



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# **An Overview of the Intersection of Housing and Criminal Justice**

---

**Office of Mental Health  
Coordination**

# Agenda

---

- Intersection of Housing & Criminal Justice
- Guiding Principles
- Options
- Barriers
- Next Steps



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Housing is Critical

---



“Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart.”

~Matthew Desmond,  
*Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*

# Behavioral Health Strategic Plan



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services



Gap 12  
Access to Housing



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Housing Stability



# Incarceration and Housing Insecurity

- People incarcerated more than once are 13 times more likely to experience homelessness than the general public.
- People experiencing unsheltered homelessness are more likely to interact with the justice system.
- Policies and practices often discriminate against people with prior justice involvement leading to further housing insecurity.

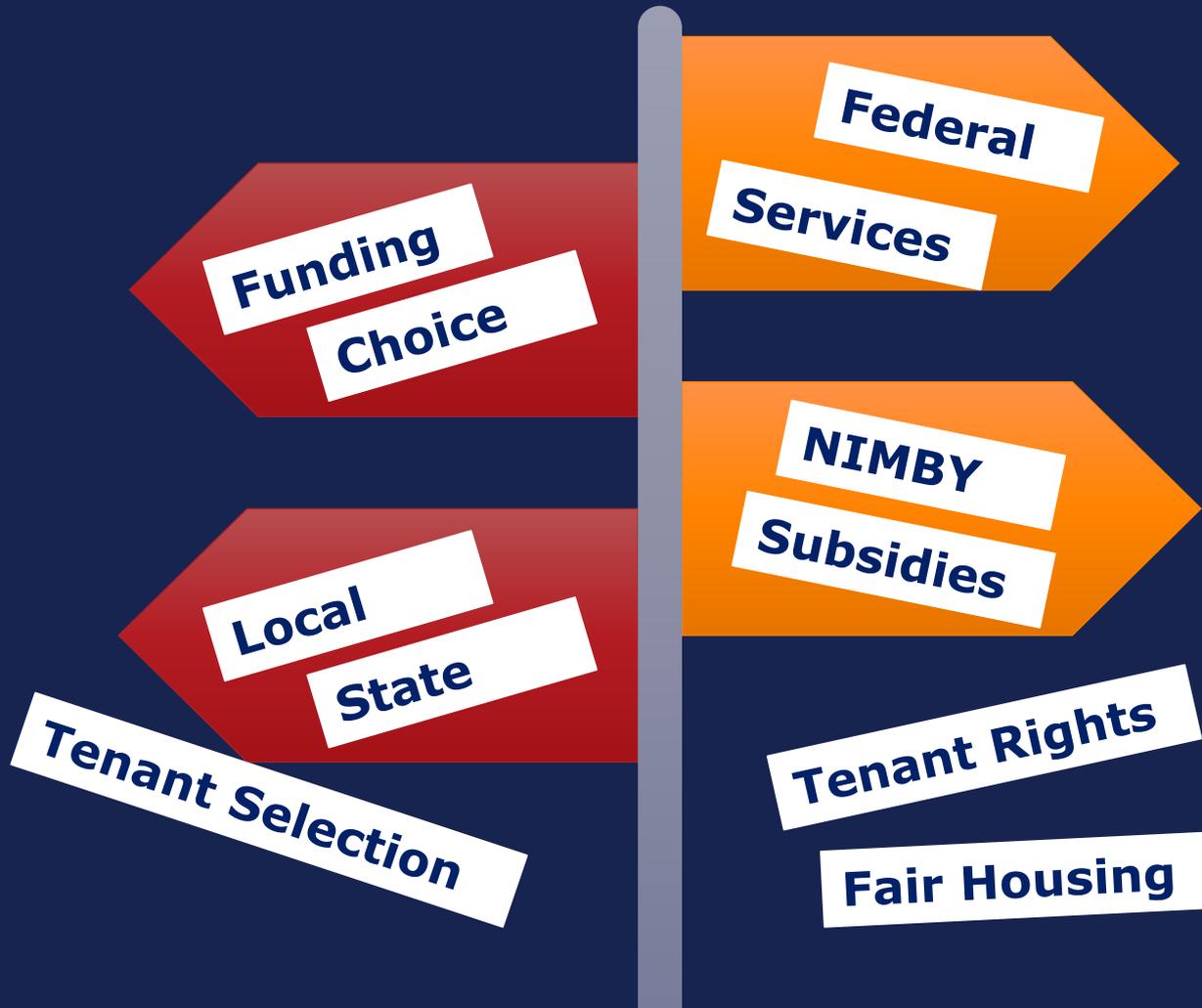


**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# Housing is Complex



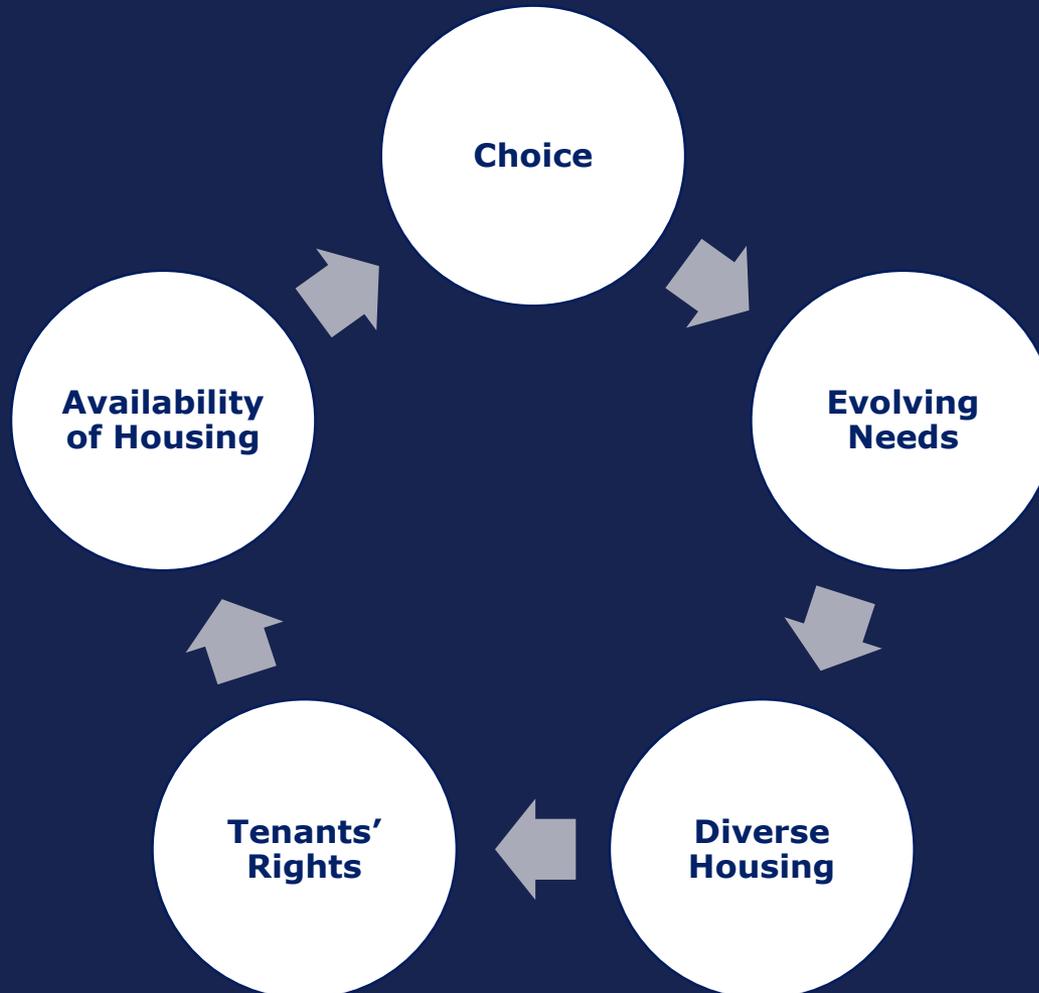
TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services





TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Guiding Principles



# Typical Housing Solutions

---

- Community-based;
- Protect tenant rights and responsibilities through signed leases or other agreements; and
- Residents may live in housing if they comply with lease requirements.



