



INDIANA BALANCE OF STATE  
continuum of care

*Committed to Housing Every Hoosier*

# The Needle in a Haystack: Identifying Alternative Housing Solutions

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# Objectives

Provide a clear understanding of the terms “Housing Problem Solving” and “Diversion”

Case Managers will learn to move through the steps of Housing Problem Solving and Diversion conversations

Use the CHAT Housing Problem Solving Assessment as a conversation guide for HPS and Diversion

# Expectations

- Housing Problem Solving and/or Diversion will not work for everyone.
- It is meant to enable clients to identify possible avenues for resolution of their housing crisis.
- HPS and/or Diversion may not be the appropriate intervention once the client moves to completing the Coordinated Entry Assessment. However, HPS and Diversion should still be explored.

# A Client's State of Mind in 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 steps
- Remember and retrieve important information

# 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.

# What is Housing Problem Solving?

Housing Problem Solving (HPS) is a creative conversation that helps households identify strengths, barriers, and housing solutions.

- Prevents entry into homelessness or quickly resolves a household's homelessness (even if it is only a temporary solution).
- Person-centered, conversational approach that seeks to identify flexible and cost-effective alternative housing solutions that can be implemented quickly.
- HPS can be implemented in Prevention and Diversion situations with the aim of ensuring homelessness is avoided or as brief as possible.

# 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

# 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, 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.



# Other Key Terms

- **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.

# Other Key Terms

- **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.

# The “Shift” in Perspective

## **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 needs clients



# How We Show Up Matters

Show up with:

1. Authenticity
2. Acceptance
3. Empathy

# HPS Conversation Skills

- Affirmations
- Reflections
- Summaries
- Positive Reframing
- Powerful Questions
- Bridge Gaps with Strengths
- Unconditional Positive Regard

# Create Safety

- Flatten the power dynamic
- Introductions
- Explain the purpose of the conversation
- Be mindful of space
- Show up as a thought partner
- Let them know you'll be asking a lot of questions
- Remind them this is their plan

# Next Steps in the Conversation

- Listen – Hear the story
  - *Active Listening is used to Reflect and Summarize their story*
- Talk It Out – Explore supports and doubled-up options
- Problem Solve Housing Solutions – Explore shared housing, establishing a rental, and relocation
- Budget Honestly – Real conversation about \$\$\$
- Housing Stability Plan – Write out the next steps
- Encourage – Affirm and support

# Let's Explore Active Listening

Some examples of active listening phrases are:

- *What I'm hearing is...*
- *Sounds like you are saying...*
- *If I'm hearing you correctly...*
- *So, as you see it...*
- *It sounds like what's most important to you is...*



# Listen

- Let them tell their story
- Pay attention to body language and non-verbal communication
- Seek to understand their experience
- Provide empathy and respect
- Confirm your understanding (reflections, summaries, and active listening)
- Utilize affirmations
- Take minimal notes
- Be attentive

# Talk it Out

- Explore supports and doubled-up options with open-ended questions while keeping safety in mind
- Explore nearby and far-away relationships: coworkers, teachers, church members, family, friends of family, and old friendships
- Can any relationships be bolstered with support?
- Pay attention to facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice – do you need to re-direct?



# Explore the Options

- Staying with family/friends
- Doubling up
- Shared Housing
- Establishing a rental
- Relocation

# Recap

**HPS Strategy:** A strategy that supports Prevention and Diversion solutions with the aim of ensuring homelessness is avoided or as brief as possible.

- **HPS Principles:** housing first, crisis response, client choice, progressive assistance (engagement), and community resources

**HPS Skills:** affirmations, reflections, summaries, positive reframing, powerful questions, bridge gaps with strengths, unconditional positive regard.

- **HPS Steps:** create safety, listen, talk it out, problem solving housing solutions, budget honestly, housing stability plan

# Real Life Scenarios

- Listen as we explore three real life scenarios from Christina Bates, Region 6 Coordinated Entry Specialist.

# CHAT Housing Problem Solving Phase 4

- *Note to assessor staff: Below is a problem-solving guide for assessors to use to give participants the space to brainstorm ways to quickly resolve their homeless crisis. The questions are a toolbox of prompts that can be effective in finding alternative solutions to a housing crisis. Staff are encouraged to use the order and questions that make sense, given the nature of the relationship with the participant.*
- Continued homelessness can take a toll on people's health and well-being. Since there are not enough housing resources in our community to give everyone housing who needs it, we want to problem solve with you to figure out if there is somewhere safe and stable you can stay, even if it's just for tonight.
- We want to have a conversation to see if there are other options but, if you prefer, we will only move forward with them if it leads to a permanent housing solution.
- Given this, what are you hoping to get out of today's conversation?
- Do you have any questions about why we are having this conversation before we start?

# CHAT HPS Phase 4

- **Explore the Situation**

1. Is this the first time you've reached out for housing assistance? If you have reached out in the past, how long ago was it?
2. Tell me any background of where you've been staying and how that's been going.
3. If you're currently sleeping in an unsheltered situation (outside, in a car, abandoned building, etc.), when was your most recent indoor living situation? How long did you stay there?
4. Where do you think you will sleep tonight if we cannot offer you shelter?
5. Do you ever feel unwelcome or unsafe where you've been trying to stay?
6. Do you have access to a vehicle?
7. Do you have any income? What type? (e.g., benefits, job, under the table work)
8. Do you have access to all the important documentation you might need for a housing opportunity? This could include a photo ID, birth certificate, social security card, etc.



# CHAT HPS Phase 4 Continued

- **Brainstorm Possible Solutions**

- *Note to assessor staff: Engage in active listening and think about/reflect back strengths they may share. Brainstorm possibilities and use motivational interviewing skills. Explore potential options with the participant.*

1. Is there anyone that may want to know you are seeking shelter tonight or may want to know you need help? If so, who would that be?
2. Do you have family, friends or anyone else who might let you stay with them, even temporarily?
3. Tell me about past places you've stayed that have been positive. Why were they positive?
4. Tell me about any resources you have to navigate difficult situations.
5. What resources do you have when looking for housing?
6. What support would you need to stay somewhere else or make a housing option work?
7. Have you tried to find safe places to stay or to obtain housing in the past? If so, what worked for you? How has your situation changed since then?



# CHAT HPS Phase 4 Continued

- **Next Steps: Diversion or Proceed with Assessment**

1. The participant wants to complete the remaining phases of the Coordinated Entry assessment.
2. The participant can be diverted to mainstream resources or self-resolve. No more phases of this assessment will be completed, and he/she/they will not be placed on the prioritization list. RESULT? EXIT from CE
3. The participant prefers not to complete the remaining phases of the Coordinated Entry assessment. RESULT? EXIT from CE
4. The assessor was unable to contact the participant to learn his/her/their preference. RESULT? EXIT from CE

# Practice Scenario

*James is 34 years old and currently living in his car and receives SSI of \$954 monthly. He is recovering from substance abuse and has been clean for 34 days. Now that he's sober, he doesn't want to continue living in his car and is looking for shelter/housing. James hasn't spoken with his parents in nearly two years due to the substance abuse. They utilized tough love and forced him to move from their home because of his drug use. James admits to stealing money and other items from his Mom and Dad to support his habit while he was living in their home. Now that he's sober, he's afraid to reach out to them for help for fear of continued rejection. He receives SSI due to a past diagnosis of Bi-Polar and Anxiety. Sometimes, he dreams of becoming a welder and being able to support himself with a full-time job. He wishes he could get on his feet financially and have a place of his own to live and be proud of. After years of substance use, James is struggling to stay sober, avoid relapse, and find housing.*

# Questions?

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