

# Built for Zero Housing Stabilization Learning Cohort (HSLC) FRAMEWORK for Coordinated Homelessness Prevention

March 2024

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This document summarizes our collective understanding of the **key concepts**, **foundational priorities**, and **core elements** of a **Coordinated Homelessness Prevention** “system” or approach that includes **Targeted Homelessness Prevention** features that prioritize responses for people at greater risk for literal homelessness. The foundational priorities and related activities can be used by communities to organize stakeholders, especially people with lived experience, around a common vision and to establish a **Coordinated Prevention Roadmap** that spells out key planning, development, and implementation steps.

Communities are encouraged to use this working document as a reference and guide for understanding the specific foundational priorities and elements necessary to establish and sustain a **Coordinated Homelessness Prevention** system within your community. As we engage in a shared learning and development process, these underlying concepts, development priorities, and operational elements will continue to evolve.

## Audience:

- Backbone entity(ies)
- Community Core Prevention Team and key stakeholders

## Topics:

- [Key Concepts](#)
- [Housing Insecurity Scale](#)
- [Foundational Priorities](#)
- [Core Elements of Coordinated Prevention](#)

## Related Tools/Guidance:

- [HSLC Overview](#)
- [HSLC Toolbank](#) (guidance and tools specific to each Foundational Priority activity)

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### Key Concepts

The following describes key concepts and working definitions based on established frameworks for prevention, particularly those arising from the public health sector. They provide a shared understanding of the full spectrum of housing insecurity, including the differences between targeted and non-targeted prevention interventions, and can be further developed and adapted to meet local needs.

Communities seeking to develop Coordinated Prevention approaches are encouraged to document locally adapted concepts, such as those included below, to ensure shared understanding among local stakeholders. Documenting these agreements also supports the development of shared screening and prioritization approaches, consistency across providers and places where people may be asked about their housing situation, so that no matter where someone is engaged in the community, there is equal, equitable, and expedited access to any available help needed to avoid literal homelessness.

Key concepts also include an example **Housing Insecurity Scale**. The Housing Insecurity Scale is based in part on federal at-risk definitions for HUD Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program and VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program that identify people who are most at-risk based on their current circumstances and other empirically-based vulnerabilities, such as prior experiences of homelessness.

### Housing Insecurity

"Housing insecurity is a measure of how close a person or family is to being homeless, determined by factors such as being behind on mortgage or rent, making multiple moves, living in a shelter, and experiencing homelessness."

### Homelessness Prevention

Homelessness prevention refers to policies, practices, and interventions that reduce the likelihood that someone will experience homelessness. It also means providing those who have been homeless with the necessary resources and support to stabilize their housing, enhance integration and social inclusion, and ultimately reduce the risk of the recurrence of homelessness.

Three general types of **Homelessness Prevention** (HP):<sup>1</sup>

- **Primary**: Structural-level initiatives that apply to everyone, to reduce the risk of homelessness and build protective factors.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Gaetz & Erin Dej. (2017). A New Direction: A Framework for Homelessness Prevention. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

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- **Secondary:** Intervention strategies aimed at those who are at imminent risk of homelessness (i.e., received an eviction notice) as well as those who have recently become homeless, with the aim of avoiding homelessness or moving out of homelessness as quickly as possible.
  - **Targeted Homelessness Prevention (“Targeted Prevention”)** and **Diversion** are forms of secondary homelessness prevention that target assistance to households at greatest risk for literal homelessness within a defined period (e.g., 14 days or less) and who lack other safe housing options and resources to avoid literal homelessness “but for” timely and individualized prevention assistance.
  - Targeted Prevention relies on **standardized risk screening** to identify people most at-risk for literal homelessness. Homelessness Prevention activities funded under Federal Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Programs are targeted based on federal eligibility requirements.
  - **Targeted Prevention** qualities:
    - **Efficient:** well *targeted* assistance that reaches the right people - those very likely to become homeless unless (“but for”) timely, individualized help.
    - **Effective:** assistance that reduces or eliminates a person's housing crisis, including stopping someone from becoming homeless.
    - **Equitable & Evidence-Based:** rooted in evidence-based, data-informed research and prioritization that centers racial and other equity considerations using data-driven indicators.
- **Tertiary:** Prevention initiatives that support individuals and families who have previously experienced homelessness to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

### Coordinated Homelessness Prevention (“Coordinated Prevention”)

A community-wide approach that uses common risk screening criteria to identify people who are housing insecure, including people at greatest risk for literal homelessness, and then offers immediate, coordinated access to **Housing Problem Solving** and prevention-related resources, including prioritized access to assistance for people with more urgent prevention needs.

