

# PROJECT RECONNECT

**PREPARED BY**

D.C. Department of Human Services, Family Services Administration

**APRIL 2019**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
FAMILY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION**

64 New York Ave NE  
Washington, DC 20002

To our partners,

The DC Department of Human Services (DHS) is proud to launch Project Reconnect: a shelter diversion and rapid exit program for unaccompanied adults experiencing homelessness. Developed in partnership with national and local experts, Project Reconnect furthers the city's goal to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

DHS works hard to minimize the impact and effect of intergenerational systemic poverty, and we can intervene early in a specific crisis and empower the individuals we serve. This empowerment can help individuals regain control over their lives and start to problem solve for themselves once again.

Diversion is not about creating a barrier to shelter. It is about listening to clients and helping them explore options other than shelter by thinking creatively about their strengths and support networks. By working with clients in an open and strengths-focused conversation, our diversion experts can help clients avoid and/or reduce their reliance on emergency shelter in the homeless services system by:

- Reuniting them with local family and friends
- Reuniting them with family and friends out of town
- Helping them return to their own residence
- Helping them obtain housing at a new residence

The District is committed to ensuring that individuals and families experiencing homelessness are valued, listened to, understood, and empowered. But we are also committed to finding an effective outcome with the lightest possible touch. Project Reconnect is another tool we can use to find the right resources for the right people at the right time. For more information about this program, please contact the Project Reconnect Program Analyst, Arielle Mungin, at [arielle.mungin@dc.gov](mailto:arielle.mungin@dc.gov).

Thank you for partnering with us to empower our clients and end chronic homelessness in DC.

Yours Truly,

Laura Zeilinger, DHS Director

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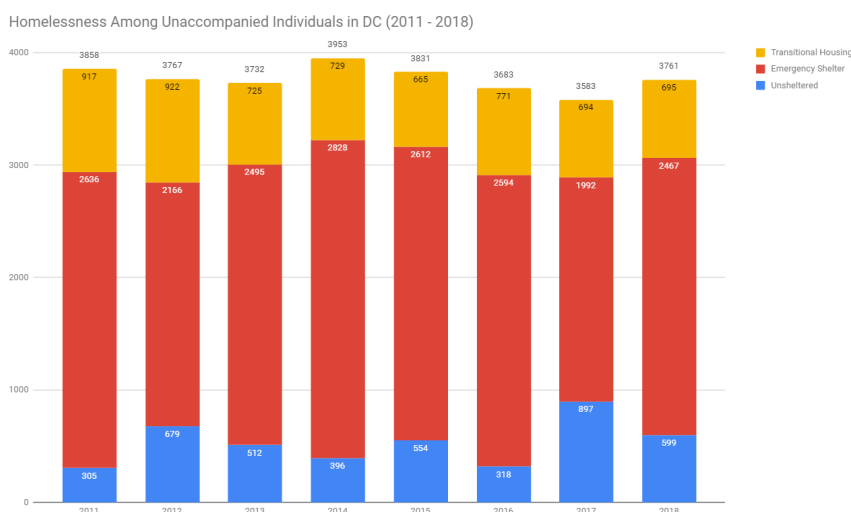
<sup>1</sup> The contents of this document have been adapted from *Diversion: A Conflict Resolution Approach to Keeping People Housed*, by the Cleveland Mediation Center (now Frontline Services) and various resources from the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

# Homelessness Among Individuals In the District

There is no single cause of homelessness, and each person’s experience can be complex. However, according to the [Homeward DC Plan](#) to end chronic homelessness and the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#) there are some clear trends and factors that we know contribute to homelessness, particularly when combined with intergenerational systemic poverty:

- the loss of affordable housing in the District
- wages and public assistance that have not kept pace with the cost of living
- de-institutionalization without the concomitant creation of community-based housing and services
- escaping violence, bullying, or abuse
- disconnection from family supports
- physical and mental health problems
- substance abuse
- job loss
- and/or barriers to gaining or maintaining employment

As you can see in the chart, the District has had at least 3,500 unaccompanied individuals experiencing homeless at each Point in Time (PIT) Count since 2011.



Between 2014 and 2017, the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness declined by over 9%. However, the total climbed by almost 5% during the 2018 PIT Count. This recent increase occurred after an unprecedented investment in permanent housing for individuals, which indicates the District experiences inflow that outpaces our exits from the homeless services system. This dynamic makes diversion and rapid exit a critical component of a book-end strategy to ending chronic homelessness.

A number of recent studies confirm that the District is not only one of the least affordable cities in America, but that there is a severe shortage of housing that is affordable to households at the lowest income levels. The issue of housing affordability in the District of Columbia is particularly glaring when the District’s minimum wage (\$13.25) is compared to its housing wage (\$34.48), which is the minimum hourly wage a full-time worker must earn to afford a two bedroom rental home at the HUD-estimated Fair Market Rent (FMR). As shown in the table below, a person earning the 2018

minimum wage in the District would need to work nearly three full-time jobs –approximately 104 hours a week – to afford a decent two bedroom rental home at 30% of their income.

Housing Type	Fair Market Rent (FMR)	Annual Income to Afford @ 30%	Annual Income to Afford @ 50%	Annual Income from DC Minimum Wage
Efficiency	\$1,504	\$60,160	\$36,096	\$27,560
1-Bedroom	\$1,561	\$62,440	\$37,464	\$27,560
2-Bedroom	\$1,793	\$71,720	\$43,032	\$27,560
3-Bedroom	\$2,353	\$94,120	\$56,472	\$27,560
4-Bedroom	\$2,902	\$116,080	\$69,648	\$27,560

## Role of Diversion

**What is Diversion?** Diversion, 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. Ideally, diversion services target households that are requesting entry into shelter and have not yet accessed homeless services. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, an effective diversion program:

- Prevents households that have alternative housing options from entering the homeless system, reserving emergency shelter beds and other homeless services for households who have no other options available to them.
- Explores flexible and client-driven solutions that can be quickly implemented, making homelessness a rare and brief occurrence.
- Allows for creative and cost-effective solutions to meet households’ needs.

Diversion is also an important part of the District’s Strategic Plan to end homelessness. The plan outlines a Program Models Matrix, which is intended to help funders understand what to fund and providers understand what they are expected to deliver. It also helps ensure we are measuring outcomes of similar programming in a consistent way. The matrix includes the following services, and diversion is included as a “front porch” services:

1. **Front Porch Services:** “Front Porch” services are those provided to customers before they reach the front door of the homeless services system (the front door being the shelter system). This may include services to both those already homeless as well as to those at imminent risk of losing their housing.

- a. Daytime Service Center
  - b. Drop-In Centers
  - c. Outreach
  - d. Prevention/Diversion
- 2. **Short-term Placement (Interim Housing):** Shelter/housing that is time limited in nature and is designed to provide a safe, stable environment for households while they work on a permanent housing solution.
  - a. Outreach Beds
  - b. Emergency Shelter
  - c. Transitional Housing
- 3. **Permanent Housing:** Housing in which a person is a leaseholder and can remain in the unit for as long as he/she chooses. The programming provides a subsidy and voluntary services (as determined by assessment) to help the client in retaining the housing.
  - a. Rapid Re-Housing
  - b. Targeted Affordable Housing
  - c. Permanent Supportive Housing

## Who is diversion for?

An important principle of diversion is that anyone in the homeless response system can benefit from the approach or principles of diversion. However, given the limited resources in the early stages of implementation, the District must strike a balance between open principles, realistic constraints, and obvious opportunities. Therefore, the District conducted an analysis of individuals experiencing homelessness in our low-barrier shelter system, and identified patterns and opportunities within subpopulations. The District also engaged stakeholders about this analysis to better understand how best to identify the target market for Project Reconnect.

**What did the analysis and stakeholder engagement reveal?** The District has an opportunity to provide diversion services to ~1,000 individuals during a given year who seem to rely on shelter for a brief period but may have the resources to stay housed. Diverting these individuals from entering shelter in the first place or shortening their length of stay in shelter (i.e. rapid exit) will increase the District's ability to focus scarce case management resources on those with more significant needs who have a greater reliance on shelter.

Therefore, based on a study of similar program models in other jurisdictions, and based on analysis and stakeholder engagement in DC, diversion services will be targeted to unaccompanied individuals who fit the following profiles:

- **New Arrivals:** individuals who present in the District's homeless services system for the first time, have no prior documentation of homelessness in the District's HMIS system, and who have visited one of the following for five consecutive days:<sup>2</sup>
  - low-barrier shelter; and/or

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<sup>2</sup> Note that youth age 18-24 do not need to wait five consecutive days before receiving a diversion appointment. One day in shelter is enough.

- daytime services centers; and/or,
- street outreach worker.
- **Non-Recent Returners:** individuals who return to a low-barrier shelter or daytime services center after an extended absence from shelter (e.g. at least 90 calendar days), and whose absence was not simply unsheltered homelessness.
- **Family-Engaged Clients:** individuals in the homeless services system who demonstrate a willingness and ability to connect with friends and family.
- **Clients Transitioning from System Involvement:** individuals who are losing their “housing” because they are transitioning out of system involvement. This includes, but may not be limited to individuals:
  - Aging out of foster care without permanent housing;
  - Re-entering society after incarceration from District or Federal prison but without permanent housing.<sup>3</sup>

The profiles outlined in this document are intended as guidance, not set-in-stone rules, and are subject to change as the District learns more about the program during implementation. Aside from limited staff time and resource constraints, there is nothing preventing anyone from receiving diversion services.

## Diversion Principles

### Housing First

Housing First is the approach of quickly getting people experiencing homelessness back into housing (market or subsidized), because people experiencing homelessness need a home - not necessarily anything else. Research shows that it is better to be aggressive in who you house. Demographically, many housed people look the same as those entering shelter - income, education, substance use, family size - so let's return them to housing, where they can start their own next steps. Those who do not benefit from diversion often languish in shelter, and experience added conflict and stress. Housing First is less expensive for society. It is faster and more humane. And it allows people to address other issues while housed (e.g. education, job training, mental health, addiction, etc).

### Right resources, right person, right time

The homeless services continuum of care is at its best when services and interventions are delivered in a customized way - where the intervention matches the person's unique needs and is delivered at a time that is most likely to effectively reduce the duration and frequency of their experience of homelessness. That is why diversion is a critical addition to the continuum. By intervening early with the right supports, the District can dramatically alter the experience of thousands of unaccompanied individuals in crisis.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that those reentering society after incarceration do not have to wait five consecutive days before receiving a diversion appointment. One day in shelter is enough.

Diversion services assist 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 and address other issues once their immediate housing crisis is resolved. 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.

### **Crisis/Conflict resolution**

What is it that diversion delivers? At its core, diversion is about crisis resolution, because an individual experiencing homelessness is experiencing a crisis. Your goal, as a diversion expert, is not to find permanent solutions for customer needs. Your job is to simply address the immediate crisis: where can the person sleep tonight, this week, this month. Much like an emergency room doctor, whose job is to keep the patient alive that day and refer them to proper follow-up care, your job is to reconnect the person to housing that day and refer them to other supports that will help them obtain and maintain housing in the future.

The role of the diversion provider is to, with the person's input and permission, help to problem solve and take constructive next steps. To help get into a crisis resolution mindset, think about these key features of crisis resolution and how they might apply to working with someone experiencing homelessness:

1. **Rapid Assessment & Triage:** quickly determine the most immediate cause of this episode of homelessness and determine what opportunities may exist
2. **Focus on the person's safety:** if a person is fleeing an unsafe situation, take that into account. If they are new to homelessness, help them understand the importance of quickly reconnecting to housing and how much harder it can be to reconnect from shelter.
3. **De-escalation:** some people in crisis can experience heightened emotions, broken trust, fear, paranoia, and shame. These feelings and emotions can lead any person to act out or assert their power in an effort to establish control. Focus on making them feel heard, respected, seen, and understood.
4. **Returning the Person to Control:** some people in crisis become more passive and need more support than they are demonstrating a willingness to take on. Much of this work is about flipping the power dynamic in favor of the client, so they can regain a lost sense of control.
5. **Achievable Action Steps:** a common refrain offered to people experiencing crisis or loss is "just take each day at a time" or "just put one foot in front of the other." These simple platitudes are actually rooted in an evidence-based practice: exit crisis and regain a sense of control through small doable actions. These could be as simple as "make the phone call," "submit the application," "take a deep breath," or "fill the prescription." No matter the circumstance, find small actions that won't overwhelm the client, but are directly related to reconnecting with housing opportunities.



## **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.

## **Lightest touch: the minimum assistance needed for the shortest possible time**

Lightest touch is about choosing the least expensive and least intrusive intervention to get or keep someone housed. 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 and end homelessness enables a program to help far more people in crisis.

## **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. Effective diversion requires that mainstream systems recognize the importance of helping people retain housing and reorient their resources to support this goal.

# **Diversion Process**

## **Identifying clients for diversion**

When a low-barrier shelter or daytime service center does an intake, the provider must talk to the client to understand the client's situation, presenting story, and obtain background information. The provider must also look in HMIS to determine whether the client fits the criteria for referral to the singles diversion program (i.e. new, non-recent returner, family engaged, and clients transitioning from system involvement). If the client is a good candidate for the District's diversion program, then the provider should book the individual into the next available Project Reconnect appointment slot. It is also helpful to get the name the client prefers to go by and the preferred pronouns, so there can be a warm handoff from the shelter to the Diversion Expert. :

- Clients 25 and older can get appointments at the Adams Place Drop-In Center (2210 Adams Place NE) or Downtown Daytime Services Center (1313 New York Ave NW).
- Clients 18-24 can get appointments with the DHS Youth Services Division (64 New York Ave NE, 5th Floor)

- Veterans of all ages can contact [rapidresolution@cchfp.org](mailto:rapidresolution@cchfp.org) to learn more about the Rapid Resolutions diversion program for veterans, managed by Friendship Place. There will also be a veteran representative on-site at the Downtown Day Services Center every Thursday morning (9:30am - 12:30pm).
  - For more information about services for veterans, see page 23 and 24.

## Scheduling and keeping appointments

### Adams Place Drop-In Center

The Adams Place Drop-In Center maintains a daily schedule for Project Reconnect appointments and is able to accommodate six appointments per day, five days per week. The first appointment begins each day at 9:30am and the last appointment begins at 2:30pm. The table below is a typical daily appointment block for Project Reconnect at Adams Place.

Appointment Block	Start Time	Ending Time
#1	9:30am	10:30am
#2	10:30am	11:30am
#3	11:30am	12:30pm
#4	12:30pm	1:30pm
#5	1:30pm	2:30pm
#6	2:30pm	3:30pm

### Downtown Day Services Center

The Downtown Day Services Center maintains a daily schedule for Project Reconnect appointments and is able to accommodate \_\_\_ appointments per day, \_\_\_ days per week. The first appointment begins each day at 9:30am and the last appointment begins at 2:30pm. The table below is a typical daily appointment block for Project Reconnect at the DDSC.

Appointment Block	Start Time	Ending Time
#1	9:30am	10:30am
#2	10:30am	11:30am
#3	11:30am	12:30pm
#4	12:30pm	1:30pm
#5	1:30pm	2:30pm

#6	2:30pm	3:30pm
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### Youth Services Division

The DHS Youth Services Division maintains a regular schedule for Project Reconnect appointments and is able to accommodate two appointments per day, three days per week. The first appointment begins each day at 2:00pm and the last appointment begins at 3:00pm. The table below is a typical daily appointment block for Project Reconnect at the Youth Services Division. Note that Wednesday appointments are held at Casa Ruby.

Appointment Block	Start Time	Ending Time
Monday @ DHS	2:00pm	3:00pm
Monday @ DHS	3:00pm	4:00pm
Wednesday @ Casa Ruby	2:00pm	3:00pm
Wednesday @ Casa Ruby	3:00pm	4:00pm
Friday @ DHS	2:00pm	3:00pm
Friday @ DHS	3:00pm	4:00pm

To ensure clients are able to keep their appointments with Project Reconnect, the shelter provider must make every reasonable effort to ensure the client gets on the shelter hotline van or nearest public transportation from their shelter or breakfast location to the appointment site.

## The Diversion Conversation

### Introductions

The first interaction with customers seeking services under Project Reconnect should be welcoming. Start by introducing yourself, your organization, and your role. Then explain the context for why the conversation is happening in the first place. Remind them that we respect their rights and welcome them into shelter, but that we want to reconnect them to their support network and housing opportunities as quickly as possible. Before you start asking them questions about their experience, explain how the conversation will work. Here is an example introduction:

**Diversion Expert:** Thank you for coming in today. My name is Demarcus, and I work here at the Adams Place Drop-In Center, which is a daytime resource and refuge for those experiencing homelessness. My job is to work with clients like yourself to understand your story, what you need, and what it will take to reconnect you with supportive resources, especially housing. Does that make sense?

**Client:** Yes, that makes sense.

**Diversion Expert:** The goal of our conversation today is for me to listen to you, and to hear your story so we can pinpoint your strengths and your needs. Then we will get creative and focus on the small things we can do to move forward together to help return you to housing. Is that okay?

**Client:** Yes, that sounds fine.

**Diversion Expert:** So, what brought you into shelter?

Asking an open-ended question like “what brought you into shelter” helps keep the door open for the customer to tell their story in their own way, which may have useful insights. Beginning the conversation with a more narrow and direct questions, like “what do you need to get housed” may actually limit the options presented by the client - making the diversion conversation less successful.

### Active & Empathetic Listening

Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. The way to improve your listening skills is to practice "active listening." This is where you make a conscious effort to not only hear the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, try to understand what's being said. In order to do this you must pay attention to the other person very carefully. There are five key active listening techniques. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they say.

1. **Pay Attention:** Give the client your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.
  - a. Look at the speaker directly.
  - b. Put aside distracting thoughts and devices
  - c. Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
  - d. Avoid being distracted by environmental factors. For example, side conversations.
  - e. "Listen" to the speaker's body language
2. **Show that you're listening:** Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.
  - a. Don't put objects, like a desk, between you and the client
  - b. Nod occasionally.
  - c. Smile and use other facial expressions.
  - d. Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
  - e. Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and uh huh.
3. **Provide feedback:** Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect on what is being said and ask questions.
  - a. Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is," and "Sounds like you are saying," are great ways to reflect back.
  - b. Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say." "Is this what you mean?"
  - c. Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.
4. **Avoid Judgement:** Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down. Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.
  - a. Treat the other person in a way that you think he or she would want to be treated.
  - b. Allow the client to finish each point before asking questions.
  - c. Don't interrupt with counter arguments - accept that the client's perspective has validity
5. **Defer Problem-Solving:** keep listening separate from problem solving and strength exploration

Double click the image below to view a helpful video on active listening.



### Strength Exploration

Diversion conversations should be focused on an individuals' housing situations, resources, and ability to identify and obtain safe housing options outside of the homeless housing system. The role of staff is to partner with the client to identify viable alternatives for temporary or permanent housing stability. Once you fully understand the client's story and how they've ended up in need of shelter, it is time to explore their past strengths with them. This has two purposes:

1. Help them identify times when they have been of help or support to others. Our clients often feel dependent, so you can help them remember times of interdependence.
2. Begin to identify networks and support persons that may be able to help them with income or housing.

Here are some example questions that help identify a client's past strengths and potential resources:

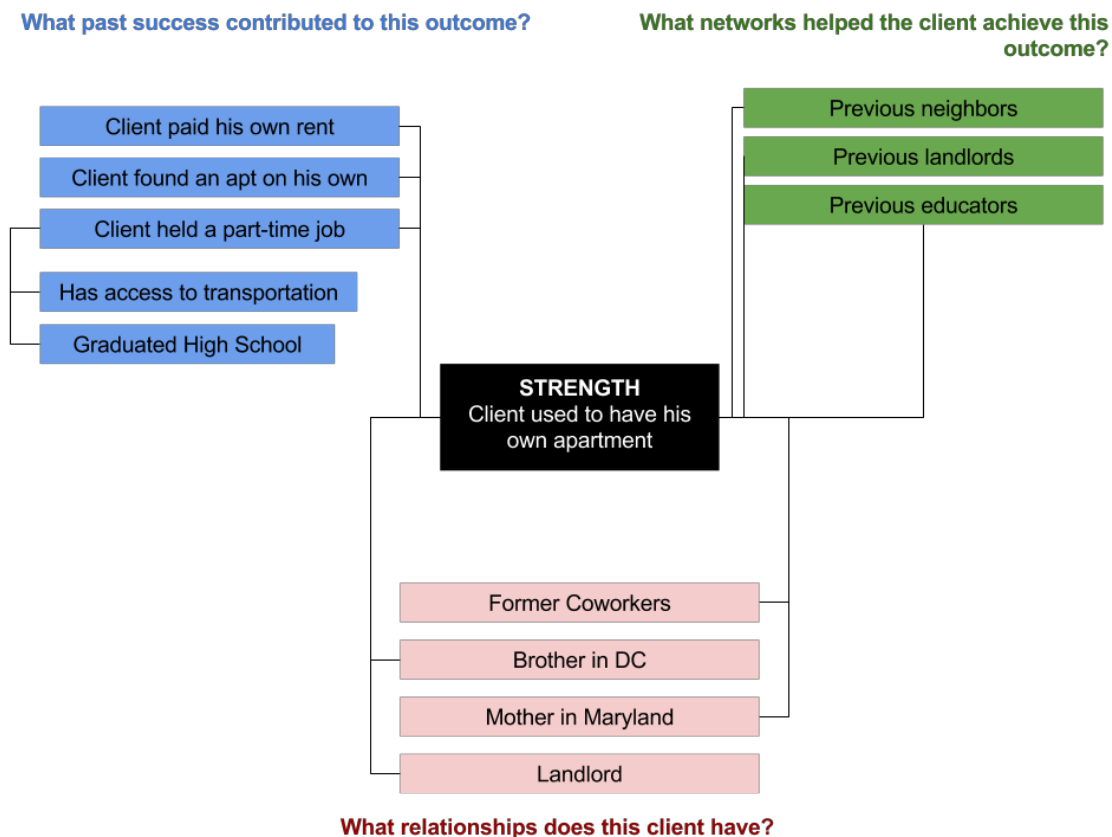
- **Who have they helped?** If the client can identify those they've helped or ways they have been helpful, then you can reframe their view of themselves as being helpless. In fact, they have been in a position to help others in the past, which is a strength.
- **What were things like for you when things were going better?** This question helps them get out of their current mindset and reflect on a different time, when things may have been less dire. This reframing helps clarify positive aspects of their life and strengths they may be undervaluing in the moment.
- **Who are your allies, friends, and family members?** Articulating who they normally rely on can be valuable information as you look for people to reach out to for support. It can also help them identify broader networks they may have been undervaluing.
- **Where was the last place you slept where you were housed and felt safe?** If they slept somewhere where they could potentially safely stay again, there might be an opportunity for diversion.
- **If you have felt unsafe in previous housing, what factors contributed to that lack of safety? Have any of those factors since changed?** If they slept somewhere where they did

not feel safe, there may be an opportunity to dissect the root causes and see if any important changes have occurred that they may be devaluing.

- **Even if it's temporary or means staying with someone you know, can you think of any housing options that might be available to you in 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 there is an option to stay in someone else's housing) What needs to change or happen in order for you to stay with your friend/family?** Can those issues be resolved with reunification, dispute resolution, financial support, etc.? If the issues can be solved with mediation or financial assistance (or all of the above), there might be an opportunity for diversion.
- **(If moving into their own unit is an option) What resources or steps would you need to obtain housing on your own (financial assistance, landlord advocacy, transportation, etc.)?** If the household could obtain their housing with some assistance, let the family or individual know what role diversion services can play.

**Pro-Tip:** As you explore strengths with the client, always find out about current and past housing history and income. Also ask if the potential housing options are safe and appropriate for the client.

When exploring strengths and resources, it may be helpful to diagram out the client's successes, relationships, and networks, as shown in the example below.



## Moving Forward

After you have actively listened to the client, then explored past strengths, relationships, and networks, it's time to talk about what housing options they want to pursue:

1. Going back to live with friends and family nearby
2. Returning to their own existing residence
3. Helping the client seek new housing on their own
4. Relocating to a safe, permanent place out of town

## Diversion Outcomes

### Going back to live with friends and family nearby

As long as the client (and relevant friends and family members) feel safe returning to live with friends and/or family in the Metropolitan Washington Region, then this might be a viable option. This is particularly true when the client has no housing history, no income history, and has no better option. It is important to ask these key questions when considering this outcome:

- When is a doubled up situation safe and appropriate?
- How can the client contribute to the household to make this viable?
- How can the client use this time to further education and/or employment opportunities?

### Returning to their own existing residence

When a client has a lease or was living with someone, but just hadn't been able to pay the rent or utility bills - there may be opportunities to help them return to that environment. It is important to ask these key questions when considering this outcome:

- If the previous residence involved a significant other, was there domestic violence involved? If so, it may not be appropriate to return.
- Is there a way to pay back rent, or at least pay one month's rent or bills moving forward?
- Are any previous places the client has lived still an option?

### Helping the client seek new housing on their own

If the client wishes to live on their own and they have done so before, then this may be appropriate. Having a past or current income also makes this a more viable option. It is important the client think through these things as they pursue this outcome:

- Discuss what housing options are immediately available, and help the client identify actionable steps to bring those options into existence (e.g. reaching out to landlords to schedule apartment viewings).

- Conduct a walk-through before moving into any new unit. Write down anything that isn't perfect or clean and keep a copy, so that when you move out, those items won't be held against you for the security deposit.
- Discuss how and when the rent is paid, when it is due, what late fees there might be, where to pay the rent, forms of payment accepted
- How the client will discuss repairs with the landlord: how to report them, what timeframe to expect for the repairs.
- Think ahead about what happens if there is a change in income and the client is struggling financially: pay your rent first, if possible; don't over-promise to your landlord or anyone else you owe money to; call DHS if you need help thinking through your options

## Relocating permanently to a safe place out of town

If the client wishes to return to a safe location outside of the Metropolitan Washington Region, that is perfectly within their rights and can be a very valuable step in the right direction for them. However, it must be a safe and appropriate option. Relocating to shelter in another jurisdiction is not acceptable, and it must be made clear to the client that the District will serve them even if they return. It is important the diversion expert and client think through these issues as they pursue this outcome:

- Is there a safe and appropriate host who is willing to accept the client for no less than 30 days
  - This must be confirmed (in writing) before any transportation is arranged
- Will the client have a support system there: family, friends, employment, education?
- What travel and other logistics do we need to work out?

## Diversion Resources

This section describes the menu of direct and indirect services that can be included in an individual's Diversion/Rapid Exit Plan. A core requirement of Project Reconnect is that these services are used to reduce the length of stay in shelter. Therefore, direct services are only provided if the individual obtains housing outside of shelter in one of the four Diversion Outcomes described above. In addition, no services are permitted to last longer than six months.

## Direct Services [paid through Project Reconnect]

**Local Transportation Assistance:** This type of assistance can help by providing public and/or private transportation resources to assist individuals with returning to/from a location within the metropolitan Washington region in order to help with employment/employability. This can include metro fares (rail or bus), or limited shared ride support (Uber, Lyft, Taxi), gas assistance, or automobile repairs. The service would be time-limited, would be dispersed via gift cards associated with public or private transportation services with adequate documentation of how transportation assistance is related to employment and housing.

### Requirements and Limitations:

- This can be included in a participant's diversion/rapid exit plan if their outcome occurs in or near the District. It cannot be included for those relocating permanently to a safe place outside of town.



