

# DIVERSION

Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing.

## Distinguishing Diversion from Other Interventions

The services people are provided with when being diverted are services that caseworkers in assistance organizations are already trained and funded to deliver. They include:

- provision of financial, utility, and/or rental assistance;
- short-term case management;
- conflict mediation;
- connection to mainstream services (services that come from Programs outside of the homeless assistance system, such as welfare Programs) and/or benefits; and
- housing search.

The main difference between diversion and other permanent housing-focused interventions centers on the point at which intervention occurs. **Prevention targets people at imminent risk of homelessness, diversion targets people as they are applying for entry into shelter, and rapid re-housing targets people who are already homeless.**

## Assessing for Diversion Eligibility

Once a client comes to a Coordinated Entry System point, they should be assessed to determine what housing needs they have. To determine which people are appropriate for diversion, intake center staff will need to ask families a few specific questions, such as:

- **Where did you sleep last night?** *If they slept somewhere where they could potentially safely stay again?*
- **What other housing options do you have for the next few days or weeks?** *Even if there is an option outside of shelter that is only available for a very short time, it's worth exploring if this housing resource can be used.*
- (If staying in someone else's housing) **What issues exist with you remaining in your current housing situation?** *Can those issues be resolved with financial assistance, case management, etc.? If the issues can be solved with case management, mediation, or financial assistance (or all of the above), use [www.SC211.org](http://www.SC211.org) to find those resources.*
- (If coming from their own unit) **Is it possible/safe to stay in your current housing unit? What resources would you need to do that (financial assistance, case management, mediation, transportation, etc.)?** *If the family could stay in their current housing with some assistance, systems should focus on a quick prevention-oriented solution that will keep the family in their unit. Use [www.SC211.org](http://www.SC211.org) to find resources.*

Some families may not be good candidates for diversion programs due to a lack of safe and appropriate housing alternatives and require immediate admittance to shelter, e.g. families fleeing domestic violence. The client's safety should always be the top consideration when thinking through what intervention fits best.

*Excerpts from the National Alliance to End Homelessness*