Coordinated Prevention systems increase access to assistance and reduce the burden on already overwhelmed homeless crisis response systems by providing

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**“housing urgent care”** in community settings where people with urgent housing needs can more readily access assistance to avoid a housing emergency. Coordinated Prevention systems also include ‘upstream’ and cross-sector partners to identify and assist people with both targeted and non-targeted strategies and resources.

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### Housing Insecurity Scale

The following scale provides key indicators for Risk Levels related to housing insecurity, ranging from least to most severe (0 to 4). The scale is modeled, in part, from federal definitions and commonly used ways to identify people based on **material risk** factors who are most at risk for housing loss without intervention. The scale allows for adaptation and integration of additional housing insecurity indicators, including ones based on characteristics that suggest greater **inherent risk** for future literal homelessness (e.g prior homelessness, youth who aged out of foster care, etc).

Risk Level		Living Situation	Housing Options & Resources
0	<b>Stably Housed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current housing is safe; AND</li> <li>Current housing is stable for the foreseeable future (e.g., sufficient income to pay rent and utilities, able to stay with host family/friend indefinitely)</li> </ul>	<u>Has</u> housing options, financial resources, and/or support networks to maintain or obtain a safe place to stay for the foreseeable future.
1	<b>Unstably Housed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current housing is safe; AND</li> <li>No material risk of imminent risk of literal homelessness (i.e., not Risk Level 2-4); AND</li> <li>Is currently experiencing general housing insecurity due to housing cost burden, housing conditions, frequent unplanned moves, and/or other characteristics and barriers indicative of higher risk for future literal homelessness. May be at-risk of housing loss in 3-6 months.</li> </ul>	<u>Has</u> housing options, financial resources, and/or support networks to maintain or obtain a safe place to stay for the foreseeable future.
2	<b>At-Risk of Literal Homelessness (within 15-90 Days)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current housing is safe; AND</li> <li>Must leave current housing within <u>15-90 days</u> (e.g., due to court-ordered eviction, landlord-issued eviction, foreclosure, safety or health risk, host family/friend limitation, etc.); OR</li> <li>Must leave an institution (e.g., hospital, jail, treatment facility) within <u>15-90 days</u>;</li> </ul>	<u>Does not have other</u> housing options, financial resources, and/or support networks to maintain or obtain a safe place to stay <u>after the next 15-90 days</u> .
3	<b>Imminent Risk of Literal Homelessness (within 1-14 Days)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current housing is safe; AND</li> <li>Must leave current housing within <u>14 days</u> (e.g., due to court-ordered eviction, foreclosure, imminent safety or health risk, host family/friend request to leave, family conflict, etc.); OR</li> <li>Must leave an institution (e.g., hospital, jail, treatment facility) within <u>14 days</u>;</li> </ul>	<u>Does not have other</u> housing options, financial resources, and/or support networks to maintain or obtain a safe place to stay after the <u>next 14 days</u> .
4	<b>Literally Homeless Tonight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is currently literally homeless and continues to have no other safe housing option tonight outside of available emergency shelter, Safe Haven, or transitional housing options; OR</li> <li>Must leave current housing <u>today</u> (e.g., due to court-ordered eviction, foreclosure, immediate safety or health risk, host family/friend request to leave, etc.); OR</li> <li>Must leave an institution (e.g., hospital, jail, treatment facility) <u>today</u>.</li> </ul>	<u>Does not have other</u> housing options, financial resources, and/or support networks to maintain or obtain a safe place to stay <u>tonight</u>

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## Foundational Priorities

The following priorities are intended to serve as guideposts for communities working toward developing and scaling community-wide coordinated prevention approaches. They align to the **Coordinated Prevention Roadmap** for the community.

