

Home, Together: Tompkins

The CoC's plan for ending unsheltered homelessness and enhancing service delivery for people with severe service needs.



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Background

Home, Together: USICH

Home, Together is the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). This plan incorporates evidence-based strategies to end homelessness nationally with the guiding principles of home: safe and stable places to call home, and together: strengthening our community by providing opportunities for people to collaborate on this issue together.

Housing and Public Health

NY-510 asserts that access to stable housing is a requirement to achieving and maintaining the health of our county. The CoC considers the growth in the population of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to be a public health crisis. The solution is not to relocate people from one unsheltered location to another, but to move people into suitable permanent housing where they can meet their basic needs with dignity.

Tompkins County Homeless and Housing Needs Assessment

Written by Horn Research and published in 2021, this report commissioned by our CoC, the City of Ithaca, and Tompkins County revealed current areas in our homeless response system that are in need of support, as well as recommendations for providing those supports.

Definitions

How does HUD define **Severe Service Needs**?

any combination of the following factors:

- facing significant challenges or functional impairments which require a significant level of support in order to maintain permanent housing (this factor focuses on the level of support needed and is not based on disability type)
- high utilization of crisis or emergency services to meet basic needs, including but not limited to emergency rooms, jails, and psychiatric facilities
- experiencing a vulnerability to illness or death
- having a risk of continued or repeated homelessness
- having a vulnerability to victimization, including physical assault, trafficking or sex work, and
- currently living in an unsheltered situation or having a history of living in an unsheltered situation.



What is **housing first**?

Housing First is an evidence-based approach to providing housing assistance that prioritizes placing individuals in permanent housing to end their homelessness as a basic need to working on any larger personal goals. This is guided by the belief that people need to have their basic needs such as food and housing met before being able to work on other less critical objectives such as employment or addressing substance use issues.

What is Home, Together: Tompkins?

A Community Wide Plan to Reduce
Homelessness

Strategies:

- increase our stock of PSH
- expand emergency shelter capacity
- organize and implement a "housing surge"
- address staff shortages
- improve access to resources



Home, Together: Tompkins

What do we hope to achieve?

01

LESS UNSHELTERED AND CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Implement low-barrier shelter, increase housing stock, and create additional resources for housing stability reduce unsheltered and chronic homelessness in our community.

02

IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES

Increase access to safe housing and preventative physical and mental health care, leading to less interactions with police, EMTs, and first-responders.

03

BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

Engage business owners, landlords and neighbors, leverage partnerships and strengthen relationships.

Rethinking low-barrier shelter

01

PROVIDING EASY ACCESS

Allowing people to access shelter as they are instead of requiring an application upon entry, screening for factors such as substance use or previous sanctions, and requiring ongoing payments.

02

CLEAR AND SIMPLE BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

Shifting to a focus on providing clear behavioral expectations with an emphasis on safety rather than focusing on compliance with a rigid set of rules.

03

A TRAUMA-INFORMED OPERATING CULTURE

Most people experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are unsheltered, have a history of trauma, crisis, and stress. Ensuring that any staff interacting with potential shelter residents are regularly trained in de-escalation and trauma-informed care is essential.

04

RELAXED SOBRIETY AND CURFEW MEASURES

Re-thinking these perceived safety measures and whether or not they actually contribute to positive outcomes for people with SSNs who are more likely to be the victims than the perpetrators of crimes.

