SNAPS In Focus: Rapid Re-Housing As a Model and Best Practice

Welcome to the next SNAPS In Focus message. Last week, I focused on Housing First as a best practice housing model. This week, I'm going to discuss rapid re-housing (RRH)—which follows Housing First principles—as a model and best practice. Although RRH programs have been used in some communities for many years, they have only recently started to be widely adopted. Evidence of their impact is growing, and HUD is encouraging CoCs to significantly expand RRH, particularly for families with children.

There are many reasons we are emphasizing RRH. It is one of the key strategies in *Opening Doors*, and it achieved positive outcomes during the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP). Early evidence from a number of studies and evaluations—including the Rapid Re-Housing Demonstration, the Family Options Study, and evaluations of the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program—all show promising results. RRH programs are screening out fewer families than transitional housing programs. Homeless households are moving into permanent housing at higher rates, in less time, and at lower costs than transitional housing programs.

One of the main benefits of rapid re-housing is that the assistance is extremely flexible, allowing providers to tailor it to the unique needs of each household. HUD has published a [Rapid Re-Housing Brief](#) that describes the features of rapid re-housing, including its three core components:

- **Housing Identification**—Housing identification services to recruit landlords and help households find appropriate rental housing in the community, which may include co-housing with a friend or family member.
- **Rent and Move-In Assistance**—Rapid re-housing programs offer financial assistance to cover move-in costs, deposits, and the rental or utility assistance necessary to allow individuals and families to move immediately out of homelessness and stabilize in permanent housing.
- **Rapid Re-Housing Case Management and Services**—Case management and services help households overcome barriers to acquiring and maintaining permanent housing.

While RRH projects should offer all three components, they may not need to provide all three to every program participant. The amount and types of assistance provided can vary significantly depending on a participant's needs. Households with more significant needs can receive longer, more intensive assistance, while households with fewer barriers can receive less assistance.

Rapid re-housing can be effective for many populations, such as families with children, youth aging out of foster care, domestic violence survivors, single adults, and veterans, but should be targeted to those households that would not be able to get out of homelessness without the assistance. It is particularly a key strategy for achieving the *Opening Doors* goal of ending family, youth, and child homelessness by 2020. To achieve that goal, we will have to dramatically expand RRH so it can serve most families who experience homelessness. Engaging mainstream programs will be crucial for this expansion. Our partners at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a memo last year about [using Temporary](#)



[Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\) for rapid re-housing](#). Child welfare agencies can also contribute to rapid re-housing efforts as described in this National Alliance to End Homelessness brief on [how child welfare agencies should use rapid re-housing](#).

We are also going to have to reshape current programs and resources serving homeless families. HUD has been encouraging communities to use Emergency Solutions Grants for RRH and to create new RRH projects serving families with children through reallocation under the CoC Program. As the 2020 goal approaches, we will increase that emphasis.

As new projects are developed, it is important that they adhere to both the letter and spirit of rapid re-housing. Households should be moving to permanent housing as quickly as possible after becoming homeless, not after lengthy stays in shelter or transitional housing. Rapid re-housing should prioritize people with more challenges, including those with no income, poor employment prospects, troubled rental histories, and criminal records. Providers should link participants with community resources that will help them achieve longer-term stability and well-being. Now is the time for communities to be working together to establish written standards for administering rapid re-housing and thinking strategically about how this type of assistance will be used most effectively within the CoC.

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently hosted "Core Principles of Housing First and Rapid Re-Housing," a webinar designed for homelessness service providers, communities, and policymakers to understand the core components of the Housing First approach and the Rapid Re-Housing model and how both work together to help end homelessness. If you were not able to participate in the live webinar, you are encouraged to view the [webinar materials](#).

We are very excited about the opportunities that rapid re-housing provide. We will continue providing resources, guidance, and incentives to help communities expand their RRH portfolio. Thank you, as always, for your tireless work and innovation in this area.

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