

Diversion “How To”

STEP ONE: Explaining diversion to the caller.

Explain to the Veteran caller that as a program we try our best to avoid entry into shelter, emergency or transitional housing whenever there is a safe and appropriate alternative.

STEP TWO: Why is the Vet looking for shelter? What are they hoping to get out of your encounter?

You want them to articulate what – exactly – they are seeking today.

- What have they already tried?
- What have they thought about trying but haven't attempted yet?
- Do they have any family they could stay with?

STEP THREE: Get a sense for where they have been staying.

You want to understand where they stayed last night, how long they have stayed there, and whether or not they can return there safely for at least another **three days** while trying to figure out next steps. If they are literally homeless, you can skip to Step Four.

- Three days is KEY here. Diversion research shows if they can stay somewhere for three days, their likelihood of ever hitting the system decreases greatly.
- Figure out the reasons they had to leave the place they stayed the night before (ex: did they have a fight with mom?)
- Figure out if they could keep staying with family/friend if family/friend knew that permanent solutions and referrals were being made. If they still say they have no way to extend their stay, you want to ask what it would take to extend it. You can also offer to speak with the 3rd party if you feel it's necessary in order to divert the person from shelter.

STEP FOUR: Find out if there is anyone else they can stay with. Ask exploratory questions.

If they absolutely cannot return to where they stayed the night before or if it was unsafe, you then want to explore other potential people they could stay with that may be safe and appropriate to connect with. After determining there is no alternative for them to put into action, and before admitting to shelter, there are a series of exploratory questions to better understand why they are having difficulties finding permanent housing.

- Example: “Ok so you definitely can't go back to mom's, what about your siblings? Do you have any brothers or sisters in the area?”
- Ask about income or benefits
- Ask about employment or other if there are other community resources they have already connected to

STEP FIVE: They have no other option.

- Begin the conversation about housing NOW. For example: “If admitted to shelter there is still an expectation that you will be attempting to secure permanent housing for you and your family. What is your plan at this point for securing housing if you are admitted to shelter?”

We want people to know, even upon shelter entry, that **shelter is not the answer**. Permanent housing is the answer. Even if they do not have a plan, we want them to stay focused on housing and getting out of shelter from the first day they are in shelter.