



Shared Housing Key Points

Adapted by CCEH from Iain De Jong's shared housing training.

"If more Americans shared housing, it could virtually end homelessness."

(Ellen & O'Flaherty, 2002)

WHAT IS SHARED HOUSING?

Shared housing is *any situation in which an agreement formalizes the co-residence of two or more family units within the same housing unit.*

Shared housing is not envisioned as a replacement for existing homeless assistance tools; rather, an expansion of shared housing, coupled with maintained or increased resources for short-, medium-, and long-term rental assistance and case management, would allow providers to stabilize more homeless households. Shared housing should not be confused with "doubled up" or "couch surfing"; shared housing is permanent housing with a lease. Shared housing can be used as a diversion method.

Examples: Roommates, living with your mother, college dorms, seniors living together, live-in care assistants, transition age youth, nannies, etc.

WHY SHARED HOUSING?

Financial reasons

- Reduced rent burden (lack of affordable housing)
- Pooled other household expenses
 - ✓ Utilities
 - ✓ Household good
 - ✓ Furnishings
 - ✓ Child care/adult care
 - ✓ Transportation
- Households save between 1/3 and 1/2 of their income (He, et al. 2010)
- Access to better neighborhoods

Interpersonal reasons

- Network of individuals that care for one another
- Reduces isolation
- Reduces stress
- Can provide a "time-out" for parents that need a break

Beneficial for Providers

- Reduces length of stay in shelter
- There aren't enough resources for long-term
 - Subsidies
- Communities with high rent
- Low vacancy rates
- Steps up to more independent living
- More sustainable

SOME SPECIFICS:

- People agree to fulfill a certain set of responsibilities
 - Could be forever or short-term
 - Leases are separate – therefore start and end
 - Dates may be the same or different
 - Services for each participant are individualized
 - One person or family is no more the “owner” or “boss” of the unit than the other
 - It’s NOT a program, housing only
 - Choice of roommate is participants’ not programs
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REQUIREMENTS:

- Each household must have their own lease
 - Each household must be willing to participate
 - Each household must decide who they live with
 - Landlords must follow all Fair Housing Laws
 - Cannot kick people out without proper eviction
 - Must meet habitability standards
 - Rents should follow rent reasonableness or FMR
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One Size Does Not Fit All

Each household is unique:

- Some cases two small households can share housing
 - In others a small household may prefer to be matched with a single individual
 - Some households prefer to live with friends
 - Some households prefer to live with a perfect stranger
 - Do not assume large households aren’t interested in shared housing
 - Willingness to be flexible = higher degree of success
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Types of Shared Housing

1. Collaborative Households:
 - a. Long term, symmetrical arrangements
 2. Surrogate Homesteads:
 - a. Long term, asymmetrical in a reciprocal exchange, high level of integration
 3. Tacit Dependency Arrangement:
 - a. Indefinite in duration , unbalanced level of reciprocal exchange, moderate integration
 4. Goal Oriented Arrangement:
 - a. Fairly transitional in nature, low financial reciprocity, usually high-level or relational integration (single mom living with family while obtaining degree)
 5. Companions or Roommates:
 - a. Arrangements are of indeterminate duration and are fairly balanced in symmetry, relationships of association rather than affinity
 6. Host Families:
 - a. Intermediary or temporary with asymmetrical contributions and fairly detached personal relationships
 7. Serial Shared Housing Arrangement:
 - a. Short-term asymmetrical arrangements of association rather than integration (couch surfing)
- (Pinsoneault 2006)*

HUD Guidelines

- Approved Section 8 shared housing
 - Approved RRH shared housing
 - Allows for scaled rental assistance
 - Must follow guidelines
 - ESG
 - Unit must follow FMR rules
 - Must follow HQS standards
 - Must have 12 month lease
 - Must be literally homeless at entry
 - Must not exceed 30% AMI @ 12 month recertification
 - CoC
 - Unit must follow rent reasonableness
 - Must Follow HQS standards
 - Must have 12 month lease
 - Must be literally homeless at entry
 - Must show financial need
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Direct Service Provider Training

- All staff should be trained on:
 - Trauma Informed Care
 - Harm Reduction
 - Boundaries
 - De-escalation and Crisis Intervention
 - Housing First Principles
 - Working with diverse populations
 - How to identify and specialize services for participants who have experiences domestic violence or have been sex trafficked
 - Review of these principles should be part of on-going supervision and case reviews.
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Better Integrate Shared Housing

- Highlight the benefits of shared housing for every participant
 - Assessment staff should be talking about shared housing during the first meeting
 - Agency written material should include information about shared housing
 - Accessing the match app or completing match documentation should be done during housing navigation/coordination meetings
 - Message, message, message
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How to make the match

- Highlight Benefits
- Make Matches Easy
- Make It a Business Arrangement
- Weigh Matches
- Craft Roommate Agreements
- Offer Ongoing Mediation
- Smooth Match Conclusion
- Participants need to know that it is an option
- Provide positive examples
- Have a meaningful match component
- Demonstrate the financial/social benefit(s)
- Be ready to address the stereotypes/stigmas of shared housing

Make it a Business Arrangement

- Shared housing can create unequal power dynamics
 - Important to create arrangements that are clear, business-like, and reciprocal
 - Each must pay fair share
 - Each are responsible only for their interest
 - Bonding is not necessary
 - Make a roommate agreement
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Potential Drawbacks

- May lead to strained relationships
 - Invasion of privacy
 - Health issues
 - Increase in slumlords
 - Overcrowding
 - Overcharging
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Separation is a LAST resort.

- Separation can be seen as picking sides if one (or more) persons remain and one (or more) persons are asked to vacate.
- Can be critical to maintaining landlord relations.
- Can be essential to maintaining tenancy.

Ending Unsuccessful Matches

- Do not require households to stay in untenable situations
 - Be prepared to relocate one or both households
 - Be prepared to re-match, if desired
 - Make sure landlords are notified in advance
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Landlord Relationship

- Building relationships with landlords is key
- Have flex funds to cover turn-over
- Effective stabilization services can help ensure issues will be quickly resolved
- Rental properties are assets—ensuring timely payments is what they want

Need more in-depth knowledge on Shared Housing?

For more in-depth understanding about shared housing, contact training@cceh.org to be notified of upcoming Shared Housing trainings presented by Iain De Jong. Or visit CCEH.org to view the upcoming training calendar.