



Maryland Department of Housing
and Community Development
Secretary Kenneth C. Holt

Housing First

**A Paradigm Shift in Providing
Services to the Homeless**



The Federal Government has Embraced Housing First.

“Housing First is a proven method of ending all types of homelessness and is the most effective approach to ending chronic homelessness.”

— “The Housing First Checklist” USICH



WHAT IS HOUSING FIRST?

- **In the Past:**
 - Clean & Sober required
 - “Job Ready” or Employed
 - Sometimes resulted in “Creaming” of clients
- **Consequences**
 - Greatest need clients were not served
 - Services provided for a limited time and clients had to move

WHAT IS HOUSING FIRST?

- **What Housing First Looks Like:**
 - Focus on accessing housing as quickly as possible
 - No time limits on the housing
 - Lease in the client's name
 - Service delivery follows housing placement
 - Services are time-limited and scaled to need
 - Services are voluntary

WHAT IS HOUSING FIRST?

- **Housing First works best as a Community Wide philosophy**
 - Communities work together to fill any gaps
- **Can be program specific:**
 - Clients accepted regardless of sobriety or use of substances
 - Seldom rejected based on credit or financial history
 - Referrals from Shelters
 - Supportive Services are emphasized. Tenant-driven.
 - Use of alcohol and drugs are not considered a reason for eviction. (Lease violations are between tenant and landlord.)

WHAT IS HOUSING FIRST?

- **Easy Checklist:**
 - Are the applicants required to have a job/income prior to admission?
 - Are applicants required to be “clean and sober” prior to admission?
 - Are tenants able to be evicted for not following through on their service and/or treatment plan?
- ***If YES, not a housing first program.***

WHAT IS HOUSING FIRST?

The ICH's draft working definition of Housing First is as follows:

Housing First offers homeless individuals and families access to permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible in a manner that is not time limited, connects tenants to optional supportive services; and has a low threshold for entry or ongoing tenancy, including no employment, income, or clinical prerequisites.