



Housing First Approach

The goal of ending homelessness will be achieved by adopting a new approach. This approach is called Housing First. What makes this approach different from traditional emergency shelter or housing transitional models is that people who are homeless are rapidly into permanent housing — with regular support. This approach takes people as they are, in part because housing is a basic right. Put simply, housing comes first, with services. A central tenet of this Housing First approach is that social services to enhance individual and family well-being can be more effective when people are in their own home.

Integrated Prevention and Support Services

The Fairfax-Falls Church approach to Housing First is centered on regional integrated community-based Housing Opportunities Support Teams (HOSTs). The HOST system provides flexible and adaptive services needed to help individuals and families obtain or maintain housing. The primary function of HOST is to coordinate and manage prevention, housing placement, and supportive services for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Members of the HOST serve as a liaison to his or her organization/system and will work closely with other HOST members to create a cohesive and seamless system of service delivery.

Community Partnership

The goal of ending homelessness requires a true community partnership to provide the essential coordinated and collaborative political, community, and managerial leadership, policy direction, resource development and stewardship. The management structure for our community plan has five organizational elements that reflect the collaborative leadership, management, and implementation resources necessary to successfully end homelessness:

- Independent governing board of leaders from throughout the community.
- A central Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH) supported by the Fairfax County government.
- An Interagency Work Group ensures coordination across all service providers.
- A Consumer Advisory Council provides high-level input from people who are or have been homeless.
- Ultimately a new nonprofit foundation will be created to expand fundraising.

What do we mean by “ending” homelessness?

Ending homelessness means that every person who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless can access appropriate permanent housing and the services needed to keep them in their homes.

How can we help individuals and families find housing when there is not enough housing?

Preserving and increasing the supply of affordable, permanent housing resources is necessary to implement a Housing First approach. This may involve working with landlords who are willing to participate in a Housing First program. Developing housing resources might also involve dedicating some housing resources, such as assistance with rent, to individuals who are homeless; developing new housing types, such as small efficiency apartments; and increasing the supply of housing targeted to people with special needs. Changes also will need to be made to land use, zoning and tax incentive policies.

How will we make sure that people will stay housed and not end up homeless again?

Once in housing, people will receive services according to their needs. Participating in some of these services is voluntary.

Those at risk will receive support from community-based HOST teams to help prevent them from becoming homeless again. These teams will maintain contact with every person who is placed into housing, even if they are not receiving services, to make sure that everything is going smoothly for the resident and the neighborhood.

The community-based teams will build on the current network of public and private organizations and individuals that provide support for those who are homeless. These teams will coordinate and manage community-based prevention, housing placement and supportive services.

Members of these teams will have experience and extensive knowledge of the service system each represents. Each will work with his or her organization and with other team members to coordinate the services people need.

2009 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Success Stories Real People ~ Real Results



In the first 8 days,
the HOST system prevented
18 households
from becoming
homeless.

- A chronic medical condition caused a county resident to be out of work for an extended period of time earlier this year. She was struggling to live off of unemployment benefits, which were a mere fraction of what she had been making before. Limited financial assistance enabled her to focus on **improving her health and returning to work without having to worry about losing her home.**
- A single mother with three children was faced with an imminent eviction. Even though employed, she had run into financial trouble after her divorce. Working with an HOST community case manager and the leasing office, **she was able to work out a plan to pay back her rent, and was able to stay in her home.**
- A county resident lost her job and was denied unemployment benefits. With short-term assistance from the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Partnership, **she was able to stay in her home, and reapply and receive benefits. Shortly after, she was able to secure a new job.**
- Two women with domestic violence, substance abuse and job loss issues found themselves homeless. Both women engaged the services of the HOST system and were able to find employment. With some assistance from a housing broker, **the women are now happily sharing an apartment, paying a manageable rent of \$450 a month each while still working.**
- While living in hypothermia shelters, a county resident was determined to attain an associate's degree and become a certified electrician. Working with staff, he was able to deal with his post-traumatic stress syndrome and complete his degree. **He was able to move out of homelessness and now lives in a supportive housing unit.**

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Partnership

- Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH) established.
- Governing Board established.
- Interagency Workgroup and Consumer Advisory Council establishment in process.
- Homeless Youth Initiative launched.

Fundraising and Partnership Development

- \$2.4 million of federal stimulus funding awarded for the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP).
- \$424,000 secured by seven partner organizations to support HOST implementation.
- Funders' tour highlighting the new community partnership implemented.

Housing Opportunities Support Teams (HOST)

- HOST system launched on November 16, 2009.
- Developed by ten committees.
- Two housing locator positions funded by HPRP funds.
- Current shelter contracts extended to support nonprofits hiring community case managers.
- Three-tiered approach to tailored training for community-wide, regional and direct service providers.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

- Configuration, training and reporting requirements for HPRP completed.
- Infrastructure set up to begin data collection.
- Five new partner organizations have implemented HMIS.
- 59 out of current 151 users attended HMIS training.

Community Outreach and Education

- A Communications Committee of nonprofits, faith-based organizations, county agencies and other partners formed.
- www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless redesigned .
- Bimonthly Partner Update e-newsletter highlighting plan progress, accomplishments and upcoming events is distributed.
- Quarterly Community Forums to inform the community on plan accomplishments and to receive feedback and suggestions.
- Six collaborative community meetings implemented to identify cross-cutting issues for homeless families and singles to map areas that impact HOST implementation efforts.

To request this information in an alternate format,
contact the Fairfax County Office to Prevent and
End Homelessness
at 703-324-9492, TTY 711.
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www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless