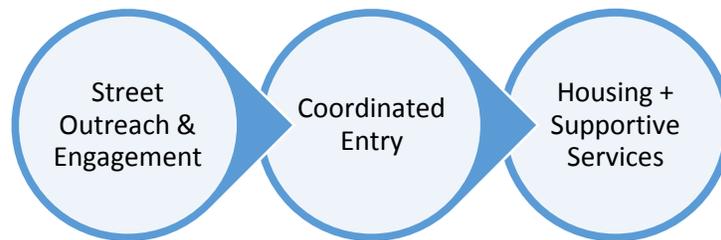




HOUSING FIRST STRATEGY



INTRODUCTION: The Santa Rosa City Council has established five primary goals for Fiscal Years 2015 through 2017. One of these goals is to address homelessness through a comprehensive strategy. The Homeless Policy Subcommittee has prepared this Housing First Strategy and an associated Fiscal Year 2016/2017 Work Plan (attached), which together establish a policy goal of achieving Functional Zero while addressing the immediate public health and safety needs of the unsheltered.

This document sets forth a framework for reaching Functional Zero utilizing a Housing First model. It directs that all homeless service resources and efforts be viewed and evaluated as part of a comprehensive community-wide program facilitating the transition of individuals and families experiencing homelessness into permanent housing. This means that all City funding considerations or initiatives (either directly or through third party contracts), permitted uses, land use policies, etc., that are devoted to providing a service to those experiencing homelessness shall be aligned with the Federal and State Housing First model. Consistent with this model, the City’s Housing First Strategy will include coordinated entry into the broader system of care and housing placement, and “promising practices” such as the Community Homeless Assistance Programⁱ (CHAP). It also includes the importance of engagement and low barrier programs as a way to screen participants in rather than out of services.

FUNCTIONAL ZERO DEFINED: The Santa Rosa community has a systematic response to ensure homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or is a brief and non-recurring experience with a goal of housing a person who has fallen into homelessness within 30 days while preserving the dignity of individuals and families. Functional Zero is achieved when the supply of housing and services is equal to or greater than the demand of individuals experiencing homelessness.

HOW WILL FUNCTIONAL ZERO BE ACHIEVED: As stated, the City shall align its efforts with the Federal and State Housing First model and regional efforts underway through the Sonoma County Continuum of Careⁱⁱ.

HOUSING FIRST MODEL: Housing First takes an evidence-based approach to solving homelessness utilizing data from best practices that demonstrate effectiveness in moving a person into stable housing as quickly as possible and does not make housing contingent on participation in services or as a reward for changing behaviors. The Housing First model was adopted into state law with the passage of Senate Bill 1380, signed Governor Jerry Brown, on September 29, 2016, making California a Housing First state and establishing a Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council. This Strategy and its associated Fiscal Year 2016/2017 Work Plan incorporate the Housing First definition and core components outlined in SB1380 and that of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, which pursuant to this Strategy are now to be included in all City sponsored activity utilizing the following checklistⁱⁱⁱ:



- Access to programs is not contingent on sobriety, minimum income requirements, lack of a criminal record, completion of treatment, participation in services, or other unnecessary conditions.
- Programs or projects do everything possible not to reject an individual or family on the basis of poor credit or financial history, poor or lack of rental history, minor criminal convictions, or behaviors that are interpreted as indicating a lack of “housing readiness.”
- People with disabilities are offered clear opportunities to request reasonable accommodations within applications and screening processes and during tenancy, and building and apartment units include special physical features that accommodate disabilities.
- Programs or projects that cannot serve someone work through the coordinated entry process to ensure that those individuals or families have access to housing and services elsewhere.
- Housing and service goals and plans are highly tenant-driven.
- Supportive services emphasize engagement and problem-solving over therapeutic goals.
- Participation in services or compliance with service plans are not conditions of tenancy, but are reviewed with tenants and regularly offered as a resource to tenants.
- Services are informed by a harm-reduction philosophy that recognizes that drug and alcohol use and addiction are a part of some tenants’ lives. Tenants are engaged in non-judgmental communication regarding drug and alcohol use and are offered education regarding how to avoid risky behaviors and engage in safer practices.
- Substance use in and of itself, without other lease violations, is not considered a reason for eviction.
- Tenants in supportive housing are given reasonable flexibility in paying their share of rent on time and offered special payment arrangements for rent arrears and/or assistance with financial management, including representative payee arrangements.
- Every effort is made to provide a tenant the opportunity to transfer from one housing situation, program, or project to another if a tenancy is in jeopardy. Whenever possible, eviction back into homelessness is avoided.
- Program participates in the coordinated entry system which is a unified, streamlined, and user-friendly community-wide coordinated entry process.
- All components of the program implement and promote low barriers to entry or services and quickly identify people experiencing homelessness, provide access to safety, make service connections, and partner directly with housing providers to rapidly connect individuals and families to permanent housing.
- Outreach and other crisis response teams are coordinated, trained, and have the ability to engage and quickly connect people experiencing homelessness to the local coordinated entry process in order to apply for and obtain permanent housing.
- The program participates within the HMIS data entry system administered through the Sonoma County Community Development Commission.

Attachment

- 2016/2017 Work Plan

ⁱ In August 2016, the Santa Rosa City Council declared a local homeless emergency in Santa Rosa. Under this declaration, in October, Council approved CHAP and a set of [Guidelines](#) for the provision of a variety of services to assist persons experiencing homelessness in our community. These include safe parking, safe camping, provision of temporary indoor overnight shelter, the placement and maintenance of portable toilets and access to existing bathroom facilities, and storage for personal belongings. Eligible property types include those that meet the City’s Zoning Code definition for “meeting facility” such as clubs, lodges, private meeting halls, community centers, religious facilities, civic and private auditoriums, grange halls, and union halls in that these facilities are likely to be equipped to provide these types of services due to their existing use as a public assembly venue.

ⁱⁱ The [Sonoma County Continuum of Care](#) is a public-private partnership that brings together local government, service providers, and community activists to develop collaborative strategies for reducing homelessness.

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Housing_First_Checklist_FINAL.pdf