

### Myths about Housing First

1. Some people are just not ready for housing.

**Truth:** *Housing is one of our most basic human needs. We believe everyone deserves a home and that housing is a human right. Housing First suggests that housing is the foundation upon which all other forms of recovery can be built.*

2. The Housing First model won't work for our population.

**Truth:** *Housing First was created to serve some of the most high-needs individuals in our service system. As such, we believe it can work for any population. The success of your program relies on your flexibility, creativity, and responsiveness to individual participant needs.*

3. Housing First enables participants to do whatever they want with no consequences.

**Truth:** *Housing First does not mean "anything goes." If participants break the law or violate their lease, they can be subject to eviction just like any other person who breaks the law or their lease. Staff do not shield participants from the natural consequences of their actions.*

4. Participants with this level of need require hospitalization or other forms of 24/7 monitoring.

**Truth:** *We expect that the level of support provided to our participants will change over time. We typically spend more time with individuals who are newer to our program, or those who are experiencing an increase in symptoms. Utilizing the team approach and offering on-call supports to our participants means that we're prepared to handle unexpected crises without overburdening individual staff members.*

5. Living alongside a person with a mental illness or substance use issues is unsafe for the others.

**Truth:** *Behavioral health challenges and violence are often mistakenly conflated. Those living with mental illness are more likely to be victims of a crime or violence, rather than perpetrators. Once housed, staff work closely with participants to help them pursue self-identified goals, such as engagement with behavioral health treatment or a reduction in substance use.*

6. If treatment is not required, participants will refuse to work with us.

**Truth:** *Regular home visits are a non-negotiable requirement for Housing First program participants. Each visit serves an opportunity to invite the participant into the treatment process. The key is centering our participants' goals, instead of our own. When we can do this, we find that individuals are often much more motivated than we once might have believed.*

7. By housing participants who are likely to get evicted, we're setting people up to fail.

**Truth:** *Participants with behavioral health concerns are much more likely to succeed in a Housing First setting than living on the street or in a program that enforces strict policies to which they cannot adhere due to their disabilities. We must believe in the possibility of recovery for all of our participants in order for our programs to thrive.*

8. We'll spend too much money on evictions, turnovers, and damages if we house people with mental illness or substance use issues.

**Truth:** *In a Housing First program, staff, landlords, and participants all work together towards the common goal of keeping individuals successfully housed. Moreover, there is no data that shows a correlation between behavioral health challenges and tenancy issues. Fear of potential problems is not a reason to deny housing to our most vulnerable participants.*

9. Our neighbors and community partners won't support Housing First.

**Truth:** *When members of our community have questions or concerns, it's up to us to provide education and counter misinformation with facts. By promoting the inherent dignity and worth of our participants, others can begin to truly understand the benefits and impact of Housing First, and often become advocates for the model themselves.*

10. We're doing Housing First already, but it's not working.

**Truth:** *There are significant differences between adopting a housing first philosophy, and running a Housing First program that follows the tenets of the model. Housing First fidelity is measured by adherence to 38 distinct ideals in five categories. Funding the philosophy, and not the program, will not produce the same desirable outcomes.*