

Built for Zero Inflow Solutions Initiative

Framework for Coordinated Inflow Reduction

INTRODUCTION

This document summarizes our collective understanding of the *Key Concepts*, *Foundational Priorities*, and *Core Elements* of a Coordinated Inflow Reduction Strategy that provides *targeted homelessness-prevention services to people at greater risk of literal homelessness*. The Key Concepts and Housing Insecurity Scale enable a shared understanding of what the community seeks to prevent and how to operationalize community-wide goals. 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 Inflow Reduction Roadmap* that spells out key planning, development, and implementation steps.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT

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 Inflow Reductions Strategy within your community. Inflow reduction strategies and the broader homelessness prevention field are evolving as new, effective practices continue to emerge. We encourage users of these materials to share feedback and learnings at [ISI feedback](#).

AUDIENCE

- Backbone Entities
- Community Core Teams and key stakeholders

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1. KEY CONCEPTS

The following presents key concepts and working definitions based on established prevention frameworks, particularly those 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 Inflow Reduction Strategies are encouraged to adopt the concepts below locally to ensure shared understanding among local stakeholders. Communities may consider formalizing them as part of the Continuum of Care's Coordinated Entry policies and procedures and prevention written standards. 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, fair, and expedited access to any available help needed to avoid literal homelessness.

Key concepts also include an example of the 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 encompasses factors across housing stability, affordability, quality, safety, neighborhood safety, neighborhood quality, and homelessness. While there is not one commonly used definition and measure that captures the multidimensional aspects of housing insecurity¹, we chose to use the following for clarity: "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

¹ Cox et al. (2019). Road Map to a Unified Measure of Housing Insecurity. *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*

integration and social inclusion, and ultimately reduce the risk of the recurrence of homelessness.

Three general types of Homelessness Prevention (HP):²

1. Primary

Structural-level initiatives that apply to everyone, to reduce the risk of homelessness and build protective factors. These could include policies like tenant protections and fair housing enforcement, rental subsidies, and low-income housing investments.

2. Secondary

Interventions 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 often 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.
 - **Fair & Evidence-Based:** rooted in evidence-based, data-informed research and prioritization that considers disproportionality in access to prevention resources and housing outcomes.
 - **Enduring:** assistance that results in a durable and lasting avoidance of experiencing homelessness

3. Tertiary

Prevention initiatives that support individuals and families who have previously experienced homelessness to ensure that it doesn't happen again. These interventions could include on-site supportive services at a Permanent Supportive Housing location,

² Stephen Gaetz & Erin DeJ. (2017). *A New Direction: A Framework for Homelessness Prevention*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

increased post-housing case management support, implementation of temporary flexible funding, and linkage to workforce development and MH/SUD supports.

Coordinated Inflow Reductions Strategies

A community-wide, data-driven approach that examines the largest sources of inflow into the homeless response system, and then offers immediate, coordinated access to housing problem-solving and other prevention-related resources, often through common risk screening tools and practices. At times, inflow reduction practices take the form of hyper-local, targeted interventions rather than a universally available practice, such as case conferencing with property owners with higher eviction rates.

Coordinated Inflow Reduction Strategies increase access to assistance where it's needed most. Communities can embed these practices within the homeless response system, building on the public's awareness of the Coordinated Entry system, network of providers, and existing data practices and workflows. Alternatively, communities can provide "housing urgent care" in non-traditional community settings such as social services agencies, barbershops, and food banks that people with urgent housing needs visit. This approach can provide lower barrier access to resources and alleviate a housing stressor before it turns into a full-blown emergency. Coordinated Inflow Reduction Strategies are most effective when 'upstream' and cross-sector partners are coordinated and appropriately trained to identify and assist people with both strategies and resources.

