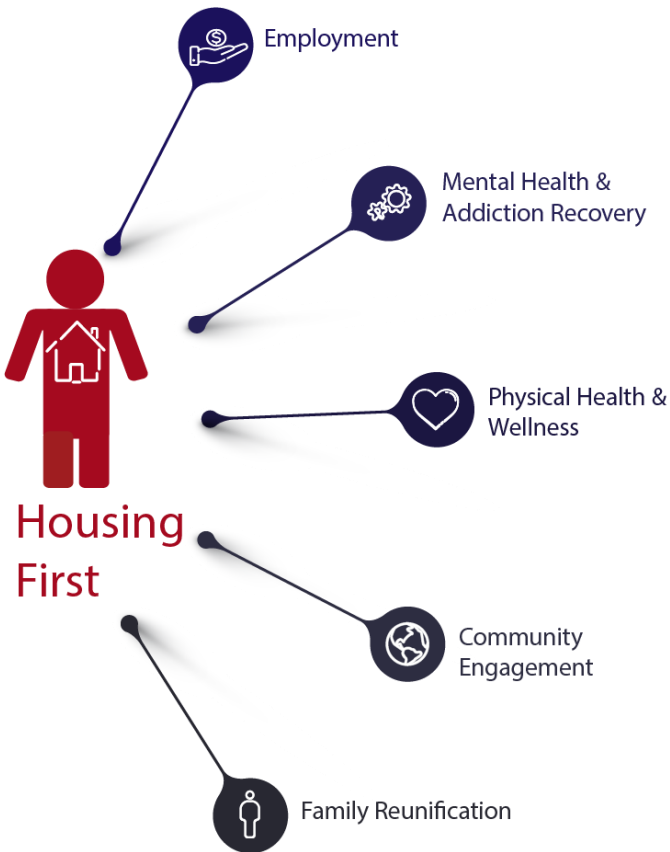




IMPLEMENTATION & OUTCOMES

UNITY | HOUSING FIRST

Roughly six million people in the U.S. are experiencing homelessness. Apart from instability and insecurity, individuals experiencing homelessness are at greater risk of violence, communicable disease, and exacerbation of existing health problems. *Housing First* is an evidence-based, recovery-oriented approach based on the philosophy that individuals can determine their own destinies and that housing is a basic human right. With stable housing, individuals can dedicate time to interpersonal relationships, personal and mental health, and seeking secure employment.



In contrast to methodologies that prioritize treatment (mental health, substance abuse) or programmatic participation before permanent housing is subsidized or provided outright, *Housing First* programs provide permanent housing with no prerequisite, therefore ending homelessness for the individual and providing a platform from which they can pursue individual goals and needs.

UNITY of Greater New Orleans’ aims to reduce chronic homelessness, made epidemic by Hurricane Katrina, by providing chronically homeless individuals and families with supportive housing services. PRG has conducted two evaluations of UNITY programs that employ a *Housing First* approach – both funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI). The purpose of the CABHI grant program is to support the development and expansion of local implementation and community infrastructures that integrate treatment and services for mental health and substance use disorders, permanent housing, and other critical services for individuals who are chronically homeless.



The New Day Program employed a *Housing First* model in which chronically homeless individuals from the streets were placed directly in permanent housing units and provided with supportive services with no requirement for being “housing ready.” The goal of offering an array of comprehensive support services was to ensure program clients had the resources, treatment, and care they needed to remain stable housed.

PRG conducted an implementation and outcome evaluation of the New Day Program. The implementation study examined the extent to which UNITY achieved targets tied to program enrollment and retention, placement in permanent housing, and connection to supportive services (for recovery, mental health, and substance use). The outcome study examined differences in housing stability, reduced substance use, and improved psychosocial functioning among clients based on 6- and 18- month reassessments and discharge from the program.

Outcome study data suggest that New Day Program clients receiving mental health treatment demonstrated meaningful decreases in reported level of distress and improvement in observed psychosocial functioning. On average, clients also remained stably housed while enrolled in the program. No meaningful change was exhibited in substance use behaviors.

PRG will conclude the evaluation of UNITY’s New Orleans Equity and Inclusion Initiative in 2020. The initiative aims to house at least 120 homeless individuals and 20 homeless families who are suffering from substance addiction, mental health illness, poor physical health, and poor connection with mainstream resources. Preliminary findings suggest meaningful change in psychosocial functioning among clients at 6- and 18-month reassessment.