

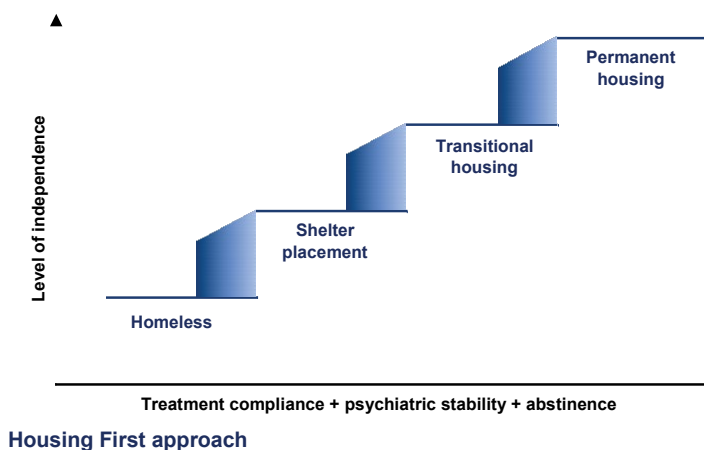
Housing First

Best Practice for Housing Workers

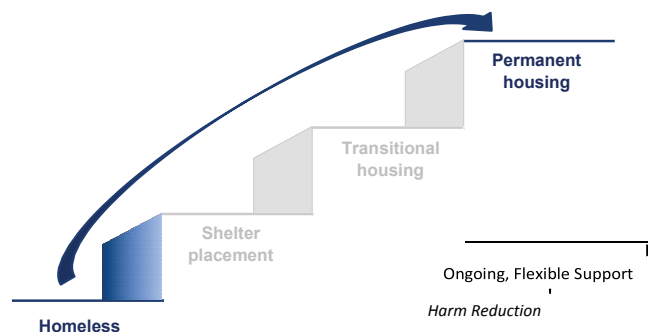
Housing First = \= Housing Only

Housing First is a human rights-based approach to solving homelessness. The framework assumes everyone has the right to housing and that our access to it shouldn't depend on anything else about us. Once someone has accessed housing, services are put in place to help people meet their needs and goals, through [Intensive Case Management \(ICM\)](#) or [Assertive Community Treatment \(ACT\)](#) or a blend of both.

Traditional system approach



Housing First approach



Graphics from "[Frontline Practice within Housing First Programs](#)" by Benjamin Henwood, USC School of Social Work, Los Angeles. 2014.

Housing First

Best Practice for Housing Workers

While rapid re-housing is certainly a strategy of Housing First, it should not be confused for 'housing only.' The supports put in place to ensure stable housing, while someone is attending to their other needs and goals other than avoiding homelessness are essential to this framework.



Graphic from "[Infographic Wednesday - This program can end homelessness and save money](#)" by Isaac Coplan, York University - The Homeless Hub/KMb, Toronto. 2014.

Best Practices in Housing First for Housing Workers

Thoroughly inform yourself about the five core principles of Housing First and apply them whenever possible.



Graphics from "[Canadian Housing First Tool Kit](#)" by Mental Health Commission of Canada and The Homeless Hub, Calgary & Toronto. 2014.

Create a plan.

Work with people to help them set realistic goals, including which community they would like to live in and which services would help best meet their needs. Since case management (either [Intensive Case Management \(ICM\)](#), [Assertive Community Treatment \(ACT\)](#), or a blend of both) are essential to Housing First, help people map out who provides which service and who to call when problems arise.

Housing First

Best Practice for Housing Workers

Connect with other service providers regularly.

Due to the complicated nature of accessing housing and providing tenancy support, it is important to communicate often and regularly with the other professionals working with the person you are serving. Schedule monthly case management meetings to clarify roles, goals, and boundaries.

Support access to income.

Helping to find and manage sources of income will ensure the tenancy remains stable and the people we work with can focus on their other goals and needs.

If a problem arises, help access eviction prevention programs, such as the Rent Bank, utility assistance programs, or the Housing Stabilization Fund. Remember, local legal clinics provide services to people having difficulty accessing OW/ODSP benefits.

Intentionally look for successes.

The skills of living in a home are completely different from the skills of living in a shelter or on the streets. The transition can be lengthy and even a little painful for the people we serve. Have patience and find successes, such a delicious homemade meal, a bill paid, or a deal made at the park instead of at home. Help folks feel comfortable in their new homes: help find furniture, plants, pets, art, and comforts.

Work with landlords.

With a lengthy waitlist for subsidized housing in Toronto, many of the people we work with will rent in the private market. Negotiation and mediation between landlords and tenants can be tense, but often there is middle ground.

Provide trauma-informed care.

Since new research is emerging, proving homelessness itself can cause trauma, providing care that acknowledges its impact is essential to housing work, including recognizing vicarious trauma and taking care of ourselves. Trauma-informed care is important for housing professionals to “respond rather than react to a person’s choices or behaviour” (Crofts, 2008).

Housing First

Best Practice for Housing Workers

For more information:

[Housing First. Toronto: The Homeless Hub](#)
[Canadian Housing First toolkit](#)

References:

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