



# Curbing the Need:

Enhancing Our Ability to Meet the Need Through Prevention

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Housing as a Human Right: Driving Progress in Times of Uncertainty

September 26, 2025



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# Homelessness Prevention: National Perspective and Ideas to Get Started

Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab

September 26, 2025

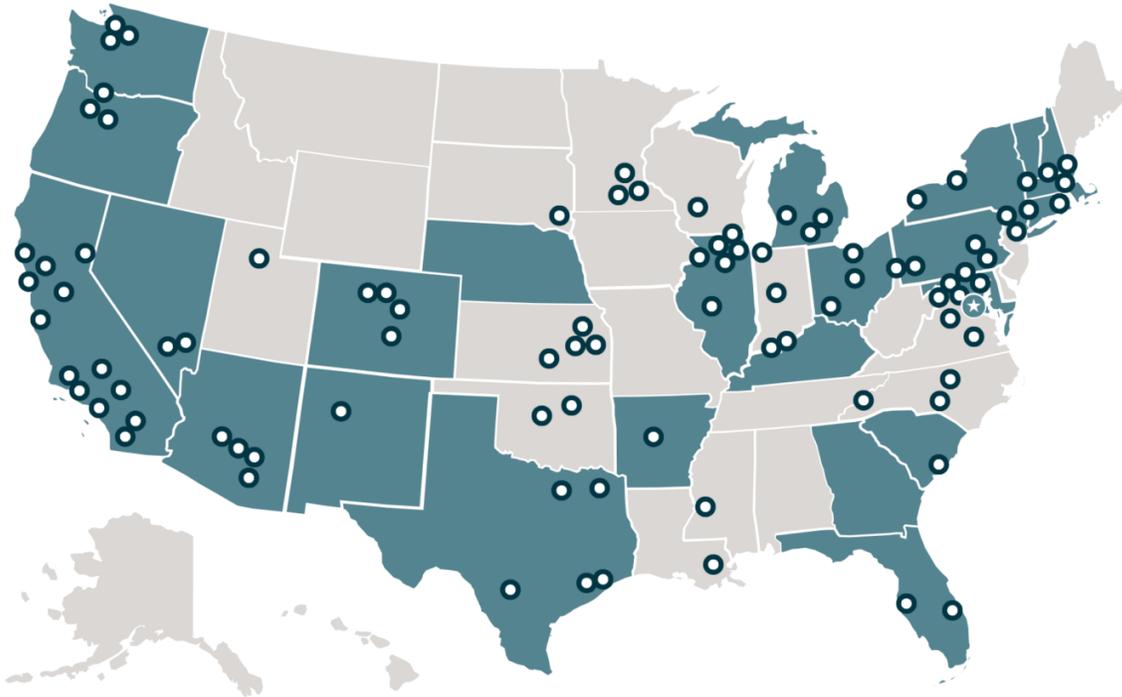


**HARVARD** Kennedy School  
Government Performance Lab

# Helping governments deliver better outcomes for their communities

**275** projects spread across **40** states.

**112** jurisdictions served.



○ Local Project   ■ State Project



**HARVARD Kennedy School**  
Government Performance Lab



**Children and families**



**Homelessness and housing**



**Safety and justice**

# GPL Homelessness & Housing Team | *Focus Areas for 2025-26*

Opportunities For Immediate Impact

Building the System of Tomorrow



## Prevention

*Prevent people from entering homelessness in the first place*



**Identify pathways into homelessness and impactful interventions**

*Detroit, MI*



**Leverage data and contracts to improve resident outcomes**

*San Francisco & Alameda County, CA*



## Rehousing

*Make the rehousing process more effective, efficient, & equitable*



**Effective and flexible Rapid-Rehousing innovations to improve housing stability**

*Chicago, IL*



**Scale solutions that increase utilization and decrease time to housing in PSH**

*National*

*Reimagining how housing systems work at the local, State, and Federal level*

- **Prevention** strategies to reduce inflow
- **New** solutions focused on **technology** and **policy changes**
- **Aftercare service models** that are lower-cost and effective
- Supports to address **housing affordability** and **increase supply**

## Staff Investment

*Build a skilled, outcome-driven workforce*  
New Jersey; Alameda County, CA; Los Angeles, CA

