Oakland County
Recommendations for Creating & Maintaining a More Racially Equitable Homeless Response System

April 26, 2023

REDI
Racial Equity Design & Implementation

Our Work Phases

- Racial Equity Assessment
- Building a Cross Systems Core Working Group
- Analyzing the Quantitative Data
- Analyzing the Qualitative Data
- System Mapping
- Strategy Development
- Developing Recommendations

Racial Equity Assessment

Project Objective: The Why

- To engage and support Oakland County CoC to assess its homeless response system, prioritize areas for action, and implement strategies in order to achieve more racially equitable outcomes.

Assessment Activities: The How

- CoC racial equity assessment survey

- Quantitative data analysis

- Qualitative data analysis

  - listening sessions

  - Work sessions / committee meetings

Strengths

Most respondents had a basic understanding and fluency of racial equity concepts

Most people appreciated that the CoC has started acknowledging the impact that structural and institutional racism has had on housing instability/homelessness.

There is a commitment to advance racial equity

Areas of Opportunity

- Despite strong commitment there is not an identified group to lead the work or a cohesive strategy to advance racial equity
- Quantitative and qualitative data is not being fully used to identify inequities and develop solutions or build an understanding of client experiences
- Partners with lived experience are not engaged in decision-making processes

Values and Guiding Principles

- Treat all people with dignity and respect
- Trustworthiness
- Teamwork
- Innovation
- Honesty and Integrity
- Autonomy/Self-determination
- Commitment to participation
- Justice/equity
- Open to feedback and making changes
- Collaborative culture
- Transparency
- Assume best intentions
- Reshape how competitive funding influences collaboration
- Always include input from those with lived experiences

Qualitative Analysis

Themes:
- Can't access rental assistance and rents are extremely high
- in places where families feel safe
- Too many rules/policies get in the way of helping people
- Limited number of Days in some shelters
- How the state and federal government define homelessness
- Lack of assistance with Landlords that don't meet compliance of livable apartments
- Not enough places for large families

Limitation: Small number of participants in the listening sessions

System Mapping

- Understand What Services are in the County
- Understand What Housing (of all kinds) are Available
- Understand What Housing (of all kinds) are in the pipeline and where
- What segments of the populations experiencing homelessness are being served?
- What segments of the populations experiencing homelessness are being left out or not being served as well?
- What is the quantitative experience of those experiencing housing instability or housing loss?
- What is the qualitative experience of those experiencing housing instability or housing loss?

System Mapping / Populations

- Returning Citizens
- Families / HH with four or more children
- Single Fathers with children
- Veterans
- Refugees

- Immigrants
- Survivors
- TAY
- Physical Disabilities / Challenges
- Sex Offenders (Lifetime)

System Mapping

Prevention / Diversion

Eviction Prevention	Free Childcare	Hotel / Motel Payments
Emergency Financial Assistance Pool	Employment Referrals	Rental Deposits
Rental Assistance	Employment	Arrears Payments
Utility Assistance	Emergency Transportation	Move-in Kits
Benefits Connector		

System Mapping

Outreach / In-reach / Intake

Encampments	Publicly Funded Shelters	Publicly Funded Shelters
Public Spaces	Privately Funded Shelters	Privately Funded Shelters
Schools	Communities of Faith	Communities of Faith
Child Welfare Offices	Housing Centers	Housing Centers
Communities of Faith	Other Service Providers	Other Service Providers
	Veterans Administration	Veterans Administration

System Mapping

Supportive Services

Service Coordination	Clothing	Legal Services
Case Management	Employment Referrals	Benefits Connector
Medical Care	Employment	Education / Skills Referrals
Mental Health Care	Childcare	Education / Skills Services
Dental Services	Transportation	Emergency Financial Assistance
Recovery Services	Community Connections	
Nutrition		

