



DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELESSNESS AND
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Homelessness Prevention and Housing Problem Solving – Presentation to HOC





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Homelessness Prevention and Housing Problem Solving and the Homelessness Response System

Within the context of the Homelessness Response System:

- Both interventions are an integral piece and core component of an efficient and robust Homelessness Response System (HRS).
- Essential for the HRS to function more effectively.
- Reduce inflow into a limited and strained system and demand for shelters and other interventions.
- Only two of the tools/core components/interventions in the HRS.
- These interventions need to happen in tandem with other interventions, like shelter, Rapid Rehousing (RRH), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), outreach.

Within the context of “Home by the Bay”:

Goal #3:

• **Increasing Number of People Exiting Homelessness:** Actively support at least 30,000 people to move from homelessness into permanent housing.

Problem Solving

Goal #5:

• **Preventing Homelessness:** Provide prevention services to at least 18,000 people at risk of losing their housing and becoming homeless.

Targeted Prevention



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Overview of Homelessness Prevention

Purpose

SF Emergency Rental Assistance Program (SF ERAP) was developed in partnership with Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) to:

- Prevent households from experiencing homelessness & housing loss.
- Provide assistance to households who are most likely to lose their housing and experience homelessness in the absence of assistance.
- Reduce inflow into the Homelessness Response System.
- Reduce displacement of households from San Francisco.
- Build a coordinated prevention & anti-displacement approach.

Targeted Approach: Concept

- **Effectiveness:** helping those most at risk to find and maintain stable housing and avoid homelessness/displacement
- **Efficiency:** assisting those for whom it will make the most difference (highest likelihood of experiencing homelessness/ housing loss in the absence of assistance)



- Identify higher risk = higher benefit from prevention assistance.
- Ensure equitable distribution of limited resources.
- Use as a key tool to enhance equity in the Homeless Response System and community.
- Target assistance based on proven risk factors.
 - Experience of homelessness
 - Informal lease agreement
 - Age & number of children

Targeted Approach: Reaching the Most Vulnerable

- BIPOC-led, culturally competent, neighborhood-based non-profit partners.
- Diverse language representation – providers/navigation partners have language capacity in Spanish, Russian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Maya/Yucatec.
- Geographical representation – Bayview, Mission, Tenderloin, SoMa, Excelsior/OMI, Sunnydale/Visitation Valley
- Evidence-based targeting (embedded in online application) to assist most vulnerable households/tenants
 - Over 18 risk factors included in our targeted approach (shared on next slide)
- Screening households in; households that may have never been eligible for services in the past

Targeted Approach: Risk Factors (Examples; Not Comprehensive)

Risk Factor	Risk Factor
Household Demographics	
Children 0-2	Senior(s) in the household
Significant change in household composition	Household income at/below 30% AMI
Head of household under 25	
Past & Current Living Situations	
In a rent-controlled unit for 5+ years	Received eviction court order
Living without a lease	Experienced homelessness
Highly vulnerable zip code	
Other Risk Factors	
Household member with a disability	Recent incarceration
Recent hospital/mental health facility discharge	

