



POLICY TITLE: Diversion & Homelessness Prevention/Emergency Assistance
 Recommended Guidelines & Priorities for Provision of Financial Assistance during CV-19

POLICY ADMINISTRATION: The Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness,
 Jackson/Wyandotte County Continuum of Care Lead Agency

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Agencies providing diversion, homelessness prevention financial assistance (i.e., emergency rent and/or utility assistance), and general emergency assistance are recommended to adopt these priorities & guidelines when determining who to provide Prevention/Emergency financial assistance to during the CV-19 pandemic. This recommendation allows the most vulnerable households to be served with emergency assistance first, preventing homelessness, and less vulnerable households to be diverted from entering the homeless system.

Diversion

Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements, and if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing.

Diversion is distinguished from other interventions (Prevention, Rapid Re-Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing) through the method in which households access the system. The main difference between diversion and other permanent housing-focused interventions centers on the point at which intervention occurs, as shown below. Prevention targets people at imminent risk of homelessness, diversion targets people as they are applying for entry into shelter, and rapid re-housing targets people who are already homeless.

Consumer’s Housing Situation	Intervention Used	Services Provided (In All Interventions)
AT IMMINENT RISK OF LOSING HOUSING (precariously housed and not yet homeless)	PREVENTION	Housing Search Rental Subsidy Other Financial Assistance Utility Assistance Case Management Mediation Connection to Mainstream Resources Legal Services
REQUESTING SHELTER (at the “front door” of Coordinated Entry seeking a place to stay)	DIVERSION	
IN SHELTER (homeless/in the homeless assistance system)	RAPID RE-HOUSING	

Families typically meet with a case manager to start housing stabilization planning immediately after being assessed and deemed appropriate for diversion. Housing planning involves both finding immediate housing and planning for longer term housing stability. If an immediate alternate housing arrangement cannot be made, a shelter stay is likely the most appropriate option.

Some families may not be good candidates for diversion programs due to a lack of safe and appropriate housing alternatives and require immediate admittance to shelter, e.g. families fleeing domestic violence. Families' safety should always be the top consideration when thinking through what intervention fits them best.

Once households come to the system entry point, they should be assessed to determine what housing needs they have. To determine which families are appropriate for diversion, intake center staff will need to ask families a few specific questions, such as:

- Where did you sleep last night? *If they slept somewhere where they could potentially safely stay again, this might mean they are good candidates for diversion.*
- What other housing options do you have for the next few days or weeks? *Even if there is an option outside of shelter that is only available for a very short time, it's worth exploring if this housing resource can be used.*
- *(If staying in someone else's housing)* What issues exist with you remaining in your current housing situation? Can those issues be resolved with financial assistance, case management, etc.? *If the issues can be solved with case management, mediation, or financial assistance (or all the above), diversion is a good option.*
- *(If coming from their own unit)* Is it possible/safe to stay in your current housing unit? What resources would you need to do that (financial assistance, case management, mediation, transportation, etc.)? *If the family could stay in their current housing with some assistance, systems should focus on a quick prevention-oriented solution that will keep the family in their unit.*

It is recommended that agencies utilize a pre-screening assessment tool to determine the appropriate intervention for households seeking assistance. A common pre-screen and assessment tool will be available to the community by June 1st, 2020. In the interim...

Prevention

The priorities and target populations are recommended for agencies administering all types of homelessness prevention and emergency assistance, including federal, state, & local government: ESG, ESG-CV, CDBG, MHTF, MoHIP; and private funds including United Way and others. Household income guideline recommendations are based on current HUD ESG waivers, which fall in line with other federal, state, and local funder income guidelines.

It is recommended that financial assistance be tailored to each individual household's needs to achieve housing stabilization, i.e. each household will require a different amount of assistance and length of time of assistance to become stabilized.

Agencies should consider waiving internal restrictions on how often households may access financial assistance, i.e., a client can only access rent assistance once every 12 months).

Target Populations anticipated to be Served with Prevention/EA

- COVID-19 Impacted Households
 - Those who have lost jobs temporarily but can rebound quickly - Shorter term interventions (3-6 months)
 - Those who have lost jobs that they cannot get back/are not anticipated to get back - Longer term interventions (6-12+ months)
 - Households whose health has been impacted (self or family member) by CV-19
 - Households with members who have ongoing health complications and/or financial burden due to medical bills due to CV-19
 - Geographies (cities, districts) within the community with high(est) confirmed cases of Coronavirus
 - Geographies (cities, districts) within the community with high levels of job loss due to CV-19
- Homelessness Prevention Households
 - Households at imminent risk of homelessness, including households fleeing Domestic Violence; short- & medium-term interventions (3-12 months)
 - Households already fully/partially unemployed prior to the CV-19 Stay at Home Order of 3/2020
- Income Maintenance
 - Formerly Homeless – Households stably housed through CE/programs who now cannot afford current rent – short- & medium-term interventions (3-12 months – use RRH \$ first if still on caseload)
 - Households at imminent risk of homelessness but not income qualified for HP (3-12 months)
 - Households already fully/partially unemployed prior to the CV-19 Stay at Home Order of 3/2020
 - Households who have made a payment on the rent/utility between 1/1/2020-3/31/2020

Priority considerations for households to be served

The tool recommended to be used to prioritize households for Prevention assistance is the PR-VI-SPDAT. This tool incorporates many of the considerations outlined below.

Target population households served through COVID-19 and Income Maintenance are recommended to be prioritized for assistance utilizing the following criteria: a recommended screening tool is forthcoming:

- Households with income below 50% of Area Median Income (AMI), lack sufficient resources or support networks necessary to maintain housing, and be at-risk or at imminent risk of losing housing
- Families with children under age 18
- Youth – age 24 and under
- Pregnant Women
- Households fleeing domestic violence

- Households with a family member with a disabling condition
- Households with a history of homelessness
- Housing threat risk – eviction notice received; utility disconnect received