



FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS: LEARNING COLLABORATIVE



Housing Navigation Best Practices

October 18, 2023
11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Moderator

Michael Helmick

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Participant Introductions

» Introduce yourself in the Chat!

- Name
- Organization
- Something you hope to get from this session



Today we'll discuss:

Housing Navigation Best Practices

Bridge Housing: A Brief Review



What is Bridge Housing?

Short- and mid-term residential programs with a goal to connect individuals to long-term housing stability



- » Shelter / Interim Housing
- » Rental Assistance (up to two years)
- » Auxiliary funding in assisted living settings aka “board and care patches”

Why Bridge Housing?

- » Lack of available permanent affordable housing
- » Lack of supportive services required to obtain or maintain housing
- » Lack of place of respite, grounding, healing (without barriers)
- » Housing is the answer to homelessness – start now!

What model should we use?

- Identify what YOUR clients need
- If you build it does NOT mean they WILL come
 - Is it far away from things?
 - Does it lack critical amenities?
 - Does it prohibit pets?
- **How else can you support BHBH participants?**

Agenda

- » What is Housing Navigation?
- » Population Considerations
- » Housing-Focused Assessment
- » Housing-Focused Plan
- » Supporting Housing Stability
- » Wrap Up



**Aram
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**Devra
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Aram Hauslaib

A Directing Attorney at Homebase, Aram supports local governments and nonprofits in their efforts to end homelessness. Aram helps communities secure federal funding, implement programs and best practices, and understand the regulations that govern their homelessness systems

Devra Edelman

A Senior Policy Analyst II at Homebase, Devra Edelman supports local governments and nonprofits in their efforts to end homelessness. Devra helps communities secure federal, state and local funding, implement programs and best practices, and understand the various regulations that govern potential homelessness solutions

What is Housing Navigation?



A key service required in all BHBH Programs that helps clients remove barriers and move into housing

Housing Navigation

- » Engagement and Assessment and Developing a Housing Plan
 - Reducing personal barriers to housing (e.g., identification)
 - Applying for affordable housing & subsidies
- » Finding and Accessing Housing (finding units, applications, securing units)
 - When housing takes too long ... finding immediate housing while seeking longer term housing
 - Linkages to owners/units that program has cultivated relationships with
- » Move-In Support
- » Inter-related but not part of navigation: Promoting housing stability and preventing homelessness

Housing Navigation

- » Individualized plans and approach
- » Low-barrier
- » Utilize Harm Reduction and Trauma-informed models
- » Housing First
- » Obtaining necessary documents
- » Communicating with property owners
- » Funds for move-in process

Goals of Housing Navigators... (1)

- » Begin immediately – regardless of where the client is sleeping;
- » Work with individuals to help them find, move in to, and retain affordable housing;
- » Develop relationships with key partners;
- » Help individuals eliminate or reduce housing barriers;



Goals of Housing Navigators... (2)

- » Assist in identification and reporting of instances of housing discrimination;
- » Link individuals with bridge housing and housing subsidy agencies and assist them in completing application;
- » Work with property owners and public housing authorities (PHAs) to facilitate approvals, assisting with documentation, timely inspections, and corrective action requests.



Who is going to do what?

- » Case Managers
- » Social Workers
- » Housing Navigators (Locators)
- » Housing staff/case managers at partner programs



Who is going to do what?

» Who will work with the client on housing?

- Who will be in charge of the service plan? Housing plan?
- Who will work directly with the client with paperwork, overcoming barriers?
- Who will connect with other service providers?
- Who will make sure the client is housed tonight?



Who is going to do what?

» Who will develop relationships with property owners?

- Think sales, giving an elevator pitch, conveying benefits to property owners, knocking on doors
- Who will conduct any housing safety/habitability inspections?
- Who will stay on top of vouchers/subsidized housing options?