Barriers to Shelter and Housing

Emergency Shelter

- 01** Paying 50%-75% of each paycheck
- 02** Submitting 5 housing contacts per week
- 03** Hotel placements are far from most centralized resources
- 04** Individuals could be sanctioned for missing appointments
- 05** THA application can take hours, if not an entire day to process

Voucher Services

- 01** Individuals are often unaware of the rules to keep their voucher
- 02** Discrimination against voucher holders on the private market
- 03** Rental cap is oftentimes too low for what is actually available
- 04** Habitability of available units
- 05** Lack of documentation to apply

Private Market Rentals

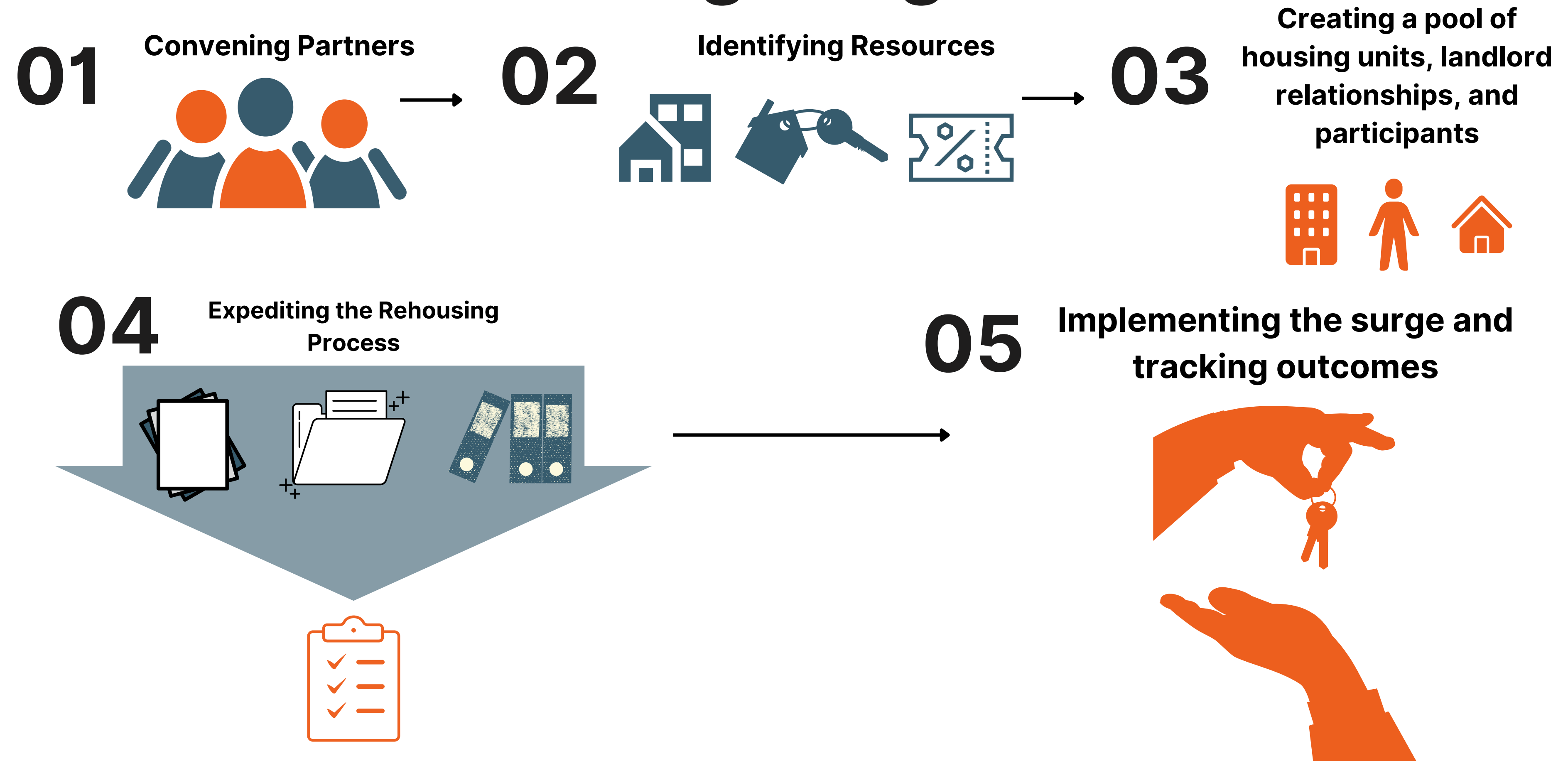
- 01** Individuals are often unaware of the rules of their lease
- 02** Individuals are often unsure of who to contact if something happens
- 03** Individuals are are afraid to stay in touch with landlord about issues
- 04** Habitability of available units
- 05** Lack of documentation to apply

