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## Housing First

*“The Housing First approach to homelessness holds that a safe and affordable roof over one’s head is a prerequisite to health, economic well-being, and self-sufficiency.”*

*City of Tucson People, Communities, and Homes Investment Plan, 2020.*

The City of Tucson follows a Housing First approach in all housing programs for people experiencing homelessness managed or funded by the Housing & Community Development Department. Housing First is an evidence-based approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing, and then providing additional supports and services as needed.

The Housing First approach includes five key pillars, all of which are equally important and needed to promote successful housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

### **1. Immediate access to housing with no pre-conditions**

Housing First programs do not require people to have a job or participate in behavioral health, substance abuse treatment, or other services to access housing. Research shows that people are best able to benefit from these services and make personal changes to improve their housing stability after they have a permanent roof over their head.

### **2. Participant Choice and Self-Determination**

Housing First programs acknowledge that each person’s experience is different and that every person, regardless of their housing status, has the right to make their own decisions. This includes where to live, what types of services to participate in and where, and the support to make their own decisions about employment and personal goals.

### 3. Recovery Orientation

People experiencing homelessness have often experienced trauma, both while homeless and before becoming homeless. Trauma associated with domestic abuse, mental illness, and other issues are often the cause of homelessness and are worsened by experiences of social isolation, stigmatization, and violence on the streets. Housing First programs are designed to acknowledge trauma and provide supportive services that help people recover from those traumas including behavioral health services, substance abuse treatment, legal services, case management, goal setting, and independent living skills.

### 4. Individualized and Participant-Driven Supports

Housing First programs do not use a one size fits all approach. Each person's needs, strengths, and motivation are unique to them. Instead of requiring all participants to engage in a set of standard supportive services, Housing First programs offer a menu of services tailored specifically to the goals and needs of each participant, providing encouragement and support to help them succeed.

### 5. Social and Community Integration

Shame, isolation, and stigma result in social isolation and disconnect people experiencing homelessness from the larger community. Housing First programs help participants re-connect to positive social and community engagement. Housing services are provided within neighborhoods throughout the City and support participants as they connect with neighbors, employment, and recreational activities – all of which are important aspects of community connectedness and well-being.

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