



# Rapid Re-Housing Tenets

Rapid re-housing (RRH) is a cost-effective strategy that can help many families successfully exit homelessness and maintain permanent housing. RRH reduces the length of time people experience homelessness, minimizes the impact of homelessness on their lives, and facilitates their access to resources and supports in the community. Communities that have successfully employed RRH have freed up significant resources to address the needs of homeless families.

Early evidence suggests that between 80 and 90 percent of all homeless families can be served effectively within a RRH framework, including families with a broad range of conditions, challenges, and situations.

The key tenets of rapid re-housing are listed below.

## Coordinated Entry and Assessment

Comprehensive screening and assessment should be used to determine whether RRH will be an appropriate intervention for a prospective family. In most communities, a coordinated entry system is the most efficient and effective way to implement RRH.

- Coordinated entry facilitates a consistent process for assessment of individual family situations and needs, and a standardized process for determining the appropriateness of RRH or other more intensive interventions as needed.
- Coordinated entry provides the most equitable system by creating a fair process for access to RRH.

## Progressive Engagement

Services start with the least intensive service and amount of subsidy—i.e. a “light touch”—and progress to greater service intensity only when necessary. The need for additional support is determined by an assessment of a family’s experience, self-reporting, and the impact of the initial intervention. Client choice, to the extent feasible, drives the housing options and services offered. Participation in services is voluntary.

By using a progressive engagement approach, assistance can be tailored to meet the needs of families and over time may identify those families who would be better served by more intensive interventions, such as permanent supportive housing.

## Housing Services and Rent Subsidy

Through progressive engagement, a family receives a short-term rental subsidy, usually lasting from three to six months. The amount of housing subsidy may vary, beginning with a small amount of assistance that may increase if needed. The exact amount a family can afford is determined in collaboration with the family as part of the assessment and planning process. The subsidy may also be extended for a short time, if additional support would stabilize the family, and it may include payment for other costs essential to obtain or maintain housing, such as deposits or application fees. Rent subsidies are most effective in combination with:

- Strong partnerships with landlords;
- Housing search and lease negotiation assistance for the family;
- Permanent housing is the immediate goal, i.e. a lease in the tenant’s name and no program-related time limitations; RRH is not intended to be used as a bridge to other housing solutions such as transitional housing, where families would still be considered homeless under the Federal HEARTH Act;
- RRH does not assume housing meets traditional affordability standards. Families may pay more than 30 percent of income for rent.

## Case Management

A rapidly re-housed family benefits from flexible case management services tailored to meet their unique needs delivered with a progressive engagement approach. Key features of effective RRH case management include:

- Development of a plan to prevent, avoid, or resolve issues that have led to housing loss;
- Home visits to develop a strong relationship and engage the family where they live;
- Strong core partnerships formed between housing case manager, DSHS programs, and workforce staff to provide wraparound supports to the family;
- Ongoing housing-based assessment with a progressive engagement approach to determine and meet the level of services each family needs;
- Connections to mainstream and community systems to provide supports and leverage resources already in place, (e.g. K-12 education, mental health, health care, child welfare, early learning, public health, legal services);
- Retention support services may continue after housing subsidy ends to help the family maintain housing stability.

## Individualized Employment Assistance

Connections to employment opportunities that can help increase a family's capacity to assume responsibility for the rent over time are essential. These services must do the following:

- Help a family find and maintain employment;
- Connect to training and employment programs with a career path;
- Form partnerships and capitalize on resources already in place in the community, such as WorkSource and WorkFirst;
- Employment services approaches can vary, and include:
  - Employment services offered by a housing provider;
  - Employment navigation: Multi-disciplinary team including housing, DSHS/TANF, Workforce, and client to facilitate a coordinated housing, employment, and services plan;
  - Assigned homeless employment specialist from mainstream workforce system.

## Data and Evaluation

Data collection and evaluation should be used to help determine what is working so that the program can be adapted to serve families more effectively and use resources most efficiently.