The Home, Together: Tompkins Plan

3 broad categories of intervention:
Increasing Access to Housing, Incentive
Programs, and Expanding Sector Capacity

Access to housing		Incentive Programs		Expanding Sector Capacity	
01 L	A commitment to building 100 studio and 1-bedroom units of Permanent Supportive Housing .	04 M	Mitigation funds for business owners and landlords serving people with severe service needs.	07 M	Three enhanced, centralized housing navigator positions to supplement existing outreach.
02 L	Low-barrier shelter that removes pre-conditions and uses a trauma-informed approach to safety.	05 S	Other incentives for community members such as shopping cart exchanges and cash for trash	08 M	Paid board positions for people with lived experience to monitor and approve projects.
03 S	Using a " housing surge " strategy to quickly move people into housing/shelter.	06 M	Easy access move-in packages and assistance for people moving from homeless to housed	09 M	Professional development opportunities for people with lived experience.
Short-term Intervention= S		Medium-term Intervention= M		Long-term Intervention= L	

The Housing Surge **Process**



● **PLANNING** ● **START**

Q1 2023

Q2 2023

Q3 2023

Q4 2023

Q1 2024

HOUSING

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

LOW-BARRIER SHELTER

HOUSING SURGES

INITIATIVES

HAPPY NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAM

SHOPPING CART EXCHANGE

CASH FOR TRASH

MOVE-IN ASSISTANCE

EXPANDING CAPACITY

HOUSING SPECIALISTS

LIVED EXPERIENCE BOARD

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Other complimentary interventions

01

INCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT OF ENCAMPMENT SPACES

Create a site that allows anyone to meet their basic needs with dignity without requiring engagement with services or clearance of other spaces.

02

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPITE CENTER

Crisis respite for people who are experiencing a mental health crisis and are experiencing homelessness

03

THE “PAPERWORK BRIGADE”

Trained and compensated community members to help people complete paperwork, understand the details of their housing and their rights and responsibilities as tenants

04

TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE

Free shuttles to expand the existing capacity of the TCAT for people experiencing homelessness in rural areas of our county.

Should we **ban** camping?



United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and The U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assert that:

1. It can **cost three times more** to enforce anti-homeless laws than to find housing for people who don't have it.
2. Lead to **arrests** of victims of violent crime and **of people who need mental health and substance use disorder treatment.**
3. Camping bans **erode trust** and **exacerbate homelessness** and the conditions that contribute to it including health problems, stigma and racial disparities.

The CoC recommends the use of **Inclusive Public Space Management.**

This avoids punitive measures to homelessness and instead provides resources that **act as a public benefit to anyone** using the space, including people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

This may include regular **trash disposal**, access to **drinking water**, access to **safe needle disposal**, and building and maintaining **public restrooms and showers.**

Needs Assessment: Data Findings



Tompkins County has the third highest rate of homelessness per 10,000 population of comparable and surrounding CoCs.

Average length of stay in shelter is increasing and was at an average of 91 days in FY2020.

91



Compared with other CoCs, Tompkins County had the highest ratio of unsheltered homelessness to total homeless (34.3%).

In FY2020, there was an observable bottleneck of 102 beds (including vouchers) between people experiencing homelessness and the beds available through the homeless response system.