Housing Support Roles & Program Structure

- » Ideal = Separate Roles/Departments
 - “Front of the House”/Client facing
 - Intake & Assessment
 - Housing Navigation
 - Housing Stability
 - “Back of the House”/Property-owner facing
 - Housing Resources/Location

Housing Support Roles & Program Structure



» Alternative Structures

- System Level (CES; CARE) – Assessment
- Case Managers – Intake; Housing Navigation; Housing Stability
 - Housing Specialist – Housing Location; Owner/Landlord Engagement
- Partner Agencies – Coordinated Entry; Other Housing-focused Agencies

Population Considerations



Securing Housing More than Once



- » When a client enters the program
- » If enters shelter/interim housing, getting permanent unit
- » If perm. unit is no longer suitable for client's needs – or – eviction
- » Before grant ends (2 years, with possible 1 year extension)
- » When funding sunsets (June 30, 2027)

Ideal locations for long-term placement

- » Permanent Supportive Housing
- » Housing Authority
- » Other permanently subsidized housing
- » Market rate housing with Voucher (e.g., HCV, EHV, FUP, Mainstream)



Establishing Trusting Relationships

- » Participant-centered
- » Strengths-based
- » Trauma-Informed Care
- » Motivational Interviewing Techniques
- » Crisis & Conflict Resolution
- » Harm Reduction philosophy

Housing-Focused Assessment

Strengths & Barriers



Housing Assessment Checklist

- » Explain the process and goals
- » **Discuss client's housing history and preferences**
- » Run a credit report
- » Public records check of evictions
- » **Identify client's strengths and barriers**



Assessment of Housing Strengths & Barriers

Housing History	Income
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Last place client lived that worked well? What about that situation made it work well?• Has client had a lease before? How did that go?• Does client have past evictions?• Has client lived in subsidized housing before?• Has client tried applying for a new lease recently? What was the outcome?• Does client have any concerns about moving into their own place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the client currently working, or able to work?• What are the client's current sources of income (e.g., employment, benefits, spousal/child support)?• Has the client worked before? How was that?

Assessment of Housing Strengths & Barriers

Client Preference	Strength & Barrier Exploration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What type of housing arrangement would the client prefer now? In the future?• Where would the client like to live?• Is there anywhere the client wants to avoid (e.g., due to DV, substance abuse recovery)?• Where does the client have a network of family and/or friends?• Where does the client feel safe?• Would they consider shared housing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When has the client helped or supported others?• What supports will the client need to move into & maintain stable housing?• How can actions or circumstances that led to the client's housing crisis be resolved or mitigated?• How well can the client solve problems & access services, independently &/or with support?• Who are possible support persons, networks who may be able to help the client with income, housing?

Understanding Client Preferences

- » Client preference should guide the plan
- » Usually, will have to compromise
- » Discuss limitations due to barriers
- » Identify with client what is most important & what is negotiable
- » Consider pets, reasonable accommodations, proximity to family, friends, or other supports that may be important to maintaining housing



Common Barriers to Housing

- » No rental history
- » Evictions
- » Larger family (3+ children)
- » Single parent
- » Head of household < 18
- » Sporadic employment history
- » Criminal history
- » Limited English proficiency
- » Debts/insufficient savings
- » No high school diploma or GED
- » Insufficient or no income
- » No or poor credit history
- » Behavioral health challenges
- » Having a pet
- » Housing-related debts (back rent, utilities)
- » Chronic homelessness
- » Substance use
- » Domestic violence
- » Lack of valid ID
- » Lack of tenancy knowledge
- » Unresolved legal issues
- » Transportation

Client Strengths to Resolve a Housing Crisis

- » **Positive references from previous landlords, employers, community members**
 - » **Experience as a tenant**
 - » **Work experience, education, or skills**
 - » **Ability to develop rapport with landlord & neighbors**
 - » **Willingness/motivation to work on plan**
 - » **Income or employment**
 - » **Support from family, faith-based, or other community network**
 - » **Completion of classes (e.g., tenancy, job training) & certificates**
 - » **Experience with problem solving & navigating systems**
 - » **Personal experiences such as military history**
- 

Solutions to Common Barriers

Barriers to Housing

- » Dispute with landlord or relatives/friends who could provide safe shared housing
- » Pending or previous evictions
- » Criminal legal system history
- » Financial history / debt
- » Short-term financial crisis (healthcare costs; auto maintenance); Inability to afford move-in costs

Problem Solving Resources

- » Mediation or conflict resolution; Connections to supportive family and friends
- » Connect with legal services, back rent assistance
- » Begin expungement process, housing search
- » Get credit reports, communicate with landlords
- » One-time financial assistance; Connections to mainstream resources/benefits

Housing-Focused Plan



What makes a *Housing Plan* different?

