



# Shelter Diversions 101

Low-cost housing first intervention  
to prevent homelessness at the front door



# What is Diversion?



**Look a Diversion**

# Philosophy

*Diversion is based on the belief that clients have a **right to housing**, and the **ability to maintain housing**.*

*Homelessness is a crisis. Not who someone is.*



*Interventions can realign incentives & change the dynamic to house people faster and more permanently.*

Diversion is part of a “Harm Reduction” Approach

# What is Shelter Diversion?

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Diversion is an intervention to solve individuals or families lack of housing before they have entered shelter or street homelessness

Through a conflict resolution, empowerment based approach, providers can prevent episodes of homelessness before they begin.

## Definitions:

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Because Diversion fits into so many housing service systems differently, there is no standardized definition.

It is a common set of principles that guide a meditation style of intervention used at the point at which someone has just become homeless, but has not yet entered shelter.

## Definitions:

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### **Cleveland Mediation Center Definition of Diversion:**

Diversion is empowering persons facing imminent homelessness to identify safe and appropriate housing options and assisting them in avoiding shelter and returning immediately to housing.

# Diversion is :

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- | Crisis Intervention through Empowerment
  - | Housing Intervention *before* clients enter Shelter
  - | Person-Centered Approach to resolving homelessness
  - | Low-cost, lightest touch intervention.
  - | Never a barrier to entering shelter
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# Why Divert?

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Emergency Shelters should be just that, **For Emergencies**

Episodes of Homelessness should be **Brief**

Resources should be Prioritized for the Most Vulnerable

Shelters aren't Homes

**Homelessness is Solvable**



Experiencing  
Homelessness as a  
Child is one of the  
Strongest Predictors of  
whether someone will  
experience  
Homelessness as an  
Adult.







# But Does it Work?

*Does Diversion Reduce Homelessness  
& Conserve Resources?*

# YES

Many communities and states are implementing incredibly effective Shelter Diversion programs!

In a 2015 case study in New London, CT, 80% of families were diverted.



From Jan - July 2017, CT diverted 17% of those presenting for shelter & some regions are diverting as high as 40%.



# But how much did it cost?

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| The average cost in the 2015 New London case study was **\$1,750 per home**. Only **one-third** of family diversions needed financial assistance.

| In Fairfield County CT, it costs an **average of \$1,000** to divert a family from becoming homeless.

**This is a fraction of Rapid Re-housing  
+ Shelter Costs**

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# What is the Impact of Reducing the Need for Shelter by 20-30%?

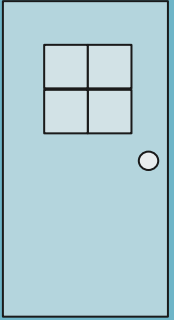
More Resources for the More Vulnerable

Weathering Budget Cuts in Your Community

Reducing Shelter Beds & Re-Allocating Resource

# What can Diversion Look Like?

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- ✦ Returning to Friends and Family
- ✦ Re-entering a Previous Residence
- ✦ Temporary Diversion while Seeking New Housing
- ✦ Relocating to a Safe Place out of Town

# What do these costs look like?

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Many Diversions require no additional costs (About a third).

Through:

- Mediation Phone Calls with Families
- Connections to Services offered in your community (such as food pantries, job training programs, or childcare assistance)
- Empowering them to believe they can maintain housing. Hope Matters.

# Diversion through Small Costs

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Small Costs Costs can include things like, cell phone assistance, food assistance or a shared meal, transportation assistance.

## Be Creative!

Diversions have been done with sewing machines, dressers, and pre-paid phones. The key is to listen and keep an open mind and have small flexible funding for your client's needs.



# Diversion Program Costs

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Shelter Diversion seeks to align incentives in the housing system and get people housed as quickly as possible.

Shelter Diversion funding includes assistance with limited back-rent or a security deposit & first month's rent *without any income or housing history requirement* if this will help them to stay permanently housed.

# What about Returns to Homelessness?

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We have found that those who are diverted largely do not return to homelessness.

In an early analysis, CT found that **90% of families & 87% of individuals diverted did not return to seek shelter in 2016**

For that 10-13%, try Diversion again, work toward Rapid-ReHousing & move to Progressive Engagement model or increasing support as needed.

# How Does it Fit?

How does Diversion fit our housing system & where do I fit in?

