

RAPID RE-HOUSING: RIGHT TOOL, WRONG JOB?

Virginia Governor's Housing Conference
November 20th, 2025

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***Over 40 years of combined experience in shelter and homeless service delivery**



So, Here's the Plan

A Little History
The Promise of RRH

The Drift from
Targeted Tool to
Universal Fix

A Dose of Reality
The Good, The Bad
and The Ugly

The Consequences
of Misalignment

Building a Smarter
System

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"I don't have any answers.
I'm a non-prophet."



**"I BELIEVE WE CAN PROVIDE JOBS TO
THE JOBLESS, HOMES TO THE HOMELESS,
AND RECLAIM YOUNG PEOPLE IN CITIES
ACROSS AMERICA FROM VIOLENCE AND
DESPAIR."**

-BARACK OBAMA, 2009



A New Era in Homeless Services: RRH and Housing First

- *In 2008, HUD Launches the Rapid Re-Housing Demonstration Project in 23 CoCs*
- *2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as an emergency response to 2008 Financial Crisis*
- *Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)- \$1.5 Billion in Funding*
- *First Federal Program to embrace “Housing First”*



USICH Releases “Opening Doors”

Transforms Pilot into Policy

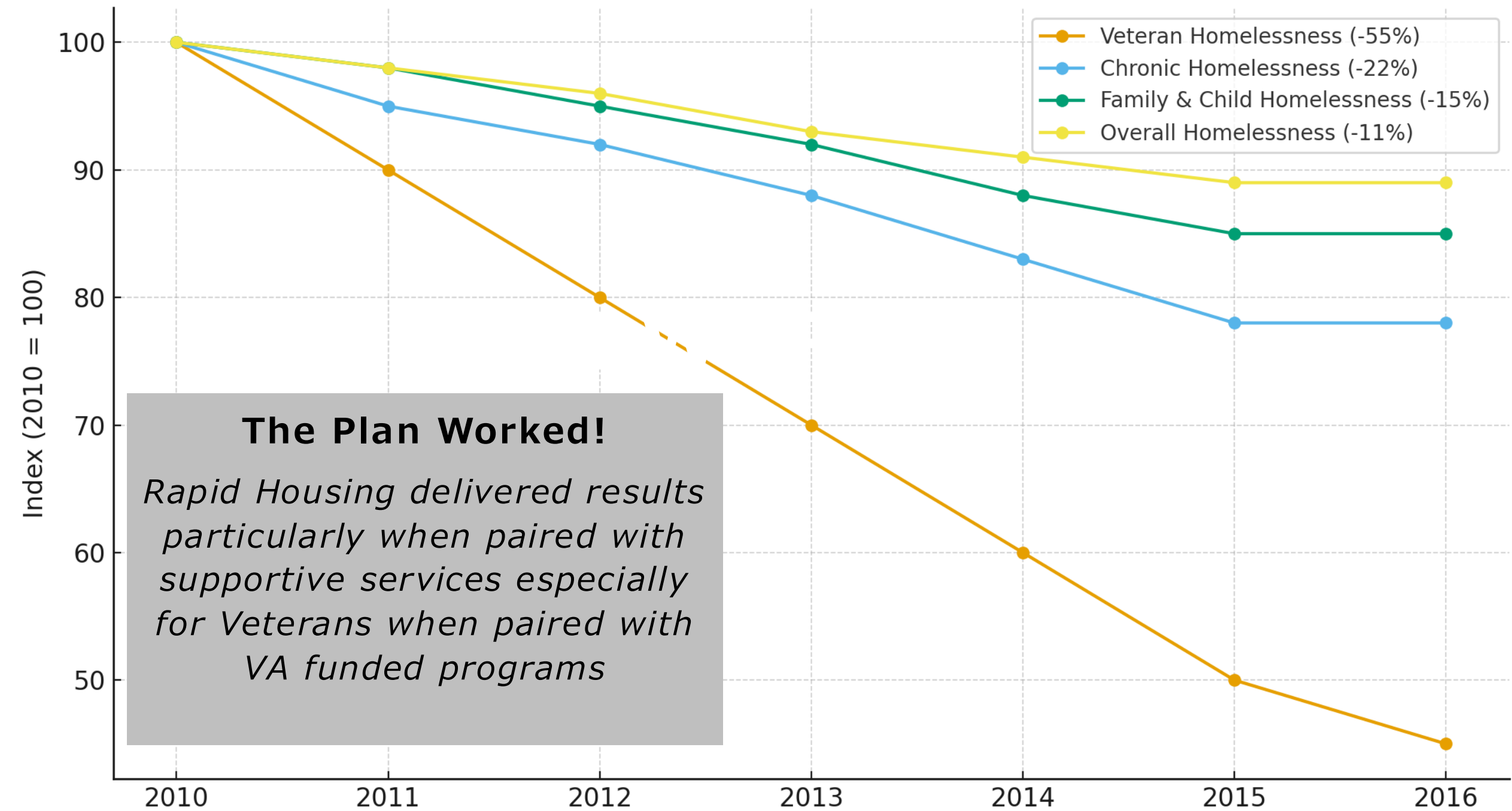
Creates Coordinated Entry

**Shift from Shelter-Centered
to Housing Focused**

Data Driven

Introduces “Prevention”

U.S. Homelessness Trends (2010-2016)



Rapid Re-Housing Program Design

- ☐ Short-term
- ☐ Low Barrier
- ☐ Cost Effective
- ☐ Targeted for Modest Service Needs
- ☐ Nimble Response

HOUSED PEOPLE ARE NOT HOMELESS



RAPID RE-HOUSING
RRH

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) ends homelessness for families and individuals.

FIND LANDLORDS
& APARTMENTS

Help people quickly find housing within one month or less.

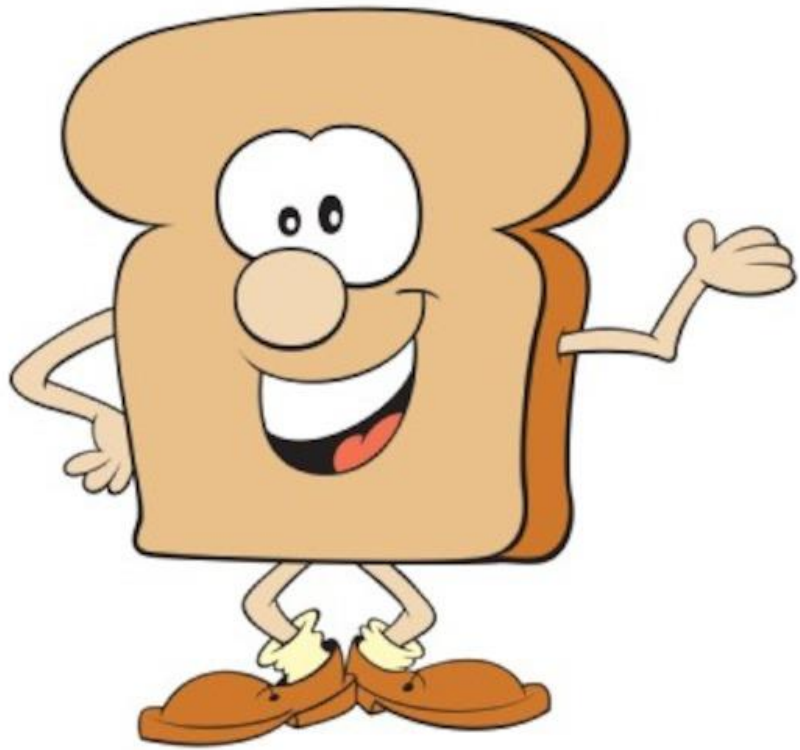
HELP PAY
FOR HOUSING

Help people pay for housing short term; longer-term help an option.

CONNECT
TO JOBS & SERVICES

Help access services so people can stay in housing.

The **Core Components** of Rapid Re-Housing help people **find** housing fast, help **pay** for housing, and **connect** to jobs and services.



ONE DAY YOU ARE THE
BEST THING SINCE
SLICED BREAD...

THE NEXT DAY YOU
ARE TOAST.