System Mapping

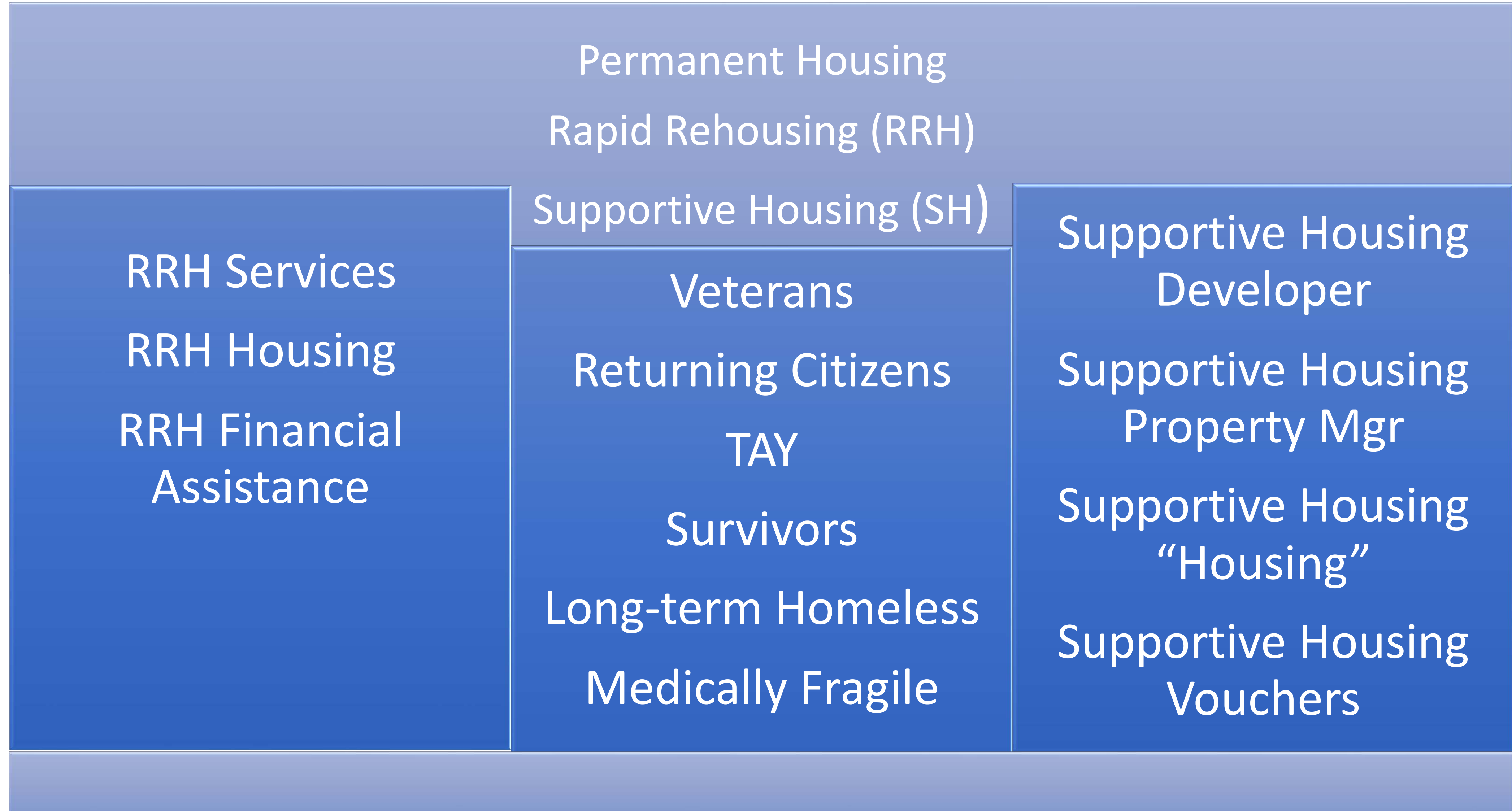| Shelters		
HH with Adults and children	HH with Adults and no Children	Transitioning Age Youth (TAY)
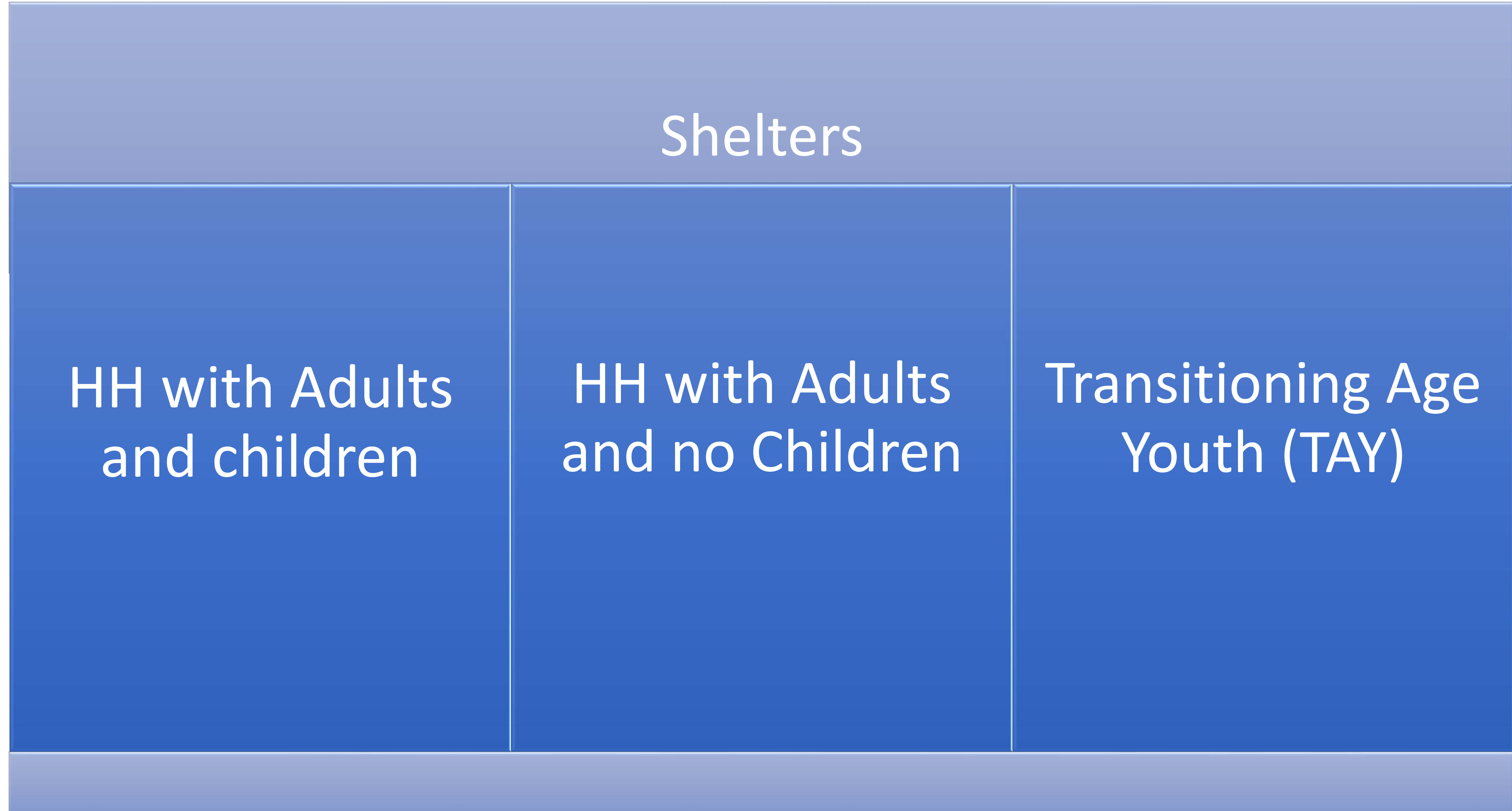
System Mapping

