

Building an Effective Homeless Crisis Response System

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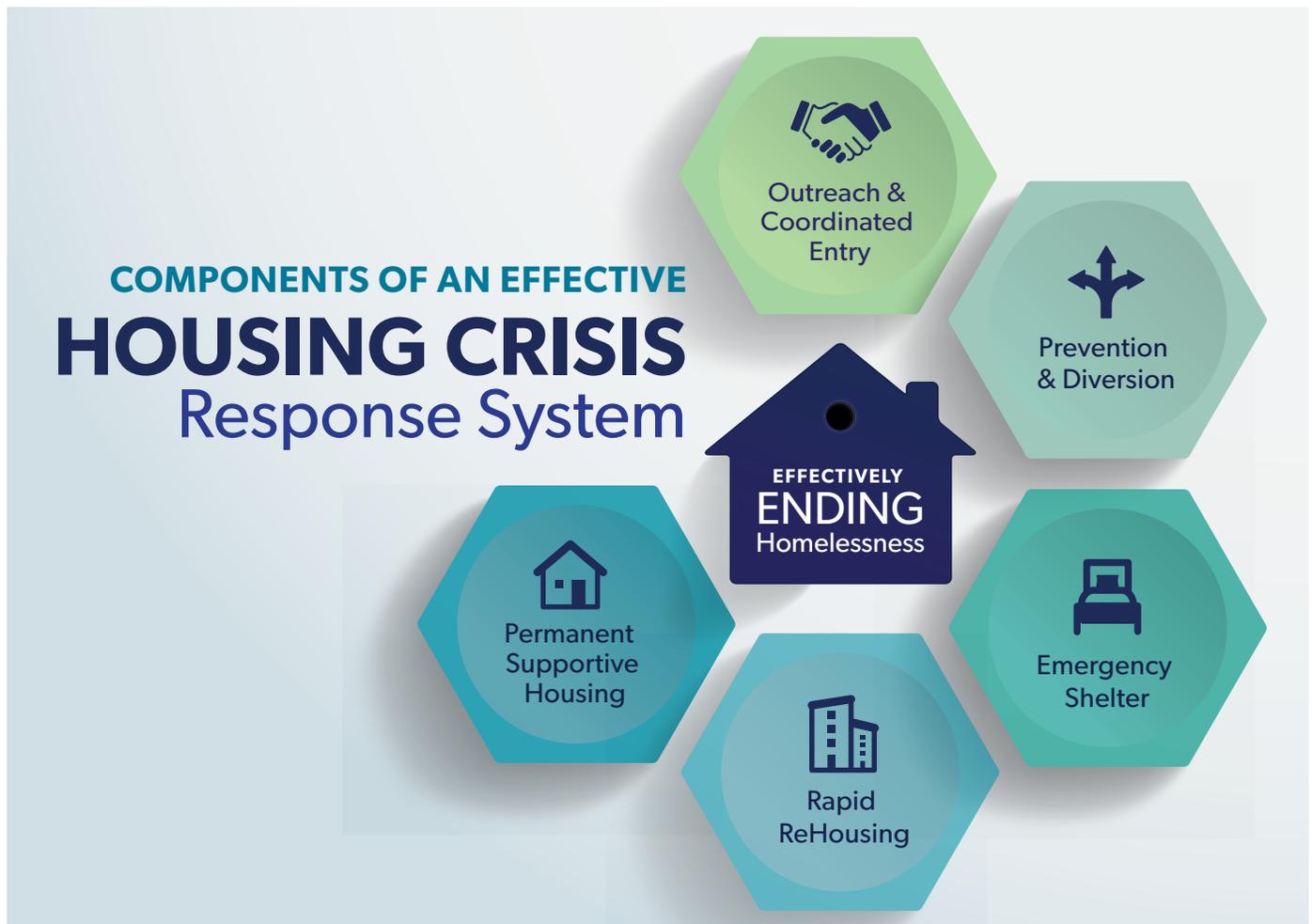
Every effective homeless response system should have a strong infrastructure and certain key components that work well together. Here we describe the components of a good system, as well as the underlying infrastructure that should be in place in your local community.

Key Components of the System

1. Outreach & Coordinated Entry – Outreach is a strategy that involves interacting with unsheltered people who are homeless in whatever location they naturally stay (e.g., in campsites, on the streets), building trust through assertive engagement, and offering access to appropriate housing interventions. Coordinated Entry is a standardized community-wide process to outreach, identify, and triage homeless households. This process consists of utilizing

common assessment tools to enter the household information into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), provide appropriate referrals, and prioritize access to housing interventions and services to end their homelessness.