- The participant must provide proof of employment.
- Public Transportation:
  - This service is only authorized to support commutes to and from an employment location
  - Delivered through SmarTrip Cards preset for \$25 and \$50
- Rideshare Services:
  - The commuting location must be within 15 miles of the District of Columbia border
  - Rideshare services are limited to Uber and Lyft.
  - Delivered through gift cards present for \$50
- Gas Assistance:
  - Delivered through gas cards which are preset for \$30.
- Automobile repairs:
  - Automobile repairs are a one-time service.
  - Cannot be that of cosmetic body work; the repairs must be relevant to the functioning of the automobile.
  - The purpose of the repair must directly relate to maintaining a client's employment and stable housing.
  - The client must provide a detailed estimate of repairs from a mechanic authorized by Project Reconnect for automobile repairs.
  - Repair costs are capped at \$1,000

**Non-Local Transportation Assistance:** This type of assistance can help by providing private transportation resources to persons who need assistance with returning to family or friends outside of the DC metropolitan area. It may include the purchase of an airline or train ticket. The service would be time-limited (e.g. one time), would be dispersed via payment to a private transportation services on a client's behalf with adequate documentation of the services provided. It may also include coordination with the third-party Traveler's Aid program, which provides bus transportation, through a non-profit organization, to persons who need assistance with returning to family or friends.

**Requirements and Limitations:**

- The participant must provide proof of new housing sustainability out-of-state with host (e.g. letter, email, phone contact between caseworker and host), and the host must sign the final diversion agreement.
- Travel is contingent upon the host agreeing to pick the client up from the airport, bus stop, or train station and provide the client with housing at their host home address for at least 30 days. Otherwise travel will not occur.
- Relocation to a shelter in another jurisdiction is not permitted.
- This service is only available one time.
- The value of the ticket (bus, train, air) cannot exceed \$1,000.
- All travel is one-way.
- Traveler's Aid:
  - All individuals who need assistance from Travelers Aid must have a name and a contact number for the person agreeing to allow them to stay with them.
  - The service would be time-limited (e.g. one time), would be delivered through a partnership with a non-profit organization.
  - This is not a direct expense of Project Reconnect

**Support to Host Household:** This type assistance involves helping offset the cost to a

household from hosting a diversion/rapid exit participant. Such support can include gift cards, assistance with public and private utilities, internet services, cable services, food/groceries, or gas/transportation - all costs that increase when the household size increases. The service would be time-limited (e.g. depending on what's permissible under the host's lease agreement), and would be delivered to private enterprises to which the resources are ultimately paid (i.e. utility company, landlord, etc.). This type of assistance does not include assistance with rent or mortgage payments, because those costs don't change based on the household size.

**Requirements and Limitations:**

- The host must provide lease agreement (if applicable), along with valid identification
  - This type of assistance is not permissible if taking on an additional occupant is in violation of the household's current rental/housing agreement. This is especially true if the host is in public housing, where taking on an additional occupant is in violation of their public housing agreement. However, market rent leases generally give the household 30 days to host someone. In some cases it may be limited to seven days.
- Support for food, groceries, and gas/transportation will be estimated by the Department in collaboration with the participant and host household.
- The participant must report any changes in living situation while housing with host; that compromise the support to host household agreement (e.g. participant is removed from household).
- Grocery Assistance:
  - Grocery store gift cards are limited to Giant, Aldi, Harris Teeter, and Safeway.
  - Grocery store gift cards are preset for \$25 and \$50.
    - *\*Note: Target and Walmart gift cards can be distributed by exception based on the distance between the host's residence and the allowable grocery stores.*
- Utility Assistance:
  - Contributions towards utility cost is subject to one utility per month, cannot exceed \$150 per month, and cannot last longer than six months.
  - The host must provide the most recent copy of the relevant utility statements.
  - The address on the lease agreement must match the address on the utility bill(s).
  - The utility statements must be in the name of the host, and the account number must be made available to Project Reconnect.
- Gas Assistance:
  - Gas cards are preset for \$30.

**New Lease Support:** This type of assistance involves lowering the barrier to entry into permanent housing by covering some or all of the cost of the first month's rent and security deposit for a participant's new housing agreement and any application fees. The service would be time-limited (e.g. one time), and would be delivered to private enterprises to which the resources are ultimately paid (i.e. landlord). The service has to be approved based at the discretion of the caseworker developing the diversion plan; this discretion must be based on the client's ability to maintain the monthly rated noted in the lease agreement.

**Requirements and Limitations:**

- General:
  - Client must provide contact information for the landlord/property

- management leasing office.
  - The property management company must have a W9 (EIN), business license, and Certificate of Occupancy.
  - The combined rent and security deposit amount cannot exceed \$2,340, which fully maximizes the person's diversion plan - so no other services can be authorized.
- Rental Application Fees:
  - The client must provide rental application and contact information for the relevant landlord for direct payment to landlord
- First Month's Rent and/or Security Deposit:
  - The participant must provide proof of approved lease agreement to include first month's rent/security deposit amounts and;
  - The participant must provide proof of income [that will sustain rental agreement once deposit is paid].
  - Landlord and/or property management company must provide acceptance letter indicating the client has been accepted as a tenant.
  - The landlord affirms that the conditions of the unit meet all of the safe occupancy and habitability standards applicable under DC law.
  - Client affirms that they have inspected the home, documented any issues and/or requests for repair, and feels physically safe residing in the unit.

**Small-Denomination Arrears Payment:** This type of assistance is a small-debt forgiveness program, so long as the debt was accrued through legal means (e.g. past rental debt, overdue bills, etc.) and can be shown as a contributing factor preventing the individual from being housed outside of shelter. The service would be time-limited (e.g. one time), would be dispersed via payment to the legal debt holder on a client's behalf with adequate documentation of the entity's legal right to collect the debt.

**Requirements and Limitations:**

- The participant must provide proof of debt (e.g. eviction notices, late rent charges, etc.).
- This service is only available one time, and cannot exceed \$1000 in total value.
- Debt payment is contingent on the host and/or landlord confirming the client will be able to live at the host or home address once the debt is paid.
- The client affirms that the debt was accrued through legal means and, once paid, will not longer be a barrier to maintaining housing outside of shelter.

**Moving Costs:** This assistance allows customers to access funding to cover relocation expenses. The service can provide customers with a one-time coverage cost to move personal items from one location to another in the Metropolitan Washington Region. In addition to covering such cost, the assistance will give customers the opportunity to relocate to another state for housing sustainability.

**Requirements and Limitations:**

- The participant must provide proof of new housing sustainability (e.g. new lease, confirmation of host [both local and out-of-state], etc.).
- The participant must provide a detailed estimate from an authorized moving company.
- This service is only available one time, and cannot exceed \$500 in total value.
- All parties, including the client, affirm that they, and all members of their household, feel emotionally and physically safe with the client residing in the home during the period of this agreement.

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## Indirect Services [delivered through partnerships]

**Benefits Optimization:** This type of assistance is not a direct expenditure of Project Reconnect. This case management service helps the individual get enrolled in all benefits programs to which they are potentially eligible. Such benefits may include Medical Assistance, Social Security, Interim Disability Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, and/or Temporary Cash Assistance. This service is delivered through a partnership with the Department of Human Services, Economic Security Administration and community partners.

**Employment Assistance:** This type of assistance is not a direct expenditure of Project Reconnect. It is a case management service that helps the individual get connected to all employment services which may be appropriate for them. This includes unemployment assistance, job training programs, supported employment opportunities, apprenticeships, and other services offered by the Department of Employment Services (DOES).

