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SNAPS Weekly Focus: Rapid Re-Housing

Last week, we talked about the Housing First approach and how it is both a cost-effective and successful model for addressing the needs of the people we serve. This week, we're going to discuss another model that has proven to be effective and which follows a Housing First approach: rapid re-housing.

When I am out doing public speaking I find that people are asking me "what exactly *is* rapid re-housing?" I realized that in the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program interim rules, we tell our recipients *what funds* can be used to do rapid re-housing, but not *how* to do rapid re-housing. While that is appropriate for regulations, which define how federal funds can be used, it points to the need for information about the model itself. However, that is a challenge because there are many successful models at the local level which are different depending on the population they are serving, what their local housing market looks like, and the scope and nature of homelessness in a given community.

But there are some core elements we have identified as critical to the model:

1. The people assisted come from the **streets or shelter** and would remain homeless but for this assistance.
2. The household being served is **helped directly into a community-based unit** it will retain after the program ends.
3. Service plans for program participants are **individualized** based on their needs, circumstances and market conditions, and focus on **helping households find and keep housing**. This typically includes landlord outreach and help with the process of housing search.
4. Other types of supportive services may be provided as needed by **links to mainstream programs** or partner agencies (i.e., mental health services, substance abuse treatment, medical services, child care, etc.).
5. Financial assistance is provided **to support housing**, and is time limited. The amount of monthly assistance is typically flexible and may be adjusted over time. Because the program is individualized and flexible in its response to each household's needs, to do this type of program successfully takes good project administration, tracking, and follow-up.

HUD encourages communities to think critically about how rapid re-housing can benefit homeless individuals and families, and work to include rapid re-housing as part of the overall homeless program portfolio. As you saw in the recently released [Fiscal Year 2013 CoC Registration Notice](#), this type of intervention is one of only two allowable types of new projects created through reallocation in the CoC Program competition. While rapid re-housing can be used effectively for many homeless populations, preliminary evidence indicates that it is particularly effective for households with children. Data from HPRP indicate that as high as 90 percent of families that receive rapid re-housing assistance exited the program to permanent housing.



Here are some reasons why communities are encouraged to create more rapid re-housing:

- By exiting households from literal homelessness more quickly, rapid re-housing may reduce the known, negative impacts of prolonged homelessness (loss of employment, increased substance abuse, failure to comply with medical/mental health instructions, and reduced school attendance/performance/graduation rates).
- By reducing the length of stay in emergency shelters, beds become available for other households whose homelessness could not be prevented; this enables the community to maintain their basic safety net.
- Short-term assistance is frequently sufficient to help most individuals and families secure permanent housing quickly and successfully, which means there are more resources available to assist more households to move out of homelessness.
- Many communities have reported to us that only a small number of those served through rapid re-housing programs later returned to the homeless system.

To help guide your local discussions and program design, HUD will be releasing two products in the coming weeks: a webinar to be conducted with our federal and national partners on why rapid re-housing is an important component of an effective system, and a short guide on the model itself.

Don't forget to check back to [SNAPS Weekly Focus page](#) over the coming weeks as we will continue to post related materials and TA products related to each weekly focus, as they become available.

As always, we thank you for your commitment to ending homelessness.

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