

## ***What is a Housing First approach?***

### **A housing first approach rests on two central premises:**

- *Re-housing* -- helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent stable housing -- should be the central goal of our work with persons experiencing homelessness.
- By providing housing assistance *and* follow-up supportive/case management services after a family or individual is housed, we can significantly reduce the time individuals and families spend as homeless.

### **A housing first approach consists of three main components:**

- **Crisis intervention, emergency services, screening and needs assessment:** Individuals and families who have become homeless have immediate needs that need to be addressed, including the provision of emergency shelter. There should be an early screening of the challenges, barriers, and resources available that will affect a re-housing plan.
- **Permanent housing services:** The provision of services to help families access and sustain housing includes working with the client to identify affordable housing options, access available housing subsidies, and negotiate leases. Clients may require assistance to overcome barriers, such as poor tenant history, credit history, and discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, family make-up and income source. Providers of housing and supportive services may need to develop a roster of landlords willing to work with their programs and engage in strategies to reduce disincentives to participate.
- **Case management and supportive services:** The provision of case management services occurs (1) to ensure individuals and families have a source of income through employment and/or public benefits, and to identify service needs *before* the move into permanent housing, and (2) to work with individuals and families *after* moving into permanent housing to help solve problems that may arise that threaten the individual or family's tenancy, including difficulties sustaining housing or interacting with the landlord, and to connect families with community-based services to meet their long-term support/service needs.

(Adapted by the Ottawa Area Housing Coalition – [www.ottawahousing.org](http://www.ottawahousing.org))