Access & Services

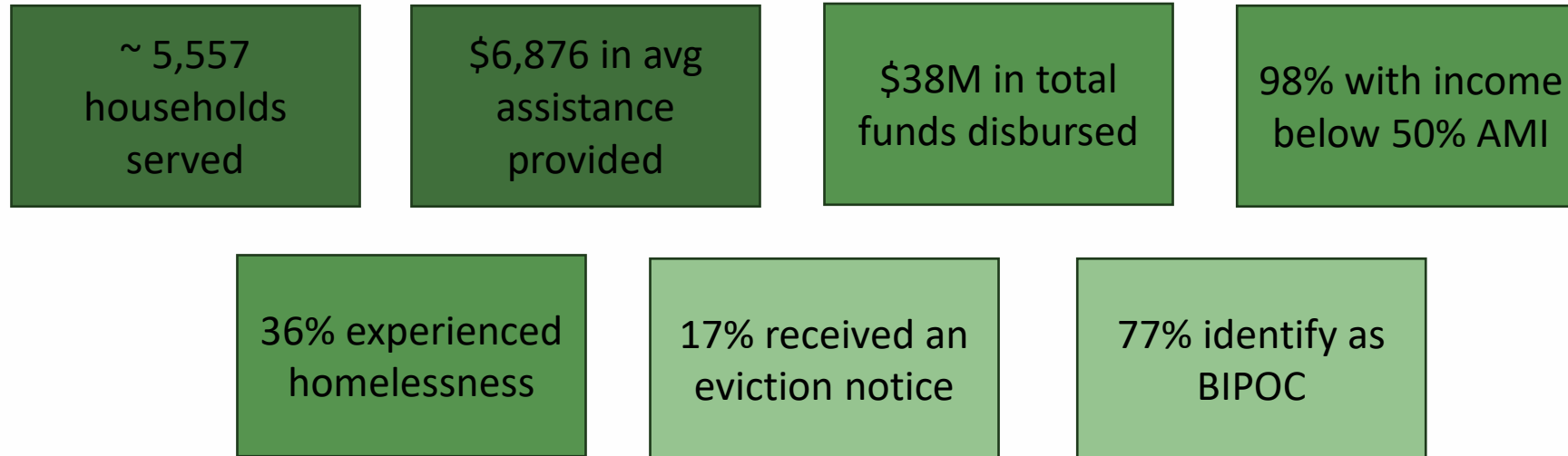
- **Financial Services through SF ERAP:**
 - Move-In Assistance
 - Past Due Rent
 - Up to 3 months of Future Rent (to support stabilization)
- **Access to Services:**
 - Online multilingual application at sferap.com
 - Walk in or call any Prevention Provider (MOHCD or HSH)
 - Walk in or call any Navigation Partner (MOHCD)
 - Online or paper multilingual applications

Eligibility

- Current San Francisco resident
- Household income at or below 50% Area Median Income (AMI)
- Recent financial hardship
 - Within previous 6 months
- Risk of Homelessness/Housing Stability (*as determined by vulnerability assessment built into application)
 - Automatic prioritization: Applicant experienced homelessness in last 2 years OR is a Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)/RAD/HOME SF resident with a payment plan OR is moving into a new unit with a Housing Choice Voucher and seeking move in assistance.

Data: Early 2021 to Early 2023

During this time, SF ERAP was mostly COVID-relief focused and complementary to the State Program (lead on COVID relief/Treasury funds). Data below is for both MOHCD and HSH.



Data: Relaunch March 2023

SF ERAP re-launched in March 2023 as a steady-state program. Data below is for both MOHCD and HSH.

~ 2,241
households
served

\$6,288 in avg
assistance
provided

\$12M in total
funds disbursed

89% with income
below 30% AMI

74% experienced
homelessness

16% received an
eviction notice

74% were at risk
of displacement

75% identify as
BIPOC

Program Improvements

• **Most Recent/Current:**

- Ongoing program evaluation (which will include who returns for services more than once and/or who becomes homeless or is displaced after receiving services and performance/equity implications of vulnerability/risk factors).
- “Customer service” phone and email hotline.
- Applicants at risk of or in eviction proceedings are automatically connected to Eviction Defense Collaborative (EDC)/Tenant Right to Counsel.
- Shared housing placements with HomeMatch.

• **Upcoming:**

- Enhanced referrals to longer-term subsidies for those with highest degree of housing precarity.
- Employment connections through OEWD pilot (discussed in a later slide).
- Housing Location Assistance services (to reduce rent burden).
- System efficiency – Fiscal Intermediary (discussed in a later slide).
- Exploring more flexible financial assistance (beyond move in and past due rent).

Mini- Analysis on Returns (HSH Only)

- During Program Monitoring for FY21-22, HSH looked at approximately 10% of completed applications for SF ERAP served by HSH in the first quarter of 2022.
 - Around 93 cases
- Then, reviewed data from:
 - The ONE system to see if household had accessed outreach, shelter, coordinated entry, problem solving or housing services after having received SF ERAP assistance, and
 - The Prevention Platform to see if household had re-applied for a second round of SF ERAP assistance.
- Returns to the System:
 - Returns within 6 months after receiving assistance was 10% (9 households)



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Overview of Housing Problem Solving

What is Problem Solving?

- **What is it?**

- Problem Solving is a unique approach that supports households resolve their current housing crisis outside of existing shelter or housing programs in the Homelessness Response System.

- **How is it delivered?**

- Through *Problem Solving conversations* - strength-based conversations that identify creative solutions to prevent or quickly resolve homelessness
- Through these conversations, households who do not qualify for Permanent Supportive Housing/Rapid Rehousing and usually have lower vulnerability/chronicity, are offered assistance that explores and identifies creative solutions to resolve housing crises in real time.
- Problem Solving staff will provide support by getting to know more about each household's housing background, connection to social supports and their current needs.
- Individualized/strength-based approach – focused on household's strengths.

