

This document provides profiles of three communities that have utilized the Housing Problem Solving model including diversion, crisis resolution and progressive engagement, and prevention. Each profile includes links to additional community information. Rural considerations can be found on page 3.

#1: Seattle/King County; Case Study on Diversion

Diversion is a housing first, person-centered, and strengths-based approach to help households identify the choices and solutions to end their homeless experience with limited interaction with the crisis response system. Seattle/King County focused on creative, person-centered conversations to identify safe and stable housing solutions outside of the homeless response system.

Profile at a Glance

Funding Source: Private, City, and County Funding (Central Diversion Fund is funded entirely through private sources)

Community Partners: Africatown International is contracted to provide the fiscal administration of the Centralized Diversion Fund

Activities Funded: Mediation, Family Reunification, Housing Location, Crisis Resolution, Flexible Financial Assistance, Diversion staffing

Community Linkages: Mainstream benefits and broad community supports

Conversation Approaches: Occurs at any entry point of the crisis response system.

Coordinated Entry: Diversion is the first service offered to people without a safe place to stay tonight when they enter the homelessness crisis response system. Diversion conversations continue throughout emergency shelter stays to support rapid exit out of homelessness whenever possible.

Participating: Staff are trained to have Diversion Conversations by Diversion Coaches who include individuals with lived experience of homelessness.

Key Takeaways: Central Diversion Fund helped to scale up diversion and promote equity in access to resources. Expertise of Diversion Coaches (including people with lived experience) needs to be adequately compensated.

Racial Equity and Including People with Lived Experience

Diversion coaches are selected to reflect the community experiencing homelessness, including people with lived experience. The coaches were also the leads in redeveloping the training using an equity framework. Diversion coaches are paid hourly and support ongoing learning of other system partners. The program used an open and inclusive process for selection of the nonprofit administrator of the Central Diversion Fund led to the selection of an organization led by people of color who predominantly serve the Black/African American community. This organization had less experience with public funding but demonstrated capacity to meet the objectives of the central fund and support community priorities around racial equity.

Additional Resources for Seattle/King County

[King County Diversion Home Page](#)

[Seattle/King County Diversion Policies and Procedures](#)

#2: Montgomery County, PA; Case Study on Crisis Resolution and Progressive Engagement

Problem Solving principles for Montgomery County include crisis resolution and progressive engagement, maximization of community resources, and a commitment to client choice, respect, and empowerment. Strategies include eviction prevention through tenants' rights advocacy, mediation services and legal aid, support finding and retaining housing through connections to the lowest-cost housing possible, and brainstorming creative solutions to housing crises so program participants avoid entering the homeless services system or can rapidly exit back into housing.

Profile at a Glance

Funding Source: CoC, ESG, State and Local Grants, Private Funds

Community Partners: Legal Aide of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) fund

Activities Funded: Call Center Staff, Shelter Case Management, Outreach, Direct Client Assistance

Community Linkages: Linkages to tenants' rights advocacy, mediation services, legal aid, Rapid Rehousing Lite

Conversation Approaches: Homeless Hotline, Street Outreach, Shelter

Coordinated Entry: Homeless Assistance is centrally located through 211 hotline

Participating: Five trained call center staff, five outreach workers, and case managers at emergency shelter

Key Takeaways: Leadership identified staffing as a primary operational expense. It is critical to fund time and intensity of services, not just financial assistance. While critical, this approach can be difficult as few funders want to pay for staff time.

Racial Equity and Including People with Lived Experience

Outcomes are analyzed by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and household size as part of any program or system outcomes review. Several interventions in the community are targeted towards directly addressing inequities. One prevention pilot program specifically targets African Americans, who are disproportionately represented among the homeless population in Montgomery County, as well as the Latinx and LGBTQ populations, who have been found to avoid homeless services in the community despite experiencing high rates of housing crises. The homeless system is partnering in this effort with other organizations that provide services to each of these populations in order to better reach them. Additionally, it is important to apply a racial equity lens to staffing operations as front-line staff are more likely to be people of color than management and given the difficulty in securing funding for staff time, are often paid at very low rates.

