

2019 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
**ENDING**  
**HOMELESSNESS**  
**& CAPITOL HILL DAY**

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# 7.01 Problem-Solving Housing Crisis: How to Have the Diversion Conversation

## Presenters:

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# Session Objectives

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- Define “diversion” as a system intervention
- Gain an understanding of the key fundamentals of effective homelessness diversion
- Identify key skill sets critical to effective problem-solving
- Review skills to strengthen capacity of attendees to problem-solve a household’s housing crisis

# Who's Here?

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## Show of Hands

- Provider Staff (Prevention, Street Outreach, ES, TH, RRH, PSH)
- CoC Leadership
- Coordinated Entry
- Local/State/Federal Government
- Funders
- Community Leaders
- Mainstream System Partners (Health & Hospital, Corrections, Mental/Behavioral Health, etc.)
- HMIS Staff

# Effective Homeless Response System

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## Goal

- House people as quickly as possible and divert people from imminent homelessness whenever possible
- Use a systemic approach to align interventions and resources across programs in a coordinated way around this common goal
- Maximize the system's performance:
  - Reduce in-flow into homelessness
  - Increase exits to permanent housing
  - Decrease the average length of time homeless
  - Decrease returns to homelessness

# What is Diversion?

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A strategy that helps people identify and access alternatives to homelessness and resolve their immediate housing crisis.

# What is Diversion?

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- Is a service to help people avoid a shelter stay and resolve their immediate housing crisis
- Is ***not*** a denial or barrier to shelter entry and instead expands options to identify alternatives to shelter

# What is Diversion?

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## Services

- **Creative Problem Solving Conversation to Identify Solutions to Immediate Housing Crisis**
  - Connections to Family and Natural Supports
  - Strengths-Based Case Management
  - Conflict Resolution/Mediation
  - Housing Search/Placement
  - Landlord/Tenant Mediation
  - Connection to Mainstream Resources
  - Tenant Legal Services
  - Credit Repair
  - Financial Assistance – although not always necessary

# When Should the System Use Diversion Strategies

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- At access points or “front doors” to the homeless system
  - Coordinated entry system access points
  - **Emergency shelter**
    - When person is seeking shelter but before shelter intake
  - Other places people are seeking homeless services assistance

# Who Can Be Diverted from Emergency Shelter

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*Try* diversion with **everyone!**

- *Try* having a problem solving conversation with **everyone** seeking shelter to determine whether it is viable, desirable, safe, and appropriate to divert them

# When Diversion is not Appropriate, Housing-Focused Services

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- When a household is not diverted from shelter, the same diversion strategies - **effective problem solving conversations, that are client-centered, and focus on creative solutions** - **should continue in the shelter** in order to quickly resolve a household's homelessness.
- These continued strategies provide much needed **housing focused, rapid exit services** for all households assessed for housing and support services and **are critical for those who will not receive** interventions such as rapid re-housing or permanent support housing.

# Effective Diversion Practice: Four Fundamental “Cs”

- Community-Wide Buy In
- Problem Solving Conversation
- Creating Connections
- Continuous Practice

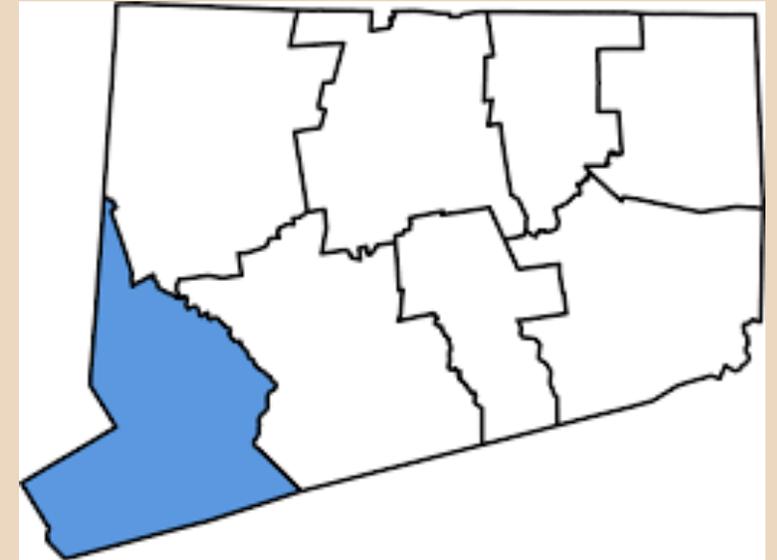
# Facilitating a Problem Solving Conversation

