

Housing First! Perspectives from the US



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Today:



- ❧ What is “housing first”?
- ❧ Etymology
- ❧ Core principles
- ❧ What it is not
- ❧ Qualifications
- ❧ Emergent federal policy in the US

What is “housing first”?



- A. A slogan
- B. A philosophy
- C. A program model
- D. A brand
- E. A policy
- F. All of the above

Etymology



- ❧ 1993 – “Beyond Shelter” publication (T, Tull)
- ❧ 1998 – Natl. Alliance to End Homelessness
- ❧ Early-mid 2000s – Applied to Consumer Preference Supported Housing (CPSH) (Tsemberis, Pathways to Housing)
- ❧ 2009 – HEARTH Act/HPRP, US Congress

CPSH Program Model



Established by Pathways to Housing in 1992

Assumption: Housing is a right to be honored, not a privilege to be earned.

Consistent with Americans with Disabilities Act principles: Access and reasonable accommodations

CPSH Program Model



☞ Core Principles:

- ❖ Consumer choice and empowerment
- ❖ Separation of services and housing
- ❖ Services are voluntary and flexible
- ❖ Community integration
- ❖ Harm reduction and recovery oriented

Are these principles distinct from PSH in general?

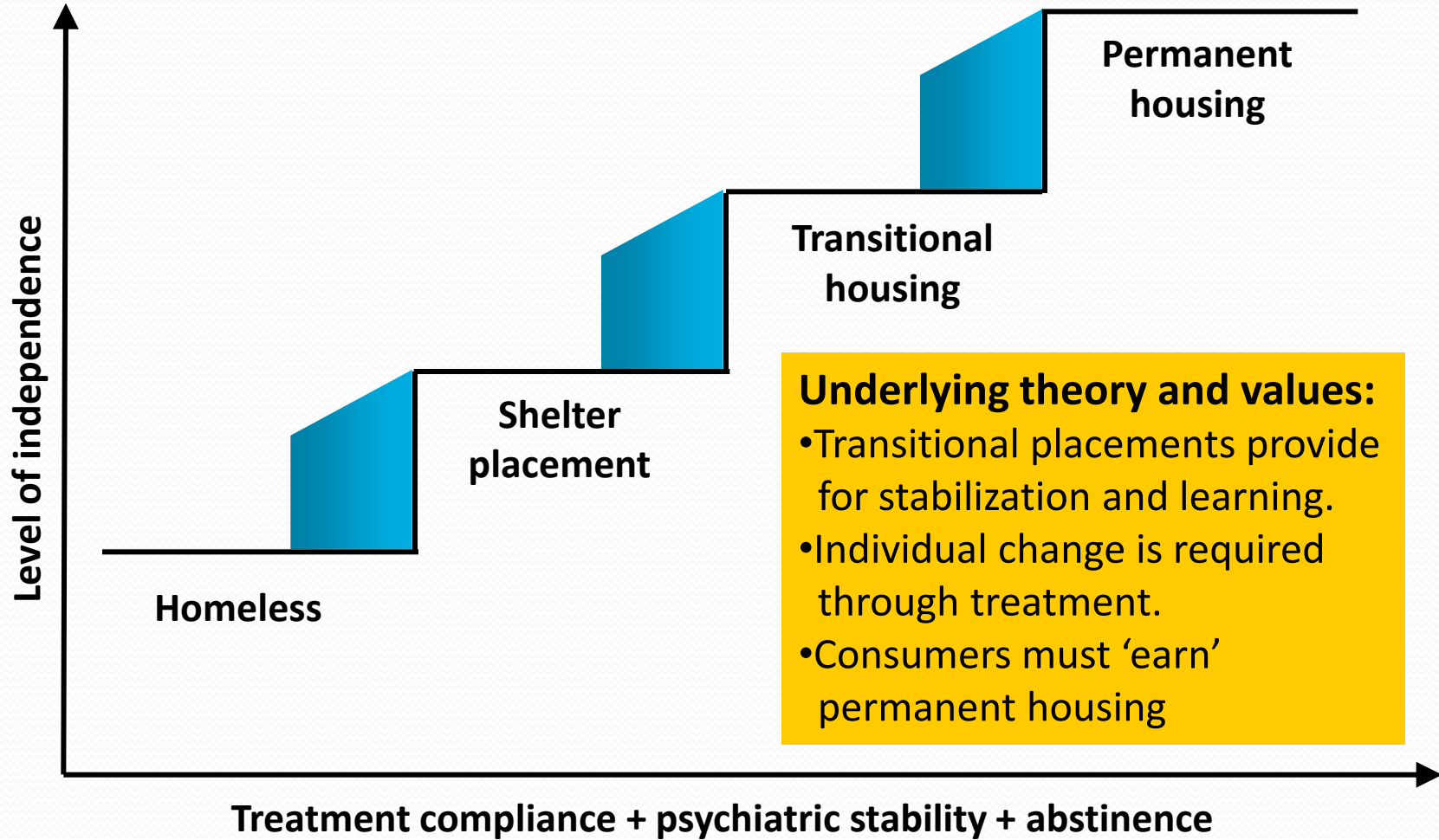
CPSH Program Model



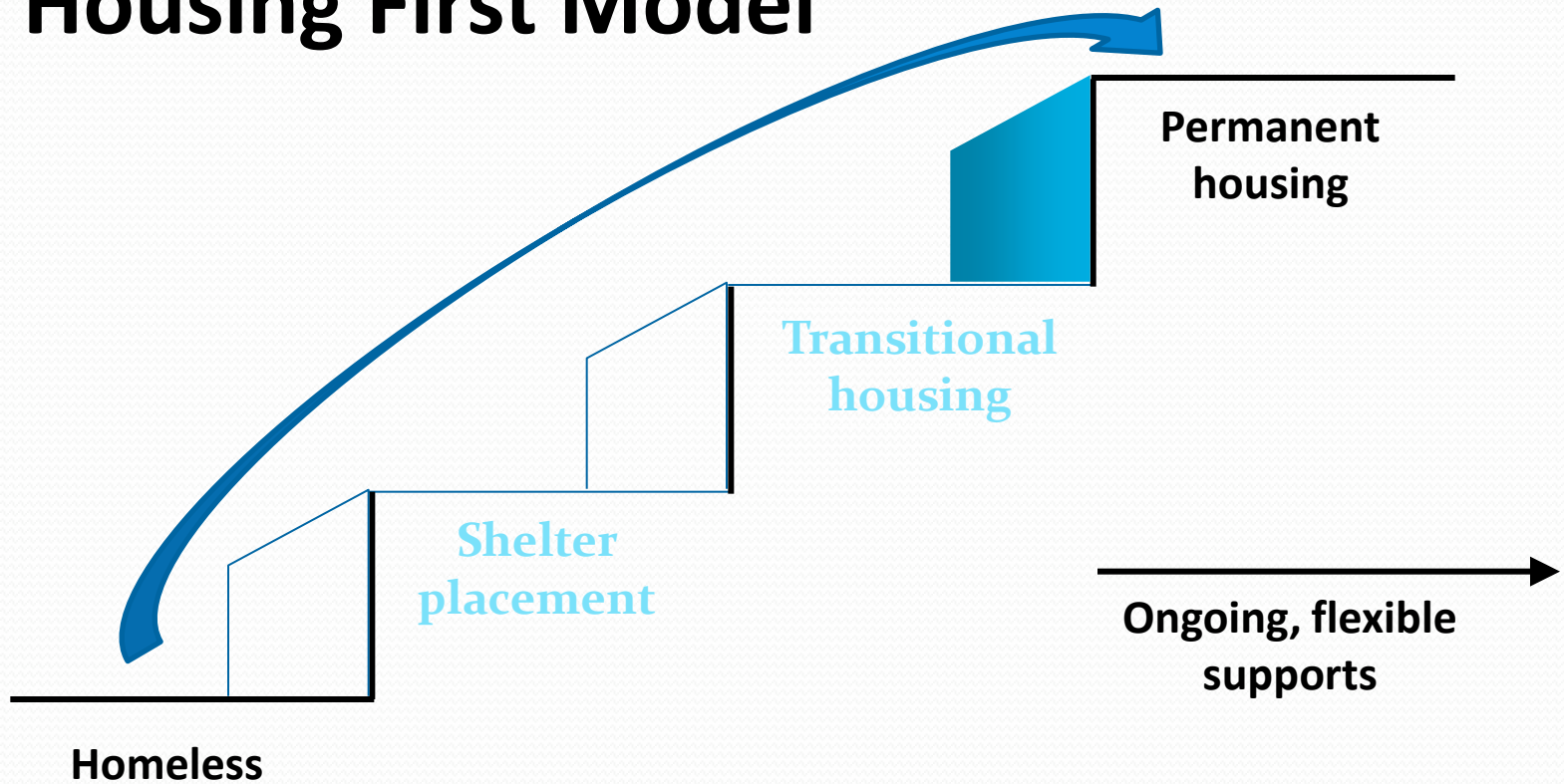
Key Differences:

