

# Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF ) National Grantee Webinar

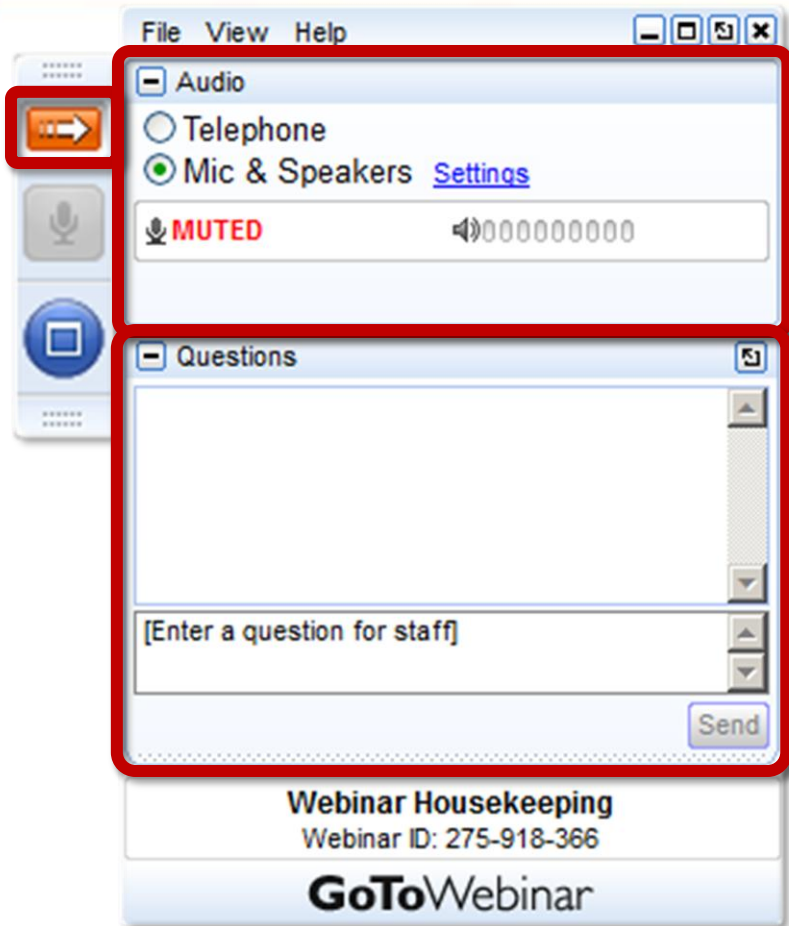
*Using Conflict Resolution for Effective  
Homeless Prevention and Diversion*

May 26, 2016

# Webinar Format

- Webinar will last approximately 90 minutes
- Participants' phone connections are “muted” due to the high number of callers
  - **Questions can be submitted during the webinar using the Q&A function**
- Questions can also be submitted anytime to [SSVF@va.gov](mailto:SSVF@va.gov)

# Questions



## Your Questions

Submit questions and comments via the Questions panel

# Presenters & Agenda

- **Welcome & Introductions**
  - Tamara Wright, MPA, SSVF Regional Coordinator
- **Using Conflict Resolution for Effective Homeless Prevention & Diversion**
  - Ed Boyte, Assistant Director at Cleveland Mediation Center in Cleveland, OH
- **Promising Practices from SSVF Grantees**
  - Patti Spaulding-Klewin, Veterans Programs Supervisor at Catholic Community Services/Family Housing Network in Tacoma, WA
  - Jessica Cruz, SSVF Program Manager and Chela Schuster, Director of Strategic Housing Resources at UMOM New Day Centers in Phoenix, AZ

# Agency Background

- Private non-profit
- Cleveland Mediation Center was formed by the community as a better way to address neighborhood conflicts
- Provides family, community and school meditations
- SSVF homelessness prevention
- Shelter diversion
- Mediation and diversion training – locally and nationally

# Mediation & Housing

- Began housing work in the 1990s by *listening* to the needs of area men who were homeless. They received shelter, clothes, food, drug and alcohol counseling – but said their unmet need was...housing.
- We then began landlord/tenant mediations –to stop evictions first through negotiations, payment plans, then added back rent assistance.
- Needed repairs, noise, parking and other tenant issues were also addressed.

# PRC, HPRP, ESG

- Landlord/tenant mediations were funded from the 1990s (PRC) to the 2000s through HPRP and ESG to halt evictions and prevent homelessness.
- Many people remained housed who otherwise would have been evicted (an eviction court date was required).
- HUD and NAEH began to address homelessness specifically, the focusing on housing those in shelter and *targeting prevention on those most likely to enter shelter*.