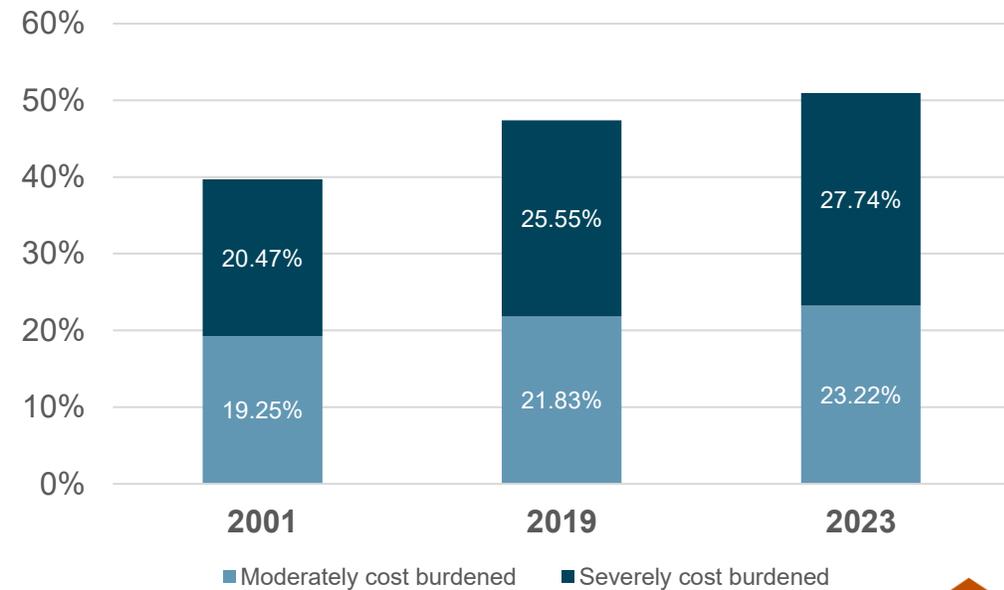
# We can't solve homelessness without figuring out how to prevent homelessness in the first place

**19,075**

people experienced homelessness for the first time in 2024 in New Jersey.

*First-time homelessness has increased by 23% nationally since 2019.*

Share of Cost-Burdened NJ Renters



**Notes:** Household incomes are adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U for All Items. Moderately (severely) cost-burdened households spend 30-50% (more than 50%) of income on rent and utilities. Households with zero or negative income are assumed to have severe burdens, while households not required to pay rent are assumed to be unburdened.

**Source:** JCHS tabulations of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

# How do we prevent homelessness?



**Identify households at highest risk of homelessness**



**Connect those households to resources** that help them stabilize their housing situation or find new housing



**But how do we identify households at highest risk of services?** How do you encounter/find them?

**What resources do they specifically need?**

**And how do we connect households to those services effectively?**

# Three primary approaches for identifying households at highest risk of homelessness

Approach	Examples	Strengths	Challenges
<b>Data system integration / algorithmic (machine learning)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Los Angeles Homelessness Prevention Unit (CA Policy Lab)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capturing people who don't self-identify</li> <li>High rate of success identifying HHs likely to become homeless</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who is missing from administrative data?</li> <li>Administratively difficult to set-up (data sharing agreements)</li> <li>Likely cold outreach</li> </ul>
<b>Screening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homebase (NYC)</li> <li>Santa Clara Destination Home</li> <li>Detroit Housing HelpLine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low barrier to set-up</li> <li>Allows people to self-identify as in need</li> <li>Can incorporate eligibility screening for resource matching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness of screening to ID risk varies, can change over time</li> <li>Missing people who don't self-identify</li> </ul>
<b>High-Risk Population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth transitioning out of foster care</li> <li>Individuals exiting prison</li> <li>Individuals exiting hospitals/treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Known high-risk populations</li> <li>Multiple system benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically not the driver of overall entries into homelessness</li> <li>Requires shared ownership and collaboration across systems</li> </ul>

# What resources and services?

*Still more to learn on what resources and services are most effective for what populations at what dosages, **but we know enough to get started!***

## Getting Started

---

1. What resources exist in your community?
2. How can existing resources be targeted and coordinated more effectively towards homelessness prevention?
3. How could you build the case for a new program? Is there local appetite (philanthropic or gov't) to fund a new targeted homelessness prevention program?

# Getting started: mapping resources and considering strategies for targeting and coordination

## Services/Resources to Consider

### *Services*

- Case management
- Legal services (eviction prevention)
- Mediation / Housing Problem Solving
- Housing navigation

### *Resources*

- Rental assistance / arrears payments
- Move-in assistance
- Flexible cash assistance
- Diversion payments

