

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DISCHARGE PLANNING

All individuals and families should have safe, affordable housing.

- Ensuring all residents safe, affordable housing requires effective collaboration among stakeholders.
- Necessary support and preventive services should be available to assist individuals and families to avoid homelessness.
- An individual or family that can be supported within their current appropriate housing situation should not come into the homeless system.

Homeless individuals or families should receive safe, temporary shelter; planning for permanent housing should begin immediately.

- If preventive interventions cannot support an at-risk individual or family in their current housing situation, temporary shelter should be provided.
- Temporary shelter is a short-term intervention, not a substitute for permanent housing.
- Homeless individuals and families should receive a thorough assessment for placement into shelters with services that meet their particular needs and will expedite permanent housing placement.
- Individuals and families have the responsibility to provide accurate and complete information about their circumstances and needs.
- Services should be culturally sensitive and available in the client's community to maintain community ties, if appropriate.
- Children in homeless families should be assured access to a sound education by minimizing school disruption that may occur as a result of becoming homeless.
- Services must be structured to ensure permanent housing is preferable to shelter and maintained once achieved.

Individuals should not have to make their home on the street or in other public spaces; safe and humane options should be available.

- Effective outreach must be provided to encourage individuals living on the street to accept services and shelter.
- Practices that encourage individuals to live on the street are counterproductive and should not be supported.
- Safe environments must be provided that appropriately support individuals who fear service engagement.

All individuals and families deserve and are expected to actively participate in the development and implementation of their independent living plans.

- Every individual and family deserves respect.
- Individuals and families must receive clear information and consistent services as they transition through the shelter system.
- Individual and family strengths should be integrated into service plans.

- Individuals and families must be responsible for achieving independence, and must be informed on how they are accountable for completing service plans, and how those expectations relate to securing permanent housing.
- Individuals and families should treat every person involved in their care, other temporary shelter residents, and their shelter space, with respect.
- Individuals and families should have permanent housing that is reflective of their assessed needs, including services, if necessary, to support permanency.

All agencies must work as partners to ensure successful, long-term outcomes for individuals and families who are, or who may become, homeless.

- Public agencies must coordinate their services to ensure their practices do not result in any individual or family becoming homeless.
- Achieving successful, permanent housing for individuals and families depends upon inter-agency accountability, collaboration, and cooperation.
- Discharge planning and resource coordination should occur to facilitate a safe and appropriate transition for individuals and families being served by multiple service systems.

Services must be provided with the goal of achieving the highest standards of practice through continuous quality improvement.

- Every employee has a significant role in achieving positive outcomes for clients, regardless of rank or title.
- Open and honest communication in an atmosphere without fear is critical to success.
- Every effort must be made to engage clients to actively participate in service delivery and planning, and to respond to feedback received from them.
- Providers should have the appropriate training and resources to enable them to achieve successful outcomes.
- Information must be used to drive improvements in outcomes and quality and must be made publicly available.
- Evaluation systems must be developed to accurately measure and recognize success.
- Every provider is accountable for meeting standards and achieving successful outcomes for clients.

PREVENTION PRINCIPLES FOR DISCHARGE PLANNING

All individuals and families should have safe, affordable housing.

- Ensuring safe, affordable housing for all residents require effective collaboration among stakeholders – including providers, public agencies, community organizations, and clients.
- Services and support should assist individuals and families to avoid becoming homeless by maintaining current, appropriate accommodations.
- Every effort must be made to prevent individuals and families who have appropriate housing from entering the shelter system.

All efforts should be made to assist individuals and families as soon as possible to avoid crises that cause homelessness.

- Interventions should be delivered at the community level before points of crisis, to avoid the disruption and instability created by homelessness or the risk of becoming homeless.
- Coordination should occur to serve individuals and families holistically, addressing the circumstances that can cause homelessness.
- Agencies and providers should provide cohesive services for individuals and families being served by multiple systems.

Homeless preventive services should provide flexible assistance to meet individual and family needs.

- Preventive services should be culturally sensitive and easy to access at the community level, if appropriate.
- Services should be flexible and responsive to client needs, ensuring the earliest possible interventions through a range of services.

Agencies that provide services to clients in institutional settings should ensure successful discharges to stable, permanent housing.

- Discharge planning and resource coordination should occur to facilitate a safe and appropriate transition that ensures individuals and families do not become homeless.
- Discharge planning should include provision of or referral to appropriate support services, when necessary.

All individuals and families receiving services deserve respect and must be respectful.

- Individuals and families should have knowledge about available preventive services.
- Individuals and families should be aware of their rights and responsibilities as tenants and clients, as well as the rights and responsibilities of landlords.
- Individuals and families receiving preventive assistance should receive clear information, responsive services, and information about their rights as clients and the responsibilities of agencies.

Preventive services should be guided by data and research.

- Data should inform prevention interventions that address the causes of homelessness.
- Research should routinely inform policy development.
- Service delivery should be based on both quantitative and qualitative data, including client and staff feedback.
- Agencies and providers must be accountable for meeting standards and achieving successful outcomes for clients.