- Overview of local efforts: FC Snapshot and CAN Evolution
- Data/Results
- What diversion is “not”...
- Staffing
- Tips and Tricks
- Effective Housing Planning
- Role Play

# FAIRFIELD COUNTY, CT SNAPSHOT

opening FAIRFIELD  
COUNTY  
doors

- Geography and Population: Composed of four small cities and twenty suburban towns
- Serve approximately 1,000 homeless households at any given time
- Launched Coordinated Access Network (CAN) in 2014



# CAN EVOLUTION

## Prior to Coordinated Access

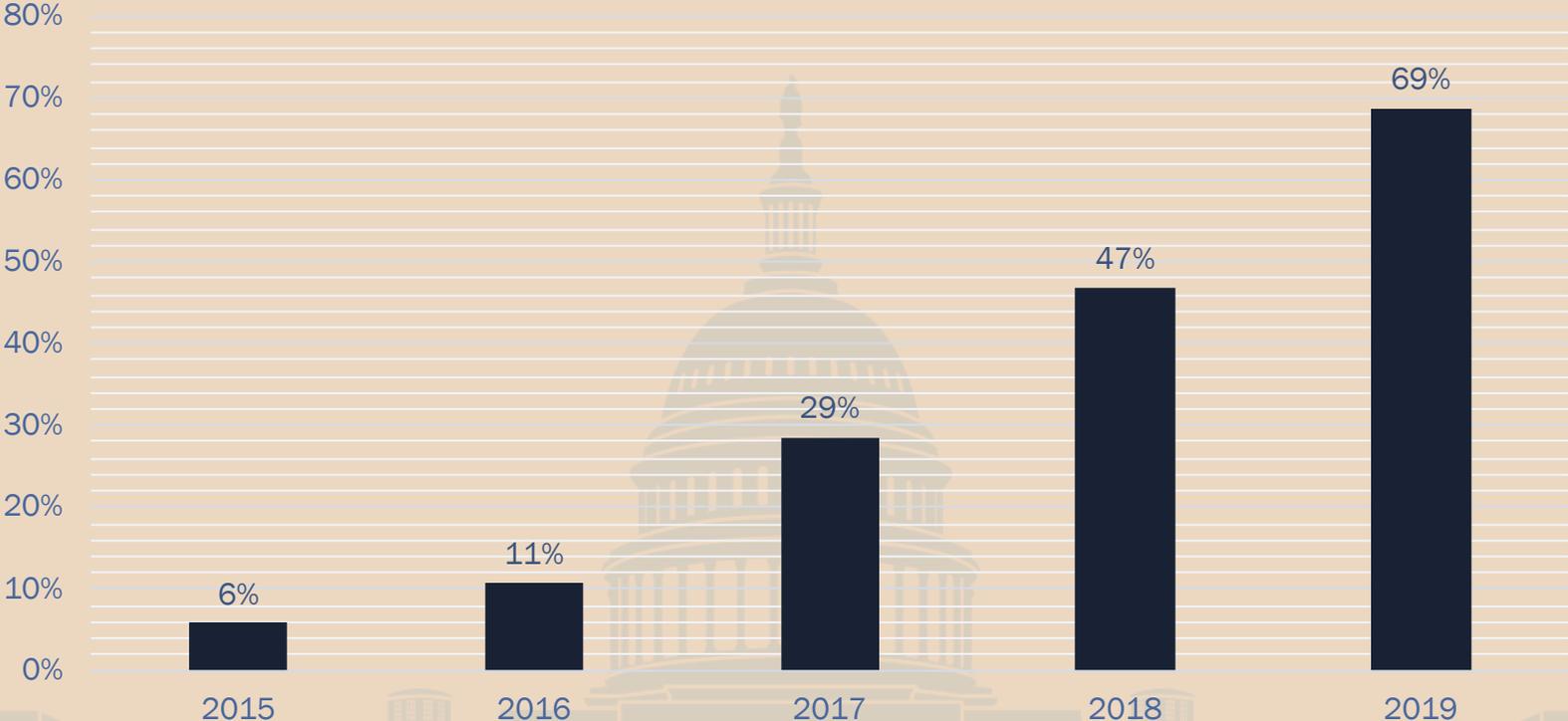
- Self Advocacy
- Silos
- Waitlist

## Post Coordinated Access

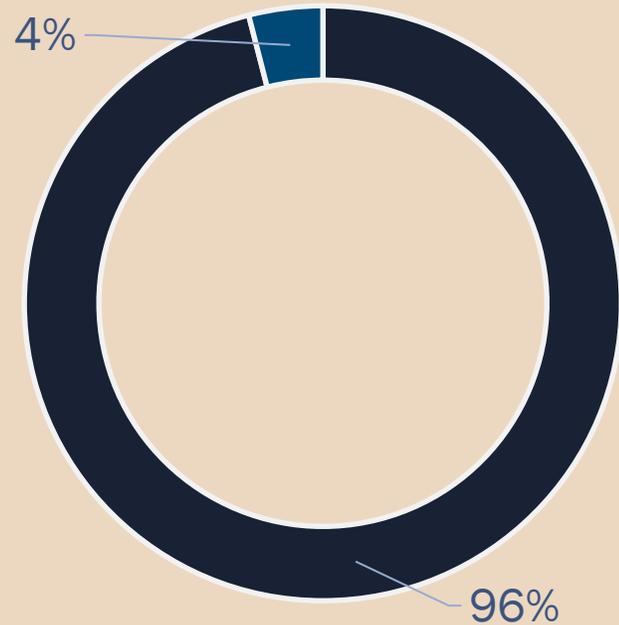
- Face to Face contact with specialist from front door.
- Capacity to provide follow up and prioritize.
- Live caseloads and shelter rosters.
- Flexible Funding.

# PROGRESS!!

### Family Diversion Rate



## FAMILY DIVERSION SUCCESS RATE 2017



Of the households diverted...

- 30% returned to CAN
  - 70% of those that returned were successfully diverted again.
  - 1/3 came back within 6-12 months
  - 1/4 came back within 30 days

■ Remained Housed ■ Sheltered

# STAFFING

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- Readiness to work with diverse populations: Disabilities, Gender Identity, Race or Ethnicity
- Various educational backgrounds or work experiences: Criminal Justice, Customer Service, Business Administration, Accounting
- Multicultural: Understanding of customs, needs of different communities, language barriers.
- Solution based mindset: Think outside the box, creative, resourceful, open to change.

# DIVERSION IS NOT...

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- A way to turn away from shelter
- A security deposit program
- Long term case management
- Short cut into subsidized programs
- Strategy to maintain clients in an unsafe/ doubled up situation

# SO WHAT IS DIVERSION?

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- It is a problem solving conversation where the client can identify, through guided strength exploration, a safe and appropriate alternative to their housing crisis.
- Diversion is a light touch intervention, where services are brief and are geared to connect folks to resources in their own community.