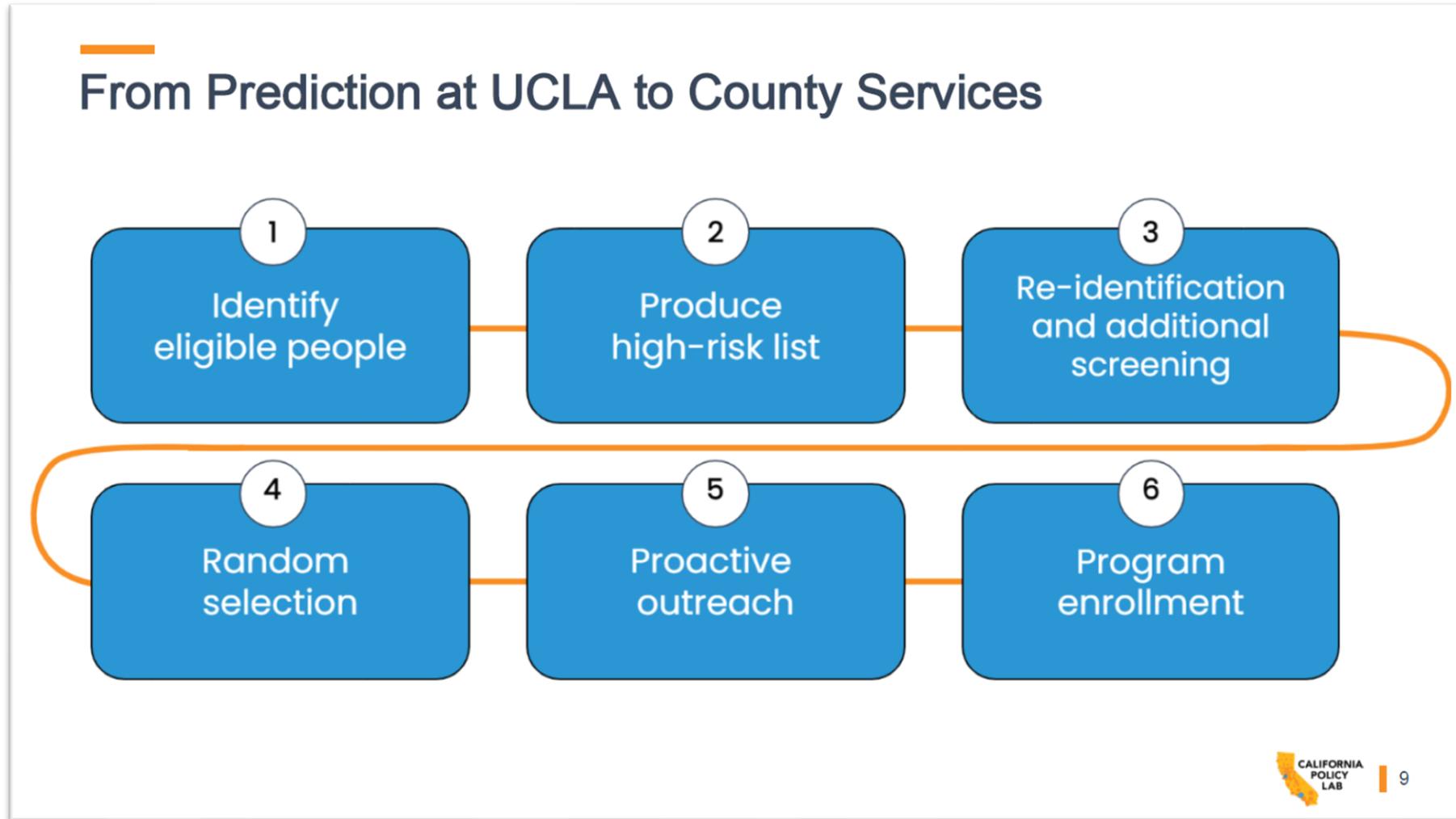
**What is the goal of this service/resource and how is success measured?** Are there opportunities to build alignment around program purpose that incorporates targeted homelessness prevention?

**Can you prioritize those at highest risk of homelessness** for access to these resources? Or prioritize giving them a warm/direct referral?  
**What screening Qs could you add to intake** or populations would you seek out?

**Can we improve resource coordination?** For example, can clients receiving eviction prevention services get prioritized for rental arrears support?

When the needed housing resource isn't available, **are their other referrals that could support a client in meeting their needs?** (e.g. SNAP, childcare, job training)

# Example | Los Angeles Homelessness Prevention Unit



# Example | Santa Clara Targeted Homelessness Prevention

## TARGETED PREVENTION IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

### Assistance Available



Immediate cash assistance that can be used towards rent, utilities and other basic expenses



