

HOUSING + SERVICES =

A PROVEN SOLUTION TO HOMELESSNESS

DEFINING THE HOUSING FIRST APPROACH

The Housing First approach prioritizes moving people immediately into stable housing while assisting them with access to supports which improve housing stability.

Ultimately, the Housing First approach recognizes two key points:

1. that people can most successfully address underlying challenges when they are safely in housing, and
2. people thrive when their autonomy is respected and are not coerced to participate in services without their consent.

WHY THIS MODEL WORKS

Decades worth of evidence demonstrates that the Housing First approach, when implemented with fidelity:

- increases housing stability for people experiencing homelessness
- **increases** use of outpatient care
- **saves** communities money through, for example, reduced hospital and jail stays
- **reduces** homelessness more than programs which mandate treatment first

The Housing First approach works best when:

- communities build and preserve enough affordable, accessible, and safe housing
- programs are fully funded and can employ and retain enough staff to serve clients
- clients can opt into available, adequate, and tailored services

How the Housing First Approach Has Helped Reduce Veteran Homelessness

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) efforts to prevent and end homelessness center around the **bi-partisan** evidence-based **Housing First approach**. The **pairing** of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance with VA case management and supportive services (HUD-VASH) represents the Housing First approach in action: veterans and their families can obtain permanent housing and access necessary supports. **And this approach works.** Since 2010, veteran homelessness has decreased by over 52%, and 83 communities and three states have effectively ended homelessness amongst veterans.

KEEPING THE FOCUS ON EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Although homeless service providers re-house thousands upon thousands of people annually, the significant inflow of people entering homelessness (on average, roughly 17,000 people weekly) has meant rises in overall homelessness in many communities. Elected officials want to respond to this crisis. And they should respond with proven approaches like Housing First – not alternatives that only exacerbate the problem.

Displacing people out of sight and out of mind, through tickets, sweeps, and arrests, only addresses the mounting public pressure to solve visible homelessness, but it does nothing to address the root of homelessness itself nor end anyone’s episode of homelessness. When elected officials focus on displacing people, it results in a rise in camping bans and other punitive policies. Instead of solving homelessness, this approach only:

- **traumatizes** people experiencing homelessness,
- creates additional barriers to accessing housing,
- **displaces** people to other unsheltered locations, and
- wastes taxpayer dollars.

Compare:

\$10,051

annual cost to provide supportive housing for someone experiencing homelessness.

\$31,065

annual cost per person for a city to enforce unconstitutional anti-panhandling laws, maintain hostile architecture, and conduct police raids of homeless encampments.

Source: [Data from Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties](#)

WHAT CONGRESS CAN DO TO HELP

The Housing First approach works when the government chooses to invest in it — and it works best when all of these resources are available. **Congress must invest in increasing access to affordable housing and expanding the nationwide network of supportive services.** These investments in housing and services will allow communities to scale the Housing First approach, and fully implement its best practices, stabilizing people re-entering housing, and ultimately, ending homelessness.