Homelessness Prevention

Policy and Procedure

**Policy:**

Due to the high costs associated with responding to homelessness and encampment resolution, trauma experienced during homeless episodes, and the increasing difficulty for homeless persons to obtain housing, the Sutter Yuba Homeless Consortium (SYHC) will provide support for individuals and families at risk of losing their housing. This service will be streamlined through the current Coordinated Entry System (CES). Those who are served through CES will fall into one of three categories: *homeless*, at *imminent risk of homelessness*, or *at-risk of homelessness*. (see definitions below)

The local data shows that individuals and families are at greater risk of homelessness if they are at or below 50% AMI, lack a lease/rental agreement, have experienced homeless episodes in the past, and claim to have destabilizing conditions such as mental health disorder, physical disability, chronic health conditions, or drug use disorder. An assessment was created in order to prioritize these situations in addition to urgency factors including families with children, and the remaining time on a notice to vacate.

Preventative services and assistance are varied and, depending on the funding source, can include any preventative measure that will save a tenancy, help individuals and families regain stability in their current housing, or move and achieve stability in a new housing location. This may include rental or utility arrears, late fee payments, first month’s rent and/or security deposits, landlord mediation, repairs, habitability/accessibility improvements, and housing navigation.

While homelessness prevention refers to a broad category of services, research shows that homelessness prevention is more effective when targeted to the people who are most likely to fall into homelessness in the absence of preventative assistance. The SYHC and partner agencies will target and prioritize those at greatest risk of homelessness.

Modes of Assistance

Two types of prevention activities can occur in order to assist at-risk households to retain their housing: eviction prevention and homelessness prevention.

Eviction Prevention is distinct from homelessness prevention in that is it not narrowly targeted to only those households who are at-risk of homelessness due to a potential eviction. Some households in receipt of an eviction notice may not be at-risk of becoming homeless because they are able to find and secure subsequent permanent housing.

Homelessness Prevention efforts often include eviction prevention strategies such as short term or one-time financial assistance payments, including payment of back rent, but also offer more substantial case management or other supportive services.

[Evidence Based Models](http://www.evidenceonhomelessness.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Homelessness_Prevention_Literature_Synthesis.pdf)

1. Permanent Rental Housing Subsidies:
   1. This is the single most effective and efficient way of preventing homelessness
   2. Payments include a portion of the rental cost for the client, with no sunset, as long as the client remains eligible for assistance
   3. All clients served through SYHC Rapid Rehousing Programs will be encouraged to apply for subsidies through the **Regional Housing Authority**
   4. As funding is secured in the future, it may be added to this activity in order to further this assistance in Yuba Sutter
2. Eviction Prevention:
   1. A one-time intervention that results in the client being able to stay in their unit and avoid an eviction
   2. Payments may include arrearages, current month’s rent, and future month’s rent
   3. This assistance should only be provided if the client does not meet the prioritization listed above, but presents an urgency with no other support identified
3. Community-Based Services
   1. A longer-term intervention (up to 6 months) that assists households that are prioritized through the assessment process, to stabilize their housing situation
   2. Direct assistance can include financial assistance to cover rent or rental arrears, help completing income re-certifications, mediation with landlords and others, or relocation assistance (including motels or storage fees)
   3. Due to the complexity of these cases, intensive case management services, using best practices such as trauma informed care, motivational interviewing and harm reduction, are *essential* for success
      1. Depending on the funding source, case managers may assist with:
         * Stabilizing income through workforce development, government assistance (CalWORKs/CalFresh/Medi-Cal), or Social Security Disability advocacy
         * Obtaining substance use treatment services
         * Obtaining behavioral or other healthcare
         * Obtaining childcare or In Home Supportive Services
         * Improving family or social support networks
         * Other services or supports necessary for the household to stabilize

[Definitions](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-A/part-91/subpart-A/section-91.5):

It is our policy that anyone who meets the definition of “Homeless” below will be given the Vulnerability Assessment and anyone who meets the definition of “At-Risk of Homelessness” will be given the Prevention Assessment

*Homeless (includes “at imminent risk”, in section 2):*

1. An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:
   1. An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
   2. An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); or
   3. An individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution;
2. An individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:
   1. The primary nighttime residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance;
   2. No subsequent residence has been identified; and
   3. The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks needed to obtain other permanent housing;
3. Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:
   1. Are defined as homeless under section 387 of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act ([42 U.S.C. 5732a](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/5732a)), section 637 of the Head Start Act ([42 U.S.C. 9832](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/9832)), section 41403 of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 ([42 U.S.C. 14043e-2](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/14043e-2)), section 330(h) of the Public Health Service Act ([42 U.S.C. 254b(h)](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/254b)), section 3 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 ([7 U.S.C. 2012](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/7/2012)), section 17(b) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 ([42 U.S.C. 1786(b)](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/1786)), or section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ([42 U.S.C. 11434a](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/11434a));
   2. Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the 60 days immediately preceding the date of application for homeless assistance;
   3. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the 60-day period immediately preceding the date of applying for homeless assistance; and
   4. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse (including neglect), the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or two or more barriers to employment, which include the lack of a high school degree or General Education Development (GED), illiteracy, low English proficiency, a history of incarceration or detention for criminal activity, and a history of unstable employment; or
4. Any individual or family who:
   1. Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence;
   2. Has no other residence; and
   3. Lacks the resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, to obtain other permanent housing.

