

# Prevention & Diversion Training with OrgCode

Post-Training Debrief &  
Practice for Communities



# Homelessness Prevention Practice - Case Studies

For each case study, you may find it beneficial to focus on three questions to prepare for or improve your practice of prevention:

1. *How would you engage?*
2. *What might you ask?*
3. *In which ways might you assist?*

## Case Study 1

Carrie and her 3 children have been living in a Rent Geared to Income (RGI) community housing unit for the past 15 months. She has received notice of non-payment of rent and currently owes \$3000 in rent arrears and re-payment of past damages to the unit.

## Case Study 2

Jorge has received an official eviction notice for the apartment that he has lived in for 12 years. Concerns of hoarding and non-payment of rent are driving the landlord's case for eviction.

## Case Study 3

Josie is 18. After an argument with her parents about her substance use and violence. She was told to leave the house until she "gets her life figured out and her temper under control".

## Case Study 4

Luke has been issued an eviction notice for disrupting the reasonable enjoyment of other tenants in the building. He denies he has done anything that warrants this action. Luke was previously supported by a local Rapid Re-housing program in your community.

## Case Study 5

Michael had his relatives move in with him. Prior to other relatives moving in, the place was spotless and there were no complaints from the landlord or neighbours. Since relatives moved in, there have been a series of complaints and the landlord is threatening eviction.

# Frequently Asked Questions About Homelessness Prevention

***Is there any household that is too high risk to be served by Prevention Services?***

No. If your program is committed to preventing homelessness, research has demonstrated that there is no household that is too high risk to be served. In fact, it is evident that targeted prevention of entry into and/or return to homelessness for highly vulnerable households will actually have the greater impact on reducing the inflow into the homelessness response system. It must be recognized, however, that such a prioritization of households demonstrate high risk of homelessness demands that agencies provide deeper, flexible financial assistance and follow-up housing location and case management supports.

***Should households that have already participated in dedicated re-housing programs in the community be eligible to receive prevention services?***

Yes. If your program is committed to preventing entry to the homelessness response system, prioritizing households that have experienced homelessness before with prevention resources can be identified as an insurance policy on your community's previous re-housing investment. Contact with the previous re-housing program is encouraged to identify the potential for aftercare supports and guidance on future homelessness proofing activities for the household.

***Should traditional eviction prevention programs be eliminated in our community?***

That depends on the goals of your community. Traditional eviction prevention programs certainly assist low-income households but rarely serve those households with the greatest risk of experiencing homelessness. Eviction prevention programs that align with poverty alleviation approaches will benefit low-income households but your impact on reducing inflow into the homelessness response system will be minimal. Investments to prevent homelessness must focus on targeting flexible and appropriate follow-up supports to households demonstrating the highest risk to enter/re-enter homelessness.

***What if you think you can only prevent the individual/couple/family's housing loss for a short period of time?***

Take whatever time you get! While it may be ideal to have permanent solutions, every day that is safely and appropriately spent outside of the homelessness response system is a good thing and can create space and opportunity to engage in dedicated housing focused supports that will increase the likelihood of successful tenancies.

***What if the person is unwell, drunk or high at the time of the prevention attempt?***

Engage and assess the ability to participate rather than starting from a position that if a person seems unwell or is drunk or high than prevention is impossible. Yes, there will be instances where prevention is impossible in the moment, but you may be pleasantly surprised at how much can be accomplished with homelessness prevention even if the person does not seem to be sober or well.

***Are there times when prevention turns into diversion turns into rapid resolution?***

Yes! And that's okay! If prevention is unsuccessful, we transition to diversion. If diversion is unsuccessful, we embrace rapid resolution. None of these are failures per se, but rather the workflow in trying to assist the household avoid homelessness, or to decrease their length of time experiencing homelessness.

# Diversion Practice - Case Studies

For each case study, you may find it beneficial to focus on three questions to prepare for or improve your practice of diversion:

- How would you engage?
- What might you ask?
- In which ways might you assist?

## CASE STUDY 1

Cathy and Bill, and their two dogs, were staying with Cathy's aunt. The aunt, who is elderly, no longer wants them at her place because of Bill's heavy drinking.

## CASE STUDY 2

Anton was renting a small apartment. His landlord evicted him for noise/guest issues. Today is his first day without a place to live in his entire life. You encounter him on the street, as Anton knows nothing about shelters or the shelter system.

## CASE STUDY 3

Charlie had a screaming match with his landlord. Charlie says his landlord told him he had to leave immediately, could never come back, and that all of his stuff will be tossed.

## CASE STUDY 4

Monique came to the shelter looking for a bed. It has been several years since Monique experienced housing instability. She was staying at her brother's place, but the brother and Monique got into an argument about Monique's alleged lack of cleanliness and poor hygiene. She left her brother's place and came immediately to the shelter she stayed at years before.

## CASE STUDY 5

Archer is 17. After an argument with his parents about his pot smoking, he was told he had to leave the house and "never come back". A friend of a friend tells Archer to call the shelter to ask for a bed. You answer the phone at the shelter.

# Frequently Asked Questions About Diversion

Here are some questions that are frequently asked:

## ***Are we still going to try diversion if there is space in the shelter?***

Yes! Diversion is an activity that is attempted, whenever possible, with every person, couple or family seeking shelter services when it is safe and appropriate to do so. The practice of diversion is not only done when there is little to no room in shelter. Given many shelter operators already do some form of diversion when they are full, these key contacts in your community can provide some helpful insights in terms of the solutions they are able to come up with and implement when they are full.

## ***What if you only think you can divert the individual/couple/family for a night or two?***

Take whatever time you get! While it may be ideal to have solutions last longer than one or two nights, every day that is safely and appropriately spent outside of the homelessness response system is a good thing and can create space and opportunity to engage in problem-solving and solution generating to assist the household beyond a night or two.

## ***What if the person is unwell, drunk or high at the time of the diversion attempt?***

Engage and assess the ability to participate rather than starting from a position that if a person seems unwell or is drunk or high that diversion is impossible. Yes, there will be instances where diversion is impossible in the moment, but you may be pleasantly surprised at how much can be accomplished with diversion even if the person does not seem to be sober or well.

## ***What if it is late at night when the household comes looking for service?***

Every person and situation is different. That said, most of the time if a person, couple or family is seeking shelter services late in the evening or overnight, there are limited attempts at diversion or no attempts at diversion in the moment. Instead, helping the household feel safe and addressing their immediate needs like a bed, food and clothing is appropriate. If the conversation moves into the realm of rapid resolution in the following days, that is fine.

***If we are already really busy, how are we supposed to work diversion into our day?***

If/when there are staff dedicated to diversion, it can be easier than having existing intake or shelter floor staff trying to engage in diversion on top of everything else in the shelter. Consider, however, that it can be of the best interest to the household and to your shelter operation to invest time at the “front door” rather than is likely measured in minutes or hours rather than focusing on outflow from shelter later that is likely measured in days, weeks or months. More time invested up front can save time later and is likely to reduce the trauma that often comes with experiencing homelessness and staying in a shelter for the first time.

***Are there times when prevention turns into diversion turns into rapid resolution?***

Yes! And that’s okay! If prevention is unsuccessful, we transition to diversion. If diversion is unsuccessful, we embrace rapid resolution. None of these are failures per se, but rather the workflow in trying to assist the household avoid homelessness, or to decrease their length of time experiencing homelessness.