- ❧ The Target Population: People who are long-term homeless, service “resistant” or “noncompliant,” or who are not effectively treated with existing therapies. People who can’t get into existing PSH or who get evicted from existing PSH.
- ❧ Sobriety or treatment compliance is not required (although, philosophically, PSH is supposed to be similar in this regard).

Treatment First Model



Housing First Model



Relevant Contrasts:

Not “housing readiness”

Not “clean and sober” housing



Less Relevant Contrasts:

Residential treatment

“Twelve Step” Recovery and abstinence

CPSH Program Model



∞ Limits on Consumer Choice:

Legal compliance

Tenant rental contribution (30% of income)

Mandatory weekly home visits

Evaluating Housing First

- Highly effective program for the 'hard to house'
- 85% housing retention rates across many cities and programs
- Access problems eliminated, retention increased
- Reduction in acute care services and significant cost savings (pre=post)
- Improves quality of life
- SAMHSA's "National Registry of Evidence-based Practices"

Tsemberis effectiveness (2004);
HUD Pearson 6 cities (2007);
VA Rosenheck 11 cities (2007);
Larimer, cost (2009).

Some Qualifications



- ❧ Tsemberis study compared CPSH to “usual care” not to other PSH programs
- ❧ Not clear that there are differences from PSH more generally - lacking published fidelity measure.
- ❧ When does “first” clock start?
- ❧ Some transitional housing often needed or used (Pathways to Housing sometimes places people in safe havens or in temporary housing prior to apartment)
- ❧ Local political sensitivities sometimes requires some “readiness” or engagement before placement.

Has “Housing First” Become a Brand?

- ⌘ Pathways CPSH model was promoted by Bush administration USICH (Mangano); led to visibility and association with “housing first” slogan
- ⌘ Now “franchised” to four countries and many cities
- ⌘ But is it different than PSH more generally? What constitutes fidelity?

Other concerns



- ⌘ Not for everyone?: Some PSH residents prefer clean and sober housing, and neighbors
- ⌘ Not everyone consistently fails in treatment
- ⌘ US context: Screening tool (“Vulnerability Index”)
 - ⌘ Unknown psychometric properties
 - ⌘ Case mix problems in practice and policy: Should policy promote “silting” (inverse of “creaming”)?

Housing First! as Policy



- ❧ HEARTH Act: promotes “housing first” principles: rapid rehousing, followed by community-based services (“homeless” aren’t different from housed)
- ❧ Shift away from shelter-based supportive services and transitional housing
- ❧ Applied to families and transitionally homeless adults
- ❧ A prevention-centered approach is emergent: Housing First! as official policy

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