*At-Risk of Homelessness:*

1. An individual or family who:
   1. Has an annual income below 30 percent of median family income for the area, as determined by HUD;
   2. Does not have sufficient resources or support networks, *e.g.,* family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place described in paragraph (1) of the “Homeless” definition in this section; and
   3. Meets one of the following conditions:
2. Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for homelessness prevention assistance;
3. Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;
4. Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance;
5. Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost of the hotel or motel stay is not paid by charitable organizations or by federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals;
6. Lives in a single-room occupancy or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than two persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than 1.5 people per room, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau;
7. Is exiting a publicly funded institution, or system of care (such as a health-care facility, a mental health facility, foster care or other youth facility, or correction program or institution); or
8. Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient's approved consolidated plan;
9. A child or youth who does not qualify as “homeless” under this section, but qualifies as “homeless” under section 387(3) of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act ([42 U.S.C. 5732a(3)](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/5732a)), section 637(11) of the Head Start Act ([42 U.S.C. 9832(11)](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/9832)), section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 ([42 U.S.C. 14043e-2(6)](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/14043e-2)), section 330(h)(5)(A) of the Public Health Service Act ([42 U.S.C. 254b(h)(5)(A)](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/254b)), section 3(m) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 ([7 U.S.C. 2012(m)](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/7/2012)), or section 17(b)(15) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 ([42 U.S.C. 1786(b)(15)](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/1786)); or
10. A child or youth who does not qualify as “homeless” under this section, but qualifies as “homeless” under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ([42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)](https://www.govinfo.gov/link/uscode/42/11434a)), and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of that child or youth if living with her or him.

**Procedure:**

1. Staff answering the Homeless Hotline will determine if the Prevention Assessment should be completed with the client, based on their current housing situation (at-risk of homelessness only)
2. Prior to completing an assessment, staff will ask the client if they have a notice to vacate
   1. If the client has less than 14 days remaining on notice, ask the client if their landlord will accept payment in order to stay in the home
      1. If the client doesn’t know, ask the client if they can find out and call back
      2. If landlord will not accept payment, a full vulnerability assessment should be completed, rather than the prevention assessment
      3. If landlord will accept payment, staff will complete the Prevention Assessment and make a referral as indicated below

***High Priority, Urgent Cases***

After completing the assessment in HMIS, if client scores 10 or above, and an urgent need exists as indicated in the assessment, Hands of Hope staff will immediately submit a referral through HMIS

1. Urgent need exists when the date on the notice to vacate is less than 14 days away from the date of assessment
2. If client is eligible, referrals will be made to a Sutter County Program or a Yuba County Program for Homelessness Prevention
   1. The County Program will review the case to determine eligibility within 24 hours or by next business day.
      1. If the referral is accepted, County staff will make an urgent referral through HMIS to Bridges To Housing, indicating that the client meets eligibility and that the County will provide ongoing assistance to promote housing stability
         1. Bridges to Housing will provide a timely, single intervention in order to keep client housed
         2. County will provide case management and conduct normal processes to ensure client maintains housing long-term.
      2. If the referral is not accepted, County staff will make a referral to The Salvation Army
         1. The Salvation Army will conduct their normal process to assist the household as quickly as possible
3. If client is not eligible for a County Program, referrals will be made to The Salvation Army for Eviction Prevention
   1. The Salvation Army will conduct their normal process to assist the household as quickly as possible

The Agency accepting the referral may provide a letter to the client stating they have an appointment for assistance. Client can take this letter to their landlord and advocate for themselves, requesting the landlord accept payment to stay in the home.

***High Priority, Non-Urgent Cases***

After completing the assessment in HMIS, if client scores 10 or above, and no urgent need exists, Hands of Hope staff will immediately submit a referral through HMIS

1. If client is eligible, referrals will be made to a Sutter County or a Yuba County Program for Homelessness Prevention
   1. The County Program will review the case to determine eligibility.
      1. If the referral is accepted, County will provide case management and conduct normal processes to ensure client maintains housing long-term.
      2. If the referral is not accepted, County staff will make a referral to The Salvation Army
2. If client is not eligible for a County Program, referrals will be made to The Salvation Army for Eviction Prevention

***Cases Not Meeting Priority***

After completing the assessment in HMIS, if client scores 9 or below, conduct diversion activities such as:

* + - * Connect with family or friends to make arrangements for shared housing
        + Worker may have to assist with these conversations
      * If eligible or receiving CalWORKs, apply for Permanent Housing Assistance through their County of residence
      * Contact their church, or other local churches for assistance (St. Vincent de Paul, St. Andrew, Glad Tidings, Cornerstone?)
      * If a veteran, contact Veteran’s Stand Down to ask for assistance
      * Connect with landlord to problem solve (i.e., make payment arrangements, work off the late rent, etc.)

***Closing a Prevention Project in the Coordinated Entry workgroup***

1. Agencies will close the Coordinated Entry Prevention Project after they have provided a financial intervention
2. Cases will be automatically closed after 60 days of inactivity

***Prevention or Homeless: Decision Tree***

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Homeless | Nighttime Residence | | At risk of homelessness – conduct prevention assessment |
| Nighttime residence missing one or more of the following traits: fixed, regular, and adequate | Fixed, regular, and adequate; Living in the same place each night in a safe and sufficient space |
| Doubled Up | |
| Due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason | Mutual decision made to live together for mutual benefit |
| No written lease/rent agreement | Written lease/rent agreement |
| Hotels, Motels | |
| Paid for by someone else | Paid for by client |
| Institutions  (on the night of discharge) | |
| Client stayed there for 90 days or less ***and*** immediately before entering that institution resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation | Client stayed there more than 90 days or was not in a homeless situation immediately prior to entry |
| Time remaining on  Notice to Vacate | |
| 14 days or less and landlord is unwilling to accept payment to remain in unit | 14 days or less and landlord is willing to accept payment to remain in unit |
| No subsequent housing has been identified | Subsequent housing is identified |