



What is Diversion?



February 2024

Diversion is...

Empowering

individuals facing imminent homelessness to identify safe and appropriate housing options (other than street/vehicle/shelter) and assisting them in avoiding shelter and returning immediately to housing.

NOT a

barrier to shelter.

Regaining control

Focus is on empowering persons in crisis to being regaining control over their situation and lives.

Helpful

These approaches and techniques may also be very helpful for person already homeless.

Goals of Diversion

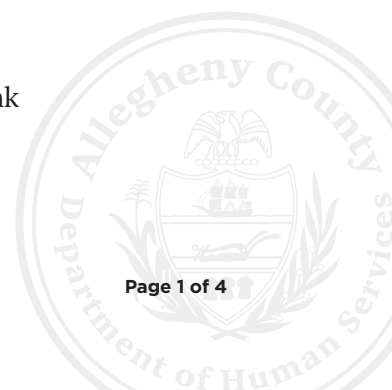
- Help people identify immediate alternative housing arrangements.
- Connect them with services and/financial assistance to help them secure and maintain permanent housing.

Diversion can happen at the shelter door

- Every effort should be made to divert individuals to other housing solutions at their first contact with the homeless system.
- Diversion can happen in person, on the phone or a combination of both.
 - To keep in mind: Where and when will diversion staff meet with clients?
Is there a space for a conversation (not just an intake)?

Conflict Resolution Approach to Diversion

Homelessness is a crisis – as in conflict, persons in crisis are less able to clearly think through problems and advocate from themselves than they are when not in crisis.



First listen and validate their experience.

Be non-judgmental. Use active & reflective listening.

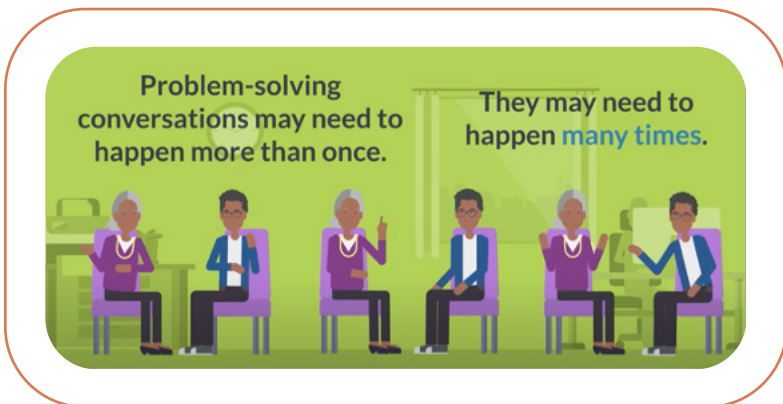
Be client- centered. Don't assume what people need; help them articulate their needs.

A strength-based approach helps clients identify and mine strengths, successes, and resources they've used in the past to help them with this episode of homelessness.

Support and trust that people want to succeed. Help them identify their own strengths and successes in their life that can help them with this crisis.



Impact of Conflict and Crisis



How do we help individuals become calm and clear so they can better engage with family members, employers, landlords, and staff?

- Conflict and crisis impede the ability to:
 - α Be hopeful and confident
 - α Clarify Goals

- α Effectively advocate for oneself – take back control of their lives
- α Have positive interactions with other people
- Experience conflict and crisis makes people shut down, and become protective, defensive/closed off and not open to others.
 - α Our job is to help people shift gradually becoming empowered.
 - α As we help them become empowered, they are more able to listen, consider, and negotiate with others.
- Reversing the Downward Spiral - Helping people feel empowered about themselves allows them to open up and engage in a more productive way with others (staff, family, landlords, employers, etc.)

Diversion Steps

1. Introductions – Briefly introduce yourself & create a safe space

- a. Name, organization & role
- b. Describe the conversation – How can we help them return to housing?
- c. Ask permission

2. Active listening & empathetic Listening

(TIP: Keep this listening step separate from problem-solving).

- a. Body Language
- b. Paraphrasing
- c. Empathy
- d. Hear their experience
- e. Ask open ended questions

3. Strength Exploration – Explore past strengths – this step has two purposes:

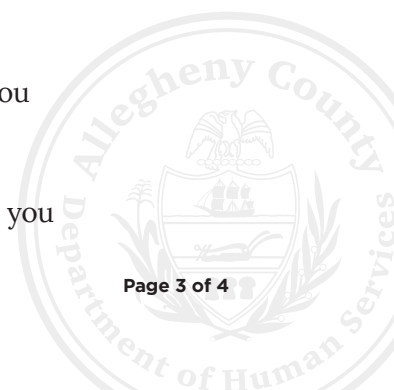
- a. Help them identify times when they have been of help or support to others.
- b. Begin to identify networks and support persons that may be able to help them with income or housing.
 - i. What were things like for them when things were going better?
 - ii. Who are their allies, friends, and family members?
 - iii. Who have they helped?
- c. Our clients may feel dependent – we can help them remember times of interdependence.
 - i. **Example** – Use an individual’s previous apartment as an example of: success (paid rent), relationships (knows landlord) and networks (knows neighborhood.)

4. Moving Forward – After we have listened, then explored past strengths, what housing option do they want to pursue? What other needs has the client identified?

- a. Going back to live with friends and family.
- b. Returning to their own residence.
- c. Temporarily diverted as they seek new housing.
- d. Relocating to a safe, permanent place out-of-town.

Problem – Solving Conversation – Questions to Ask to Start and Move the Conversation Forward

- Can you tell me about why you are seeking emergency shelter today?
- What are all the other things you tried or thought about trying before you sought shelter today?
- How long have you been staying there?
- What is the primary/main reason that you had to leave the place where you stayed last night?



- Are there additional reasons why you can't stay there any longer?
- Where did you stay before that?
- Do you think that you could stay there again temporarily if we provide you with some help or referrals to find permanent housing or connect with other services?
- What resources do you have right now that could help you and your family find a place to stay temporarily or find permanent housing?