- It meets the clients where they are and brakes down barriers to help them get to where they need to be.

# TIPS AND TRICKS

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- Prepare the Scene
- Paperwork
- Body Language
- Open Ended Questions
- Paraphrasing
- Reality Testing
- Knowledge is Power
- Active Listening
  - Watch out for the “buts”
  - Ambivalence
  - Repetition

# EFFECTIVE HOUSING PLANNING

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- Contract between diversion specialist and client.
- Geared to setting small steps to get to the main goal: Prevent Homelessness.
- Housing Plan is going to include information gathered through the strengths exploration conversation and will focus specifically on housing and not shelter access.
- This plan will include housing options, coverage of basic needs, income development, resources, contact information and next steps.

# CREATED A HOUSING PLAN

Last Name:	First Name:	HMIS ID:
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**Fairfield County Coordinated Access Network Initial Housing Plan Summary**  
(Completed at time of CAN Appointment)

Type of Plan:  Initial Plan  Update **CAN Staff Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Plan: From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (up to 2 weeks)

**Housing Options I am willing to try (select 3 choices):**

<input type="checkbox"/> "Stay Where I Am"	<input type="checkbox"/> Rooming House / Sober House
<input type="checkbox"/> Family / Friends	<input type="checkbox"/> "Traditional" Apartment by yourself
<input type="checkbox"/> Roommate	<input type="checkbox"/> "Secondary" Market (i.e. basement apartment) apartment by yourself
<input type="checkbox"/> Room for Rent	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

**Things I can do to work toward housing:**

Housing Option 1 (Choose from above list):	Expected cost to me:	Target Completion Date (mo/yr)
Task 1:		
Task 2:		
Task 3:		

<b>My Monthly Income is (all sources):</b>	
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If needed, I can work to increase my income by:	Target Completion Date (mo/yr)
Task 1:	
Task 2:	
Task 3:	

