

2019 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
ENDING
HOMELESSNESS
& CAPITOL HILL DAY

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“RIGHT NOW” SOLUTIONS

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BACKGROUND

- Rise in unsheltered homelessness and public health crises has created pressure for rapid, visible action, which has led to...
 - Expansion of shelter capacity, and/or
 - Creation of new “right now” interventions

BACKGROUND

- “Right Now” Solutions are crisis responses to homelessness that:
 - Have a short term goal of assisting people who are unsheltered move from their current unsheltered location,
 - (Unsheltered locations may be an encampment, vehicles, scattered unsheltered sites, etc.)
 - To a centralized location that is more safe and/or provides services.
- Examples include (but are not limited to)...

RIGHT NOW SOLUTIONS

- Large outdoor area—covered or uncovered—designated as a safer sleeping area for a large number of households.



RIGHT NOW SOLUTIONS

- Large tents or tent-like structures that can be erected quickly to provide a covered sleeping area for a large number of households.



RIGHT NOW SOLUTIONS

- Large shed-like structures (e.g. shipping containers) that were not created for the purpose of housing or shelter that can be used to provide a covered sleeping area for a large number of households.



RIGHT NOW SOLUTIONS

- Small, covered structures big enough for 1-2 individuals to sleep.



SESSION PURPOSE



- Outline key considerations for communities in need of “right now” *solutions*, and help avoid less effective or even harmful short-term *responses*.
- Explore the relationship between “right now” solutions and decisions to expand shelter capacity.
 - Note: full session on expanding shelter capacity this afternoon: “Session 5.05 Think Before You Build”

SESSION AGENDA

- Overview of key considerations for “right now” solutions
- Q & A
- Review and “rate” fictional scenarios of “right now” solutions

Assessing Your Community's Need for Crisis Resources

Do we really need this solution?

- Could we house people without first utilizing temporary structures?
- Is there enough shelter capacity that could be used with changes in shelter policy (lowering barriers) or focusing on housing people quickly from shelters?
- Some tools/resources to help you think through these questions:
 - [NAEH Tools to Assist in Shelter Capacity Decisions](#)
 - HUD's crisis response decision tool (to see this tool in action, go to Session 5.05 *Think Before You Build*).

ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT CRISIS RESOURCES

- Assess your community's data on:
 - who gets into shelter
 - existing shelter utilization/capacity
 - shelter performance outcomes to determine whether you need to add "right now" solutions and how to target them

ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT CRISIS RESOURCES

1) Look at your data to determine need

- Do you have a high number of unsheltered people in your community?
- Who is getting into shelter? From where?
- Are particular populations not accessing shelter?

ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT CRISIS RESOURCES

**2) Assess whether you are optimizing
your current shelter capacity**

ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT CRISIS RESOURCES

Are people unable to enter shelters because of restrictive shelter policies such as:

- Sobriety requirements
- Rules/Hours of operation
- Inadequate/Unclean/overcrowded accommodations
- Income requirements
- Household configuration requirements
 - Women and children only
 - Single-sex shelters that don't provide equal access to people who are LGBTQ
- Can't bring in their partner, pets, or possessions

ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT CRISIS RESOURCES

Are people unable to enter shelter because there are long waitlists to get in?

- Are any people entering shelter from friends/family/housed locations?
- Are you **practicing diversion, problem-solving, rapid exit strategies** across your system so that people may be diverted from homelessness ***before having to enter shelter?***
- Can you use existing transitional housing?

ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT CRISIS RESOURCES

Do you have less than 95% utilization rates in your shelters?

- Why?
 - Ask people living on the street why they don't use shelters!

ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT CRISIS RESOURCES

What are the outcomes for people staying in shelter?

- What percentage of people exit shelter to permanent housing?
- What percentage of people exit to other shelters or to transitional housing?
- What percentage of people return to homelessness?

ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT CRISIS RESOURCES

↓ DECREASE Long stays

↑ INCREASE Exits to permanent housing

↓ DECREASE Returns to shelter

↑ INCREASE Shelter utilization

KEY CONSIDERATIONS for Right Now Solutions

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Planning for “right now” solutions must include attention to:

- Safety
- Human dignity
- Exit strategies

Let’s take a closer look at each.



