

Promising & Evidence-Based Practices

Per [Health and Safety Code Section 50217\(a\)](#), the Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program requires that program spending be informed by a best-practices framework focused on moving individuals and families experiencing homelessness into permanent housing, and in accordance with [eligible activities](#). While the information below is not an exhaustive list, the promising and evidenced-based practices outlined in this document were compiled to assist jurisdictions applying for HHAP funding determine how to most effectively and efficiently spend their HHAP funds.

Using HHAP funds to Strengthen the Homeless Crisis Response System

An [effective homeless crisis response system](#) is critical to helping people exit homelessness quickly by identifying those experiencing homelessness, preventing homelessness when possible, quickly connecting individuals to housing, and providing wraparound services when needed. HCFC encourages HHAP applicants to support programs that strengthen the local crisis system and ensure that the full continuum of interventions described below are available and effective in their jurisdictions.

1. **Outreach:** Outreach programs engage and provide services to people living in places not meant for human habitation, including cars, parks, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, encampments, or campgrounds. HHAP grantees are encouraged to fund outreach programs that:
 - Thoughtfully and respectfully engage unsheltered individuals and assess them via the local Coordinated Entry System (CES); and
 - Connect participants with emergency shelter, housing, and/or other critical services.

Additionally, services provided should aim to meet the basic needs of the program participants, gain their trust, and help them access a broad range of stabilization services.

2. **Coordinated entry:** [Coordinated entry](#) is a process designed to quickly identify, assess, refer, and connect individuals, [youth including parenting and pregnant youth](#), and families in crisis to housing and services. Coordinated entry is intended to prioritize resources for those with the greatest need, match people with the services that are most likely to help them exit homelessness, reduce the time it takes for participants to access services, and ensure that resources are allocated efficiently. Per Health

and Safety Code Section 50219(a)(9), HHAP applicants should ensure that funded programs are integrated within the local CES.

Homelessness Prevention and Diversion: Homelessness prevention and [diversion](#) programs are intended to quickly support people who are at imminent risk of homelessness or who are initially attempting to access shelter by helping them quickly regain stability in their current housing or in other permanent housing. Prevention programs are intended to target people who are at imminent risk of homelessness, whereas diversion programs usually target people as they are initially trying to gain entry into shelter.

Both prevention and diversion programs connect participants to other types of assistance such as landlord mediation, CalFresh benefits, health and behavioral health care, early childhood development and education, CalWORKS, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and other resources. Additionally, these programs are designed to engage participants in creative problem-solving conversations, connect them with family supports, provide housing search and placement services, and secure flexible financial assistance to help people resolve their immediate housing crisis.

HHAP applicants are encouraged to consider funding programs that provide rental assistance, housing search, and stabilization services to prevent homelessness or quickly divert individuals out of the shelter system. Examples of HHAP eligible activities for prevention or diversion programs include but are not limited to: short or medium-term rental assistance, payment of rental arrears and security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, housing search assistance, housing stabilization case management, credit repair, and legal services.

Emergency shelters, Navigation Centers, and Interim Housing: Emergency shelter, navigation centers, and interim housing provide immediate access to temporary shelter via the CES, meet basic needs like food, clothing, and hygiene, and quickly connect individuals to housing and other mainstream services including health and behavioral health services, welfare agencies, juvenile justice and social service agencies. HHAP applicants should evaluate the type of temporary shelters available in their local crisis response system to determine ways to improve their effectiveness. Possible improvements to current shelter could include the following:

- expanding services and/or operational hours to meet the demonstrated need;

- eliminating rules or expectations that could be perceived to be unreasonable or punitive;
- accommodating self-defined groups of families;
- creating safe arrangements for pets within the shelter;
- providing safe storage for possessions; or
- increasing case management to create quick connections to permanent housing or housing navigation services.

Both essential services and operations for temporary shelter are eligible uses of HHAP funds. Examples of HHAP eligible activities for emergency shelters, navigation centers, and interim housing include but are not limited to: increased case management services, increasing the number of available shelter beds, adding or increasing employment assistance, and insurance, furnishings, utilities and rent for the facility.

3. **Permanent Housing:** A crisis response system should have the capacity to connect people experiencing homelessness with permanent housing programs, such as [rapid re-housing](#), [host homes](#), [supportive housing](#), and other stable and safe housing options.