Legal support & eviction defense



Case management services



Assistance applying for benefits



Help accessing services & resources provided by other partners

New Resource

### Building a Homelessness Prevention System

A Toolkit for Launching, Operating, and Managing an Evidence-based Program

RESULTS FOR AMERICA

leo LAB FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

DESTINATION HOME



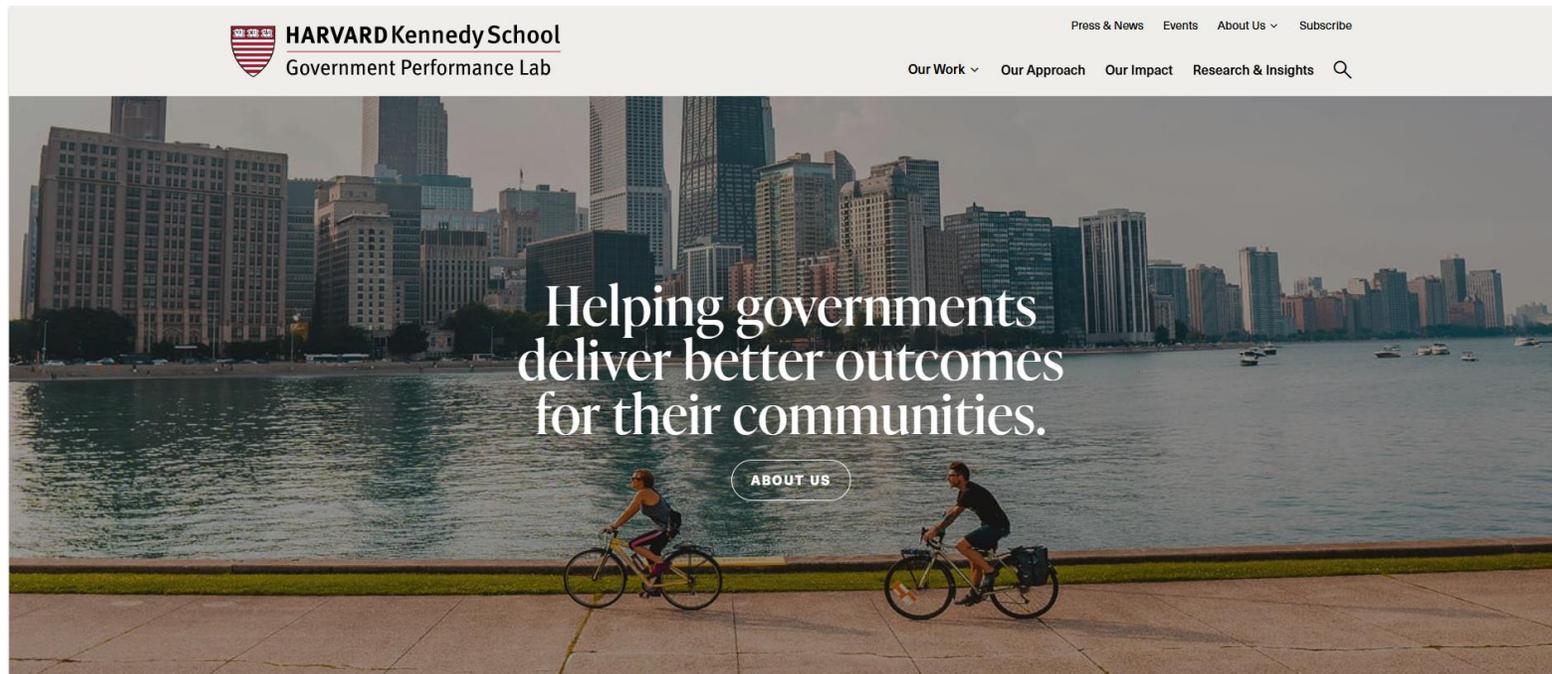
SCAN TO DOWNLOAD

# Example | Detroit HelpLine Screening & Referrals



# How to learn more

- Subscribe to the GPL newsletter
- Visit the GPL website – [govlab.hks.harvard.edu](http://govlab.hks.harvard.edu) – to read more about our work and projects





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**Darrell Cason**

Deputy Administrator,  
DC Department of Human Services (DHS)

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# Homelessness Prevention

*Enhancing our Ability to Meet to Need  
Through Prevention*

# DHS Mission

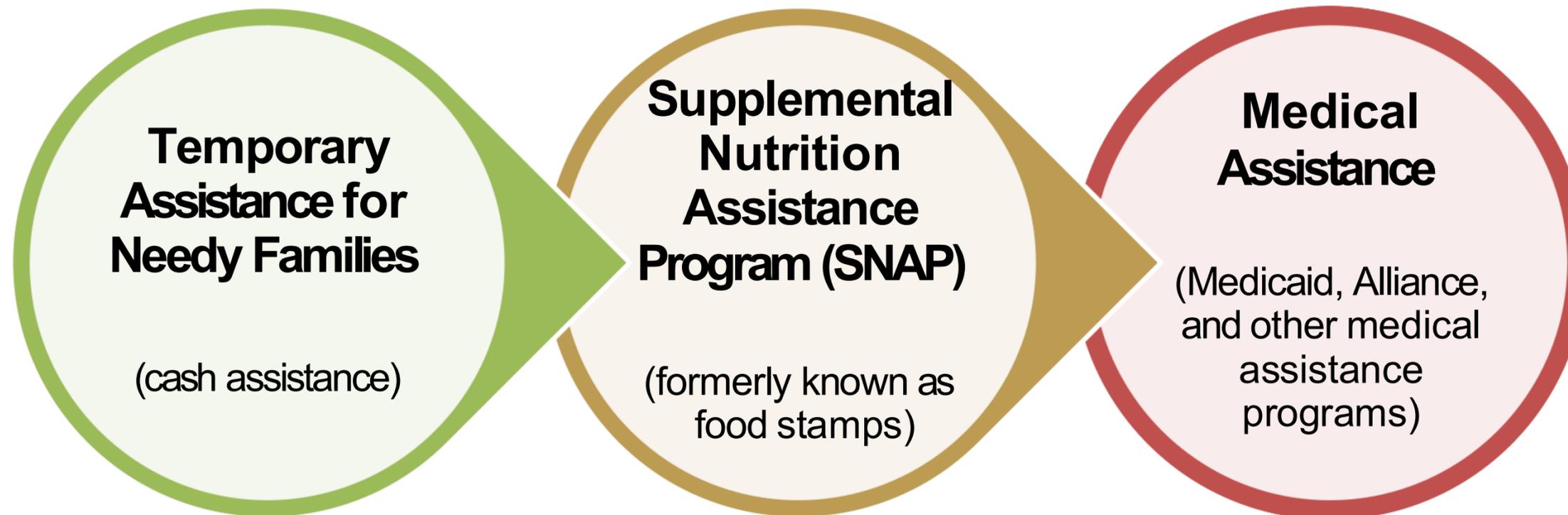
The mission of the District of Columbia Department of Human Services (DHS) is to provide meaningful and equitable services, supports, and access to resources for District residents to realize their goals.