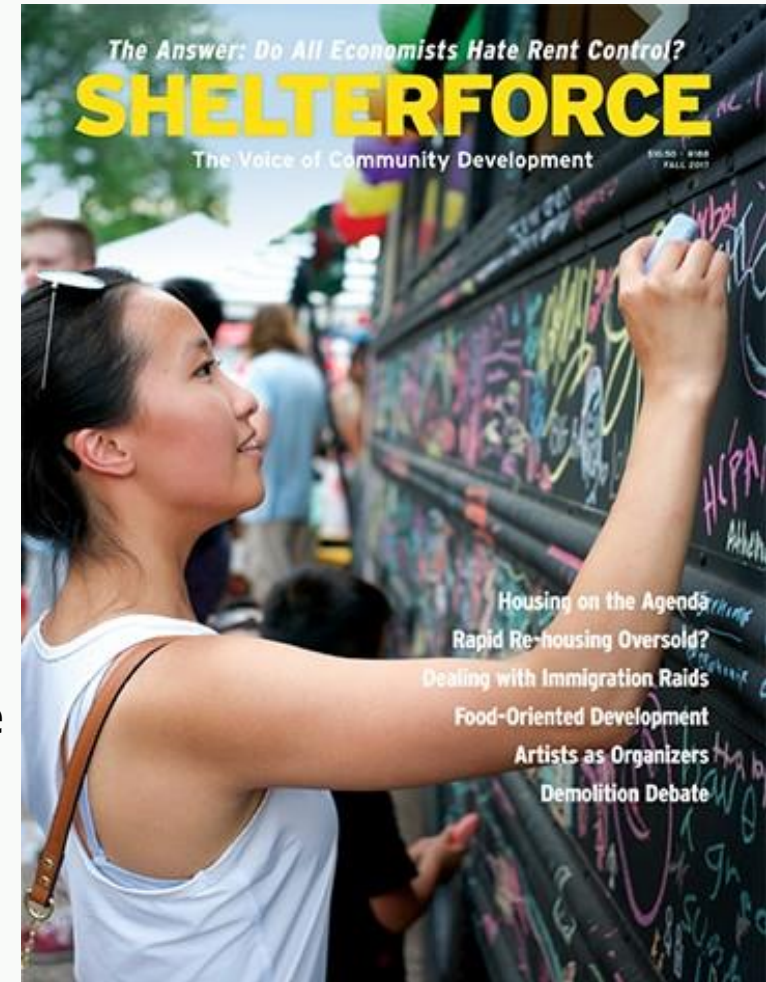
Okay...
Maybe not
quite “toast”
but by 2017
the RRH
“bread” was
beginning to
get a little
“stale”.