Problem Solving as an Intervention

- Problem Solving may not be the best intervention for all households and it is not expected to be the solution for everyone.
 - 10% resolution rate – target for successful Problem Solving (Goal is to increase in upcoming years)
- Facilitates for the Homelessness Response System to focus on those who need more intense interventions (prevents inflow; diverts).
- Creates intervention/pathway out of homelessness for those who do not qualify or need permanent supportive housing/other more intense interventions.
- Shift away from focusing and waiting on shelter and PSH as a solution to all homelessness, to utilizing more flexible, faster interventions and exploring real-time solutions to housing crises.
- Faster; less expensive; more flexible.
- Not an ongoing intervention – once resolution has been found, housing crisis is considered resolved.
- Problem Solving does expect and allows returns to the System.

What does Problem Solving look like?

Outcome: Secure a safe indoor place outside of the Homelessness Response System

1. With friends and family permanently
2. With friends and family temporarily
3. Relocation
4. New residence of their own

What does Problem Solving look like?

Housing Problem Solving services include:

- **Problem Solving conversations:** help identify real-time solutions to a housing crisis
- **Housing location assistance:** helps households with income but without an immediate housing plan locate a place to rent. Includes shared housing placements to increase exits to housing
- **Travel and relocation support outside San Francisco:** travel and relocation assistance that results in a housing connection/safe housing plan in another community
- **Reunification, mediation, and conflict resolution:** helps households stay in a current or recent housing situation or new housing situation with mediation support
- **Financial assistance:** Flexible financial resources to cover specific costs that will assist households to stay in a safe, indoor place outside the Homelessness Response System.
- **Connections to employment:** currently a pilot with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD)
- **Referrals and links to a range of community services**

What does Problem Solving look like?

Allowable Expenses: Anything that contributes to resolving a housing crisis

- Removal of housing barriers – pest extermination, car repairs/insurance/payment
- Move in assistance – deposits, first and last months' rent, contribution to rent costs of another household, furniture
- Furniture
- Rental assistance after move in (up to 3 months, within max limits)
- Out of the box examples: refrigerator; 1-800 Junk truck

Where is Problem Solving Happening?

- Youth, Family and Adult Access Points (12)– including Access Points for veterans and justice-involved population.
- Family Shelters (11).
- Non- Access Point providers (Glide and Hospitality House).
- Goal/Vision: all Shelters, all Nav Centers, all Access Point Partners, non-Access Point providers.

Data:

- **Problem Solving since November 2020:**

- 1,774 households' homelessness has been ended through this intervention
- \$3,112 average financial assistance per resolution
- \$5.73M issued

- **Exit destination (Top 3):**

- Rental by client
- Staying or living with family, permanent tenure
- Staying or living with family, temporary tenure

- **Financial Assistance (Top 5):**

- Move-in assistance (includes Fair Market Rate housing & any type of affordable housing; excludes housing inside the Homelessness Response System)
- Rental Assistance after move-in
- Furniture
- Travel and relocation support
- Contribution to rent or utility costs of another household (informal living arrangements)

Problem Solving Numbers: Demographics/System

- **Problem Solving clients since November 2020:**
 - Over 40% between the ages of 25 and 44
 - 13% are under 24 years old
 - 20% over 55 years old
 - 45% black; 37% white; 22.5% Latinx
 - 58% male; 39% female
 - 86% heterosexual

Enhancements to Problem Solving

🔑 **Housing Location Assistance Services:**

- Last fiscal year, conducted successful housing search for 46 households; 6 shared housing placements

🔑 **Employment Pilot with OEWD:**

- Co-locating employment specialists at Problem Solving providers sites.
- Goals of pilot:
 - Increase **collaboration and alignment** between homeless services and workforce services.
 - Improve **employment outcomes** for people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco.
 - Improve **connectedness among agencies and organizations** serving people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco.
- Pilot also includes Rapid Rehousing providers.

Enhancements to Problem Solving

• **Fiscal Intermediary:**

- Increased efficiency, oversight and alignment within the system.

• **Direct Cash Transfer Pilot for Youth:**

- Larkin is piloting direct cash transfers as a housing intervention, thus testing the effects of these transfers on the housing stability of youth participants.
- Part of a larger, multi-year, national study on direct cash transfer interventions for youth as a way to end homelessness.

• **Upcoming:**

- Evaluation of Problem Solving (who is returning, who is Problem Solving working for?)



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Questions?