

Supportive Housing Providers Network

The Supportive Housing Providers Network (SHPN) is a coalition of approximately fifteen San Francisco-based nonprofits that have supportive housing as a primary piece of their work.

Presenting today are SHPN co-chairs Tramecia Garner (Swords to Plowshares Chief Operating Officer) and Doug Gary (Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing co-director). Thanks for including us!

We know that every member agency, HSH, and those involved in today's hearing share the goal of ending homelessness for as many San Franciscans as possible as quickly and effectively as possible.

SHPN: Key Definitions

Some quick definitions for our presentation:

Vacant Unit: A permanent supportive housing unit that is not occupied by a tenant and does not have a signed lease.

Ready for Referral Unit: A permanent supportive housing unit that is ready to be leased by a new tenant and awaits a referral from HSH or another entity.

Offline Unit: A permanent supportive housing unit that is vacant but not yet available for occupancy because it needs: cleaning/refurbishing, repairs related to damage, release for a reasonable accommodation upgrade or transfer, release by medical examiner, etc.

SHPN Vacancies Overview

- Over the past six months, looking at a sample of 9 SHPN providers, we've collectively seen an average of about 275 vacancies total across the 9 providers. At least 25% of these units are SF Housing Authority units. Most providers have had 15 or fewer offline units at any given moment during the same period. Some have far fewer, one has far more. Offline units are not included in the 275 vacancies.
- The process of filling vacancies -- the core of our work in ending homelessness -- remains too slow with too much back and forth and confusion with both HSH and the SFHA.
- We recognize that HSH is understaffed as are many providers, yet our work to house people experiencing homelessness must not stop.
- We also recognize that providers each have a small percentage of offline vacancies or slow move-ins where we can and will do better to bring those units online.
- Work has been done to make things better such as "Tiger Teams" and other blitz efforts but we still have a lot of work to do together to fix the systemic issues and move away from short-term fixes.

Referrals: Barriers & Solutions

Barriers:

- Once housing applications are received, the process is sometimes slowed down because outside providers seem to struggle to locate and/or support those needing housing through the streamlined process.
- We continue to see an increase in applications that are mismatched -- the person in need of housing is referred to a mismatched housing site, set of amenities, or location due to the imperfect systems that track vacant units and client needs.

Solutions:

- Client Navigation: Dedicated worker (or small pool of workers) to quickly navigate housing applicants to a given site and until placed into housing.
- Referral Matching: An accurate, up to date list of buildings, their requirements, and their amenities should be consulted as a critical step before matching an applicant to a specific housing site/unit.

IT Systems: Barriers & Solutions Part 1

We appreciate the BLA's thorough process and concur with the recommendations in its recent report. In particular:

- Expedite ONE system enhancements to accurately track vacancies in real-time -- this seems underway, and the timeline should be expedited.
- The interim system, the "Vacancy Tracker," does not fully track vacancies nor can providers fully assess what vacancies exist using the Vacancy Tracker as it stands today. These need expedited fixes as well.
- The many systems redundancies and inefficiencies need to be overcome. We remain eager to collaborate -- this seems underway.

IT Systems: Barriers & Solutions Part 2

Reporting: Since the very beginning of the HSH department, the SHPN has urged a collaborative effort to measure, report, track, and share contractor performance results.

Specific to vacancies, we suggest a regular (at least monthly), detailed report from HSH to all providers and stakeholders that includes the total number of vacancies by building/agency, number of units “ready for referral,” average time between ready for referral and when the referral is sent to the site, number of referrals sent per vacancy, number of move-ins, number of move-outs, outcomes of referrals (move-in, withdrawal, etc.), average time from referral to move-in, number of units held offline, including length of time and reason.

This could be a powerful tool in bringing accountability and improvements to our systems of care.

Collaboration: Barriers & Solutions

Barrier: Many of the existing vacancy challenges seem rooted in a lack of “reality testing” for how things play out onsite in our supportive housing. While HSH has held many, many multi-provider and individual provider meetings, we often experience these meetings as top down where HSH sets the agenda and limits what feedback is actionable. The SF Housing Authority has held few meetings with providers which continues to slow the process for filing vacancies.

Solution: We continue to seek to work collaboratively to improve systems for tracking vacancy and occupancy data with both HSH and SFHA. A small group, including providers, HSHers and IT consultants would be ideal to task with that mission. The GREAT news is that HSH seems to be on board with this approach as of a few weeks ago and we are encouraged by the recent progress.

Thank you!