

# Hoosiers Need Housing First: Advocating for What We Know Works



# WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS



- Vice President Programs and Policy, National Alliance to End Homelessness
- Former frontline staff, federal employee, federal technical assistance provider
- Hoosier-adjacent
- She/her pronouns

# Session Objectives

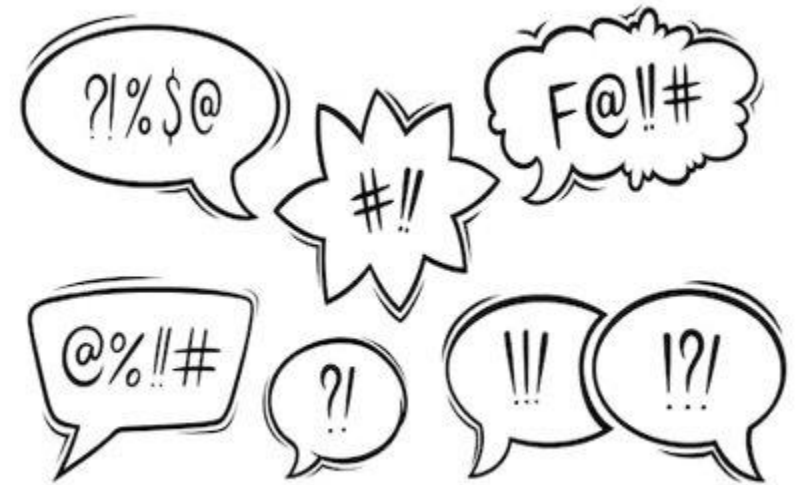
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- Revisit the Principles of Housing First
- What We Have Learned
- Implications for Policy and Advocacy

# Warm Up: First Word that Comes to Mind

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In one word, what is the first feeling/thought that comes to mind when you think of Housing First?



# Housing First Defined

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Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, **without preconditions**, as quickly as possible and connects them to voluntary services and **supports necessary to sustain that housing.**

# A Paradigm Shift: Fixing Systems Not People

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## Mindset Prior to Housing First

- People experiencing homelessness have too many barriers to be successful in housing
- People must first be ready for housing
- Prioritize those households most likely to succeed
- Stairstep, project-level approach

## Housing First Mindset

- All people are ready for housing
- People cannot address their needs without the basic need of housing met
- Prioritize those households with the most complex needs
- Whole-system orientation

# Housing First: A Timeline

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1990s:  
Pathways to  
Housing  
developed the  
Housing First  
Model

2010: First  
Federal Plan,  
*Opening  
Doors*,  
embraces  
Housing First

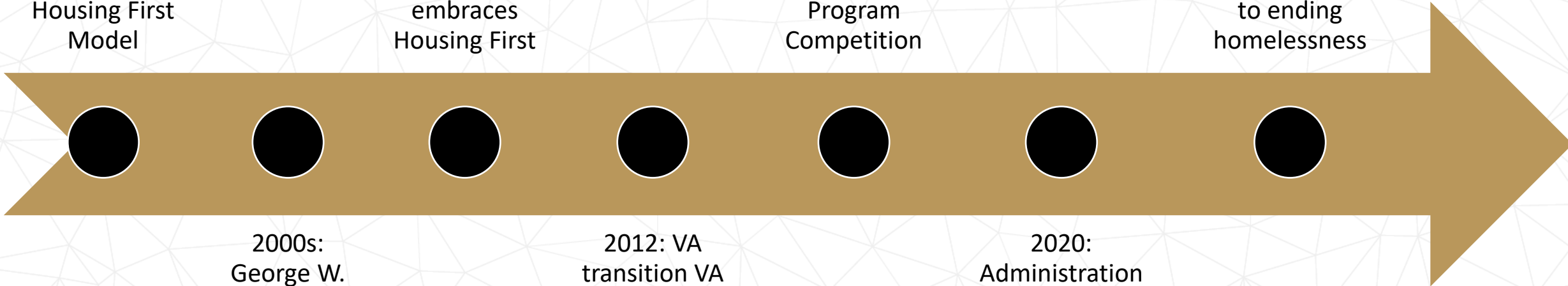
2013-2014:  
HUD first  
includes  
Housing First in  
Annual CoC  
Program  
Competition

2022: *All In*  
recommits to  
Housing First as the  
Federal approach  
to ending  
homelessness

2000s:  
George W.  
Bush  
Administration  
Begins  
to Promote  
Housing  
First

2012: VA  
transition VA  
Homeless  
Program  
operation for  
incorporation  
of Housing  
First into  
HUD-VASH  
nationwide.

