



**The Supportive Housing Network of New York  
13<sup>th</sup> Annual New York State Supportive Housing Conference  
Thursday June 6, 2013**

Remarks by Bob Pulster, Regional Coordinator, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, Workshop Moderator

Rapid Rehousing: Adding a New Resource in the Strategy to End Homelessness

Thank you to SHNNY for the opportunity to join you at this Conference and moderate this workshop presentation on rapid re-housing. My name is Robert Pulster and I serve as a Regional Coordinator for the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.

The Council coordinates the federal response to homelessness by providing a platform for 19 federal agencies to engage in joint planning and in partnership with states, communities and the private sector, to develop collaborative solutions to homelessness. I am pleased to serve as the Regional Coordinator that works closely with the State of New York and New York City. I'd also like to extend greetings from the Executive Director of the USICH Barbara Poppe and the USICH team based in DC and around the country.

As many of you know, the Council's work is guided by Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness. Opening Doors sets four bold and measurable goals:

- Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015;
- Prevent and end homelessness among veterans by 2015;
- Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; and
- Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.

The Council supports rapid rehousing as an important tool in advancing these goals.

Since the end of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP), communities still have choices about how to use their federal resources including Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Continuum of Care, HOME Tenant Base Rental Assistance (TBRA), Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families (SSVF) and even Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Utilizing a rapid rehousing approach can dramatically decrease the length of time people experience homelessness by leveraging these and other funds to support families who need time-limited assistance to get and keep housing.

Following the demonstrated success of HPRP in communities across the country, USICH and HUD have been joined by a number of federal agencies that are urging investment in rapid rehousing.

A rapid rehousing model offers five primary program elements:

1. Immediate intervention and engagement to help households obtain housing;
2. Financial assistance to address barriers to secure housing such as security deposits, utility arrearages, and other one-time costs;
3. Flexible funding for short term rental assistance typically over a period of three to six months but in some cases for over a 24 month period, as well as intermittently;
4. Case management to link households to mainstream benefits and community supports to help families stabilize and retain housing;
5. Frequent reassessment to adapt provider service engagement levels to the households' needs and strengths. Here the objective is to minimize the need for ongoing assistance while promoting greater family independence. Known as progressive engagement, this approach begins with a small amount of assistance while adding more assistance if needed.

Results of rapid rehousing programs funded across the country under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act were dramatic: 85 to 90 percent of placements were successful in that households remain housed, as compared to 64 percent for transitional housing. Moreover, communities that have tracked returns to shelter have found rates to be lower as well, generally between 5 to 10 percent of households assisted with rapid rehousing.

The initial evidence is demonstrating that rapid rehousing offers a more cost efficient and effective solution to homelessness than many of the interventions communities have traditionally relied upon. Using rapid rehousing to assist families to exit shelter will increase turnover in shelters so that communities can improve their ability to serve more families in need of an emergency placement without increasing shelter-bed capacity. Most importantly, rapid rehousing minimizes extended shelter stays that can be stressful for individuals and families with children.

The leadership within the federal government has strongly encouraged the use of funding for rapid rehousing. USICH Chair, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki put more than \$300 million dollars into the Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families (SSVF) Program, USICH Vice Chair, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan is encouraging communities to use their Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) for rapid rehousing, and HHS issued a Memorandum encouraging the use of TANF for rapid rehousing.

While communities respond to sequester-related issues and budget cutbacks, investing in rapid rehousing is one way to actually accomplish more with less. In closing, I would invite you to take advantage of the resources and information that pertain to rapid rehousing at [usich.gov](http://usich.gov).

Now we are going to learn more about rapid rehousing from two serious practitioners – one based here in New York City and the other in Poughkeepsie – as well as from a respected researcher.

Thank you.