Diversion

An example of a targeted homelessness prevention intervention that seeks "to assist people to resolve their immediate housing crisis by accessing a safe and appropriate housing alternative versus entering emergency shelter or otherwise staying in a place not meant for human habitation that night."³

³ [Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\) Homelessness Prevention Screening Tool Companion Guide](#)

2. 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, on federal definitions and commonly used methods for identifying people based on material risk factors who are most at risk of 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	Stably Housed	- Current housing is safe; AND - 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)	<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	Unstably Housed	- Current housing is safe; AND - No material risk of imminent risk of literal homelessness (i.e., not Risk Level 2-4); AND - 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.	<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	At-Risk of Literal Homelessness (within 15-90 Days)	- Current housing is safe; AND - 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 - Must leave an institution (e.g., hospital, jail, treatment facility) within <u>15-90 days</u>;	<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	Imminent Risk of Literal Homelessness (within 1-14 Days)	- Current housing is safe; AND - 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 - Must leave an institution (e.g., hospital, jail, treatment facility) within <u>14 days</u>;	<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	Literally Homeless Tonight	- 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 - 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 - Must leave an institution (e.g., hospital, jail, treatment facility) <u>today</u>.	<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>

3. FOUNDATIONAL PRIORITIES

The following priorities are intended to serve as guideposts for communities working to develop and scale community-wide coordinated inflow reduction strategies. They align with the Coordinated Inflow Reduction Roadmap for the community.

EXPLORATION & PLANNING PHASE (months 1-8)

1. Develop a Backbone Team consisting of: (months 1)

- a. Dedicated lead organization and staff to support:
 - i. inflow reduction strategy development and management,
 - ii. data analysis and reporting, and
 - iii. compensation and support for PWLEH as indicated by the CoC's policies and procedures,
- b. Meaningful engagement with PWLEH leaders
- c. Service Providers who are knowledgeable of the homeless system access and inflow
- d. Shared understanding of homelessness insecurity risk levels
- e. Assess Backbone Team capacity to recruit and convene Community Core Team, hold responsibility for managing community Roadmap (by month 1)

2. Conduct an Initial Inflow Analysis (months 2-4)

- a. **Refer to (or administer) the Data Quality scorecard** to understand the strengths and limitations of existing data (month 2)
- b. **Conduct Annual literal homelessness inflow analysis** using HMIS data, review should include cohorts (new, return from housing, return from other), geolocal data, homeless system history, and disaggregated by subpopulations (race, household type, etc.) (initial by month 3, repeated at regular intervals per Roadmap)
- c. **Create a Housing insecurity heat map** using HMIS inflow data and other readily available information (such as eviction data, American Community Survey data, and Medicaid/SNAP enrollments) to identify geographic areas of greatest homeless system inflow and groups experiencing greater housing insecurity. (month 3)
- d. **Conduct Community interviews** in geographic areas with the largest inflows to document common user experiences accessing emergency homeless assistance resources, along with experiences and insights from coordinated entry/diversion assistance providers and frontline staff (initial by month 4, repeated at regular intervals per the Roadmap).
- e. **Solicit feedback and insights** from coordinated entry and street outreach providers to identify observations and trends related to inflow.

3. Establish Community Core Team, Staff Roles, & Roadmap (months 4-5)

- a. **Recruit cross-sector stakeholders**, representative of areas of higher inflow, to serve on the Core Team (by month 5).

- b. **Develop a Charter** that outlines roles and responsibilities, including formalizing decision-making structure and relationship to the CoC (by month 6)
- c. **Adopt shared understanding of Coordinated Inflow Reduction**, including Foundational Priorities, Core Elements, and related housing insecurity risk levels and definitions (by month 6).
- d. **Create a Coordinated Inflow Reduction Roadmap** including key milestones, roles, timelines, etc. (initial by month 6, reviewed and updated monthly).