# Challenge of Traditional Prevention

Stopping evictions had two main challenges:

1. The number of filed evictions did not mirror the numbers entering shelter.
2. The program was successful and stopped hundreds of evictions a year, but there was a seemingly unlimited number each additional year that could also be assisted, at a high cost.

SO...we began applying the techniques and approaches of mediation to persons entering shelter to see if they have safe, other options.



# Conflict Resolution Approach

- Based on Transformative Mediation Theory
- *Homelessness is a crisis* – like in *conflict*, persons in *crisis* are less able to clearly think through problems and advocate for themselves than they are when *not in crisis*.
- So as in conflict, we first *listen* and *validate* their experience – as our mission says, *honoring all people, building their capacity to act*.
- *Client-centered*. We don't assume what people need, we help them articulate their needs.

# National Alliance to End Homelessness: *Principles for Homelessness Prevention*

## **Principle 1: Crisis Resolution**

Homelessness is a crisis.

Responses must include:

- Triage
- Focus on personal safety as the first priority
- De-escalation of emotions
- Clear, achievable action steps
- Returning the person to control over their own problem-solving

# National Alliance to End Homelessness: *Principles for Homelessness Prevention*

## **Principle 2: Client choice, respect, and empowerment**

- Staff must help people in crisis regain a sense of control
- Focus is on client's goals, choices, and preferences
- An unwavering respect for client's strengths, and reinforcement of progress, are essential for empowerment.
- This does not mean clients are protected from the natural consequences of their actions.

# National Alliance to End Homelessness: *Principles for Homelessness Prevention*

## **Principle 3: Provide the minimum assistance necessary for the shortest time possible**

- Progressive engagement as in RRH, but clients must re-qualify under prevention.
- Other than paying back rent, what are some examples of *lesser* amounts of assistance that help people become housed?

# National Alliance to End Homelessness: *Principles for Homelessness Prevention*

## **Principle 4: Maximize community resources**

- Lightest touch
- Reserve shelter beds for those in need
- Connect people to resources

# National Alliance to End Homelessness: *Principles for Homelessness Prevention*

## **Principle 5: The right resources to the right people at the right time**

- Do not over-serve.
- Match the services to the needs identified by the clients.

# Conflict Resolution Approach

- We use a *strength-based approach* – helping clients identify and mine strengths, successes and resources they've used in the past to help them with this bout of homelessness.
- Consistent with CMC mission of *honoring, validating and building persons' capacity to act*, we are non-judgmental.
- We support and trust that persons want to succeed, have done so previously and help them tap into their own strengths and past successes to help them with their current situation.

# What is Diversion?

Diversion is helping persons determine if it is possible for them to stay anywhere else that's safe, other than a shelter. This could be temporary or permanent.

Persons chart their own way out of shelter and back into housing – we follow their lead, providing the minimum amount of assistance (and therefore intervention into their lives) to help them get housed.



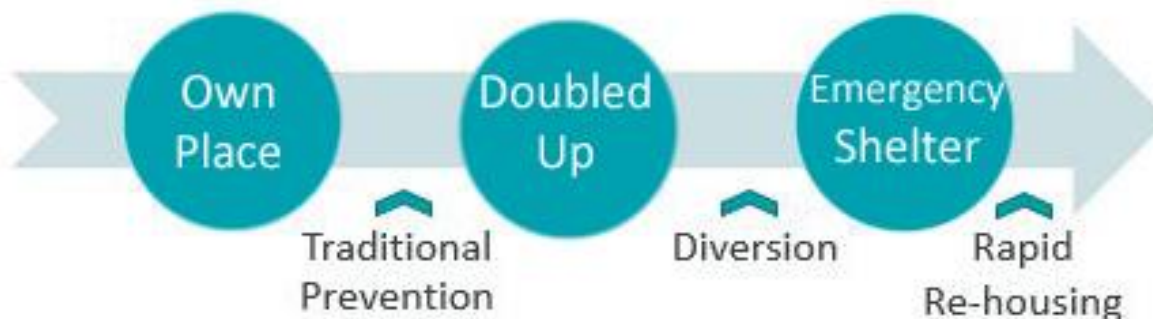
# Types of Diversions

Diversion should always be safe and appropriate for the client.