**Short Term Rental Assistance:** This type of assistance is not a direct expenditure of Project Reconnect and is used as a last resort. It involves connecting the participant, through an expedited referral, to the District's Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) program for unaccompanied adults, where they can get time-limited assistance with rental payments if they have a viable opportunity to earn income and sustain full payments once the assistance ends. The program also includes case management services during program participation. This type of assistance cannot be combined with support to host household.

**Referral to Residential Treatment:** This type of assistance is not a direct expenditure of Project Reconnect and is for those struggling with substance use issues who express willingness to begin addressing addiction through residential treatment. In addition to a referral to Residential Treatment, client may be referred to transitional housing programs for those in recovery, like Blair House.

**Mediation Services:** This assistance allows customers to access professional family problem resolution services; this form of resolution is solely to reconnect customers with their family, in an effort to sustain housing. The problem resolution comes as interventions through joint sessions with a mediator that will assist both parties illustrate their issues in a constructive manner.

**Foster Care Transition Services:** This type of assistance is not a direct expenditure of Project Reconnect and is for those who have recently aged out of foster care without stable housing. Project Reconnect participants who meet certain age requirements will be connected to resources offered through the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), including aftercare services, education and employment services, and housing assistance. If appropriate, youth may also be connected to various resources through the youth homeless services system.

**Juvenile Justice Transition Services:** Similar to foster care transition services, this type of assistance is not a direct expenditure of Project Reconnect and is for those who have recently transitioned from the Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS). Project Reconnect

participants who meet certain requirements will be connected to resources offered through DYRS, including aftercare services and housing assistance. If appropriate, youth may also be connected to various resources through the youth homeless services system.

**Re-entry Services:** These services, provided by the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), are intended to integrate supervisees into the community by connecting them with stabilizing resources and interventions vital to their ability to comply with the conditions of their release. Interventions include, but are not limited to, substance abuse treatment, behavioral health assessments and referrals, education and vocational training, employment assistance, violence prevention, transitional housing, and victim support. Along with close case supervision by Community Supervision Officers, the supervisees' use of these resources and ongoing application of the knowledge and skills gained through the needed interventions help reduce recidivism and increase public safety. In addition to CSOSA, returning [from incarceration] District of Columbia citizens can access services through the Resources to Empower and Develop You (READY) Center. The READY Center allow immediate access to critical services and linkages to resources to support reintegration efforts that will lead to more stability and a safer community.

**Adult Protective Services (APS):** APS provides protective services to reduce or eliminate the risk of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation. Residents of the District of Columbia, who are 18 years old or older and are highly vulnerable to, or have recently been or are being abused, neglected or exploited by another or meet the criteria for self-neglect may be eligible to receive protective services from APS. To report allegations of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and/or exploitation, please call the APS Hotline at (202) 541-3950 available 24 hours 7 days a week; or Visit the APS office at 64 New York Avenue, NE, 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20002 between the hours of 8:45 am to 4:45 pm. Walk-ins are accepted.

**Office on Aging:** The Office on Aging is the District of Columbia's Agency on Aging that oversees direct services to persons 60 and older through a Senior Service Network. Within the Senior Service Network are eight community-based agencies, funded by the Office on Aging, to provide health, education and social services. In order to use DCOA'S services, seniors are required to become registered participants through the Senior Service Network Lead Agency in their Ward. Senior Service Network Lead Agencies are designed to provide older adults with ward-based and citywide supportive services, resources and referral linkages that assist them in continuing to live independently in their homes and community. You can obtain information about a DC Aging and Disability Resource Center in-home and community-based services by contacting one from the list below that is located in the service ward of interest.

Terrific, Inc.  
910 Westminister Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
Service Area: Ward 1  
Phone: (202) 387-9000  
Fax: (202) 733-2329

Terrific, Inc.  
1220 L Street, NW, Suite 800

Washington, DC 20036  
Service Area: Ward 2  
Phone: (202) 595-1990  
Fax: (202) 595-1980

IONA Senior Services  
4125 Albemarle Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20016  
Service Area: Ward 3, Foggy Bottom  
Phone: (202) 966-1055  
Fax: (202) 895-0244

Terrific, Inc.  
418 Missouri Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20011  
Service Area: Ward 4  
Phone: (202) 882-1824  
Fax: (202) 882-1045

Seabury Ward 5 Aging Services  
2900 Newton Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20018  
Service Area: Ward 5  
Phone: (202) 529-8701  
Fax: (202) 832-0127

Seabury Ward 6 Aging Services  
555 Water Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024  
Service Area: Ward 6  
Phone: (202) 397-1725  
Fax: (202) 397-1729

East River Family Strengthening Collaborative  
3917 Minnesota Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20019  
Service Area: Ward 7  
Phone: (202) 534-4880  
Fax: (202) 388-7691

East River Family Strengthening Collaborative  
4301 9th St. SE, DC 20032

Service Area: Ward 8  
Phone: (202) 562-6860

**Veteran Resources:**

**Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF):** SSVF programs provide rapid rehousing and homeless prevention services to very low-income Veteran families. They provide case management services aimed at housing stability. These services may include assistance with locating and moving into a permanent housing unit, connecting with benefits, employment assistance, connecting with medical and mental health care, budgeting, and other needs identified during intake.

Friendship Place: (202) 658-9599

Housing Counseling Services: (202) 667-7006

Operation Renewed Hope Foundation: (703) 969-4562

**Rapid Resolution** is a practice being implemented by the Department of Veteran Affairs Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grantees; it is a housing intervention designed to prevent immediate entry into homelessness or to immediately resolve a household's homelessness once they enter shelter, transitional housing, or an unsheltered situation. In a Rapid Resolution intervention, SSVF and its partners work to help a household identify an immediate safe place to stay within their own network of family, friends, and other social supports, even if that solution is temporary. SSVF can then, as needed, provide follow-up services and supports to help the Veteran find stable long-term housing.

If client identifies as a veteran, review veteran eligibility criteria.

**Veteran Eligibility Criteria:**

- Must have active service:
  - Served active military, naval, air service, or Merchant Marines
  - National Guard/Reserves: activated by Presidential Order and served in another state or country
- Must not have received a dishonorable discharge
- Imminently at-risk or experiencing literal homelessness
- Annual gross income less than 50% AMI

**FY2018 Limits: Must be below Gross Total Income listed (50% AMI)**

Household Size	Gross Total Income
1	\$41,050
2	\$46,900

<b>3</b>	<b>\$52,750</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>\$58,600</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>\$63,300</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>\$68,000</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>\$72,700</b>

If client meets eligibility criteria, fill out First Contact Form and email to [rapidresolution@cchfp.org](mailto:rapidresolution@cchfp.org). There will also be a veteran representative on-site at the Downtown Day Services Center every Thursday morning (9:30am - 12:30pm).

**Community Resource & Referral Center (CRRC):** The CRRC is open seven days a week to combat homelessness among Veterans. It centralizes federal and local partners to provide services to homeless and at-risk Veterans. Although not a shelter, the CRRC provides services to assist Veterans which include a computer lab ,laundry, showers, social work services and a host of community services. Offices located in the CRRC include:

- DCVAMC's Health Care for Homeless
- Veterans Program (HCHV)
- Employment Assistance
- Compensated Work Therapy (CWT)
- HUD/VASH Case workers
- Vocational rehabilitation specialists
- Mental Health professionals
- Veterans Supported Employment Program
- Pathways to Housing

## Diversion Agreements & Follow Up

By clicking on [this link](#), Case Managers can access printable Diversion Agreements to support each individual's Diversion Plan in HMIS. These documents should be completed by authorized case managers and uploaded to HMIS as an attachment to the client's record.

