



HOUSING FIRST

Charlotte–Mecklenburg

Ending Chronic Homelessness in 2016

What is Housing First?

Housing First is a low-barrier approach to housing. With a Housing First approach, people are moved directly from the streets and shelters into housing, with minimal eligibility criteria. The Housing First approach differs from the traditional housing approach, which often requires stability and sobriety before moving into permanent housing. The Housing First approach recognizes that housing is often necessary in order to achieve stability. Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC), one of the founders of the Housing First approach located in Seattle, WA, recognizes these two underlying principles to the Housing First approach:

- 1. Housing is a basic human right, not a reward for clinical success.**
- 2. Once the chaos of homelessness is eliminated from a person's life, clinical and social stabilization occur faster and are more enduring.**

When the Housing First approach was first implemented in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the approach targeted people experiencing chronic homelessness, especially those struggling with severe mental illness. While Housing First is recognized as fundamental to serving chronically homeless households, the approach has been adapted and applied to not just chronically homeless individuals, but to individuals and families experiencing short-term homelessness.

Seven Standards of Housing First Approach*

- 1. Move people into housing directly from streets and shelters without preconditions of treatment acceptance or compliance.**
- 2. The provider is obligated to bring robust support services to the housing. These services are predicated on assertive engagement, not coercion.**
- 3. Continued tenancy is not dependent on participation in services.**
- 4. Units are targeted to most disabled and vulnerable homeless members of the community.**
- 5. Embraces harm reduction approach to addictions rather than mandating abstinence. At the same time, the provider must be prepared to support resident commitments to recovery.**
- 6. Residents must have leases and tenant protections under the law.**
- 7. Can be implemented as either a single-site or scattered-site model**

*created by DESC in Seattle, WA, one of the founders of the Housing First Approach