4. Examine Current Housing Insecurity Resources (months 6-7)

- a. **Conduct an Environmental scan** of current prevention resources and potential partners, mapping prevention resources relative to housing insecurity risk levels (i.e., timeliness, accessibility, etc.) and populations served (by month 6).
- b. **Community interviews** with PWLEH, documenting experiences accessing homelessness prevention resources, particularly in areas and/or among groups disproportionately experiencing severe housing insecurity (initially by month 7, repeated at regular intervals per Roadmap).
- c. **Solicit feedback and insights** from prevention and diversion providers to identify observations and trends related to access and effectiveness of current prevention resources (by month 7)
- d. **Update the Coordinated Inflow Reduction Roadmap** to pair existing or new resources with sources of greater inflow, such as returns from a specific housing provider, and expand Housing Problem Solving training to a high-volume Coordinated Entry access point (by month 7).

IMPLEMENTATION & SCALING PHASE (months 8-24)

5. Pilot Core Elements of Coordinated Inflow Reduction (months 8-11)

- a. **Conduct a literal homelessness inflow analysis** of the last three months. Review should include any previously noted sources of inflow, such as cohorts (new, return from housing, return from other), geolocation data, homeless system history, and disaggregated by subpopulations (race, household type, etc.) (by month 8)
- b. **Develop a Pilot Implementation and Scaling Plan** outlining objectives, current baseline measures from the above inflow analysis, assumptions, measurable outcomes, roles/responsibilities, and funding for the initial prevention pilot to initiate or test Core Elements of Coordinated Inflow Reductions (by month 8).
- c. **Early implementation, data collection, and ongoing monitoring** of piloted activities (months 9-11).
- d. **Community Core Team review** with key community partners, including examination of measurable outcomes and related effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of piloted activities (by month 11)

6. Scale & Implement Core Elements of Coordinated Inflow Reduction strategies (months 12 -24)

- a. **Conduct a literal homelessness inflow analysis** of the last three months. The review should include any previously noted sources of inflow, such as cohorts (new, return from housing, return from other), geolocation data, homeless

system history, and disaggregated by subpopulations (race, household type, etc.) (by month 12)

- b. **Review and update Pilot Implementation and Scaling Plan**, built on learning to date and dependent on available resources, and including measurable inflow reduction goals, process goals, including review disaggregated by demographics at regular intervals by (month 12).
 - c. **Update Coordinated Inflow Reduction Roadmap** for year 2 key activities to further establish Core Elements of Coordinated Inflow Reduction Strategies, including ongoing improvement activities (e.g., regular feedback mechanisms with people accessing assistance) and sustaining activities (e.g., recruitment of cross-sector champions) (by month 12).
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4. CORE ELEMENTS OF COORDINATED INFLOW REDUCTIONS

The following core elements represent the basic “ingredients” communities are finding necessary to effectively implement and sustain coordinated inflow reductions. They are intended to serve as guideposts for communities working to develop and scale community-wide coordinated prevention strategies. These elements are designed to be implemented in concert, rather than one at a time or sequentially.

CORE ELEMENTS

1. **Coordinated Inflow Reduction Partners:** community partners formally engaged as Access Points & Service Providers (location and type may vary depending on whether access is embedded in Coordinated Entry or as a standalone intervention) 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 a 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 can 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 the Community Core Team or a designated lead to confirm commitments, roles, and responsibilities, including a shared understanding and definition of housing insecurity
2. **Coordinated Inflow Reduction 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.
- 3. **Coordinated Inflow Reduction Manual, Tools, and Guidance:** for Access Points and Service Providers to consistently and equitably identify and assist higher priority households.
 - a. **Coordinated Inflow Reduction 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** is regularly updated (e.g., weekly or monthly) and shared with Access Point and Service Provider partners, including Risk Level-specific response reminders and guidance, currently available prevention assistance, eligibility and documentation requirements, key contacts, the expedited referral process, and responsiveness by Risk Level.
- 4. **Coordinated Inflow Reduction 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 Inflow Reduction 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 fair 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).
 - d. **Alignment** with existing homeless response structures, such as the CoC and/or administrative leads for the homeless system (e.g., Mayor's office, local Interagency Council, etc.)
-