

Demonstrating Diversion Concepts within an Alberta Context

Developed by the Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness. This table differentiates the concepts of prevention, diversion, and rapid re-housing and contextualizes diversion as it relates to the prevention of homelessness.

		Housing Situation	Concept	Who shares responsibility?	Services Provided
PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS	PRIMARY	Housed (Not at imminent risk of losing housing)	Early Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banks (as mortgage lenders) Landlords Employers/Employment agencies Education Institutions Community Agencies Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary prevention activities Connection to mainstream resources/community supports Accessible information on services available
	PRIMARY	At Imminent Risk of Losing Housing (Precariously housed and not yet homeless)	Diversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food banks Banks Landlords Employers/Employment agencies Guidance councilors Education Institutions Government Community agencies Corrections Women's Shelters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental assistance/subsidy Income supports and other financial assistance Employment services Mediation/legal services Short-term case management Connection to community supports
	SECONDARY	Entry into System (Program/system entry point; could be explicitly seeking a place to stay but not necessary)	Diversion	Depending on entry point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Justice/Corrections Child Intervention AHS AISH/Income Support Landlords Outreach programs/community agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing search Case management Discharge planning Financial assistance Rental subsidy Outreach services Mental health and addictions Employment services Mediation/legal services
	SECONDARY	In Shelter – Short Term (In the homeless serving system for the first time; no history with Episodic or Chronic Homelessness)	Diversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless Shelters and Community Partners Alberta Health Services Income Support Legal Aid Trustee/Guardian Police Justice and Solicitor General 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connection to community supports Housing search Case management Financial assistance Rental subsidy Mental health and addictions Employment services Mediation/legal services
	SECONDARY	In Shelter – Episodic Homelessness (In the homeless serving system)	Rapid Re-housing or Housing First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless shelter, Housing First Providers, and Community Partners AHS Income support Legal Aid Trustee/Guardian Housing Advocates Police Justice and Solicitor General 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening tool/assessment Mental health and addictions Employment services Legal services Case management Wrap-around supports
	TERTIARY	In Shelter – Chronic Homelessness (In the homeless serving system)	Housing First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless shelter, Housing First Providers, and Community Partners Police AHS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening tool/assessment Mental health and addictions services Employment services Legal services Case management Wrap-around supports
		Unsheltered	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach workers, Housing First Providers, and Community Partners AHS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assertive engagement Assessment and referral Housing first

Glossary of Terms

Chronically homeless individuals - Those who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. In order to be considered chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets) and/or in an emergency homeless shelter.

Diversion: The Committee is referring to diversion as a preventative strategy/initiative to divert individuals from becoming homeless before they access a shelter or immediately expedite their exit from the shelter system. This may include helping people identify immediate alternative housing arrangements and connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them maintain or return to permanent housing. People requiring diversion assistance may be residing in any form of housing identified on the Housing and Supports Spectrum.

Episodically homeless individual: A person who is homeless for less than a year and has fewer than four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Housing First - Adopting a Housing First approach means that permanent housing is provided along with comprehensive, client-directed support services based on each individual's particular needs, to promote housing stability and individual well-being. Support services may include intensive medical, psychiatric and case management services including life skills training, landlord liaison assistance and addictions counseling. The essential elements of the Housing First approach are:

- a) rapid rehousing of homeless people without pre-conditions or limitations to length of stay;
- b) a commitment to working with clients for as long as they need;
- c) an emphasis on consumer choice and self-determination (within given structural constraints);
- d) an orientation on recovery and harm reduction; and
- e) social and community integration.

Primary prevention – Primary prevention activities seeks to reduce the risk of homelessness among the general population or large parts of the population, by targeting people who are housed (Apicello, 2010), in an effort to prevent new cases of homelessness (Culhane et al., 2011). This first level of prevention includes measures involving broad housing policies including supply, accessibility and affordability as well as services such as income benefits, housing benefits and job protection (Busch-Geertsema & Fitzpatrick, 2008).

Rapid Re-Housing: a specific type of housing intervention for individuals/families with moderate acuity, who are quickly diverted from homelessness and provided access to moderate supports to maintain housing stability.

Secondary prevention – Secondary prevention activities would seek to identify and address conditions at its earliest stages, such as when they enter shelters (Apicello, 2010). This includes people who have been in institutional care or those in crisis situations such as eviction or relationship breakdown, which are likely to lead to future homelessness. Busch-Geertsema & Fitzpatrick (2008) maintain that most homelessness prevention interventions tend to focus on secondary prevention measures. While these programs may reduce the total number of people affected at any time, they do not reduce the number of new cases of homelessness (Shinn et al., 2001), but rather attempt to treat conditions close to their onset, at a time when they are easier to counteract (Culhane et al., 2011).

Tertiary prevention – Activities developed for tertiary prevention attempts to slow the progression or mitigate the negative effects of homelessness once it has become established, by targeting people who have been homeless for some time. Prevention initiatives focus on harm reduction activities to minimize repeated homelessness (Apicello, 2010). Culhane et al. (2011) further suggests that these prevention activities should be seen as a continuum of care as the boundaries between each are somewhat indeterminate.

Unsheltered: Living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation. (One component of the Canadian Homelessness Research Network's typology describing a range of accommodations that people who are considered to be homeless may experience.)

Note:

- Definitions in this glossary are from the Working Reference Glossary of Terminology and Concepts for the Alberta Interagency Council on Homelessness.
- Please note the content in this table is not exhaustive and only provides a brief snapshot of diversion concepts within Alberta.