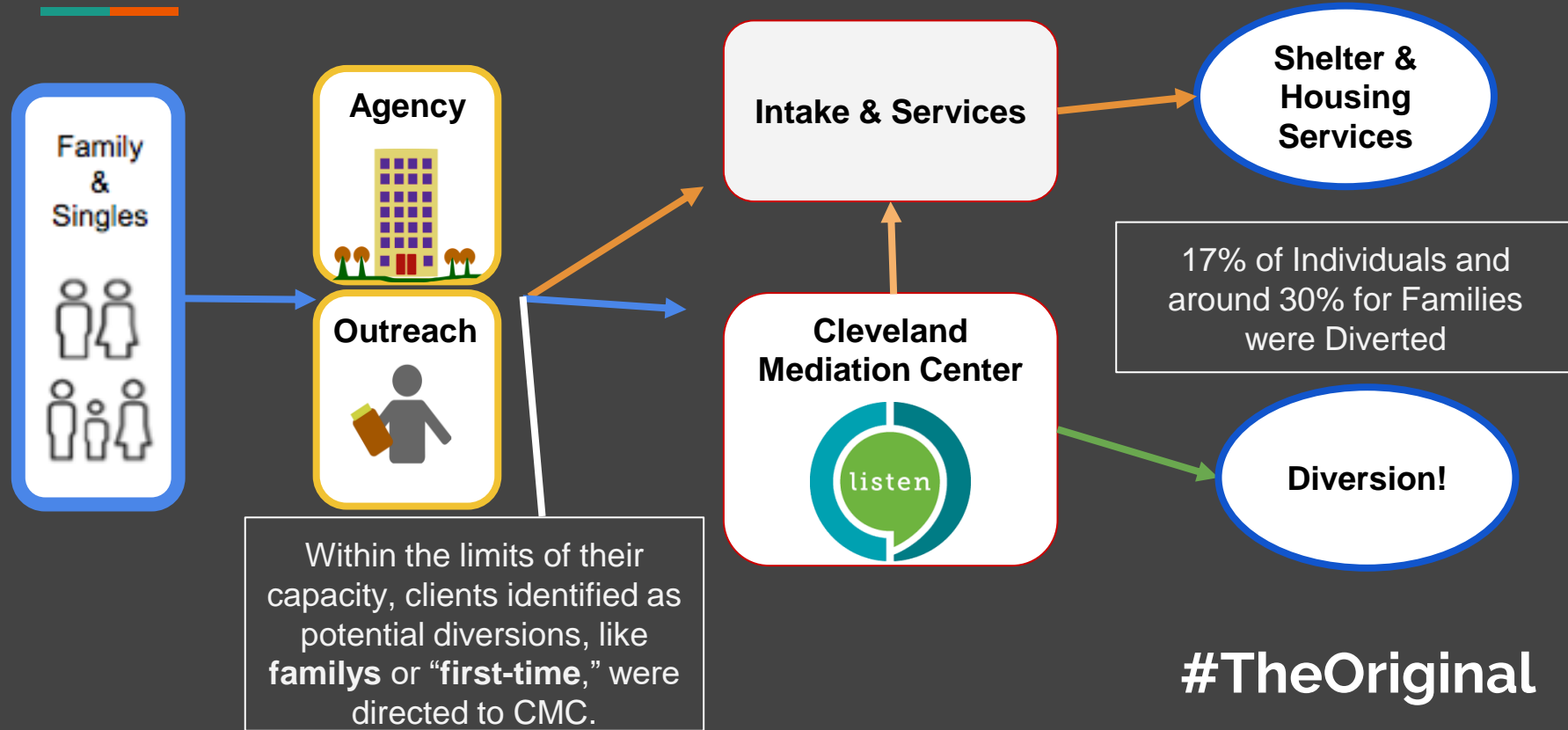


Diversion can fit in to  
any Housing First Assistance  
System.

&  
Everyone has  
a role to play.



