



## 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](mailto:training@cceh.org) to be notified of upcoming Shared Housing trainings presented by Iain De Jong. Or visit [CCEH.org](http://CCEH.org) to view the upcoming training calendar.