1. Helping persons go back where they have recently stayed – mediation + food or utility assistance. Sometimes back rent.
2. Relocate to a stable home out of town – phone facilitation + Greyhound fare.
3. Own (new) housing – temp place to stay during housing search. We order inspection and pay first month's rent and deposit.
4. Return to their own residence – previous places they have lived are options, non DV relationship issues

# When & Where Diversion Can Happen

Diversion is a prevention strategy moved to the Front Door of the Shelter.



Traditional Prevention generally targets renters at risk of losing their units - or in cases like SSVF - works with persons doubled up to obtain their own housing.

Once people enter shelter they are actually homeless per HUD and therefore no longer prevention candidates and may qualify for Rapid Re-housing, PSH, Section 8, etc.

# Diversion Case Flow

1. Persons needing shelter go through Coordinated Intake
2. All new (longer than 30 days) persons needing shelter are then referred to Cleveland Mediation Center (CMC) diversion advocates
3. CMC spends time listening, empathizing and helping persons in the crisis of homelessness identify strengths, successes and people in their life that can help them avoid homelessness.

## Diversion Case Flow (cont.)

4. If resources are needed to make the diversion happen, limited local flexible funds are used for food cards, gas cards or Greyhound bus tickets to a permanent home out-of-town.
5. First month's rent and deposit can be used for those with income and housing history.
6. Inspections, client and landlord verification are required based on the funding source.
7. Goal is to prevent homelessness for 25% of those presenting for shelter.
8. After 12 months the success rate was above that of RRH -- 94% did not return to homelessness.

# Diversion Successes

- Our staff. After an early hire -- who had shelter and mediation background -- didn't work out, we broadened our search. We emphasized candidates' beliefs and attitudes, and had them demonstrate their skills in the shelters during the interview process with our staff providing crucial feedback.
- Evidence-based tracking via HMIS Service Point has been helpful in showing what has worked.
- Our goal is to divert 20% - 25% of clients entering shelter.

# Homeless Prevention Case Flow

1. Veterans are referred to CMC by the courts, landlords, the VA, Community Referral and Resource Center, and 211/First Call for Help.
2. Clients bring in needed documents (DD214, letter from landlord or host family, income verification).
3. But the main part of the intake is staff *listening* to the veteran. Taking the time and effort to understand their situation and validate their experience.

# Homeless Prevention Case Flow (cont.)

4. Staff help the veteran identify the type of housing that best suits their needs: a new unit, returning to their current place, or to continue to live with their family. Steps 4-6 apply to veterans seeking to return to current housing.
5. The family member or current landlord is invited to a mediation at Cleveland Mediation Center.
6. While the presenting issue (back rent or a family conflict) is given an opportunity to be addressed, parties may also choose other issues they feel are important to be addressed.
7. Mediators help parties identify topics and goals, communicate, negotiate and structure agreements.

# Homeless Prevention Case Flow (cont.)

8. For *back rent*, owner documentation is collected from the landlord or for
9. For those going into a new unit, a HQS inspection is conducted (including lead if children under 6), leases submitted, ownership documentation received, and then
10. Payment arrangements are made to the landlord.
11. Other identified financial needs are addressed (moving, storage, furniture, etc.)



# Veterans Who Are Doubled Up

- The housing options for those who have been with friends or family are usually their own place.
- Those who qualify as chronically homeless are connected to get a HUD-VASH voucher.
- Others with employment and/or disability income find their own market rate unit.
- Clients get first month's rent, deposit, bed and starter kits for moving in.

# Promising Practices from SSVF Grantees

## **Homeless Diversion Pilot Project in Pierce County, Washington**

- Patti Spaulding-Klewin, Veterans Programs Supervisor at Catholic Community Services/Family Housing Network in Tacoma, WA

# How does it work?

Begins with a conversation:

1. Listen to the story
  2. Affirm, reflect, de-escalate, pay attention to housing strengths, resources, resilience and the needs (not services) expressed.
  3. Move from crisis to brainstorming solutions, empowerment.
  4. Prioritize immediate plan (where to be tonight), with attention to safety. Engage their resources.
- Initiate plan (30 day max) with minimal assistance (mediation, housing search, Temporary Financial Assistance)

# What do solutions look like?

## Common outcomes:

1. Re-establish rental housing with minimal, 1X Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA)
2. Mediate with family/friends to stay short or long term, possible flex TFA
3. Mediation with landlord/property
4. Shared housing
5. Relocation to out-of-area support system.

