

# Metro Rapid Response Funding (MRRF) Pilot

## A Homelessness Diversion Initiative



### Purpose

Current HUD-funded homelessness programs are primarily designed to prioritize individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness with co-occurring conditions. As a result, people who are newly homeless, lower on the vulnerability scale, and still at high risk of prolonged homelessness, often wait for extended periods of time to receive a referral for housing programs.

The Office of Homeless Services (OHS) has designed a Metro Rapid Response Funding (MRRF) pilot to reduce the barriers that lead to long stays in homelessness. This pilot works by creating a **local pathway** for people who need help now before their homelessness becomes longer, more traumatic, and more difficult to resolve, especially for those who may not meet prioritization thresholds.

The goal of the pilot is simple: move people into housing faster and **test whether earlier intervention leads to stronger long-term outcomes that prevent returns to homelessness**. By pairing short-term rental assistance, with intensive case management provided by community partners, MRRF helps shorten the time households spend unhoused, reduces exposure to trauma, and creates a pathway toward long-term housing stability.

**All people referred for MRRF must be “housing ready”, meaning they have all essential documents and income, to ensure they can secure and sustain permanent housing.** Using a targeted universalism approach, the specific subpopulations we are focusing on in this initial pilot are:

- **People experiencing unsheltered homelessness**
- **Families in emergency shelter**
- **Veterans experiencing literal homeless**

These subpopulations have been of focus for our community; however, they may not score high enough on Coordinated Entry (CE) assessments to quickly receive referrals to housing programs. Those who are “housing ready” are most likely to benefit from this type of short-term assistance and remain housed.

### Financial Assistance May Include:

- Arrears
- Security deposits
- First month’s rent
- Ongoing rental subsidies
- Utilities payments

### How We Measure Success

Because MRRF is a pilot, we’re focused on measuring outcomes that are directly tied to the financial assistance being provided. This helps us evaluate what’s working based on our own investment.

We assess housing stability regularly by looking at whether participants are:

- Moving into housing and achieving stability faster

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- Achieving self-sufficiency in paying rent
- Accessing other long-term rental subsidies
- And ultimately remaining housed

Studies on rapid rehousing and diversion-focused interventions consistently show that early financial assistance reduces returns to homelessness and lowers long-term costs to the broader system ([Homebase, 2020](#)). Similar pilots of flexible funding pools have been implemented in cities such as Denver, Dallas, and Austin.

### Timeline for Evaluation and Decision Making

We do not have all the answers and are hopeful this pilot can provide us with more insight. Because this is a pilot, we are constantly evaluating and cannot project a deadline for when the pilot will be complete.

OHS has currently received **91 MRRF referrals**, of whom 40 households have been successfully housed. The remaining 51 households are actively working with OHS staff and partners providing case management to secure housing and complete lease applications.

### How Are Referrals Made

At this time, referrals are made through OHS street outreach teams, emergency family shelters, and the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). Participants still:

- Are entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) shared database
- Complete standard homelessness Coordinated Entry (CE) assessments
- Have key outcomes and case notes tracked through HMIS

What makes this pilot **different** is that it introduces an **alternative** local prioritization pathway, allowing Metro to serve households who may not score high enough for HUD-funded programs but still need immediate housing intervention.

### How MRRF Interacts with the Broader System

This diversion strategy creates flexibility for Metro to address barriers that contribute to long stays in homelessness and to provide financial assistance that prevents returns to homelessness. By moving individuals and families into sustainable housing quickly, demand for emergency assistance decreases, which relieves our homelessness response system as a whole, including: CE, emergency shelters, emergency services, and other Metro Departments who are responding to the needs of unhoused Nashvillians daily. OHS is hoping to utilize this pilot to show that investment in diversion can help make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in Nashville.