2020:  
Administration  
promotes anti-  
Housing First  
policies



# Five Basic Principles

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## **Consumer Choice**

Choice in housing and services and emphasis on self-determination



## **Separation of Housing & Treatment**

Immediate access to housing without treatment or sobriety as prerequisites



## **Provide Services to Match Needs**

Program provides or coordinates access to all needed services



## **Recovery Oriented Philosophy**

Ongoing, positive, hopeful, affirming support



## **Social Community Integration**

Supporting a life in the community



# Housing First: The Evidence

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- There is extensive evidence of the effectiveness of Housing First:
  - The Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) recommends Housing First based on evidence from systematic review of 26 studies which found Housing First decreases homelessness, increases housing stability, and improves quality of life.
  - There have been four randomized controlled trials, all of which found that Housing First resulted in large improvements in housing stability.
  - Recent studies have found:
    - Housing First programs reduce homelessness, increase housing stability, and improve quality of life for people who are experiencing homelessness
    - Housing First can lead to better treatment outcomes
    - Housing First can reduce healthcare and other costs

# Impacts on Housing First Fidelity

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# Dangerous Narrative and Rhetoric

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- Increased visibility of unsheltered homelessness resulted in backlash against effectiveness of Housing First despite evidence
- Led to increased state and local laws to criminalize homelessness
  - Camping or sleeping in public places
  - Sitting or lying in public
  - Living in vehicles
  - Panhandling
- Pushing harmful practices and policies that do nothing to solve the complex problem of homelessness
- Introduction of federal legislation that could undermine ability to effectively implement that Housing First approach

# Overview: Housing PLUS Act

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- H.R. 3405, Housing Promotes Livelihood and Ultimate Success (PLUS) Act
  - Introduced by Representative Andy Barr (R-KY)
  - H.R. 3405 harms efforts to end homelessness by:
    - Undermining HUD's ability to prioritize evidence-based solutions, including the Housing First model.
    - Diverting scarce resources to outdated, ineffective, and costly strategies, wasting limited federal resources on underperforming programs.
    - Punishing individuals struggling to address substance use disorders, pushing them back into homelessness when they face challenges.
    - Undermining access to effective treatment. Housing First is more effective at increasing service utilization than non-Housing First programs.

## Excerpt: Rep. Barr's May 17, 2023, Press Release

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*Housing First prevents providers who require wraparound services from receiving federal funds to curb homelessness in our communities,” said Congressman Andy Barr. “*

*These wraparound services are oftentimes necessary to ensuring a person can safely and fully attain permanent housing on their own...*

*The Housing PLUS Act will ensure that HUD grant funding is reaching providers who are helping people transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency, without unneeded restrictions.”*

# 27 Cosponsors of the Housing PLUS Act (H.R. 3405)

*Davidson (R-OH-8)*

*Sessions (R-TX-17)*

*Ogles (R-TN-5)*

*LaMalfa (R-CA-1)*

*Tenney (R-NY-24)*

*Cloud (R-TX-27)*

*Palmer (R-AL-6)*

*Hill (R-AR-2)*

*Jackson (R-TX-13)*

*Posey (R-FL-8)*

*Weber (R-TX-14)*

*Lesko (R-AZ-8)*

*Van Duyne (R-TX-24)*

*Cline (R-VA-6)*

*De La Cruz (R-TX-15)*

*Roy (R-TX-21)*

***Baird (R-IN-4)***

*Self (R-TX-3)*

*Wittman (R-VA-1)*

*Steil (R-WI-1)*

*Williams (R-TX-25)*

*Lamborn (R-CO-5)*

*Crenshaw (R-TX-2)*

*LaTurner (R-KS-2)*

*Mann (R-KS-1)*

*McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)*

# What's Next for Housing PLUS Act?

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How will the Housing PLUS Act (H.R. 3405) be considered?

- Hearing in House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance
- Mark up in House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance (optional)
- Mark up in House Financial Services Committee
- Considered on House floor on its own or as part of a larger bill

# What Can You Do?

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- Do outreach to your legislators
  - Cosponsor
  - Potential Cosponsor
  - Potential Ally
- There is no Senate companion bill yet, however, include them in your outreach



# Making a Strong Case for Housing First

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1. Understand their aspirations and what promises they've made
2. Make an explicit connection between the work to end homelessness and their priorities
3. Describe how the whole community wins by using effective strategies like Housing First to address homelessness
4. Highlight the successes!
5. Help them see the specific role they can play to bring Housing First to scale

# Reinforce Key Messages

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1. Housing First is not a program—it is an approach to housing and service provision, and it is a whole-system orientation and response.
2. Housing First can be successful for anyone, regardless of actual or perceived need. Meet people where they are.
3. Housing First is not Housing Only—the services and engagement must be offered, too.
4. Housing First is about health, recovery, and the ability to thrive.
5. System and organizational limitations can impact fidelity to the model.

# Resources

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- [Housing First - National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
- [The Playbook for Building Public and Political Will for Ending Homelessness](#)
- [Research on Housing First \(nlihc.org\)](#)
- [The Housing PLUS Act Undermines Proven Solutions To Homelessness \(nlihc.org\)](#)