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Housing Continuum



# What We Know

---

- There is a lack of affordable housing for low-income people in Texas.
- The current housing continuum available in most communities across Texas needs to be flexible and robust to accommodate the different needs and preferences of people at different points in their lives.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Options Reviewed Today



**Step-Down/Small  
Group Homes**



**Rapid Re-housing**



**Permanent  
Supportive Housing**



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# Step-Down Options

---

- Usually less than 16 residents.
- Can be structured like a highly staffed group home.
- There are often levels of licensure based on the population served and services provided.
- There is a small pilot at two local mental health authorities in Texas to explore stepping people down with long-stays at the state psychiatric hospital into small group homes.



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# Transitional in Nature

---

- Step-downs are intended to promote independence on someone's path of recovery, preparing them for community housing.
- General stays are very diverse; can range from days to months.
- Must put step-downs in the context of the full housing continuum in a community.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# How Step-Downs Can Help

---

- Provides a stepped approach to transitioning someone from a psychiatric hospital into the community.
- Provides an additional support to people in re-establishing themselves in the community.
- Can interrupt the revolving door of homelessness and justice-involvement



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# Requirements for Step-Down Options

---

- Often funded by the state.
- Design based on realities for people without resources:
  - ▶ Consider how long will it take them to get benefits and income.
  - ▶ Consider how will they access permanent, affordable housing and how long will this take?



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Small Group Homes

---

- Settings where a small number of unrelated people who need care, support, and/or supervision live together.
- Settings can vary from single family homes to more formal facilities.
- May include trained staff, onsite supervision, support, and sometimes therapy.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Small Group Homes in Texas

---

- Texas does not currently have any state regulated or licensed group homes for people with serious mental illness.
- There are small group homes funded through the Home and Community Based Services-Adult Mental Health program called Supervised Living group homes.



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# What They Look Like

---

- There are other states that license small group homes for people with serious mental illness.
- Staffing can vary at these homes from 24/7 staff on-site to only on-call support overnight.
- There are varying degrees of trained staff available.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# How Small Group Homes Can Help

---

- Increases options for people that want to live with others or who are not ready to live independently
- Recognizes the evolving housing needs of people in recovery
- Can interrupt the revolving door of homelessness and justice-involvement



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# Requirements for Small Group Homes

---

- Funding
  - ▶ The higher the staffing standard, the more expensive.
- Community support.
- Navigating Fair Housing laws.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Rapid Re-Housing

---

- Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) provides short-term rental assistance and services.
- Helps people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed.
- It is offered without preconditions such as justice involvement.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# How RRH Can Help

---

- Demonstrates effectiveness in getting people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and keeping them there.
- People are in a better position to address other challenges that may have led to their homelessness once housed.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Requirements for RRH

---

- Strong housing navigation program that helps people find housing (<30 days).
- Funding for short-term rental assistance.
- Simultaneous services that address the on-going needs of the person (e.g. employment, substance use).



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# Permanent Supportive Housing

---

- PSH combines affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of chronically homeless people.
- PSH has been shown to lower public costs associated with the use of shelters, hospitals, jails, and prisons.



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# How PSH Can Help

---

- For those experiencing long periods of living on the streets or an endless cycle between institution, jail, and the streets, PSH can provide a permanent home.
- It is usually “low barrier” and those with any prior justice involvement are eligible.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Requirements for PSH

---

- Funding Needs:
  - Development
  - Support Services
  - Operating Costs
- Strong housing navigation and advocacy to help people maintain housing.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Justice Involvement is a Barrier to Housing

---

- Private landlords able to set their own tenant selection criteria.
- Public Housing Authority (PHA) screening criteria.
- NIMBY-ism – Not In My Backyard.
- Stigma towards mental illness and substance use disorders.



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# JCAFS Next Steps



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

Future presentations:

- Data & Data Sharing
- Funding Mechanisms for Housing
- JCAFS Housing Recommendations



TEXAS  
Health and Human  
Services

# Questions?

---



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

# Thank you

---

**Carissa Dougherty, LCSW-S, Director,  
Stakeholder Engagement and Strategic Planning**  
[Carissa.Dougherty@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:Carissa.Dougherty@hhs.texas.gov)

**Helen Eisert, LCSW-S, Senior Housing Policy Advisor**  
[Helen.Eisert@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:Helen.Eisert@hhs.texas.gov)