



Homeless Diversion Pilot Program Guidelines

Updated 8/7/2020

1. What is Diversion?

Diversion is a person-centered approach that empowers households to identify their own resources and solutions to end their homeless episode with minimal intervention. It differs from other homeless system responses that require intensive case management and sizable system resources. As a result, Diversion costs less and takes less time to get households successfully stabilized. It is imperative to understand the difference between a diversion and prevention strategy.

Diversion is a strategy that addresses and prevents homelessness by helping households who have not identified a safe place to stay tonight.

- ✓ It is an intervention that assists households experiencing a housing crisis and seeking shelter to preserve their current housing situation or make immediate alternative rehousing arrangements without having to enter a temporary shelter. Or, if they must, it is for a minimal time.

Prevention is assistance aimed at helping low-income households resolve a crisis that could otherwise lead to a loss of housing and a safe place to stay tonight.

- ✓ The most common prevention methods include short-term financial assistance, legal assistance, housing case management, or all of these. Prevention is a category of funding under HUD ESG.

2. Local Diversion Implementation

The Diversion process takes place during a household's initial contact with any SAHomelink access point who is trained on Diversion & Problem Solving by SARA. A Diversion-trained staff member initiates an exploratory conversation with the household to brainstorm practical solutions for resolving immediate housing needs promptly. Diversion should be attempted with **every household who presents as literally homeless** as an initial intervention before completing a full assessment and adding to the person to the SAHomelink waitlist for longer-term housing resources (ex. Rapid Rehousing, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing)

Households are prompted to identify safe housing alternatives based on their own or available community resources. SARA will maintain an accurate list of resources and explore MOUs with partner agencies to support Diversion. Flexible funding assistance is available for households who identify likely needs to resolve their present issue and divert them from homelessness.

Diversion Problem Solving Approach

- ✓ Structured problem solving
- ✓ Explore situation and resources
- ✓ What can we do to keep you from entering shelter?
- ✓ What would resolve your current housing crisis?

3. Eligibility

Households experiencing homelessness may access funds through a variety of SAHomelink/Coordinated Entry access points to the homeless response system, including SAHomelink Hubs, the Homeless Hotline, and mobile outreach. Households must be literally homeless, living/about to live tonight in a place not meant for human habitation/unsheltered, or fleeing domestic violence. A Diversion-trained staff member must refer the household as the result of a SAHomelink Diversion Problem Solving Assessment.

- **Eligible expenses include:**

- ✓ Payment for background and credit checks,
- ✓ Landlord fees,
- ✓ Move-in costs (including deposit and first month's rent, fee of moving truck, and storage),
- ✓ Utility deposits and arrears,
- ✓ Previous housing debt/rental arrears,
- ✓ Transportation,
- ✓ Grocery card,
- ✓ Interpreter costs,
- ✓ Fees for assistance securing IDs, birth certificates and social security cards,
- ✓ Certifications or license fees related to school or employment,
- ✓ Work or education-related assistance, or
- ✓ Other types of financial costs that will help the household obtain housing.

4. Expected Outcomes

- ✓ 100% of literally homeless or fleeing domestic violence households will have a Diversion Problem-Solving Assessment at any SAHomelink access point upon initial contact.
- ✓ 100% of Diversion Problem Solving Assessments will be completed by staff trained in Diversion Assessments.
- ✓ 25% of households will be successfully diverted from emergency shelters and the SAHomelink waitlist.
- ✓ 75% of households successfully diverted will remain stable in their housing after 30 days.
- ✓ 100% of flexible funding assistance will be documented in HMIS.

5. Procedures

- **Access Points/Network Partners will:**

- ✓ Have at least one staff trained in Diversion Problem Solving per shift of designated operating hours.
- ✓ Complete the SAHomelink enrollment for the Problem-Solving Assessment.
- ✓ If the client can be successfully diverted, select the outcome choice that corresponds to diversion intervention.
 - If diversion intervention involves some other referral than the Homeless Diversion Pilot, then document intervention and outcome and close enrollment.



- If diversion intervention is the Homeless Diversion Pilot, then select as service.
- ✓ Have a method for collecting supporting documents.
 - Invoices and Vendor W9s (except for food) are required to support request.
- ✓ Diversion trained staff must attach documentation to corresponding SAHomelink enrollment and document the activity in an HMIS case note.
- ✓ Have the option to indicate if the agency will disburse diversion funds directly and then invoicing SARAH monthly. *Disbursements are not reimbursable until SARAH has approved the service request.*
- **SARAH will:**
 - ✓ Review clients assigned to Homeless Diversion Pilot daily.
 - Once the client profile is complete (assessment has been completed, and supporting documents have been uploaded), SARAH staff will approve service requests within one business day.¹
 - Checks will be disbursed, via USPS, to the vendor within two business days of service request approval,
 - Provide grocery gift cards for qualifying grocery requests. Homeless Diversion Pilot requests for food assistance will suffice as the invoice. Homeless Diversion Pilot grocery gift cards will be available for pick up by appointment (please see Diversion Pilot Community Job Aid for specifics).
 - ✓ Close SAHomelink diversion enrollments within three business days of service fund disbursement (or reconciliation of enrollment-specific, agency issued invoice).
 - ✓ Follow up with the client 30 days after initial enrollment with a satisfaction survey.
 - ✓ Support to community hubs and network partners in the following manner:
 - Provide Problem Solving Assessment Training/Certification,
 - Provide ongoing support, training, and shadowing for Certified Diversion Specialist, and
 - Provide monthly Diversion Networking and Support meetings (beginning September 2020).

¹ Providers can choose to provide direct funds for SARAH approved service requests and resolved through monthly invoicing.