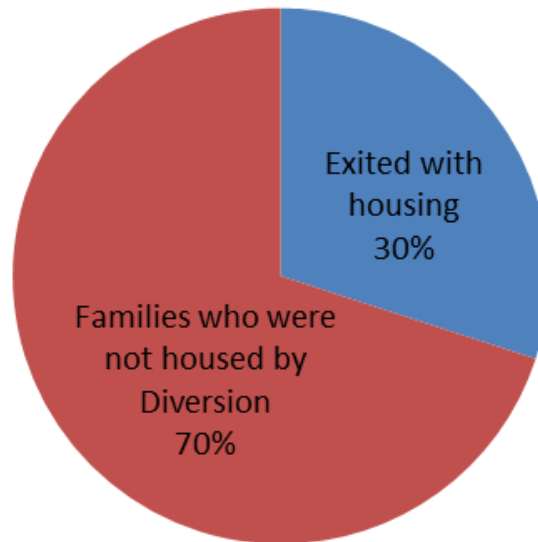
# Pierce County Diversion Pilot

- Pierce County: Mix of urban (Tacoma area) and rural. Current Centralized Intake system evolving into Coordinated Entry.
- Pilot started October 2014, focused on families seeking services from CI, screened as literally homeless.
- Families had Diversion conversation, opted for Diversion intervention OR to enter shelter or waiting list.

# Data

2015: 260 families had Diversion conversation as 1<sup>st</sup> step at “front door” of services. 174 (67%) tried Diversion

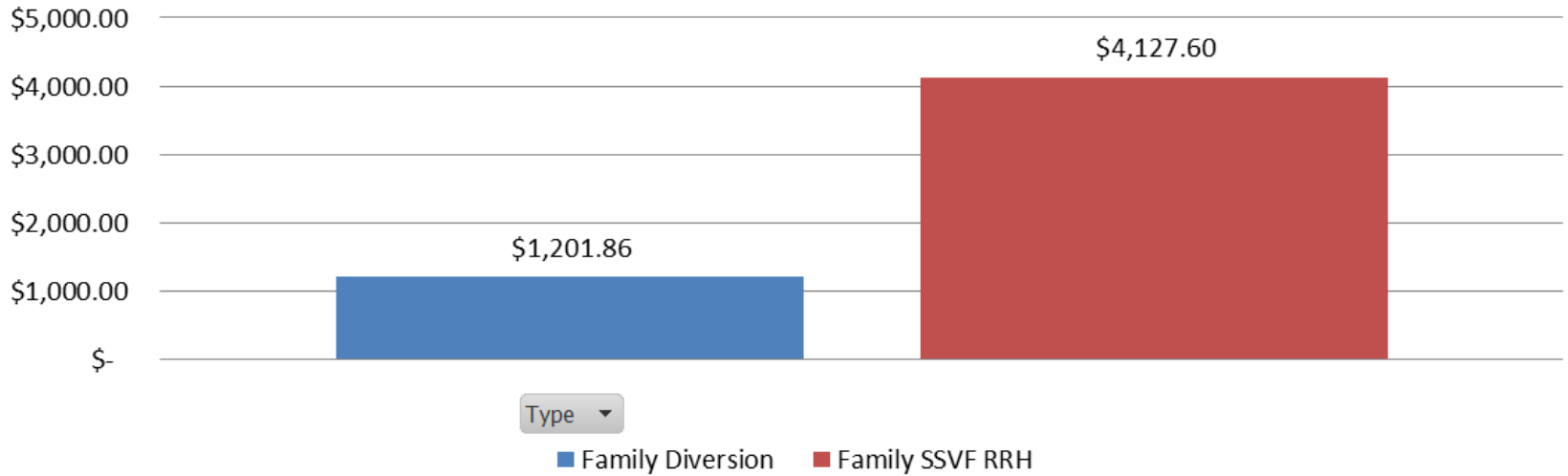
## Literally Homeless Families Who Had Diversion Conversation