# Cleveland Model



# CMC Model



## Where do they get funding?

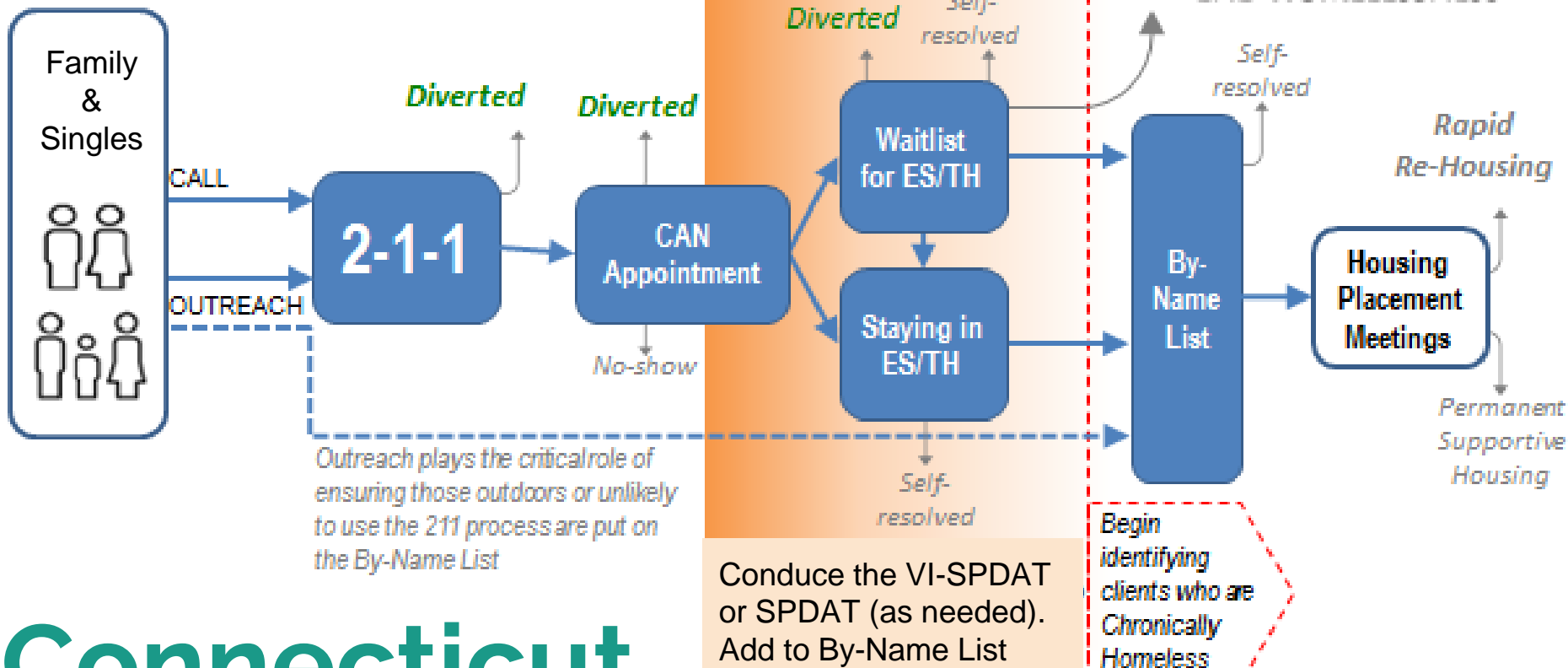
*Mixed! Most funding comes from philanthropy & grants.*

## Who does the Diversion?

*Providers of the Cleveland Mediation Center*

**The Cleveland Mediation Center is no longer able to practice Diversions for their community as a result of funding changes, but continue to provide other mediation services.**

**#TryTry&TryAgain**



# Connecticut

# Connecticut Model

#Universal



## Where do they get funding?

*Mixed! Some funding comes from philanthropy, some from a Crowdfunding site & “Be Homeful Initiative,” many have individual community funds.*

## Who does the Diversion?

*Providers in every region have been trained and there are trained trainers in every region.*

## What are the results?

*CCEH tracks its Diversion outcomes and they are available here.  
<http://cceh.org/data/interactive/cancomparisons/>*



# Key Takeaways:



- ❖ *No Wrong Door*
- ❖ *Trust Staff & Fund Flexibly*
- ❖ *BE **BOLD** IN WHO YOU DIVERT*
- ❖ *It's an Approach, Not a Formula*
- ❖ *Trying again doesn't hurt!*
- ❖ *Not Everyone is Divertable, but everyone deserves a Chance to be Diverted.*

# Key Takeaways - System Level



- ❖ *Build into the System*
- ❖ *Break Down Silos*
- ❖ *Seek Community Buy-in*
- ❖ *Involve Every Level - Providers through Boards*
- ❖ *Tracking is Essential*

# Diversion is Flexible

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Diversion fits any housing first based system. There are many existing models. The Keys to Implementation are:

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Staff Training

Funding Models

Advocacy

Data Collection

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## Discussion:



1. What services like this currently exist in your community?
2. What are some Challenges to Bringing Diversion to Your Community?
3. What Support Does Your Community Need to Start Diversion?



# Thank you

*For listening and being part of  
the work to end homelessness*

If you have any questions about the Diversion or  
hosting a Training, please contact:

**Sarah Day Chess**  
**Diversion1st.org**  
**SCS@diversion1st.org**