Participants in Project Reconnect will not receive case management services on an ongoing basis. They meet with a case manager to craft a diversion plan, and will be provided with a Housing Stabilization Plan/Toolkit to provide guidance. However, if a case manager suspects that a participant might need periodic check-ins, that case manager should contact the participant and/or any other parties to the diversion agreement to understand how Project Reconnect is going for that client.

### Failure to Comply with Diversion Agreement



If any party to a Project Reconnect agreement fails to uphold their end of the agreement, the responsibility for informing the case manager is on the participant. Upon notification, the client's case manager will attempt to bring the parties back together in accordance with the original agreement to see if the agreement can be salvaged. If one or both parties to the agreement fails to comply, then the case manager will immediately terminate all services in the agreement and will exit the participant from the program. Termination from Project Reconnect does not make the client ineligible for future services, particularly those not directly funded through Project Reconnect; however, the client would need to go through the Project Reconnect intake process again (at a later date) to determine whether a new diversion plan would be more viable than the first.

## Reality & Troubleshooting

Agreements reached during diversion conversations need to work for the parties (not just for the government). By starting with what has worked previously, we increase the odds of it working again. However, if you have a concern - do not ignore it - use that concern as an opportunity to help the client think through their options and decisions. To help the client reality-check some ideas, consider the following questions:

- How would this look?
- What is the timeline?
- Have you done something like this before?
- What other options have you considered?
- What resources do you have to carry this out?
- In case this does not work out as well as you would like, would you like to explore a backup plan?

## Measuring Success

### Reducing the frequency and duration of low-barrier shelter stays

Success Category	Description	Time Between Episodes
<b>Unsuccessful</b>	The individual returns to the District's homeless services system <sup>4</sup> within three months of receiving the first diversion intervention.	<90 days
<b>Moderately Successful</b>	The individual does not return to the District's homeless services system for at least three months, but does return within six months of receiving the first diversion intervention.	90-180 days
<b>Successful</b>	The individual does not return to the District's homeless services system for at least 6 months, but does return within	180-365 days

<sup>4</sup> The "homeless services system" includes outreach to those living unsheltered. DHS does not consider it a successful diversion if the individual is sleeping outside instead of shelter.

	12 months of receiving the first diversion intervention.	
<b>Highly Successful</b>	The individual does not return to the District's homeless services system for at least 12 months after receiving the first diversion intervention.	>365 days

#	Metric	Baseline	Target	Actual
1	% of unaccompanied individuals in low-barrier shelters (LBS) with no more than 2 LBS stays	56%	60%	TBD
2	Average length of stay in LBS for those with no more than 2 LBS stays	18 days	15 days	TBD
3	Median length of stay in LBS for those with no more than 2 LBS stays	4 days	3 days	TBD
4	% of diversion participants who achieved one of four diversion outcomes	0%	30%	TBD
5	Ratio of Diversion Costs to Shelter Costs (per client, per month)	Shelter: \$1,001 per client per month	$\$120/\$1001 = 12\%$	TBD
6	Placeholder for compounding vulnerability metric	Odds Ratios		

### Diversion Self-Assessment

To implement diversion at scale, the program will eventually need to operate out of every low-barrier shelter in the District's continuum. As shelters plan for their future participation in this program, it is important to think about whether the staff, culture, and service delivery model are setting the conditions for diversion to be successful. The questions below, [developed by the National Alliance to End Homelessness](#), should be asked and answered by each low-barrier shelter considering participation in diversion and responses should be captured on a likert scale (e.g. strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, i don't know). The higher the score overall, the closer the shelter likely is to being ready to implement diversion.

1. For people requesting shelter, our staff engages them in conversations to find safe, appropriate, permanent housing solutions for them that may be better than entering shelter.
2. Our staff discusses diversion options with people who are seeking shelter by having creative and problem-solving conversations that help to identify whether they are fleeing an unsafe situation, have better alternative housing options, or need help to stay in the place that they currently have rather than simply asking a checklist of questions.
3. We have appropriate staffing and job descriptions to provide safe, appropriate, and effective diversion services.
4. Our staff is trained on how to provide safe and appropriate diversion options that are focused on finding better permanent housing solutions for people instead of entering shelter.
5. Staff continuously works with shelter participants to problem-solve and find permanent housing solutions even after they have entered shelter.
6. Our shelter's diversion practice ensures that people feel that they are receiving a service that helps them to resolve their housing crises rather than making people feel that staff is restricting entry to shelter with no additional support.

## Staff Qualifications

Hiring the right staff is integral to a successful diversion program. By emphasizing a candidate's beliefs and attitudes, and having them demonstrate their skills during the interview process, your program can onboard a highly skilled diversion expert.

### Sample Job Posting

District of Columbia seeks energetic, non-judgemental candidates to join our Project Reconnect team - where we use conflict resolution strategies to divert clients seeking shelter. We seek to empower persons to chart their own path back to housing, and then assist them in helping implement their own plan.

Project Reconnect staff helps those newly experiencing homelessness in several ways:

- Identify and implement strategies that will prevent them from having to use shelter
- Secure permanent housing (if the immediate alternative to shelter is not permanent)

Project Reconnect uses an empowerment approach based on conflict theory. We seek to bolster a person's own ability to think for themselves, weigh and consider options, advocate for their own needs, and ultimately act on their own behalf. Similar to people in conflict, persons in crisis (like someone experiencing a housing crisis, including homelessness) often experience diminished confidence, clarity, and less ability to access resources.

Consistent with the conflict-resolution philosophy of empowerment, Project Reconnect is client-centered and uses a Housing First philosophy. This position, as well as others on the team, will have a schedule rotation that may include weekends, days, nights, and holidays. This is a full-time position,

with a competitive salary, health insurance, vacation, and retirement. Project Reconnect strongly encourages persons from diverse backgrounds to apply, including persons fluent in Spanish and ASL.

### **Qualifications**

Commitment and ability to engage in empathetic, non-judgemental way with people in stressful situations -- to establish rapport in order to help them resolve their immediate housing crisis. Needs to be culturally competent across all populations.

Ability to work effectively in emergency situations.

Be versed in and committed to using conflict resolution and mediation skills. Basic mediation training preferred.

Strong organizational skills in order to effectively organize records, track data, and provide written reports.

Undergraduate degree preferred. Appropriate life experiences also considered.

Able to work independently and with partners from other agencies.

Ability to communicate clearly and effectively in writing and email, MS Word, and MS Excel.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Can a client get Project Reconnect services more than once?**

It depends. There is nothing that categorically prohibits a Project Connect client from coming back into the program after exiting (either successfully or unsuccessfully). However, the prior experience would be taken into account when determining whether Project Reconnect remains an appropriate fit for the client. Clients are not permitted to simply renew their diversion plans and agreements after expiration. If a client returns to homelessness after the expiration of the agreement, then a new plan can be developed from scratch.