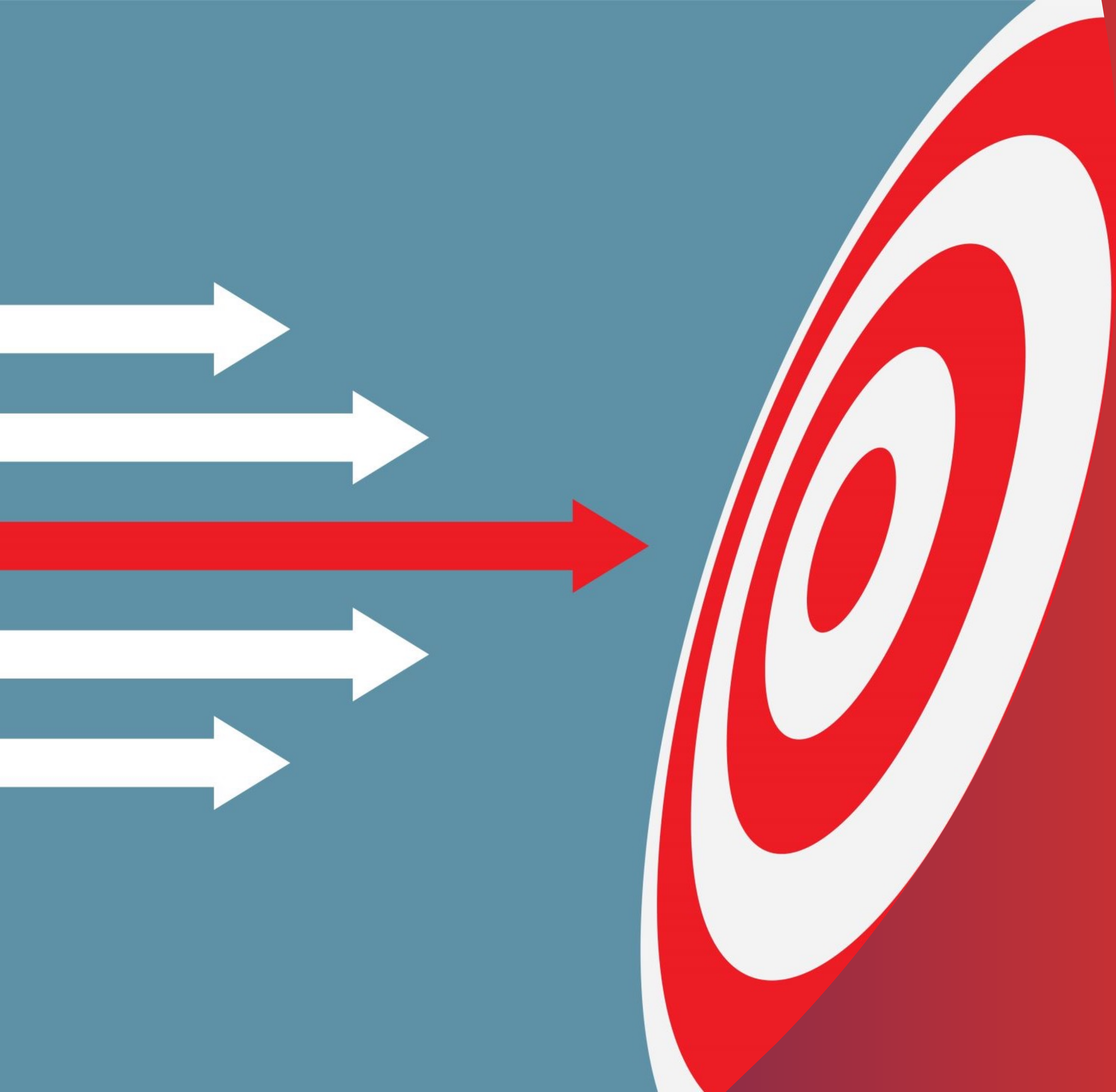| Interim Housing (up to three months / Transitional Housing (up to 12 months)		
HH with 3 or less children HH with 4 or more children	HH with no children (including singles) TAY	Veterans Survivors

