

National Alliance to End Homelessness Diversion (and Prevention) Principles

Principle 1: Crisis resolution

Every situation that could result in homelessness is a crisis for the person experiencing it. Crisis resolution responses must include: rapid assessment and triaging, based upon urgency; an instant focus on personal safety as the first priority; de-escalation of the person's emotional reaction; definite action steps the individual can successfully achieve; assistance with actions the individual is temporarily unable or unwilling to attempt; and returning the person to control over their own problem-solving.

Principle 2: Client choice, respect and empowerment

People in crisis may feel paralyzed by the urgency and the potentially devastating consequences of their situation. Homelessness prevention services must help people in crisis regain a sense of control and feeling of empowerment to actively overcome obstacles. A constant emphasis on the client's goals, choices, and preferences, an unwavering respect for their strengths, and reinforcement of progress are essential for empowerment. This does not mean clients are protected from the natural consequences of their actions.

Principle 3: Provide the minimum assistance necessary for the shortest time possible

Respect includes "letting go" as soon as the person has the resources, knowledge and tools to continue their lives--however they choose to live them. Providing "just enough" to prevent homelessness enables a program to help far more people in crisis. Often this means ensuring resources are used to help persons at-risk of losing housing of any kind—persons who would otherwise end up on the street or in an emergency shelter—before using resources to provide assistance for other needs. Providing non-essential assistance to a program client will cost someone else in the community their housing.

Principle 4: Maximize community resources

Mainstream assistance programs are intended to be the backbone of every community. Creating duplicate services for a sub-population such as people at risk of homelessness allows mainstream agencies to continue to bypass or ineffectively serve people who have a right to better quality and access. Duplication also wastes valuable, limited resources that could be spent to keep more households from becoming homeless.¹

Principle 5: The right resources to the right people at the right time

¹ *National Alliance to End Homelessness, "Diversion and Prevention Principles".*

Diversion services, sometimes called *shelter diversion*, assists households in quickly securing temporary or permanent solutions to homelessness outside of the shelter and homeless services system. The main difference between diversion services and other housing-focused interventions centers on the point at which intervention occurs. ***Diversion services targets households that are requesting entry into shelter or housing and have not yet accessed homeless services.*** Diversion services assists households to identify immediate, alternative housing arrangements and, if necessary connect them with services and financial assistance to help them obtain or return to housing. Skilled diversion providers partner with households in finding creative solutions to their needs while reserving shelter beds for those families or individuals who have no other options. ²

While the term “diversion” is specific to the point at which the intervention occurs, the **approach can be used throughout the entirety of the homeless response system.**

² Modified from *National Alliance to End Homelessness*, “Closing the front door: Creating a Successful Diversion Program for Homeless Families” (2011).