Rapid rehousing (RRH) is an evidence-based housing intervention, particularly for families experiencing homelessness. HHAP grantees are encouraged to fund projects that incorporate all the following core components of RRH:

- i. Housing identification;
- ii. Rent and move-in assistance; and
- iii. Intensive case management and services.

Examples of HHAP-eligible RRH activities include but are not limited to: rental and utility arrears payments, rental application fees, moving costs, security deposits, rental subsidies, housing search assistance, and housing stabilization case management services.

Shared housing is an intervention where two or more households live together in a housing unit and share housing related costs. Shared housing models often include sharing common areas such as kitchens and living rooms, individual bedroom areas, and may also include either individual or shared bathrooms. Shared housing programs may consider utilizing a person-centered screening process to fill a vacancy or formalized tenancy agreements for each household, and are encouraged to provide short-term case management to tenants upon move in. Shared housing programs may use the same HHAP eligible activities mentioned in the RRH intervention section.

Host homes are an innovative approach that pairs community members with underutilized spaces in their homes and provides a non-institutional environment for youth experiencing homelessness. HHAP applicants should consider funding programs that provide alternate housing arrangements in supported environments rather than temporarily placing youth into emergency shelters. Additionally, jurisdictions receiving funds from the [Rural Host Homes for Basic Center Program](#) administered by the United States Department of Health and Human Services should consider leveraging the HHAP youth set-aside to expand their rural host home projects.

Supportive Housing (SH) is an evidence-based model that combines low-barrier affordable housing assistance with intensive wraparound services to help individuals and families lead more stable lives. Both the housing assistance and the services are non-time-limited. HHAP funds can be used to provide operating subsidies, including operating reserves, in new and existing affordable or supportive housing units.

Adopting Effective Approaches to Provide Services and Housing

Jurisdictions receiving HHAP funds should administer, evaluate, and monitor programs to ensure compliance with the core components of Housing First, strive to employ a progressive engagement approach, and offer opportunities to increase a household's income or retain employment. Additionally, programs geared towards ending youth homelessness should ensure services are tailored around the specific needs of the unaccompanied youth.

Housing First

Housing First 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 providers offer services as needed and do not make housing contingent on the participation in services. (e.g., sobriety, engagement in treatment, service participation requirements).

Additionally, Senate Bill (SB) 1380 (Mitchell, Chapter 847, Statutes of 2016) requires all state-funded programs providing housing or housing-based services to people experiencing homelessness to incorporate the core components of Housing First as enumerated in Welfare and Institutions Code Section [8255](#).

Progressive Engagement

To maximize resources and increase the number of people served within the homeless crisis response system, HHAP grantees are encouraged to support programs that utilize a [progressive engagement approach](#). This means programs help households end their homelessness as rapidly as possible, despite barriers, with minimal financial and support resources. More supports are offered to those households who struggle to stabilize and cannot maintain their housing without deeper assistance.

Programs and systems using a progressive engagement approach regularly reassess housing barriers and seek to transition individuals off assistance as soon as their housing retention barriers are resolved. Programs employing this approach consistently evaluate when to offer more intensive support, additional rental assistance, or step-up referrals to longer-term, deeper housing interventions.

Increasing Income for People Experiencing Homelessness

Helping people experiencing homelessness increase and stabilize their incomes is key to creating and maintaining housing stability. HHAP applicants are strongly encouraged to support programs that connect participants with job training or placement programs, facilitate access to work supports such as childcare or transportation assistance, and/or increase their income through public benefit programs like CalWORKs or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). HHAP funds are eligible to be used on outreach and coordination efforts to job programs, and to foster partnerships with county welfare departments or workforce development agencies.

Youth Centric Programs

Understanding the causes of youth homelessness can help local jurisdictions design effective systems and interventions. HHAP applicants should consider funding programs that employ the following housing services practices and interventions:

- Youth, including those who are transgender and gender conforming, have access to inclusive, nondiscriminatory shelter and housing.
- Programs prioritize [family reunification](#) or support reunification as the initial intervention for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Youth in crisis are provided alternative housing models such as flexible emergency shelter responses or [host homes](#).
- [Rapid re-housing](#) programs offered to youth are tailored to youth.
- Supportive housing units are prioritized for the most vulnerable.

HHAP grantees are encouraged to utilize the youth set-aside allocations to support programs that are incorporated in the local homelessness crisis system or utilize a comprehensive or [coordinated response](#) to prevent and end youth homelessness.