The Overselling of Rapid Re-housing” by Sharon Lee

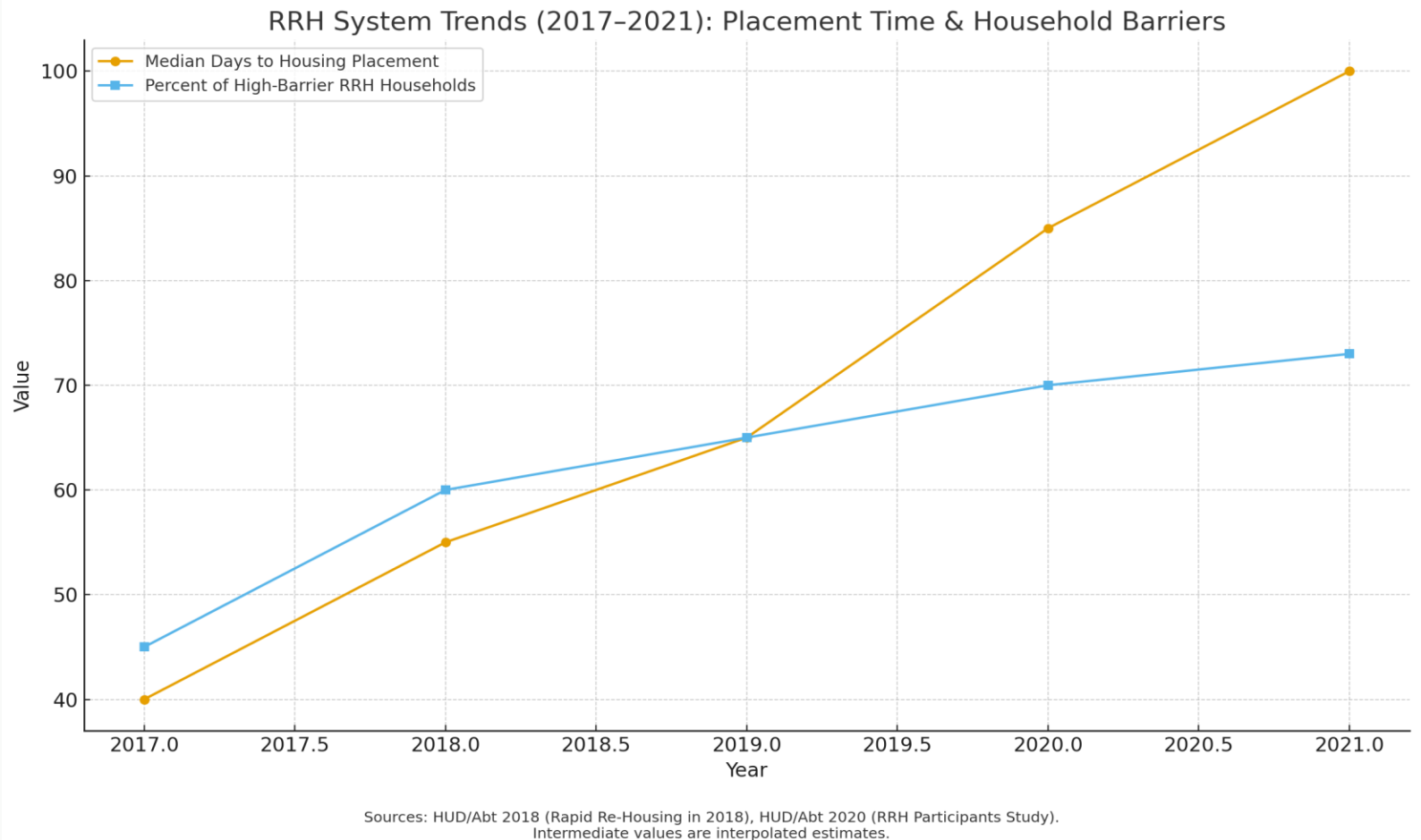
“Short-term rent support and light case management may be adequate for some households, but they are inadequate for a disabled head of household, a person with mental illness or a family on refugee assistance or TANF.”

“Some are worse off than the before evictions and judgements on their records.”

— Shelterforce, 2017



- In 2017, for the first time since 2009 RRH metrics began to trend in the “wrong direction”
- Significant growth of “high barrier” RRH cases
- No longer “Rapid” Increasing days to placement



The Drift- Targeted Tool to Universal Fix



“We have created a one-size-fits-all homeless services system where short-term interventions are expected to solve long-term, complex problems.”

