

FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HOUSING FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN CENTRAL IOWA

START

COORDINATED ENTRY

People experiencing homelessness in Polk County start at Primary Health Care's Centralized Intake, which is our local coordinated entry program.

Coordinated entry is a crisis response that connects people to housing and service interventions to address homelessness.

Centralized Intake is connected to over 30 different community organizations that serve people experiencing homelessness. A family with children will complete their intake with Primary Health Care, and a referral can be made to family emergency shelter, such as New Directions Shelter.

NEW DIRECTIONS SHELTER

New Directions Shelter provides immediate and low-barrier access to short-term emergency housing and services for families with children. Following a housing-first approach, shelter is not tied to income, sobriety, criminal background, or participation in mental health services. All services provided by New Directions Shelter are voluntary. The shelter provides a home-like environment for 8 families at a time with private bedrooms and shared bathrooms and living spaces. During a family's stay, all basic needs are met by the shelter including: food, clothing, baby supplies, laundry services, and hygiene items. Supportive services are available to all families in shelter through a case management team. Case managers navigate resources and referrals that assist families with their individualized housing plans

Lack of any of these supports contributes to homelessness.

CHILDCARE/SCHOOL

Case Managers work with each school district's homeless liaison to assist with immediate enrollment into school if the child is new to the district, or coordinate transportation to allow children to stay at their original school (McKinney-Vento Act).

If the child needs daycare, case managers assist the families with obtaining Child Care Assistance for free childcare, navigate resources such as free health clinics to get well-child checks and necessary immunizations, and help the families choose a childcare center that best meets their individual needs.

Barriers:

Lack of transportation, lack of income or Child Care Assistance. Child Care Assistance can sometimes take up to 30 days to be approved. Location of available childcare in relation to employment and housing.

INCOME

Case Managers screen all families to ensure they are receiving all public benefits they are eligible for (FIP, WIC, SNAP, unemployment, etc.) and help them apply if they are missing any.

Case Managers also help the parents find reliable income through employment, which can include help with resumes and the job search process.

Changes in income can affect eligibility of other resources, so case managers check in with the family's current income frequently.

Barriers:

Transportation, childcare, criminal background, lack of mailing address, lack of internet access

TRANSPORTATION

Case Managers tailor transportation assistance to the family's individual needs.

For families who rely on public transportation, the shelter provides bus tokens, assists in purchasing monthly bus passes, uses ride-share services for destinations not on bus lines, and occasionally staff helps transport families.

For families with their own vehicle, the shelter provides gas cards.

Barriers:

When a family relies on public transportation, choices for housing, childcare, employment, and access to health services are limited to what is available on the bus route. Other basic errands can take up to three times as long on the bus. Personal transportation comes with its own barriers. Families with poor credit can get trapped in predatory lending schemes and can end up with cars that are unreliable and unsafe. Poor credit also leads to higher insurance costs and other fees that people may not be able to afford.

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Essential documents are needed for housing and employment applications. Case Managers help families obtain: Social Security cards, birth certificates, verification of immigration status, IDs, medical & SNAP (food assistance) cards.

Barriers:

These documents can take weeks to process.

Some clients may lack all essential documents, leading to higher levels of assistance.

Many of these documents cost money to obtain.

END

HOUSING

Case managers work alongside families to assist in overcoming the barriers listed above with the ultimate goal of moving into safe and affordable housing. Each family has their own needs and individualized case plan. Exits to housing can include short-term and long-term rental assistance programs, rentals paid by clients with no assistance, or moving in with family or friends on a permanent basis

Barriers:

Housing choice can still be limited due to criminal backgrounds, income requirements, and large application fees