System Mapping

Permanent Housing

Rapid Rehousing (RRH)

Supportive Housing (SH)

RRH Services

RRH Housing

RRH Financial Assistance

Veterans

Returning Citizens

TAY

Survivors

Long-term Homeless

Medically Fragile

Supportive Housing Developer

Supportive Housing Property Mgr

Supportive Housing "Housing"

Supportive Housing Vouchers

Targeted Strategies & Action Steps

Shifting the CoC Culture: Inclusive and Anti-Racist

Strategies

Engage and recruit organizations that have mission of diversity and equity even if they are not housing services

How do we ensure that organizations not currently members or not housing providers feel like they can really contribute to change, making sure they have a real voice

Being intentional about the place, location and platform.

Focus intern recruitment to ensure diversity as this is how many staff join organizations

Advisory board, making people feel comfortable with providing feedback.

Being intentional about setting times or meetings to get all members/people involved in policies, implementation, and outreach.

Removing barriers for different households (i.e. large families) what does that mean for the households and the community

Empowering people with lived experience for meetings. How do we frame discussions, and dedicate functions and meetings to valuing their contribution

Truly engaging with people with lived experiences, giving them a voice, making a more strategic plan around engagement with people with lived experience

Action Steps

Case managers authentically asking clients within the system 'what could we have done better so far?'

"Who are those clients begging to help others going through it?" and provide opportunities for engagement *provide job descriptions of each*

"Would it be ok if we contacted you in 3-4 months to ask how things are going? We would like to pay you X amount for your time. Would it be better for us to text or email you to set it up?

Alternatives to support all

Offer session for all organizations around 'people and experience hoarding' - can lead to exploitation - How to name what is happening and theories why

Who's Responsible?