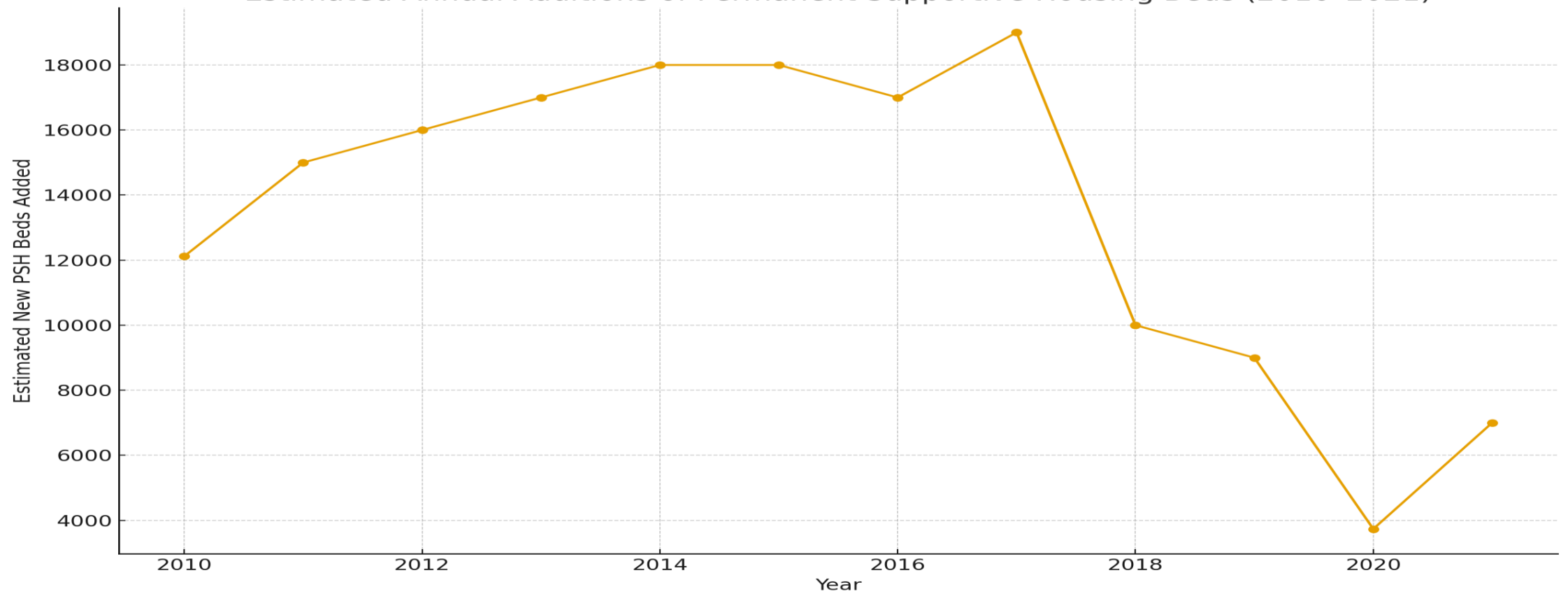
“Housing First requires the *right* intervention for the *right* household. The problem arises when the right intervention is not available.”

“Rapid Re-Housing was never intended to serve every household experiencing homelessness.”

“When communities face shortages of permanent supportive housing, people with the highest needs end up in programs that were never intended for them.”

Dr. Dennis P. Culhane, Ph.D.
University of Pennsylvania

Estimated Annual Additions of Permanent Supportive Housing Beds (2010-2021)



Illustrative values based on HUD HIC/AHAR inventory trends.
2020 value (3,737 beds) is the only hard reported annual increase.

**CoC/ESG Systems Expanded Without
Parallel PSH Growth**

Where Are We Now?

The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

The Good:

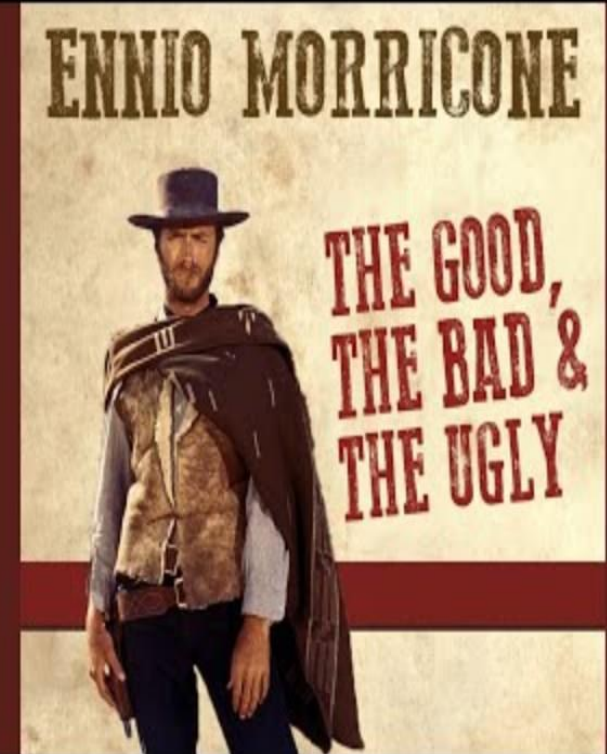
- RRH is still effective for low barrier "light" touch cases.
- In 24/25 Program Year 3,304 Individuals Re-Housed in Virginia (Source DHCD)

