



A PLAIN-LANGUAGE GUIDE

Understanding Housing Problem Solving

An approach that starts from what a person *can* do — not from what they lack.

Housing Problem Solving (HPS) — also called **diversion, rapid resolution, or rapid exit** — is a person-centered approach for helping someone resolve a housing crisis quickly, often upstream of the homelessness system entirely. It's one of the most talked-about skills in the field, and one of the most misunderstood. Understanding what it actually is clears up a lot of confusion about where it fits.

WHAT IT IS

At its core, HPS is a **person-centered, housing-focused conversation** that helps someone resolve a housing crisis quickly — ideally before they need to enter, or stay in, the homelessness system. It's a skill, not a program: a stance and a set of techniques a trained staff member brings to a conversation, wherever that conversation happens.

The staff member listens closely to understand what caused the crisis, then explores safe, immediate, often creative options *with* the person: reconnecting with a support network, a temporary stay, a small piece of flexible assistance, a path back to prior housing. The conversation has **no predetermined outcome** and no eligibility screen — it starts from the belief that, with the right support at the right moment, many people can resolve their own crisis.

WHY IT MATTERS

UPSTREAM

HPS happens at or before the front door — at the earliest moment of a crisis, when the widest range of options is still open and a resolution is easiest to reach.

SCARCE RESOURCES

System resources are limited. **Every crisis resolved upstream preserves a shelter bed or program slot** for someone whose situation genuinely requires it — HPS helps the whole system target its scarce capacity where it's needed most.

SELF-RESOLUTION

Given the right support at the right time, **many people can resolve their own housing crisis** and move toward stability without a lengthy program stay. HPS creates the moment for that to happen.

The Dignity in the Premise

What makes HPS distinct isn't only where it happens — it's the assumption it starts from. Rather than treating a person as a case to be assessed and slotted, HPS **leads with strengths**: it presumes the person has knowledge, relationships, and capacity of their own, and treats them as the lead problem-solver in their own life. That strengths-based premise is the source of everything else — the open conversation, the person-led solutions, the refusal to reduce someone to a deficit to be managed.

WHAT GOOD HPS LOOKS LIKE

- ✓ **It's a real conversation, not a script.** Guided by deep listening, not a checklist or form — exploring with the person, not processing them.
 - ✓ **It leads with strengths.** It starts from what the person and their network *can* do, not from a menu of programs or a list of deficits.
 - ✓ **It's offered to everyone, never used as a gate.** A genuine attempt to find a better option than shelter or the street — not a way to turn people away from help they need.
 - ✓ **Safety is non-negotiable.** A "resolution" only counts if the option is genuinely safe and appropriate — never a push back into a harmful situation.
 - ✓ **It's measured.** Conversations and their outcomes are recorded, so a system can see whether its problem-solving is actually helping people resolve crises — and improve how it's done.
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HPS isn't a place on the continuum — it's an approach that can make every place on it more effective, and more humane.

To think through building problem-solving into your system — and measuring whether it's working — visit homelessresponselab.com.