# Economic Security Administration (ESA)

## Economic Stability and Well-Being

DHS determines eligibility for medical assistance, food, and cash benefits programs available in the District, which helps residents enhance their economic stability and well-being. Delivery of these services is done through five [Service Centers](#) located in neighborhoods throughout the District of Columbia.

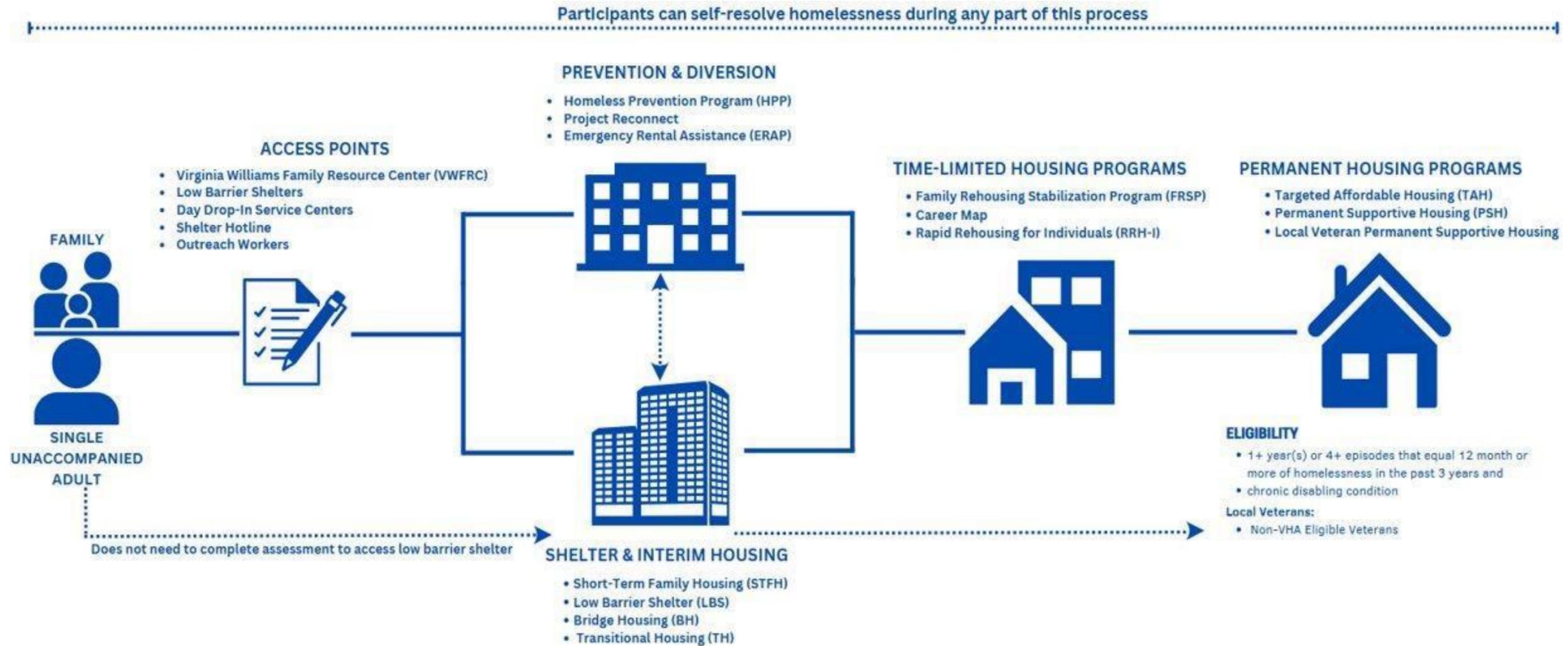


# Family Services Administration (FSA)

The Family Services Administration (FSA) strives to provide innovative, person-centered, and research-based services to meet the needs of vulnerable District residents. FSA operates many different programs – too many to list – but here are some of the major areas FSA works on:



# Landscape of Homeless Services



# DHS Milestones

**DHS and Community Partners achieved the following milestones while implementing Homeward DC, the city's Strategic Plan to End Homelessness:**

- The number of people experiencing homelessness in the District of Columbia is **down by 43% percent from 2020**
- 2025 Point in time shows a **18.1% decrease** in Family Homelessness
- The number of households experiencing homelessness (which includes both families and singles adults) is the lowest counted in over 17 years.

**DHS SERVICE TIP**

**HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM**



“ Families at imminent risk of homelessness can seek stabilization services through the DHS Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP). HPP offers housing search assistance, emergency rent assistance, and referrals to food and clothing banks. To be deemed eligible for HPP services, visit the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center at 920 Rhode Island Avenue, NE. ”

 DEPARTMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

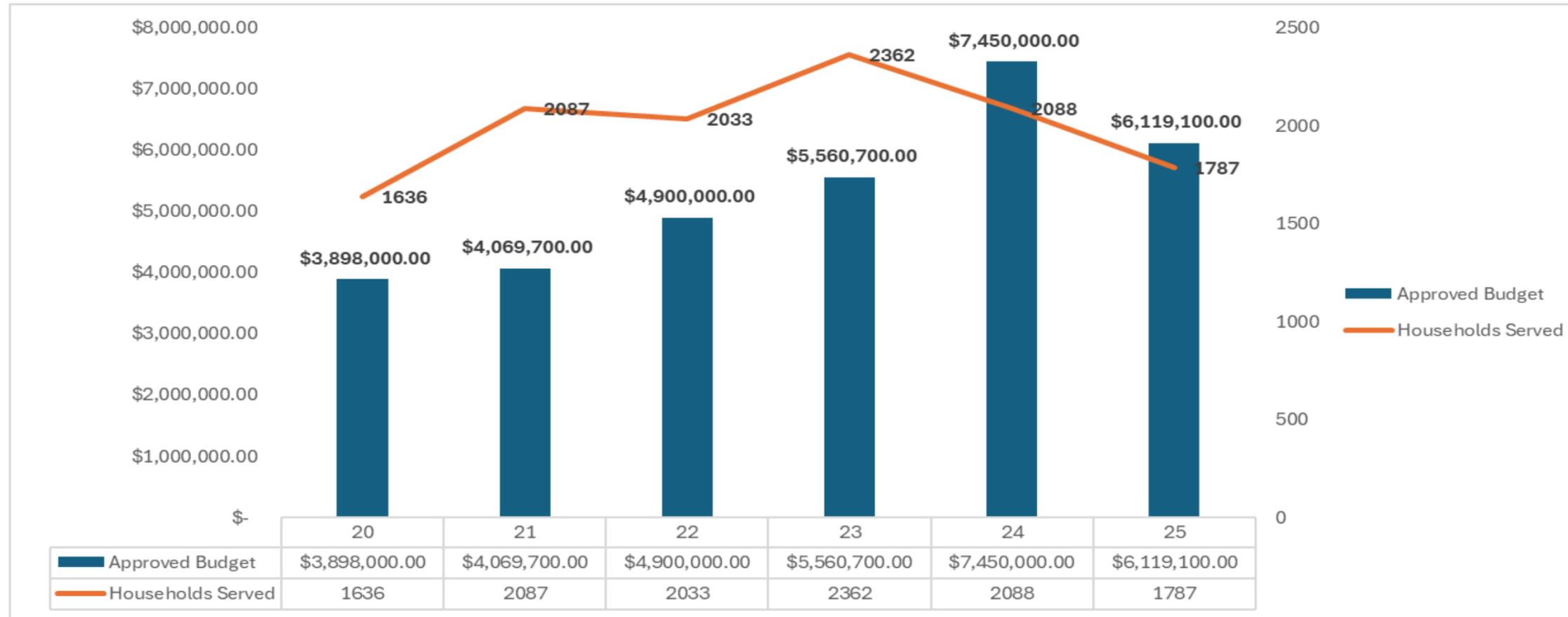
## Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP)

# Overview of HPP

- Established in September 2015
- Goal of preventing families at risk of homelessness from entering the shelter system by providing services and resources to stabilize the family in the community.
- Families are referred to 1 of 5 prevention providers after completing an application for services at the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center (VWFRC). DHS also selected a predictive analytics tool called The Westat to assist workers in identifying and prioritizing families who are most likely to require shelter placement.

