Shared Housing: Community Strategy Framework

This framework provides our understanding of "shared housing" and the current direct and indirect means by which our community can support stable, safe shared housing options to prevent and end homelessness.

In Ventura County, housing rental costs continue to increase and there continues to be a very limited number of affordable units. According to the Dyer Sheehan Group Inc., a Ventura real estate consulting firm, the average rent costs in Ventura County rose 10.9% in 2021 and another 7.4% increase in 2022. The monthly price for a two-bedroom apartment was $2,601 in 2022.

According to the Ventura County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) 2022 data, 5,275 households experienced housing insecurity and 47% of those households were assisted through emergency shelter, transitional housing and rapid re-housing programs. The remaining households continue to seek permanent housing through various sources and many are unsuccessful due to rising rent costs. In 2022, Ventura County's 2-1-1 system reported 2,923 calls for housing assistance which is a 42% increase from the prior year.

The Ventura County Continuum of Care (VC CoC) Board continues to emphasize the need for a reduction in the number of first-time homeless households by expanding homelessness prevention programs and implementing diversion strategies. Shared housing provides another option for households to consider when currently unhoused or facing homelessness, to reduce their monthly rent cost.

What is "Shared Housing" and why is it important?

Shared Housing encompasses many different types of shared living situations, including temporary and permanent situations. Most fundamentally, shared housing involves two or more related or unrelated people or households sharing a single apartment or home, where there is both separate (private) and shared living space.

For households receiving HUD assistance, HUD regulations on Shared Housing (24 CFR § 982.615 through 24 CFR § 982.618) define Shared Housing as "…a single housing unit occupied by an assisted family and another resident or residents. The shared unit consists of both common space for use by the occupants of the unit and separate private space for each assisted family. The unit may be a house or an apartment." HUD and the VA also encourages public housing agencies and service providers to adopt policies and operational practices that support Shared Housing.
- **Notice PIH 2021-05**: provides important reminders about Shared Housing as a permissible and viable option, along with reminders about related programmatic requirements.
- **PIH Rule 86 FR 53207:** Includes requirement that PHAs allow for Shared Housing as a special housing type for HUD VASH, regardless of whether allowed for other households in administrative plan.

Various national, state and local efforts are underway around the country to support Shared Housing situations, driven in part by what people say they want and recognition that most people spend their last night before becoming unhoused at a family member or friend's home. While these are sometimes unsafe and therefore not viable housing options, providers assisting people who are unhoused on the street or in shelter increasingly are focusing on helping people *safely remain in or return to family or friends*. These can be either on a temporary or long term ("permanent") basis, with the right support and resources.

The need for policies, investments, and services to support Shared Housing situations has never been greater:
- Rents are increasing faster than wages…
- Affordable rental housing options are decreasing relative to demand…
- Federal emergency rental assistance is decreasing…
- Leading to increasing housing insecurity and homelessness.

Increasing focus and resources to stabilize or create sustainable Shared Housing situations can help, in part, to mitigate these conditions by opening up more short- or long-term housing options for households who struggle to individually afford housing, including households experiencing homelessness who do not require long-term supportive services from the CoC. In Shared Housing, households – typically individuals without children - split rent payments to reduce individual rent burden to make housing affordable. Shared Housing programs are being stood up in communities around the country to facilitate and help people stabilize in Shared Housing situations. Often called "roommate matching," such programs focus on matching individuals with similar interests and a willingness to co-habitat. Additionally, anecdotal evidence indicates such programs also help to decrease social isolation and increase self-determination.

Work to further develop Shared Housing approaches and supports, beyond individual roommate matching, is evolving. For instance, states such as Connecticut are incorporating strategies for supporting existing shared living situations (e.g., for people who are "doubled-up" and imminently at-risk for literal homelessness) into statewide training on Housing Problem-Solving, while many communities are beginning to facilitate Shared Housing options for families and Veterans where each have a federal rental subsidy voucher (e.g., HUD-VASH, Housing Choice Voucher Program ("Section 8").

The following provides a brief sampling of recent and emerging resources related to Shared Housing:
- U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness: Shared Housing – An Effective, Rapid, and Solution-Based Housing Option
- Shared Housing Institute
- VA SSVF Shared Housing Toolkit
- Shared Housing ICF/CA HCD Training

The Strategy Matrix on the following pages outlines specific areas and opportunities for further development of our Shared Housing Strategy.

Area	Opportunities	Current State/Status (incl any barriers)
Training	1. Shared Housing (SH) competencies/skills, including relationship-building and engagement strategies, incorporated into Housing Problem-Solving (HPS) training for prevention, diversion, shelter, and rehousing staff. 2. HPS training with SH content provided for all relevant staff. 3. SH-specific training for rapid rehousing/rapid resolution staff, including housemate matching approaches, landlord mediation and support strategies, etc. 4.	
Programs and Resources	1. Shared Housing program(s) and ancillary supports (e.g., flexible financial assistance) for single and family households experiencing homelessness or imminently at-risk, including matching assistance for unrelated/unacquainted households and tenancy supports for all participants. 2. Local PHAs adoption of HUD allowed policies and operational practices that facilitate Shared Housing for assisted households. 3. Diverse array of landlord partners with rental housing suitable for Shared Housing situations. 4. Landlord incentive and risk mitigation funds for when tenancy's fail and/or to facilitate new lease-ups.	• UW Risk Mitigation Fund • How to make more routine/interesting (e.g., monthly meetings/events to learn and grow collaborative efforts). • Should there be a dedicated SH workgroup under CoC? • Carie: Illumination Foundation (Orange Co) – will send link • Goldcoast Veterans Foundation (local NPO) provides mobile Veteran outreach, connecting them to SSVF/HUD-VASH, including for SH. Currently rent a house w/5 bedrooms. • Turning Point – also doing some and some other orgs. Overall, happening mainly at case level.
Other	1. Local renter protection ordinances that increase legal protections and eviction- and housing-loss avoidance opportunities, including for "doubled-up" households without a lease. 2. Additional buy-in and exploration of what leasing options are available for SH situations, what are barriers, are people willing? What does it look like for people with vouchers?	• May be useful to see different city ordinances (e.g., around occupancy, renter protections, etc.) • Unclear what to do/how to support SH when only 1 has voucher • Process can be complex with PHAs and/or PHA policies/processes may not support