### **Can the client get diversion services if they have already used the supportive housing system in the past?**

As long as the client has been out of shelter for at least 90 days, hasn't been sleeping outside, and hasn't been in a supportive housing program, then they are eligible to receive diversion services.

**For those re-entering society after incarceration from District or Federal prison but without permanent housing, how far upstream can this be? For example, can it happen pre-release if the jail knows they will exit to shelter?**

In the pilot phase, with limited resources, DHS cannot create a new front door for the program by doing diversion from the jail. It should be targeted to those who present at shelter, so the most DHS and our partners can do is prioritize the appointment slot for their first day at shelter (whereas everyone else will have to wait a week).

**For how long will DHS authorize payments and services in an individual's diversion plan?**

In the pilot phase, no diversion service shall be authorized to last longer than six months. Within that six-month, the timeframes for various authorized services in an individual's plan can vary from one-time, to weekly, to monthly - with no services lasting longer than six months.

**Can services within a diversion plan be sequential? For example, can I authorize support for a host household for one month and then security deposit after that, if the host is willing to temporarily host them while they get their own place?**

Yes. The case manager is free to design the diversion plan (and agreements) in any way that effectively gets all parties to yes. However, the services authorized in the plan cannot exceed six months of support, nor can they exceed the established financial caps in the program.

**If a diversion client is referred into Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) and is subsequently incarcerated, can RRH pay 100% of rent during their incarceration so they have a place to return to upon release?**

Unless the client was already at the end of their RRH subsidy, RRH would pay and hold the unit IF the program knew the incarceration was going to be short (less than three months). So, in short, yes, they would pay for a short incarceration stint. Similarly, the Permanent Supportive Housing program gives 90 days for customers to be gone (not just for incarceration, but for other valid reasons).

**Will walk-ins be accepted?**

Clients can walk into any shelter and any daytime service center and discuss the potential of becoming a Project Reconnect client with shelter or day center staff. However, meetings with Project Reconnect staff (where a diversion plan is discussed and created) must be scheduled by shelter or day center staff - walk-ins are not accepted for those appointment slots.

**How do you define "one week" of homeless services for those who sleep outside?**

Project Reconnect is a shelter diversion and rapid exit program. Therefore, it is targeted toward those who seek shelter. One week is defined as five consecutive days at a low-barrier shelter or daytime service center (or some combination thereof). If an unsheltered individual wants to take advantage of Project Reconnect, they are strongly encouraged to regularly visit a daytime services center or low-barrier shelter.

**Can participants get some diversion services (e.g. transportation assistance) and still stay in shelter?**

No. Project Reconnect services are all contingent on the participant implementing a diversion/rapid exit plan with one of the following outcomes: (1) Go back to live with friends and family nearby; (2) Return to their own

existing residence; (3) Help finding a new place of their own; and (4) Relocating permanently to a safe place out of town. If none of these outcomes is possible for the participant, then no diversion plan will be created for this client.

**What about clients who do not fit the criteria for Project Reconnect? How do they get help with housing stabilization?**

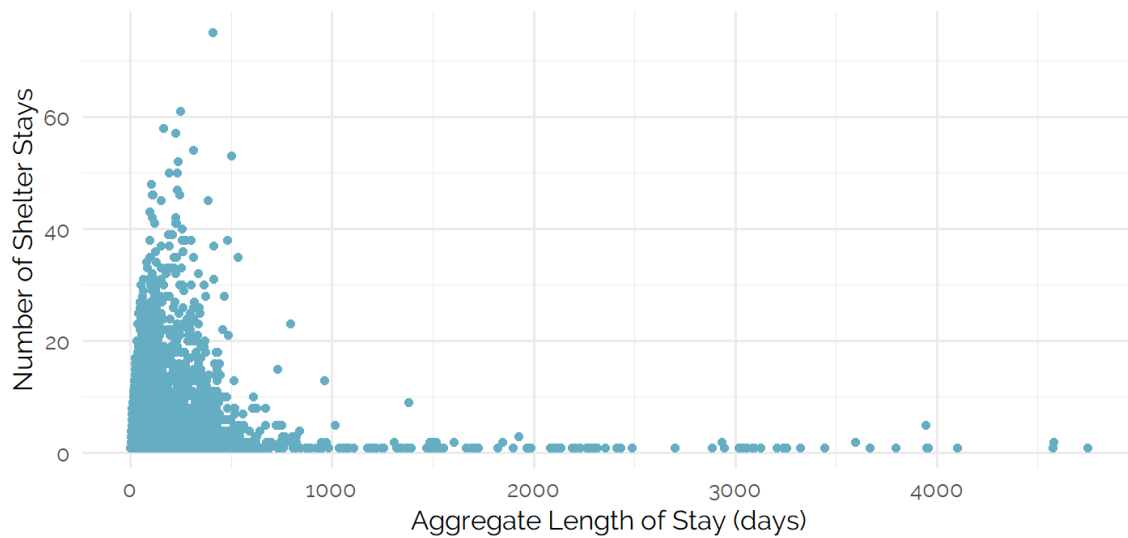
Project Reconnect is designed for a small subset of the population experiencing homelessness, who do not need ongoing case management but could benefit from light-touch supports to stay housed outside of shelter. By serving this population with light-touch resources, the District can focus shelter case management on clients with more significant needs through a series of progressively intensive supports: rapid re-housing, targeted affordable housing, or permanent supportive housing.

## **Analysis**

To design a properly-resourced diversion program, DHS analyzed the frequency and length of all low-barrier shelter stays for individuals active between August 30, 2017 and August 30, 2018.

## Number of Shelter Stays vs Total Days in Shelter

for Individuals in LBS between Aug 30, 2017 and Aug 30, 2018



Individuals: 10,214

During that time period, the District saw 10,214 individuals in our low-barrier shelter system, including hypothermia sites. This includes all active individuals, regardless of their overall length of stay. Those 10k individuals fall into the following categories:

Category	IQR	Length of Stay (days)	Number of Clients	Percent of Clients
Self-Resolvers	1st	0-2	2,554	25%
Self Resolvers & Diversion Candidates	2nd	2-11	2,554	25%
Medium Stayers	3rd	11-71	2,554	25%
Long Stayers	4th	71-175	1,430	14%
Outliers	Outlier	>175	1,124	11%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>AVG = 89</b>	<b>10,214</b>	<b>100%</b>

The groupings above are simply the Interquartile Ranges for the active LBS population between August 30, 2017 and August 30, 2018. To determine the likely volume of diversion candidates, DHS analyzed the population within these ranges because Project Reconnect does not intend to target likely self-resolvers (e.g. those likely to leave relatively quickly by using their strengths and natural supports). Therefore, with rare exceptions, DHS will not consider referrals to Project Reconnect for clients who have not yet had at least one week (or five days) in shelter.

Self Resolvers appear in both the first and second Interquartile Ranges. Therefore DHS isolated the number of clients who stayed in shelter for at least five days, but fewer than 11. The result shows that 946 individuals or 9% of the population may be good candidates for a diversion service under this program.