Housing Problem-Solving Community Initiative

Sacramento Steps Forward and the Continuum of Care are developing a community-wide effort to integrate housing problem-solving (HPS) into the homeless response system. Our goal is to help leverage current resources and reduce new entries into homelessness, while reducing overall length of time homeless for households across the continuum with upstream approaches.

Two HPS-101 sessions were held in May and June 2022 for providers to learn more about the initiative.

What is housing problem-solving?

Housing problem-solving is an approach that assists communities to preserve limited shelter and supportive housing interventions for households without quick, safe alternatives. Trained staff support households with creative problem-solving conversations focused on identifying immediate, safe housing arrangements based on their own available resources rather than those of the crisis response system. Housing problem-solving also offers flexible services that may be coupled with minimal financial assistance when needed.

This systemwide approach has been utilized to support people in real-time across different communities, acknowledging that far more people request housing assistance than can be referred to housing through the CoC's Coordinated Entry System.

Who is eligible for housing problem-solving?

Households at risk of homelessness (within 21 days), fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence sexual assault tor human trafficking, and households experiencing literal homelessness that have not identified a safe housing option for tonight.

How can my agency get involved?

Here are 3 ways your agency can get involved and what to consider when deciding:

1. Act as a housing problem-solving access point:
   a. Provide housing problem-solving supports to at-risk or homeless households seeking services, including problem-solving conversations, resource connections, and/or one-time financial assistance when needed
   b. Submit required documentation for financial assistance requests
   c. Enter data into HMIS, including a program enrollment, HPS service, assessments, financial assistance requests and exit data
   d. Receive referrals from 2-1-1 (optional)

   Ideal if your agency:

   - Regularly explores housing solutions and conducts assessments or referrals to resources, inputs data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), wants to expand its ability to connect clients to resources and shelter through 211
   - Willingness to receive housing problem-solving training (2-day in-person training dates: 6/23- 6/24 or 8/30- 8/31)
   - Willing to enter an MOU with SSF

- Ability to utilize housing problem-solving funds to provide limited financial assistance for households (i.e. security deposit, first-month's rent, etc.)

2. Host a housing problem-solving specialist (or CAN team member) at your site regularly, or at specific dates/events
   a. HPS Specialist performs all the functions of a problem-solving access point (see above), but would be hosted at your site or events

   Ideal if your agency:

   - Wants to begin exploring housing solutions with clients, but does not regularly conduct assessments, refer to resources, or enter data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
   - Lacks staff capacity to act as a problem-solving access point but serves the homeless population in underserved areas

3. Apply for the RFQ: Coordinated Access Navigation (CAN) team
   a. Provide HPS support and navigation to shelter for households on shelter waitlists
   b. Actively receive 211 referrals
   c. CAN housing problem-solving specialists would be located at community agencies and public sites providing HPS supports

   Ideal if your agency:

   - Has the ability to manage a team of navigators that would serve the community
   - Experienced in providing housing problem-solving support and resource connections
   - Provides direct outreach, serving the homeless population where they are

Questions?

Please reach out to Sacramento Steps Forward's Coordinated Entry Team:

Stacey Fong, Analyst, sfong@sacstepsforward.org

Peter Bell, Manager, pbell@sacstepsforward.org