Additional Resources for Montgomery County, PA

[Your Way Home \(Montgomery County, PA\) Operations Manual](#)
[Outcomes Dashboard](#)

#3: Washington, DC; Case Study on Secondary Prevention

The goal of the Homelessness Prevention Program is to prevent families at risk of becoming homeless from entering shelter by providing services and resources that stabilize families in their communities. The program implements a progressive engagement model: a strategy of providing targeted services delivery, starting with a small amount of assistance for a large group of people and then providing additional assistance as needed.

Profile at a Glance

Funding Source: Local public funding

Community Partners: VWFRC-Central intake center for homeless families; 4 Homelessness Prevention Program providers

Activities Funded: Case Management, Mediation, Family Reunification, Housing Location, Direct Client Assistance, Central intake/assessment staff, Prevention Program staff (4 nonprofit orgs)

Community Linkages: Public benefits/Child and Family Services, Employment/Education, Upstream emergency rental assistance, Legal aid, Food banks, Budgeting/credit repair/financial wellness workshops, Connection to mental health services, Parenting workshops

Conversation Approaches: Initial conversations take place at the central point of intake for families to determine initial eligibility for homeless services.

Coordinated Entry: Resource Center is the central access point for families at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the District. Staff will assist families experiencing housing instability to identify any safe alternative to entering the homeless system prior to referring to emergency shelter.

Participating: Starts Family Resource Center, intake staff trained to have initial conversations, Homelessness Prevention Program operated by community partners

Key Takeaways: The Homeless Prevention Program was introduced to provide alternatives to shelter placement to ultimately slow the rate of shelter placement through redesign of the intake process. Measuring the success of the revisions to the intake process has been focused on shelter entry and returns to the system. DC has intentionally not set targets for diversion at intake to ensure families are not disincentivized to ask for, and ultimately, get connected to, what they need.

Racial Equity and Including People with Lived Experience

Racial equity is embedded in the day to day practice at Virginia Williams and in the Homelessness Prevention Programs. Policies are developed with a racial equity lens and trainings incorporate equity competencies for case managers to build into their practice.

Additional Resource for Washington, DC

VWFRC:

https://dhs.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dhs/page_content/attachments/Homeless%20Services%20VWFRC-Family_NEW_5-31-19.pdf

Rural Considerations

Diversion: Partnerships are integral to diversion activities in rural areas. Diversion can be a component of the CES or conducted through service providers such as Community Action Agencies or local DHS offices. These providers likely provide some level of prevention services that will assist households to resolve their housing crisis without entering the homeless system.

Churches and faith-based organizations, civic groups, and other nonprofits can support diversion activities through funding and problem solving. Also, reframing the diversion conversation to think about presenting households as part of a larger network (faith, family, or friends) can help resolve a housing crisis through re-connection or reunification at no cost while reserving financial assistance for those without such networks.

Staffing: Each of the three communities highlighted the need for staff with creativity and problem-solving skills. In rural areas this specialized skill set equates to a higher salary. Consider subsidizing federal funding with local sources. Selling diversion services to the faith-based community is one way to do this. Households seeking assistance often go to churches first, but church staff likely don't have the skill set needed to triage and refer clients. If faith organizations pool their money to support a diversion program (including staffing), churches can quickly refer any presenting household to the diversion team and it doesn't pull them away from their daily work.

Additionally, rural and Balance of State CoC often cover large geographic expanses, so diversion team members must be mobile. Supporting a mobile team includes ensuring there is enough budgeted for mileage, and technology (including a hot spot) is needed to allow the mobile team member to triage, assess, and refer anywhere in their catchment area. Complementing a mobile team is hotline access, rather than a physical location, so team members can meet clients where they are. This promotes client choice.

Communities should use their data to inform how the diversion team is staffed. The team should mirror the demographics of those experiencing homelessness, especially those least likely to feel comfortable accessing services from the homeless response system. As in the Montgomery County, PA example, a racial equity lens should be applied to all levels of the organization(s) providing diversion services.

Marketing: As homelessness looks different in rural communities, consider who may be in contact with homeless households, including cashiers and convenience store clerks, librarians, grocery stores, and park rangers. These community stakeholders should know how to get in touch with the diversion team at any time, as they can extend the reach of the team to all parts of the catchment area.

Key Takeaways: All hands on deck are needed to ensure diversion activities can be carried out across a large geographic area. Consider traditional and nontraditional partners to support diversion, and staffing should have the ability to be mobile instead of place based.