Singular focus on overcoming barriers to housing and achieving housing stability

- » For clients not currently housed, the primary goal is to develop a strategy to assist them in securing housing
- » Once housed, the goal is to ensure that adequate supports are in place & linkages to community resources are made so the client can stabilize & maintain housing

Making a *Housing Plan*

- » Identify:
 - Barriers to housing and steps to resolve them
 - Strengths and steps needed to build on them
 - Available resources and path to obtain them
- » Document all steps client and navigator will take to secure permanent housing
- » Include both short- and longer-term goals and timelines
- » Build in flexibility to respond to progress and changing circumstances
- » Work with partners to support client implement the plan's goals and action steps



Housing-Focused Goals (1)

- » Clients should make final decisions for all goals, actions, and timelines
- » Techniques such as Motivational Interviewing can support process



Housing-Focused Goals (2)

Use assessment of strengths & barriers to set goals related to:

- Repairing poor credit history or past evictions
- Resolving past criminal legal system involvement
- Obtaining cash income benefits and health insurance
- Securing move-in resources
- Addressing service needs for mental health or substance use to support stability during the housing location process
- Managing other short-term crisis



Tips & Tricks

- » Focus on most pressing barriers to housing
- » Goals and process should emphasize client choice and empowerment
- » Each goal should have bite-sized steps, an identified outcome, and a way to measure progress
- » Establish an expected pattern of emphasis on the Housing Plan, at every check-in
- » Identify actions that may feel overwhelming, and then plan
- » Ensure that goals are achievable and do not exceed client's willingness or ability
- » Limit number of actions committed to at each meeting and confirm who is doing what





Question

How do you decide which steps the client should be responsible for and which ones the case manager or housing navigator is responsible for?

Documenting Roles

Action Steps for Clients:

- » **What** will the client do?
- » **When** will the client do it?
- » **How often** will the client do it?
- » **Where** will the client do it?
- » How will the client know if their part of the goal has been **successful**?

Action Steps for Staff:

- » **Who** on the staff will take action?
- » What is the staff's **role**?
 - Are they performing the task, providing information, providing contacts, providing moral support?
- » **When** will the staff begin this task?
 - When will the task be complete?

Evaluating Outcomes

When Goals are Met:

- » Celebrate
- » **Identify and reinforce** positive behaviors that helped with achieving the goal
- » Set new goals that make use of the **momentum** created by accomplishing the initial goal
- » Note the achievement in the client's file

When Goals are Not Met:

- » Identify obstacles and brainstorm potential solutions
- » If the client is going to try again, set a **new target date** for the goal
- » If the client is not going to try again, set a **smaller, easier goal**
- » Note the status of the goal in the client's file to help with long-term evaluation of progress

Wrap Up



Follow Up Resources

- » [Homebase Selected Resources](#)
- » [VA's Housing Navigator Toolkit](#)
- » [HUD's Housing Search Assistance Toolkit](#)
- » [ESG Minimum Habitability Standards for ES and PH](#)
- » [CoC Housing Quality Standards \(HQS\)](#)

Behavioral Health Bridge Housing Resource Library

The screenshot shows the website's header with the logo on the left and a navigation menu on the right. The main content area features a dark blue banner with the word "Resources" in white. Below this is a section titled "Search the Library" with a paragraph of introductory text and a search input field. The "Featured Resources" section contains three cards: a blue circular graphic, a photo of hands holding keys, and a white document cover.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH Bridge Housing

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Resources

Search the Library

This library contains documents that may be useful to counties and/or Tribal entities as they design and implement behavioral health bridge housing. The search function allows you to search by keyword and resource type. Although BHBH staff has reviewed all resources for relevance to behavioral health bridge housing and to categorize them by topic, please note that external links and resources may not fully reflect the views of DHCS or AHP.

Featured Resources

- Reimagining Interim Housing**
Stages and Action Areas for Transforming Approaches to Sheltering People Experiencing Homelessness
December 2022
- ACTION PLAN**
for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in California
- Whole-Person Care for People Experiencing Homelessness and Opioid Use Disorder: Toolkit Part 2**
MAY 2022

Questions?