Any TFA Served? ▾

Average of Average Spending Per Family

### Average TFA Per Household Who Received TFA by Project Type

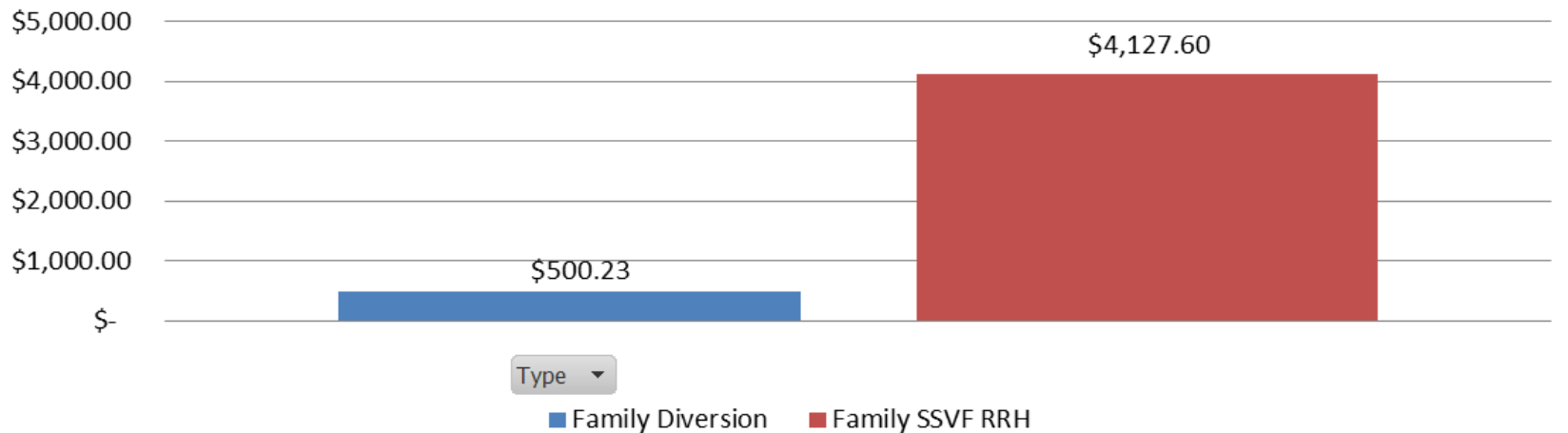


Type ▾

■ Family Diversion ■ Family SSVF RRH

Average of Average Spending Per Family

### Average TFA Per Household in Project Type



Type ▾

■ Family Diversion ■ Family SSVF RRH

# Impact

- Useful in rural areas where formal resources are rare or remote
- Skills of conversation helpful in other interventions, including SSVF
- Allows system to have room for those with highest barriers and vulnerability
- Diversion conversation integrated into CES system for all populations.

*We empower people by supporting them to solve their crisis. The more we do, the more power we take from them.*



# Promising Practices from SSVF Grantees

## **Diversion and Recidivism: Using Assessment to Connect Families to the Right Services**

- Jessica Cruz, SSVF Program Manager
- Chela Schuster, Director of Strategic Housing Resources
- UMOM New Day Centers in Phoenix, AZ

# Prevention

## How do we determine who is most likely to fall into homelessness?

- Target: Most Vulnerable - with a preference to Families and Female Veterans
- 1,020 Families were screened and not accepted into UMOM GY14-15

## Data:

- **62% did not meet eligibility**
  - 20% were able to access other resources
  - 13 % had not received an eviction notice and were not facing imminent risk of homelessness
  - 10% were over 50% AMI
  - 3% had a secondary place to live
  - 16% did not meet point threshold
- **15% self diverted**
- **23% were not target population - referred to other SSVF grantee**

# Prevention

- Homeless Prevention Threshold: 15
- Screen and triage appropriately and thoroughly
- Less than 1% of screened and not accepted based on not meeting HP threshold are falling into homelessness

“Almost everyone that gets evicted finds a place to live, if they are not able to secure a place they are a part of the small minority.”

“Homeless prevention & RRH services are for families that have tried and tried and have used their best effort to securing their own housing.”

–Iain De Jong

# Coordinated Entry & The Family Housing Hub



**FHH – Central** Mon.- Thurs.  
**East valley-** 2 days per week  
**West Valley-** 1 day per week  
**VA CRRC** .5 day per week

