



Progressive Engagement: How less can truly be more

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Overview

- National objectives from HEARTH and Opening Doors
- Common approaches to assigning resources
- What do we mean by “Progressive Engagement”?
- Essentials of a progressive engagement approach
 - Planning the program
 - Working with the households
- Leading the culture shift



From the HEARTH Preamble

“...to establish a Federal goal of ensuring that individuals and families who become homeless return to permanent housing within 30 days.”

- HEARTH Act purposes – Sec. 1002(b)



Opening Doors Objective for Local Communities

“Transform homeless services to **crisis response systems** that prevent homelessness and **rapidly return** people who experience homelessness **to stable housing.**”



How do we assign resources locally now?

- Luck?
- Persistence?
- Assessment and Triage
- Progressive Engagement



Progressive Engagement

A different kind of design:

The lightest touch possible



OR

“You can always add more, but you can’t take it away.”





What about Assessment?

- Assessment is critical: need knowledge of the client's relevant history, their current plans and desires
- Understand housing barriers to be able to assist, not to refuse assistance
- Developing a realistic approach to finding landlords and housing situations
- Ability to link clients to supports in the community

But:

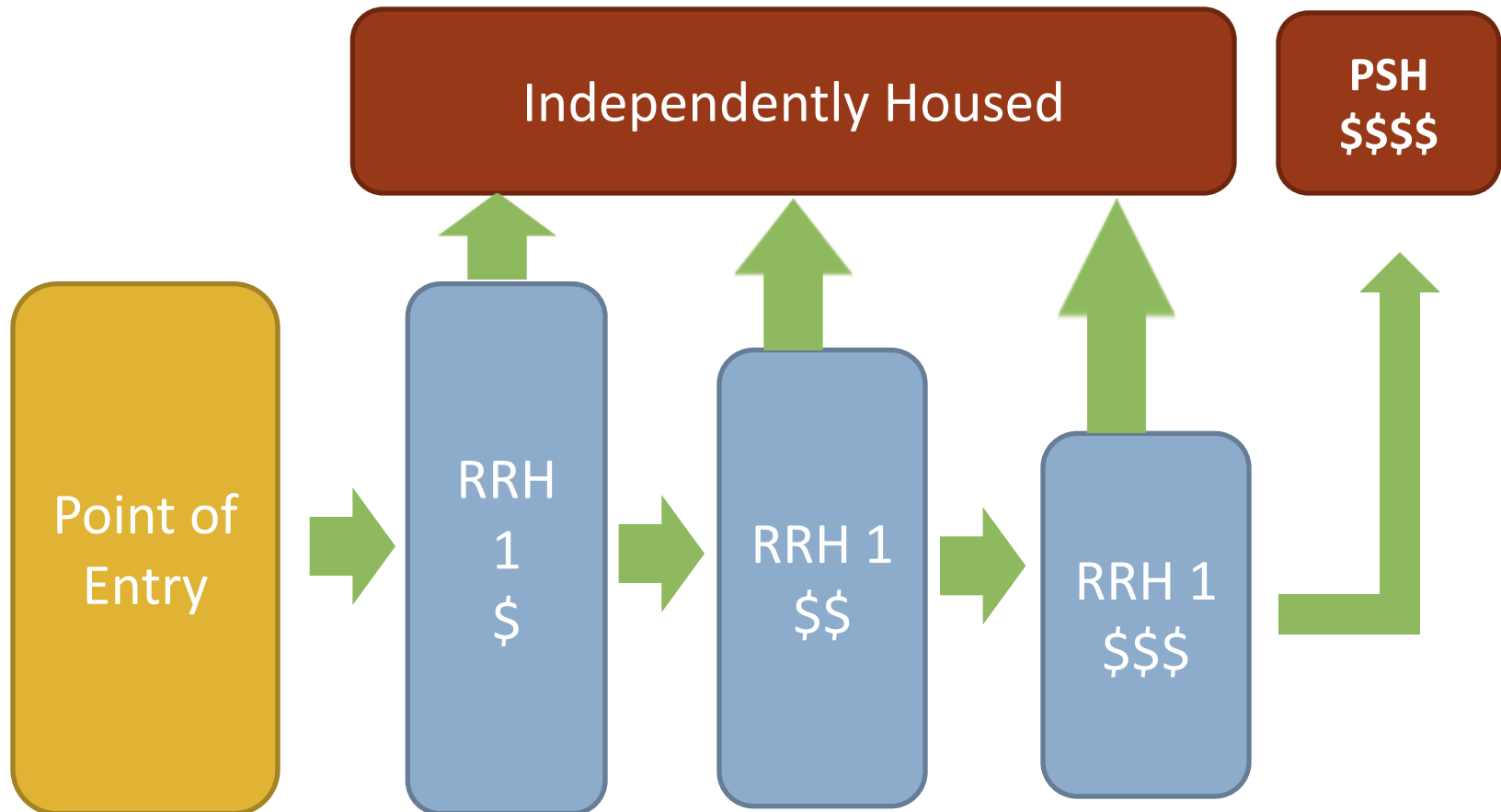
- Assessment up front may not be a good way to **size** the financial assistance or length of time services are offered

Example: Let's all go on a job hunt...





Progressive Engagement Approach*





Progressive Engagement

One resource or many?

- Use different resources in tandem, based on their requirements and strengths, for different levels or phases of assistance

Example:



- Use one resource with regular reassessments and adjustments

Example: ESG alone, local Child Welfare dollars



Creating the Program

What do you need to know?

- The rules of the funding
- The population and their housing barriers
- Trends for lengths of stay and exits
- Community partners
 - *If we're not going to provide the service, who can?*

Projecting the overall program size – knowing how to budget and staff
(See Refinement)



Working with the households

- Frame the programs expectations and the help they'll get to achieve them
 - Strengths-based approach
 - Specific plans to address concrete issues related to housing
- Make clear you won't abandon them but don't over-invite more assistance than needed

Set them up to succeed!



Progressive Engagement

What is essential to a progressive engagement approach to rehousing?

- Flexible resources (money and staff)
- Relationships with landlords
- Links to other services in the community
- Skill managing a flexible program
- Partnership with clients to make a realistic plan
- Messaging to clients, landlords, partners



Core: A change in culture

- Idea of doing the least for each household rather than the most
- Believing people can make it without us
- Staff get rewards from seeing people leave and helping more people
- *The pace is fast*





Leading the culture shift

- Learn about successful approaches
- Hear from clients about what they want
- Take things step by step
- Offer staff lots of support and training, but...
 - Also be open to staff changes
- Use agency data to evaluate and adjust



Measuring your impact

From HEARTH

- How many households are exiting to permanent housing?
- How quickly?
- Do they experience homelessness again?

Also, consider cost per outcome





Refining the Model

Look at your outcomes and refine based on results:

- Unacceptable loss rate or returns?
 - *Maybe resize, assist longer, check in more, improve partnerships*
- Virtually everybody sticks?
 - *Maybe do less*
- Some succeed and some don't?
 - *What factors can we look at to tell us what's happening? (ex: family size, differences in income source, staff working with household, etc.)*



For More Information

- USICH website (www.usich.gov)
 - Tools for Local Action
 - Program Profiles (coming soon)
- National Alliance to End Homelessness (www.endhomelessness.org)
- Homelessness Resource Exchange (www.hudhre.info)



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