2. Prevention & Diversion – Prevention provides services and financial assistance to prevent someone from becoming homeless. The assistance is targeted to keep people in their current housing situation. Examples of homelessness



prevention include mediation with landlords and payment of past-due rent. Diversion is strategy that prevents homelessness for people at the point when they are seeking shelter. Effective diversion helps the individual or family stay housed where they currently reside or helps them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements. When necessary, diversion may help by connecting the household with services, mediation, and/or financial assistance to keep them from entering the homeless system. Note that diversion is different from prevention, in that diversion catches the person at the point they are about to enter shelter and diverts them to another solution. Homelessness prevention, on the other hand, assists the household prior to their accessing the homeless system.

3. Emergency Shelter – A facility operated to provide temporary shelter for people who are homeless. Effective emergency shelters do not have barriers to entry (such as a sobriety requirement) and should be primarily housing-focused rather than focused on providing services. HUD’s

guidance is that the average length of stay in emergency shelter prior to moving into permanent housing should not exceed 30 days.

4. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) – A housing intervention designed to move a household into permanent housing (e.g., a rental unit) as quickly as possible, ideally within 30 days of identification. Rapid Re-Housing typically provides (1) help identifying appropriate housing; (2) financial assistance (deposits and short-term or medium-term rental assistance for 1-24 months), and (3) support services as long as needed and desired, up to a certain limit. This is the best way to help households with moderate to high barriers to housing.

5. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) – Safe and affordable housing for people with disabling conditions, with legal tenancy housing rights and access to flexible support services. PSH should prioritize people who are chronically homeless with the longest terms



of homelessness and the highest level of vulnerability/acuity in terms of health and services needs. This is the best way to help households with the greatest barriers to housing stability.

System Infrastructure

1. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) –

A web-based software solution and database tool designed to capture and analyze client-level information including the characteristics, service needs, and use of services by persons experiencing homelessness. HMIS is an important component of an effective Coordinated Entry System, Continuum of Care (CoC) planning efforts, and performance evaluation based on program outcomes.

2. Continuum of Care (CoC) – A local planning body required by HUD to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. The terms “CoC Governing Body” or “CoC Board” have similar meanings. In some contexts, the term “continuum of care” is also sometimes used to refer to the system of programs addressing homelessness.

With the infrastructure and key components described above, combined with adequate housing-focused funding, a local community can effectively end homelessness. Contact us to learn more or to engage the Florida Housing Coalition to help create an effective system in your community. **HNN**

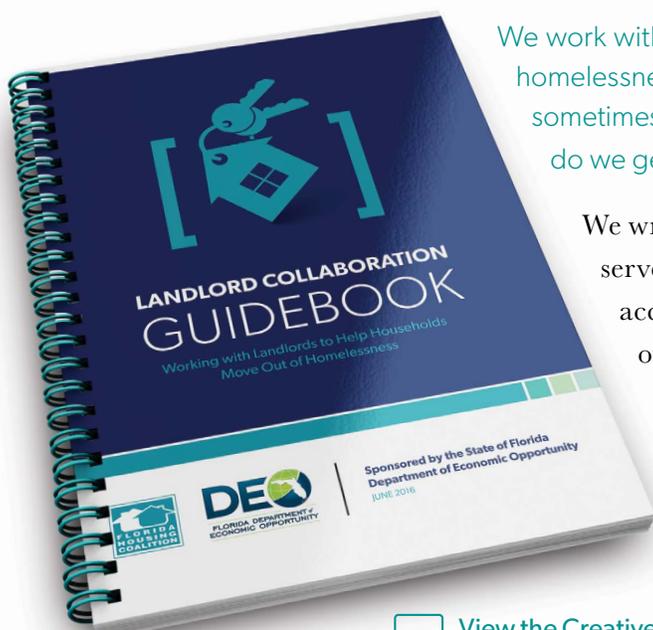


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Amanda Rosado is a Technical Advisor for the Florida Housing Coalition. She holds a master's degree in Social Work with a focus on organizations and communities from the University of South Carolina. For the past ten years, she has worked with individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness in various settings including a drop in center, emergency shelter, HIV clinic, and permanent supportive housing programs. As a strong advocate for housing first and recovery oriented systems of care, she is passionate about utilizing evidence based practices and providing effective interventions to work with some of the most vulnerable populations.

NEW RELEASE:

Landlord Collaboration Guidebook



We work with many local community partners who help move people out of homelessness and into apartments they can call home. This is hard work, and sometimes frustrating! One of the most common questions we hear is: “How do we get landlords to work with us?”

We wrote this guidebook to help answer that question. The guidebook serves as an additional tool in your toolbox as you work to provide access to a safe, affordable, and lasting home for people moving out of homelessness. We discuss how to increase access to existing affordable housing through effective outreach to landlords. We outline proven methods of working collaboratively to move homeless households into apartments. And we describe how to maximize long-term housing stability with the help of landlord partners. **HNN**



View the Creative Inclusive Communities in Florida guide and other valuable resources under the Publications tab at www.flhousing.org