DEVELOPMENT & PILOTING PHASE (months 1-8)
<p><b>1. Establish Core Team, Staff Roles, &amp; Roadmap (months 1-2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. <b>Dedicated lead organization and staff</b> to support: 1) prevention system development and management, 2) data analysis and reporting, and 3) meaningful involvement of people with lived experience and expertise, including written roles, responsibilities, and basic organizational chart. (month 1).</li><li>B. <b>Diverse, representative Core Prevention Team with PLEH leaders</b> with a written group charter and plan for PLEH support (by month 2).</li><li>C. <b>Shared understanding of Coordinated Prevention</b>, including Core Components and related housing insecurity risk levels and definitions adopted by Core Prevention Team (by month 2).</li><li>D. <b>Coordinated Prevention Roadmap</b> developed by Core Prevention Team, including key milestones, roles, timelines, etc. for initial 8 month planning and piloting phase (initial by month 2, reviewed/adjusted monthly).</li></ul>
<p><b>2. Examine Current Housing Insecurity &amp; Emergency Needs (months 2-4)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. <b>Initial inflow investigation</b> using HMIS data (by month 3), including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I. <b>HMIS data usability review</b> (accuracy, completeness for key data)</li><li>II. <b>Annual literal homelessness inflow analysis</b> of cohorts (new, return from housing, return from other) and disaggregated by subpopulations (race, household type, etc.)</li></ul></li><li>B. <b>Community interviews</b> documenting common user experiences with <u>accessing emergency homeless assistance resources</u>, along with experiences and insights from coordinated entry/diversion assistance providers and frontline staff (initial by month 3, repeated at regular intervals per Roadmap).</li><li>C. <b>Housing insecurity heat mapping</b> using HMIS inflow data, eviction data, and other readily available data to identify areas and groups experiencing higher (severe) housing insecurity.</li></ul>
<p><b>3. Examine Current Housing Insecurity &amp; Emergency Responses (months 2-4)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. <b>Environmental scan</b> of current prevention resources and potential partners, with mapping of prevention resources relative to housing insecurity risk levels (i.e., how timely, accessible, etc.), including any existing <b>Core Elements of Coordinated Prevention</b> available or forthcoming (by month 3).</li><li>B. <b>Community interviews</b> documenting common user experiences with <u>accessing urgent/emergency prevention resources</u>, along with experiences and insights from prevention/diversion assistance providers and frontline staff, particularly in areas and/or among groups disproportionately experiencing severe housing insecurity (initial by month 3, repeated at regular intervals per Roadmap).</li></ul>

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- C. Identification of new or current resources** that can be directed to support ***Core Elements of Coordinated Prevention***, including as part of initial pilot implementation (by month 4).

## **4. Pilot Core Elements of Coordinated Prevention (months 4-8)**

- A. Pilot implementation plan** outlining objectives, assumptions, measurable outcomes, roles/responsibilities, and funding for initial prevention pilot to initiate or test one or more ***Core Elements of Coordinated Prevention*** (by month 4).
- B. Early implementation and testing** of one or more elements (months 4-7).
- C. Pilot review, learning, adjustment** with Core Team and key community partners (month 8), including examination of measurable outcomes and related effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of pilot interventions and approaches.

## **SCALING & IMPLEMENTATION PHASE (months 9-12)**

## **5. Scale & Implement Core Components of Coordinated Prevention (months 9-12)**

- A. Updated pilot implementation and scaling plan**, built on learning to-date and dependent on available resources, and including measurable annual inflow reduction and race equity goals (month 9).
- B. Updated Prevention Roadmap** for year 2 key activities to further establish ***Core Elements of Coordinated Prevention***, including ongoing improvement activities (e.g., regular interviews with people accessing assistance) (month 12).

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### Core Elements of Coordinated Prevention

The following core elements represent the basic “ingredients” communities are finding necessary in order to effectively implement and sustain coordinated prevention efforts. They are intended to serve as guideposts for communities working toward developing and scaling community-wide coordinated prevention approaches.