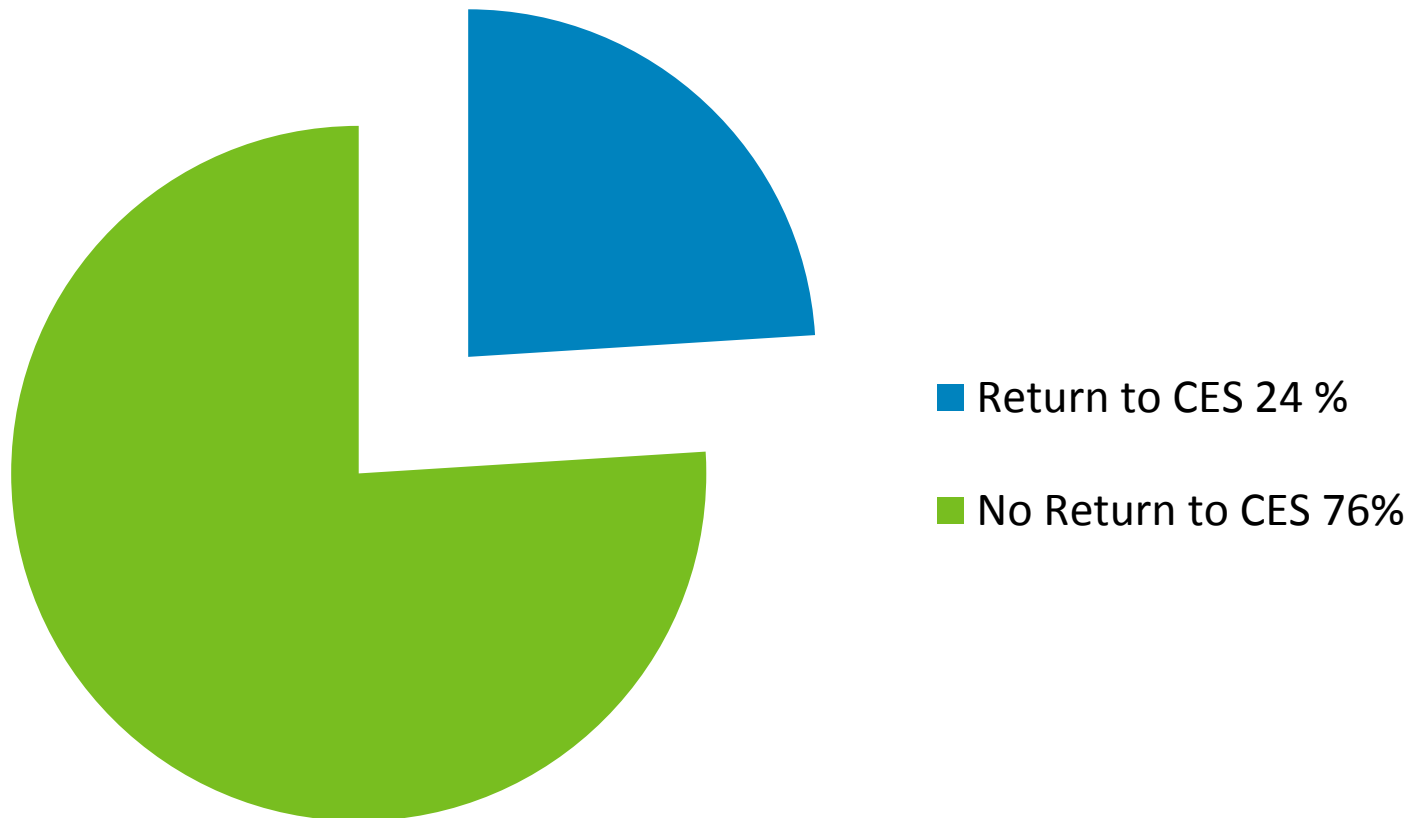
# What is diversion?

From “Ending Family Homelessness” Strategic Plan 2020...

- *We agree to commonly fund and support services to families seeking shelter, with a strong focus on resolving and diverting as many families as possible whenever it is safe and appropriate to do so.*
- *Diversion includes looking at the current circumstance of the family – from wherever they are connecting from across the County – and professionally, sensitively, and patiently attempting to solve their housing instability without ever requiring shelter admission.*

# Diversion Impact

**Formally Diverted since 2014 n=1,264 households**



# Self-diversion

In person Families

**3253**

Families entering shelter

**907**

# Recidivism

Total individuals that have exited SSVF since 2011

**1387**

Total individuals that have returned to SSVF since 2011

**60**

Total recidivism for SSVF program

**4.5%**



# Q & A

## Panelists:

- Ed Boyte, Cleveland Mediation Center
  - [eboyte@clevelandmediation.org](mailto:eboyte@clevelandmediation.org)
- Patti Spaulding-Klewin, Catholic Community Services/Family Housing Network
  - [PattiS@ccsww.org](mailto:PattiS@ccsww.org)
- Jessica Cruz, UMOM New Day Centers
  - [Jcruz@umom.org](mailto:Jcruz@umom.org)
- Chela Schuster, UMOM New Day Centers
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# Additional Questions

SSVF Program Office

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Website:

[www.va.gov/HOMELESS/ssvf.asp](http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/ssvf.asp)

A recording of this presentation will be provided to webinar registrants and posted at SSVF University.