The Bad:

- Tight rental market, diminished landlord confidence
- "Rapid" no longer rapid; delayed lease-ups and recidivism rising (30 Day Standard, 60 to 90 median based on locale)

The Ugly:

- Funding structures and administration have barely evolved since HPRP
- Housing First Under Attack, HUD Backing Away



THE COST OF RELYING
ON RAPID RE-HOUSING
OFTEN AS THE ONLY
TOOL IN THE BAG

“To the man who only has a
hammer, every problem looks
like a nail”

-Abraham Maslow



Misapplication absorbs limited RRH resources

High-need households require:

- Longer financial assistance
- More intensive case management
- More staff time, more landlord engagement
- More stabilization work than RRH was designed for

This has a system-wide opportunity cost:

- Households who *would succeed* with RRH wait longer or miss out.
- The Continuum of Care loses throughput, reducing total system flow.
- Short-term dollars are consumed by households who need PSH, not RRH.

Downstream Impacts on Staff, Landlords, and System Credibility

- **Staff Overload & Burnout**

RRH standards assume light to moderate case management, but serving high-acuity households drives caseloads from 1 to 20 or 40 to as high as 1 to 50 or 70, increasing burnout and turnover and weakening program fidelity.

- **Landlord Distrust and Shrinking Participation**

Landlords experience more nonpayment, shorter tenancies, or failed placements, leading them to hesitate leasing to RRH tenants again and costing the system critical private-market access.

- **Funders/Polymakers interpret the symptoms as program failure**

Data shows weaker exits and higher returns, which is often misread as RRH not working rather than a structural mismatch, eroding the program's credibility in the community.

RESTORING BALANCE:
LET'S CREATE A
SMARTER SYSTEM

“A CALL TO ACTION”



A Modest Proposal: A Possible Blueprint for “System Reset”

Re-Focus RRH on What It Does Best:

- Moderate-barrier, income-ready households
- Households facing temporary crises
- Households who need shallow, time-limited assistance

Reinvest in Permanent Supportive Housing & Long-Term Subsidies

- High-acuity households need long-term subsidies, not short-term RRH.
- Package PSH Vouchers within VHSP Allocations- Put them in the hands of more agencies
- Increase capital investment (HOME-ARP, LIHTC set-asides, state trust funds)

Time for A Meaningful Re-Design of Coordinated Entry

- Define clear acuity thresholds- A true evidence-based assessment
- Create Guidelines for Progressive Engagement- Adjust as need presents

Strengthen Landlord Partnerships & Flexibility Mechanisms

- Guarantee funds, damage mitigation, unit repair funds
- Moving costs, application fees, utility deposits, and rapid unit turnover support
- Dedicated landlord liaisons



Oklahoma City CoC System Re-Alignment

Oklahoma City restored RRH effectiveness by aligning interventions to acuity, expanding PSH access, and investing in landlord partnerships — proving that system alignment, not more RRH, is the solution.

Category	Before Reform	After Reform
Referral Pathways	High-acuity households placed in RRH due to PSH scarcity	Acuity-based CE directs high-acuity to PSH/vouchers and moderate-need households to RRH
Landlord Engagement	Limited landlord pool and frequent refusals	Risk mitigation funds, bonuses, and landlord liaisons expand landlord participation
Subsidy Allocation	RRH absorbing households needing long-term support	Long-term vouchers prioritized for highest-need clients
Flexible Support	Short-term RRH only; mismatched for many households	Medium-term subsidies (12–24 months) added for stability
RRH Caseload	Overburdened staff and administrative strain	Balanced caseloads aligned with household acuity
Placement Speed	Slow lease-ups and reduced unit access	Faster placements due to targeting and strengthened landlord partnerships
Outcomes	RRH exits to permanent housing ~55%	RRH exits to permanent housing ~75–80%
System Flow	High churn (shelter → RRH → shelter)	Reduced returns and smoother system flow

Questions and Discussion

THANK YOU



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