

WHEN HOUSING FIRST BECOMES A DIRTY WORD: OVERCOMING RESISTANCE AND ANXIETY WHEN IMPLEMENTING HOUSING FIRST FOR FAMILIES

April 10, 2018

Housing First Partners Conference

*Amanda J. Harris, Chief of Services to End and Prevent
Homelessness, Montgomery County Department of Health
and Human Services*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Understanding the reasons for resistance to the Housing First Model from family providers
- ▶ Identifying shared values and guiding principles
- ▶ Overcoming provider anxiety in applying Harm Reduction and Housing First when working with children

WHY IS HOUSING FIRST SO SCARY FOR FAMILY PROVIDERS?

Group Exercise

MONTGOMERY COUNTY FAMILY SYSTEM

A little bit about us...



Montgomery County, MD



AMI \$100,352

Poverty Level: 6.9%

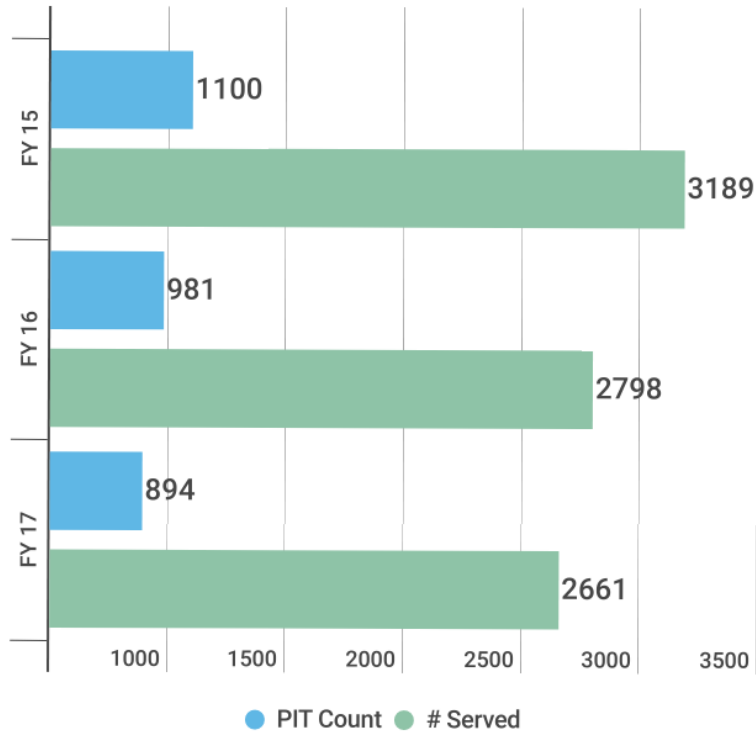
Population: 1 million

Average Rent (1BDRM):
\$1451

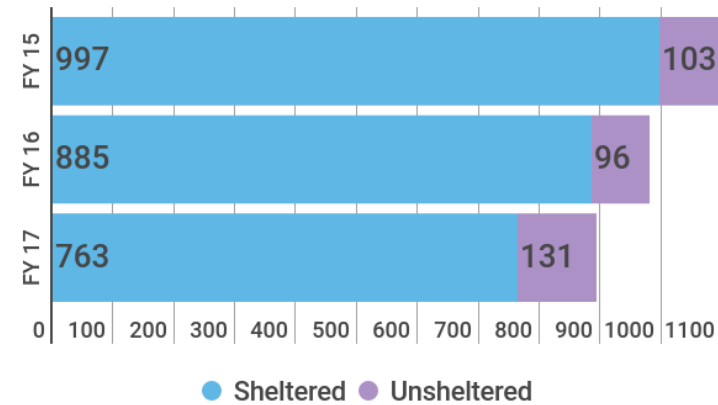
% Housing Burdened (Renters):
49.4

Point in Time Stats

of People Experiencing Homelessness



Sheltered vs. UnSheltered



As of June 2016, 274 People were experiencing chronic homelessness

2018 POINT IN TIME

MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S HOMELESS COUNT BY CATEGORY					
Category	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change 2016 to 2018	Percent Change 2017 to 2018
Total Number Counted	981	894	846	-14%	-5%
Total Individuals	623	616	568	-9%	-8%
Total Number of Families	109	84	86	-21%	2%
Total Persons in Families	358	278	278	-22%	0%
Total Adults in Families	128	106	93	-17%	-12%
Total Children in Families	230	172	185	-20%	8%

COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM FOR **FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

Department of Health and Human Services

Neighborhood Opportunity Network

Community

Self

Crisis Center

Hospitals

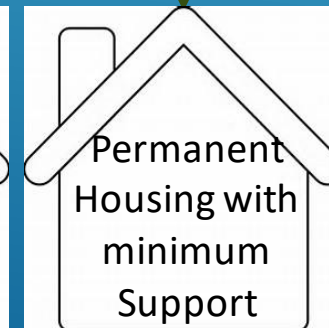
Faith Community

Domestic Violence Centers

Emergency Assistance Coalition

Coordinated Assessment and Referral

Regional Service Centers (SEPH Offices)
Germantown | Rockville | Silver Spring



OUR JOURNEY

Where we started and how far we have come



THE BEGINNING

- ▶ “Implementing “Housing First for a number of years
- ▶ Largely a sheltering system vs. a housing system
- ▶ Deep assessments and multiple requirements for service participation
- ▶ Treatment first model
- ▶ Risk adverse

FINDING COMMON GROUND: THE “SPIRIT” OF HOUSING FIRST

- ▶ Immediate access to permanent housing with no readiness requirements
- ▶ Consumer choice and self-determination
- ▶ Recovery orientation
- ▶ Individualized and client-driven services
- ▶ Social and community integration

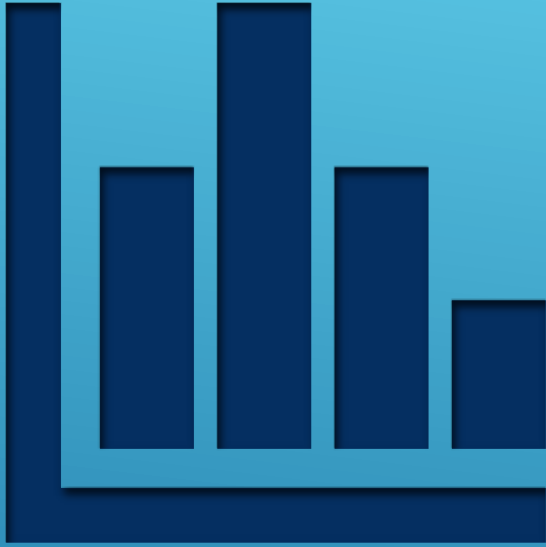
CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS

- ▶ Listen, really listen!
- ▶ Discuss – If you haven't had the same conversation at least 5 times, keep trying
- ▶ Build on momentum
- ▶ Look for unlikely allies
- ▶ Use the hammer, sparingly
- ▶ Find a support system – change is exhausting

TACTICAL TOOLS

Okay, but how?





- ▶ In Montgomery County, 6% of the population is in poverty but less than 0.1% become homeless!
- ▶ Only 1 out of 4 households that need a housing subsidy get one.
- ▶ In Montgomery County, 50% of households experiencing homelessness are employed.

USING DATA TO MAKE YOUR CASE



- ▶ Homeless simulation exercise:
<http://playspent.org/>
- ▶ Voices of the people we serve
- ▶ Brain Science: Being in Poverty is like pulling an all-nighter
 - ▶ The Hidden Brain Podcast on Tunnel Vision

EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING



- ▶ Coordinated Entry Policies
- ▶ Contract Changes
- ▶ Funding requirements
- ▶ Reallocation

POLICIES AND FUNDING REQUIREMENTS



QUESTIONS?

Contact Info: Amanda.Harris@montgomerycountymd.gov