# Quick Data and Reference Guide on Housing First
## Information from a literature review done by Public Policy students at UNC-Chapel Hill

Housing First Success:

LA Family Housing:

- saw a 59% increase in housing placement
- with a 97% retention rate over a 2 year period

following Housing First implementation (NAEH, 2017a)

The Center of Hope shelter Charlotte, North Carolina

- saw a 100% increase in housing placements
- a 110 day reduction in average length of stay
- housing retention rate of 84%

after restructuring their rules to better match Housing First best practices (NAEH, 2017b).

The Friends in Service to Humanity of NW Connecticut:

- saw average length of stay decrease from over 200 days to 40 - 70 days

after transition to Housing First (NAEH, 2017a)

2014 Veterans Affairs study of Housing First program for chronically homeless veterans:

- found 95% of those housed remained in some form of housing a year later,
- and, of that group, 87% remained in their original housing

(Montgomery et al.)

Community Impact and Effort:

2006 study on Housing First in Denver, Colorado found that the program

- reduced individuals' reliance on emergency services like hospitals and jails, leading to substantial savings for the community.
- On average, each person exiting the streets to the Housing First program saved the community $31,545 (Perlman, 2006).
- Housing First is a community-wide effort that relies on a collective approach to ending homelessness. In a best practices survey of shelter practitioners from cities all across the country, Rethink Homelessness found that interagency cooperation and general community outreach were fundamental to the success of shelters in Atlanta, Minneapolis, Miami, New Orleans, Houston, Fairfax, and Denver (2013).
- A 2017 survey of practitioners from Los Angeles, Connecticut, and Rhode Island found similar results, with one responder reporting that their housing first model was successful because homelessness became viewed as everyone's responsibility in the community, not just the shelter's (NAEH).

Removing Barriers:

While removing certain barriers may seem contrary to safety and security

- the priority of Housing First is to get people into the shelter instead of putting them back out on the street.
- once they are in the shelter, the individual can be assisted by staff and begin receiving the services needed to get them into a suitable living situation.
- not only does this reduce the number of vulnerable people out in the community, but it also reduces their dependency on costly critical services like hospitals and police.
- To quell the fears that removing background checks will decrease safety in shelters, the NAEH emphasizes that having a criminal background does not inherently mean an individual is dangerous (Nagendra, n.d).
- Furthermore, a 2013 summary of case studies on best practices in homelessness policy by the non-profit Rethink Homelessness discussed how many cities criminalize homelessness through anti-panhandling laws, loitering

laws, and public urination laws, which lead to homeless individuals being more likely to have criminal records simply because they are homeless (2013).

- Instead of looking at criminal history, the NAEH recommends that shelters focus on behavior of individuals when it comes to making security decisions (NAEH, 2017b).

Substance Use:

The Friends in Service to Humanity of NW Connecticut reported positive results after removing drug and alcohol testing from the admissions process in favor of working with individuals seeking admission while under the influence.

- staff simply escorted the individual to their room where they would not disturb other residents.
- For more severe cases, the staff had a special room where an individual could be supervised.
- The shelter reserved the right to turn those away that were deemed to be in an unacceptable state and unable to stay in a room, as they posed a safety risk (NAEH, 2017a).

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