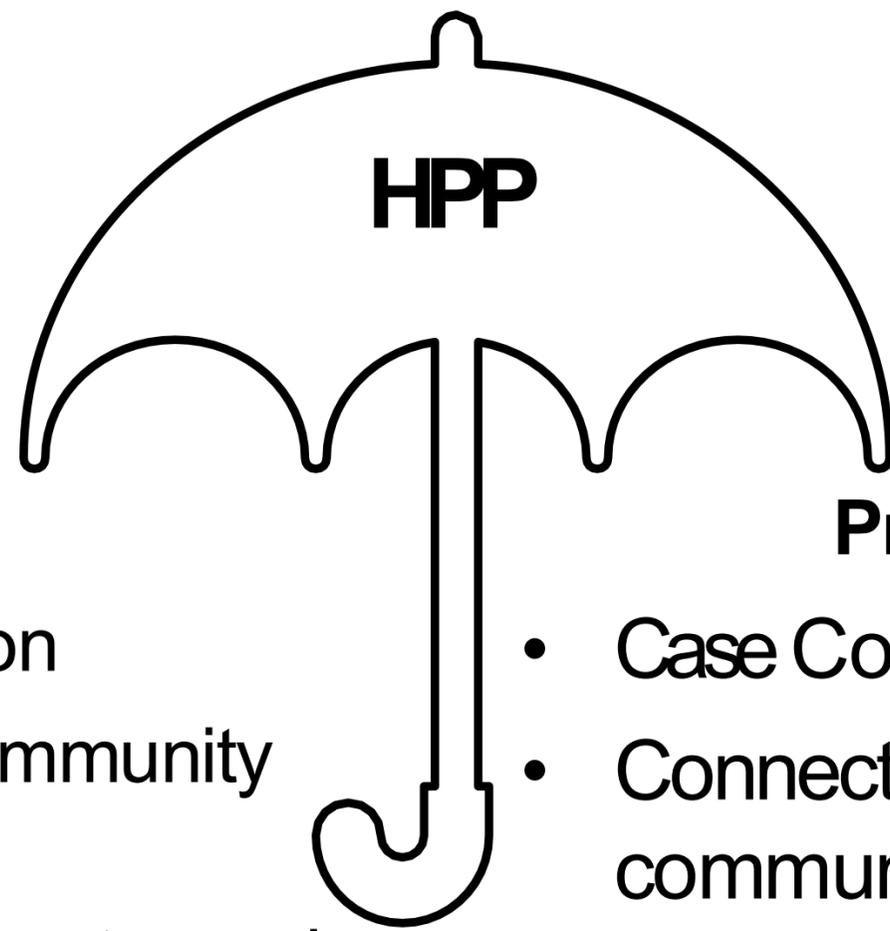


# HPP Snapshot



## Since program inception:

- Families referred: 15,000
- Episodes of homelessness prevented: Apprx, 13,000



## **Mediation**

- Case Coordination
- Connection to community resources
- Financial Assistance towards First Months Rent and Security Deposit
- TANF Connection or Re Engagement

## **Prevention/Diversion**

- Case Coordination
- Connection to community resources
- Short Term Rental Assistance (up to 4 months)
- Referral to Rapid Rehousing
- TANF Connection or Re Engagement
- Unit Search

# Program Expansions

- In addition to increases in the budget, we have also expanded over time to:
  - Increase partnerships with the community to strengthen case planning and resource connections
  - Implemented a referral process to the Families Rapid Rehousing program
  - Partnered with DV provider to better support DV cases

# On the Horizon

Need	Adjustment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ability for additional housing opportunities for stable housing and affordable housing options</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Implementation HPP+ (Pilot)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HPP +is designed to support eligible District residents who are at imminent risk of homelessness by providing short-term rental assistance. This particular component of the program supports clients seeking safe and stable housing outside of the District of Columbia. Eligible clients who express the intent to move outside of the District may receive partial rental assistance for up to six (6) months to promote housing stability and prevent shelter entry.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Utilize HPP to assist with shelter exits or Rapid Rehousing</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting in October 2026 we have expanded the potential options where HPP can support- including exits from shelter and or support from the Rapid Rehousing program.</li> </ul>

# Contact Information

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# Thank You!



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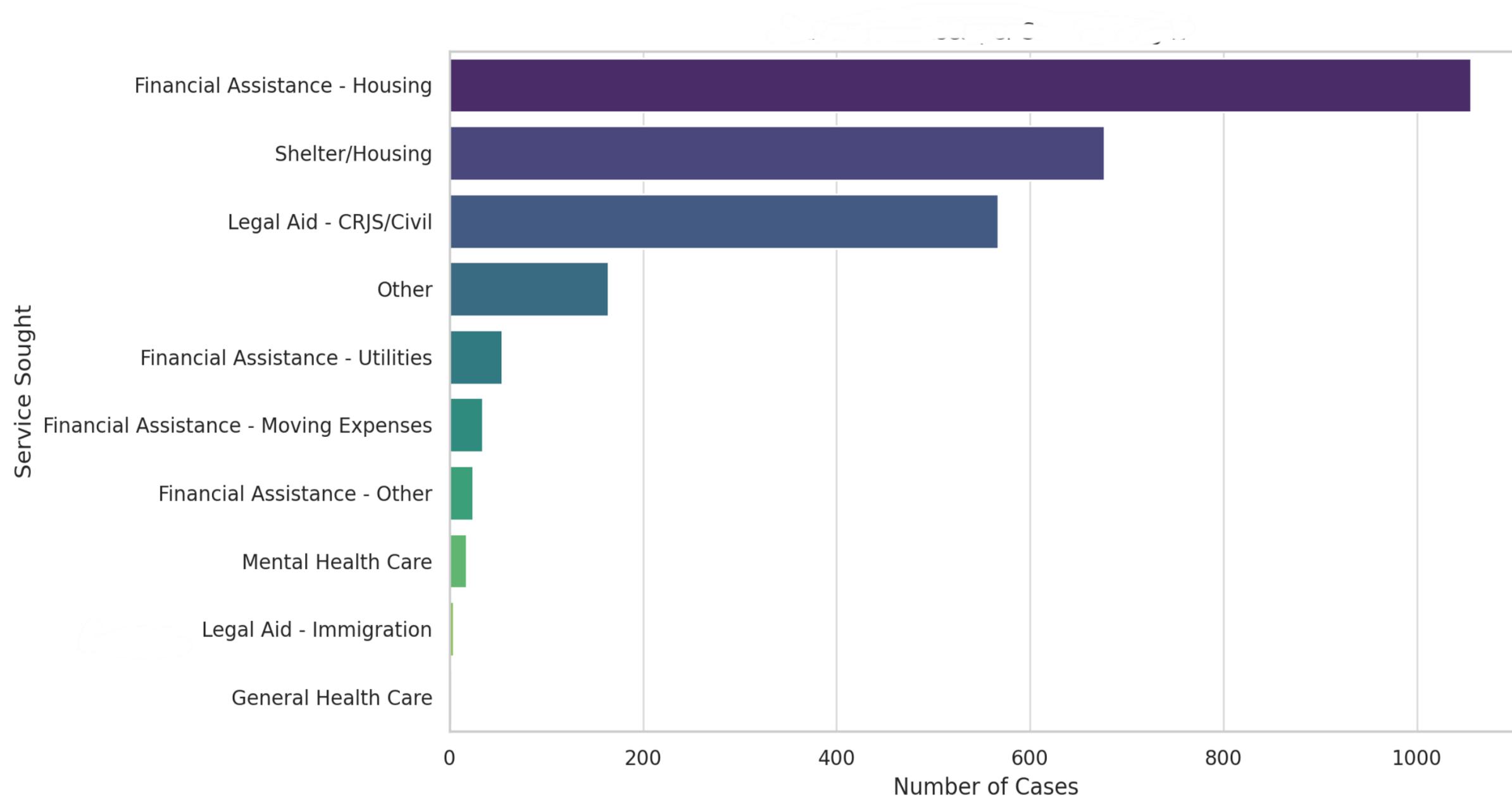
# CEDD Analyst Report