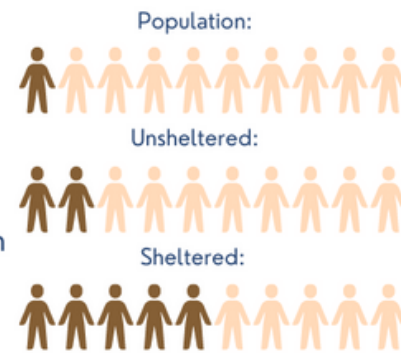
Adult-only households have the worst outcomes in our continuum:

FY2020 Adult- Only Households	FY2020 Adult and Child Households
473 Households	53 Households
87 days homeless on average	71 days homeless on average
8% returned to homelessness	0% returned to homelessness



Chronic Homelessness is increasing in our county. Almost half (45.1%) of our current homeless population are experiencing chronic homelessness.

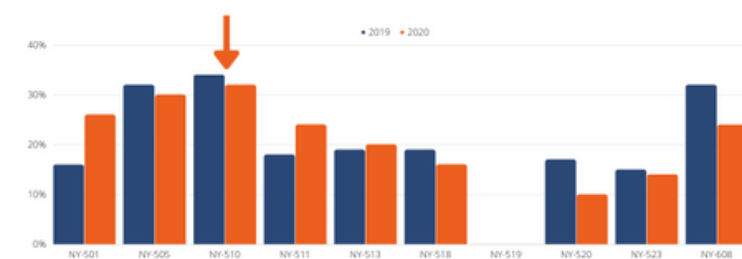
While the local population consists of 12.4% BIPOC, we see 48% representation of BIPOC in our shelter, and 22% representation of BIPOC in unsheltered locations.



Qualitative interviews with people with lived experience of living in the encampment spaces revealed barriers to housing

In FY2020, Tompkins County had the highest rate of returns to homelessness of all comparable CoCs at 32% of households returning to homelessness within 24 months.

Returns to Homelessness



Although 31% of people served by the homeless system in FY2020 come from a couch-surfing situation, there is no existing pathway to divert these households into permanent housing.

Home, Together: Tompkins Outcomes

Reduce unsheltered homelessness by 70%:

- Recurring Housing Surges with rapid exits to permanent housing destinations
- Prioritization of people currently sleeping in unsheltered locations or otherwise banned from the OTDA-funded shelter in the low-barrier shelter
- 80 light-touch contacts from a HTT housing specialist to serve people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Decrease homeless entries from couch-surfing situations by 50%

- 200 new light-touch contacts assisting people at-risk of losing their housing
 - 80 contacts per year as high-priority referrals from 2-1-1
 - 40 contacts per year as referrals from eviction court
- Rolling intensive case management for a caseload of 10-12 clients with severe service needs to help people sustain their current housing or find new permanent housing
- 5 housing surge spots set-aside for couch-surfers with severe service needs.

Decrease the average length of time homeless by 30 days:

- Housing surges to serve households interested in housing with rapid, lower barrier exits to permanent housing
- Culture shift towards housing first as the basis for outreach
- 200 light-touch contacts and successful interactions with clients to end their homelessness as soon as possible
- Rolling intensive case management for a caseload of 10-12 clients with severe service needs throughout the year with rapid (within 30 days) exits from homelessness

Reduce returns to homelessness by 50%:

- 200 light-touch contacts assisting with new moves
 - 40 contacts assisting with landlord/tenant conflict within 6 months of move-in
- Rolling intensive case management for a caseload of 10-12 clients with severe service needs throughout the year with no returns to homelessness
- At least 200 clients served with move-in supplies and assistance
- Professional development for people with lived experience

Increased Community Engagement.

- Opportunities for engagement through initiatives such as cash for trash
- Paid lived experience board to enhance communication and understanding of the needs of people living outside
- Opportunities for professional development for people who lack other higher education requirements for employment in this field

Increased Accountability to Business Owners, Landlords, and Neighbors.

- \$50,000 per year going directly to business owner and landlord partners
- A neighborhood liaison to foster increased communication
- Returning stolen shopping carts through the cart exchange program.

Racial Equity Lens: Serve 50% BIPOC

- Proportional to current BIPOC representation in our homeless response system
- Commitment to equity through targeted outreach

Thank you!