Everyone

Shifting the CoC/CES Policies: Inclusive and Anti-Racist

Strategies

Informed Consent regarding agencies / applications

Gender identity inclusivity in applications / agencies

More-inclusive prioritization tool -gender, race, criminal background- Prioritize based on county / state underserved communities

Reduce documentation duplicity burdens

Action Steps

Make rules list all CoC agencies must agree to in order to be included --ie how to engage with Cts of backgrounds different from religious org. background

Gender neutral bathrooms

How to determine priority on an on-going basis (capture changes in underserved communities)

How 'updated' do forms actually need to be (reducing the frequency of recertifying documents)

Spreadsheet of religious vs non-religious affiliated agencies and their requirements --only refer those who follow CoC requirements

Preferred vs Legal names on documents ('alias' on HMIS). Way to flag to not use legal names at all *HMIS is already in the process of changing this*

Transparency to the community of our priority process / who is prioritized and in our intentions

How to work around confidentiality of HMIS and inform the other agencies of what documents are already on file

Script of heads up on religious requirements, and what they will be exposed to. Allow them to make an informed decision **caution for wording**

Gender options: Male, female, nonbinary, other --pronouns--

Who's Responsible?

Case managers / referring providers

CoC (rules)

Recommendations

Increasing Housing Inventory

Strategy: Increase the number of landlords who will work
with CES and who will accept vouchers

1. Recruit landlords from all areas of the county
2. Develop a Landlord Lunch n Learn/Meet and Greet
3. Work with MSHDA to update the Landlord Database
4. Celebrate Participating Landlords (esp. those with larger units)
5. Create a Landlord Ambassador Program
6. Explore Master leasing with Landlords
7. Incentivize Landlords with Service MOUs (where applicable)
8. Work with the County to utilize ARPA dollars with more targeted housing investments

Recommendations

Increasing Housing Stability

Strategy: Advocate for Additional Funds for the System and for Individuals

1. Advocate for funding match while individuals are in RRH
2. Begin and expand the Guaranteed Income Pilot program
3. Advocate for the return of the Childcare tax credit

Recommendations

Transform the Culture

Strategy: Increase culturally affirming services

Increase the number of people in CoC organizations who participate in regular trainings on:

- racial equity principles
- trauma-informed
- healing centered care

Recommendations

Transform the Culture

Strategy: Reduce Implicit/Explicit Bias and Discrimination in Services

- Engage and employ diverse populations and those with lived experience
- Guard against discrimination based on faith/denomination or lack thereof
- Reduce intrusive screening/prioritization questions
- Create a script for intake specialists

1 Name Racial Equity as a System-Wide Goal

- Embed Racial Equity Principles in all CoC policies
- Conduct Racial Equity Gaps Analysis
- Embrace a Multi-system Approach to Ending Homelessness
- Conduct Racial Equity Impact Analysis
- Focus on Results / Equitable Outcomes
- Set the expectation for anti-racist program delivery

2 Commit to Culturally Appropriate Support Services

- Address inequitable access and disparities in quality of care

- Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support services

- Develop a workforce that fully reflects communities served

Align Funding to those Racial Equity Goals

- Incorporate racial equity into grantmaking and contracting for homelessness and housing programs.

- Work with funders and decision-makers to align with and match federal funding

- Fund support services at the proportionate level to housing

- Create flexible and sustainable funding streams for support services

4 Expand the role of those most impacted, grassroots organizations and adjacent systems

- Authentically engage people with lived experience of housing insecurity

- Leverage the existing community and grassroots organizations and create more opportunities for them to lead

- Engage Adjacent Systems:

  - Eviction Prevention

  - Education / Internet Access

  - Economic & Workforce Development

  - Infrastructure & Transportation

  - Health care Law Enforcement & Public Safety

  - Criminal Justice

5 Expand the Access to Safe, Affordable Housing

- Increase the Affordable Housing Inventory
- Address transportation barriers
- Address connectivity barriers
- Remove barriers for justice-involved people

6 Build the infrastructure to support sustainability

- Support collaboration across systems and communities

- Advocate for federal, state, and local policy change

- Determine who will be responsible for regularly reviewing disaggregated data to identify and report racial disparities?

- Keep historically underrepresented community organizations and folks with with lived expertise engaged in the process

- Consistently measure and refine the work

What Conditions Need to be Present to Move Forward with Action Planning?

There is an inclusive and representative team of people who are ready to do the work

There is "infrastructure" in the community that ensures successful implementation, including accountability, evaluation, course correction, and sustainability

Accountability for:

- Implementing the plan in an inclusive and equitable process
- Support from CoC Leadership
  - Racial equity is a core value that the CoC is willing to invest in
  - Building a shared understanding and commitment
- Data reporting
- Monitoring, evaluation, and course correction
- Keeping the plan live and updated
- Partner engagement and sharing progress with all key community partners

"True accountability, by its very nature, should push us to grow and change, to transform."
- Mia Mingus

Comments? Questions?

Regina Cannon

Chief Equity and Impact Officer

Vice President, Housing Solutions

rcannon@c4innovates.com

President & CEO

ARC4Justice

Arc4justice.org