Kayla Zimmer  
Deputy Director  
The Waterfront Project

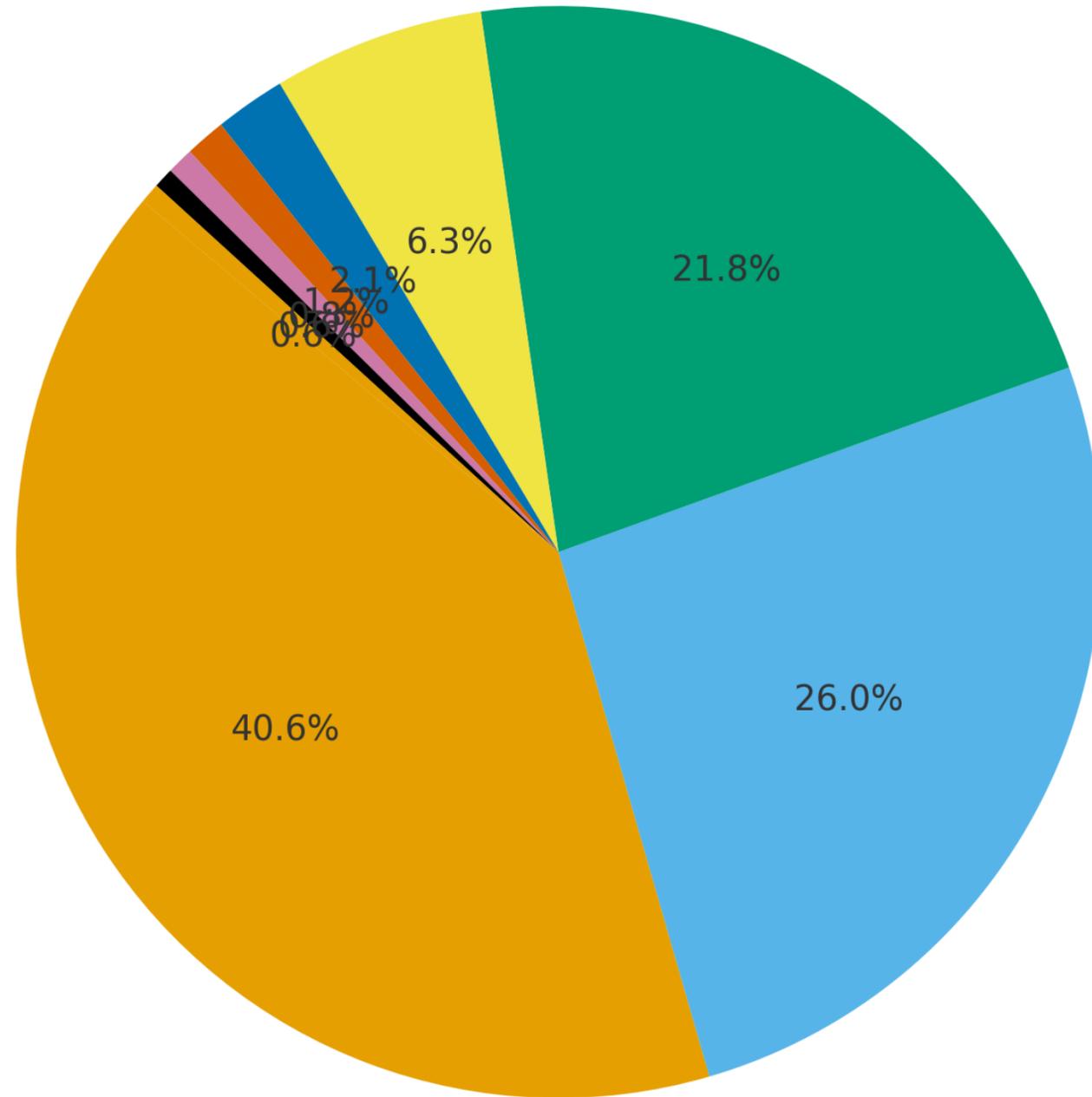
Data from 02/01/2024 to 06/05/2025



# Number of Cases Sought per Service



# Distribution of Services Sought



# Legal Outcomes Summary

- Successful Legal Outcomes: 80.95%

- Total Successful Cases: 563 of 696

# Attorney Representation & Legal Outcome





# Thank you to our Speakers!

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