Questions? Email us at sgatson@hsctc.org or
lbargar@hsctc.org



A commitment to building **100 units of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).**

PSH is housing set-aside for people experiencing literal homelessness that is affordable (residents contribute 30% of their income at most), permanent, and offers supportive services.

20 of these units will be set in rural areas of the county, and include additional supports such as free preventative healthcare and transportation.

HSC will work with TCAction on expanding staff capacity to serve additional units, starting with the 40 ESSHI units at Asteri.



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Low-barrier shelter option



The Continuum of Care found that people who are currently living outside in Tompkins County are primarily people who are sanctioned from, or unwilling to navigate our current emergency shelter system.

Implementation of a site based low-barrier shelter with minimal pre-conditions to entering and maintaining shelter with an emphasis on safety through clear and simple expectations for residents.



A "housing surge" strategy to quickly move people indoors

A faint, light blue illustration of a house with a gabled roof. Inside the house, several stylized human figures are shown moving boxes. One figure is standing and lifting a box, while others are kneeling or sitting on the floor. The house is partially overlaid by a large, semi-transparent orange and yellow shape that resembles a stylized sun or a large arrow pointing towards the text.

A concentrated, time-limited community effort that houses a significant number of people in a short time-frame. Use the Coordinated Entry System to connect targeted households to a pre-identified pool of housing subsidies, available rental units and other resources and services. Housing Surges are a practice used for quick rehousing after natural disasters.

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Mitigation funds for business owners and landlords.



Happy Neighborhood Program, provides eligible members with access to **up to \$5000 support annually for damages or theft**, and support from HSC's landlord liaison.

The program will help build positive relationships, rebuild trust, and enhance communication in neighborhoods across the community.

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Other incentives



Shopping cart return: reliable, collapsible, easy-to-repair carts to exchange for carts borrowed from businesses.

Cash for Trash: a redemption program like bottle return, but for trash (Ex. \$10 per bag of collected litter)

05
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Easy access move-in packages and assistance for moving from homeless to housed.

A faint background illustration of a house with a triangular roof. The left side of the roof is orange, and the right side is yellow. In front of the house, two stylized grey figures are shown moving boxes. One figure is on the left, and the other is on the right, both appearing to be in the process of moving a large box between them.

Expand current programs to help support housing stability by providing: trash tags, cleaning supplies, kitchen utensils, linens and more

Also, moving assistance, moving trucks, storage units and additional household basic needs.

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Three enhanced, centralized housing navigator positions. ←

Direct service generalists to help people access resources at all stages of the continuum: people who are currently experiencing homelessness, people who have just entered new housing, and people who are at risk of homelessness.

All three housing navigators would be trained by providers across our continuum to understand the available resources and eligibility criteria for programs. Each housing navigator would have a **small caseload of 10-12 individuals with severe service needs** for situations needing long-term assistance. They also act as a mobile, coordinated, community referral for individuals falling through the gaps of the existing safety net.

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Proposed Responsibilities

Housing Navigator 1: Serving literally homeless

- help people fill in THA applications
- apply for other DSS services
- stay in compliance with the shelter
- help people in unsheltered situations get into shelter
- assist with housing search

Housing Navigator 2: Serving recently housed

- assisting in navigating local resources
- staying in compliance with section 8
- navigating relationships with the landlord and other tenants
- providing other appropriate referrals
- acting as a housing search resource

Housing Navigator 3: Serving housing unstable

- regularly attend eviction court at all sites in Tompkins County
- assist with finding last-resort resources to divert from homelessness
- follow up on high priority calls from our 2-1-1 line
- have a close relationship with local legal services

Paid board positions for people with lived experience



People who are currently living in the encampments, have lived there or have other experiences of homelessness. Participants will offer **leadership** and **guidance** to the plan.

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Professional development opportunities for people with lived experience



Partner with human services employers to offer a route to employment in the sector for people with lived experience who lack education or experience requirements.

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