**1. Coordinated Prevention Partners:** *community partners formally engaged as Access Points & Service Providers across a wide variety of community-based and cross-sector settings.*

- A. Prevention Service Providers** identified and organized to receive referrals and provide timely response and support for people who are housing insecure, including those most at-risk of losing their housing, with focus on providers offering:
- I. Targeted homelessness prevention and diversion programs**, including those funded with HUD Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program, VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program, and any state or local funding for targeted prevention..
  - II. Non-targeted prevention resources**, including providers administering emergency financial assistance resources, legal services, landlord and family mediation services, and other critical assistance that can be accessed on a *prioritized and timely* basis when needed.
- B. Access Point partners** set up across the community that are able to connect with Service Providers, including cross-sector partners (e.g., health clinics, schools), and other places (e.g., libraries, rec centers, laundromats) located in or serving areas with more people who are disproportionately housing insecure.
- C. Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding** between partners and with Core Prevention Team or a designated lead to confirm commitments, roles and responsibilities, including shared understanding and definition of housing insecurity.

**2. Coordinated Prevention Access & Services:** *Housing Problem-Solving, flexible financial assistance, and prioritized access to other existing community resources and housing options that reduce risk and help to stabilize housing.*

- A. Housing-focused screening and referral approaches** appropriate to each partner setting and population, used across Access Points and Service Providers.
- B. Housing Problem-Solving**, a crisis intervention and trauma-informed approach used by trained and certified staff at Access Points and Service Providers focused on immediate housing stabilization and resource connection..
- C. Flexible financial assistance** that is immediately available and can address any financial need related to reducing imminent risk and stabilizing housing.
- D. Prioritized and timely access to other existing community resources** that reduce imminent risk for literal homelessness and promote housing security.
- E. Landlord partners and housing relocation support** to help households avoid eviction or secure new housing.



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**3. Coordinated Prevention Manual, Tools, and Guidance:** *for Access Points and Service Providers to consistently and equitably identify and assist higher priority households.*

- A. Coordinated prevention manual** including roles, responsibilities, policies, procedures related to screening, services, prioritized access to assistance, data collection, etc.
- B. Brief screening tools, prioritization and referral workflows** tailored for specific partner settings that facilitate connection to staff trained in Housing Problem-Solving and other available prevention assistance.
- C. Response and referral guidance** regularly updated (e.g., weekly or monthly) and shared with Access Point and Service Provider partners, including Risk Level-specific response reminders and guidance, along with currently available prevention assistance, eligibility and documentation requirements, key contacts, expedited referral process, and responsiveness by Risk Level.

**4. Coordinated Prevention Training:** *regular training for Access Point and Service Provider partner staff on key skills, community resources, and all things housing.*

- A. Housing Problem-Solving** training and certification for staff at Access Points and Service Providers, including refresher and recertification training.
- B. Community prevention resource training** on key prevention resources, including eligibility, referral protocols, documentation requirements, etc.
- C. Community homeless crisis response system training** including coordinated access, problem-solving, diversion, and shelter/outreach referral protocols and expectations.
- D. Housing law and landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities training** including review of legal documents (e.g., leases, eviction notices) and legal remedies.
- E. Affordable housing resource training** including housing subsidy types, eligibility, referral protocols, documentation requirements, etc.
- F. Other key frontline crisis intervention staff training** (e.g., trauma informed crisis intervention, immigration and refugee status issues and legal rights, supporting survivors of human trafficking, etc.).

**5. Coordinated Prevention Management and Support:** *backbone entity to lead and support partner recruitment, training, coordination, reporting, analysis, and ongoing system improvement and development.*

- A. System management and development staff** to support overall system management and partner coordination, meetings, resource development, communications, etc.
- B. Support for people with lived experience** including designated staff and resources to support successful collaboration and equitable compensation.
- C. Data systems and staff support** for partner service referral and coordination, as well as for data collection, reporting, and evaluation (e.g., HMIS, community information and referral platforms).