

## 3.2 Housing First

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline and promote the Housing First approach as defined by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. This approach aims to rapidly connect individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing with minimal barriers, ensuring that housing stability is prioritized. The policy emphasizes the importance of leveraging supportive services to maintain housing and improve the quality of life for those who are housed.

### FORMS

There are no forms related or required for this Policy

### POLICY

Housing First, as defined by the United States Interagency Council of Homelessness,

*“is a proven approach, applicable across all elements of systems for ending homelessness, in which people experiencing homelessness are connected to permanent housing swiftly and with few to no treatment preconditions, behavioral contingencies, or other barriers.”*

Housing First is an evidence-based practice designed to maximize housing stability for people experiencing homelessness. Housing First providers operate under the principle that homelessness is a housing crisis and must be addressed through the provision of safe and affordable housing.

Housing First is most successful when supportive services are leveraged to prevent returns to homelessness. Therefore, utilizing a person-centered housing model to move households experiencing homelessness quickly and efficiently into housing under the assumption that every eligible person is “housing ready.” “Housing ready” means that a person’s eligibility for housing is not based on sobriety, treatment compliance, or criminal histories. Rather, people experiencing homelessness can control their own outcomes and improve their quality of life after they have attained housing.

The core components of Housing First include:

- Low barrier admission policies – Housing program policies should place a minimum number of expectations on participants. They should be designed to “screen-in” rather

than “screen-out” applicants with the greatest barriers to housing, such as having little to no income, poor rental history or past evictions, or criminal history.

- Few to no programmatic prerequisites to housing – Program participants are offered permanent housing with no programmatic preconditions such as demonstration of sobriety; completion of drug, alcohol or mental health treatment; or agreeing to comply with a treatment regimen upon program entry.
- Voluntary but engaged services – Supportive services are proactively offered to help clients achieve and maintain permanent housing, but participants are not required to participate in services as a condition of housing

### KEY TAKE AWAYS

- **Housing First Approach:** Housing First is an evidence-based practice that focuses on swiftly providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness without requiring treatment or meeting behavioral conditions beforehand.
- **Low Barrier Admission Policies:** Housing programs should have minimal expectations for participants, aiming to "screen-in" rather than "screen-out" those with significant barriers such as low income, poor rental history, or criminal records.
- **No Prerequisites for Housing:** Participants are offered permanent housing without preconditions such as sobriety, treatment completion, or compliance with treatment regimens.
- **Voluntary Supportive Services:** While supportive services are proactively offered to help clients achieve and maintain housing, participation in these services is not a requirement for accessing or maintaining housing.
- **Client-Centered Model:** The policy operates under the assumption that every eligible person is "housing ready," meaning eligibility is not based on factors like sobriety or criminal history. Instead, individuals can improve their outcomes and quality of life once they are housed.