Optimal
“right now”
solution

SAFETY AND SPACE

- **Access:** accessible to all
- **Security:** safety from harm and access to emergency services; plans for emergency situations
- **Sanitation:** including restrooms and procedures for waste disposal
- **Environment and air quality:** procedures to ensure safety from extreme weather and elements
- **Personal space:** recommend 37.7 sq. ft. per bed, and room for storing belongings
- If providing **food and water:** ensure free from contamination

DIGNITY

- **Person-focused:** solutions should assist in resolving homelessness, not just remove a visible homeless population or assist with “sweeps” and other forms of criminalization
- **Low-barrier:** eliminate sobriety and income requirements, limited hours of operation, prohibitions on pets and property, and service requirements
- **Non-punitive:** encourage expectations of safe behavior but do not penalize behaviors that are not a threat to the safety to the person or others
- **Harm reduction:** using harm reduction approaches

EXIT PLANNING

- **Housing focused:** all persons given services toward access to permanent housing as soon as possible, including use of:
 - **Diversion / Rapid Exit:** problem-solve with people to end their episode of homelessness without utilizing scarce housing subsidies
 - **Navigation:** incorporate housing navigators to assist with locating and securing PH
- **Community effort:** housing resources are made available to ensure that persons are able to exit to permanent housing
- **Housing First:** Remove unnecessary barriers and preconditions to subsidized permanent housing

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Location:** How can we best locate the temporary structure site for access to transportation and services?
- **Long-term planning:** “Right now” solutions are meant to be temporary. What is the planned duration? Do we have a plan to wind down operations?
- **Cost effectiveness:** How can we control costs of operation? (hint: see exit planning)
- **Data:** How will we know we were effective? How will we track those outcomes?

Questions?

SCENARIOS



Scenario 1: Description

- Community acquired several empty lots next to existing shelter and set up a “right now” solution in the lots
- Outreach teams market the solution to clients as safer than sleeping on the street, though it is outdoors
- Low barriers to entry and uses a harm reduction approach
- Individual sleeping areas large enough for a small tent
- Health and behavioral health services located onsite
- Outreach teams conduct CE assessments weekly or bi-weekly

Scenario 1: Review

- **Safety:** Ample space provided and services located on-site.
- **Dignity:** No connection with criminalization. Low barrier entry. Harm reduction approaches.
- **Exit Planning:** Connected to coordinated entry.

Scenario 1: Improvements

- **Safety:** Ensure that environmental conditions and emergency situations can be addressed.
- **Exit Planning:** Ensure that solution is focused around movement to PH. Ensure that solution is not just waiting area for admission into neighboring shelter.
- **Operational Concerns:** Ensure that neighboring shelter is not high barrier and is highly utilized.

Scenario 2: Description

- Converted old parking garage into shelter-like structure. Full range of services co-located in building. Heavy focus on employment services.
- Detailed procedures for inclement weather and emergencies.
- Clients brought to solution by mobile outreach teams or police.
- Lowest levels of garage do not have walls. Clients provided mats to sleep on ground. These levels are reserved for newest clients or those who refuse to follow rules.
- Higher levels of garage have been walled and feature cots. These levels are reserved for clients who follow rules of job-search program.
- Little connection to coordinated entry. Exit planning focused on stabilizing client through employment.

Scenario 2: Review

- **Safety:** Services located on-site. Safety procedures in place for inclement weather and emergencies.
- **Exit Planning:** Heavy focus on exit through employment and entry into market rate housing.

Scenario 2: Improvements

- **Safety:** Ensure safe amount of sleeping space provided to all clients.
- **Dignity:** End penalization through dual sleeping areas. Ensure that solution is not connected to criminalization of homelessness.
- **Exit Planning:** Ensure that exit planning to PH occurs for all clients, not just those able to work.
- **Operational Concerns:** Ensure that solution is connect to CES and full homeless crisis response system.

Scenario 3: Description

- Small sheds provide shelter for 1-2 person households on empty lot in secluded area outside of town.
- Sheds are 6x8 ft with air vents and cots for each household member.
- On-site security and established procedures for emergencies.
- Clients enter first-come-first-serve; usually a long waitlist for entry.
- 24/7 hour access and pets are allowed, meeting certain requirements.
- No sobriety or service participation requirements.
- No on-site services. Case management via provider located downtown, and other services come on site infrequently.
- Maximum stay is two months; 90% of clients exit back into homelessness or to unknown destination

Review Checklist

Accessible to all	Safety	
Safety from harm and access to emergency services	Safety	
Sanitation (restrooms and waste disposal)	Safety	
Protection from extreme weather and elements	Safety	
Personal space + room for storing belongings	Safety + Dignity	
Food and water, if provided, are free from contamination	Safety	
No sobriety or income requirements	Dignity	
No service requirements	Dignity	
24/7 access / no limited operational hours	Dignity	
Pets and property allowed	Dignity	
Expulsion or other punitive actions are based on collective safety, not on expectations of “good” behavior	Dignity	
Harm reduction meets clients where they are	Dignity	
Community has committed housing resources for persons in temporary site	Exit planning	
Problem-solving is used to rapidly exit people to their own housing solutions	Exit planning	
Housing navigators assist people with finding permanent housing	Exit planning	

Questions?



Thank you!