****

Newcomer Housing Stability Assessment Tool: Scoring Summary Sheet

The Newcomer Housing Stability Assessment Tool (NHSAT), developed by Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS) and Switchboard, assesses housing stability among newcomers. Use this scoring summary sheet to analyze the results of the NHSAT and prioritize the client’s needs.

This questionnaire is adaptable to the specific needs of newcomer populations. Clear and sensitive questions are crucial, as is providing language support for accurate responses. Scores for each component must be noted individually, with the total score indicating a newcomer's level of acuity.

Scoring Summary Sheet

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Component | Score | Comments |
| A. Health and Wellness Assessment |  |  |
| B. Legal Status and Housing |  |  |
| C. Financial Instability and Housing |  |  |
| D. Social Support Networks |  |  |
| E. Cultural and Linguistic Barriers |  |  |
| F. Previous Housing Instability and Experiences of Homelessness  |  |  |
| Total |  |  |

Prioritizing Service Based Upon Score & Guiding Supports

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Scoring Range | Intervention | Comments |
| 0-19 | Housing Help Supports | These are generally high-functioning newcomers with shorter periods of homelessness or inconsistent stable housing. Their needs are not as complex, and they are most likely to solve their own homelessness, perhaps with brief financial assistance, shallow subsidies, and access to affordable housing listings (subject to local availability and eligibility). |
| 20-34 | Rapid Re-Housing | With some support—though not as intensive as Housing First—these newcomers can access and maintain housing.  |
| 35-60+ | Housing First | These are newcomers with more complex needs who are likely to benefit from support through Intensive Case Management.  |

Within each category, those newcomers scoring closer to the top of the threshold are the first priority. For example, if two newcomers have undergone an intake and one scores a 73 and the other a 69, and there is only one opening on a caseload, the newcomer with the highest score is served first.

Housing Help Supports Scored 0-19

For newcomers experiencing housing instability, particularly those who are generally high-functioning with shorter periods of homelessness or inconsistent stable housing, the following steps deserve consideration, subject both to availability and to eligibility for providing housing help supports:

1. NHSAT Assessment and Engagement:Begin by conducting a thorough assessment of the newcomer’s housing situation, including their current living conditions, support networks, and any barriers they may face in securing stable housing. Engage them in discussions about their housing goals and preferences.
2. Case Management: Connect with a local housing authority case manager or housing support worker to work closely with the newcomer. The case manager can provide personalized assistance, advocacy, and guidance throughout the housing stabilization process. Find a local public housing authority [here.](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts)
3. Financial Assistance: Seek short-term financial assistance to help cover immediate housing-related expenses such as rental arrears, security deposits, or utility bills. This assistance should be targeted and time-limited, aiming to address the specific financial barriers preventing the newcomer from obtaining or maintaining stable housing. Connect with the local housing authority and/or housing providers in the community visit.
4. Housing First Approach with Subsidies: Prioritize a Housing First approach, ensuring rapid access to permanent housing without barriers. Focus on securing stable housing quickly, with ongoing support provided as needed. Explore subsidies or local rental assistance programs to supplement income, making housing more affordable. *Keep in mind that these programs are contingent on availability and eligibility.*
5. Housing Navigation: Provide comprehensive housing navigation assistance, including access to affordable housing options, assistance with applications, and connections to supportive services for long-term housing stability. Contact [211.org](https://www.211.org/get-help/housing-expenses#:~:text=Your%20local%20211%20is%20the,to%20find%20more%20contact%20information.) and/or [United Way](https://www.hfuw.org/get-help/) for local resources, including housing listings and rental assistance programs.
6. Supportive Services: Connect with supportive services such as transitional housing, temporary housing shelters, employment assistance, mental health counseling, and life skills training as needed. These services can address underlying issues that may contribute to housing instability and support the newcomer in maintaining their housing stability in the long term.
7. Legal Status and Housing: Severe legal issues can be significant barriers to housing and local assistance. Clients with severe legal issues would need referrals to organizations that specialize in re-entry programs, which can provide one-to-one support to fit clients’ specific needs. For a list of re-entry programs by state, visit [helpforfelons.org](https://helpforfelons.org/reentry-programs-ex-offenders-state/) or contact your [local HUD Certified Housing Counselor.](https://www.hud.gov/counseling)
8. Follow-Up and Monitoring:Conduct regular follow-up meetings with newcomers to monitor their housing status, address any emerging challenges, and provide ongoing support as needed. Continuously reassess their needs and adjust support services accordingly to promote long-term housing stability. Connect with local Continuum of Care agencies to inquire about follow-up and monitoring services available in your area.

By implementing these steps, housing help supports can effectively assist newcomers experiencing housing instability in accessing and maintaining stable housing, even when their needs are not as complex and they are likely to resolve their homelessness with minimal assistance.

Rapid Re-Housing Scored 20-34

For rapid rehousing with some support, though not as intensive as Housing First, the following steps deserve consideration, subject both to availability and to eligibility for providing housing help supports:

1. NHSAT Assessment and Eligibility Determination: Begin by conducting a comprehensive assessment of the newcomer's housing needs, barriers, and strengths. Determine eligibility for rapid rehousing programs based on criteria such as income level, housing history, and vulnerability factors.
2. Housing Search Assistance: Provide support with housing search activities, including assistance in identifying suitable rental units, contacting landlords, and completing rental applications. Offer guidance on navigating the housing market and accessing available resources such as housing listings and rental assistance programs. Contact [211.org](https://www.211.org/get-help/housing-expenses#:~:text=Your%20local%20211%20is%20the,to%20find%20more%20contact%20information.) and/or [United Way](https://www.hfuw.org/get-help/) for local resources, including housing listings and rental assistance programs.
3. Financial Assistance: Offer short-term financial assistance to help cover move-in costs, such as security deposits, first month's rent, or utility setup fees. This assistance should be time-limited and tailored to the newcomer's needs, aiming to address immediate financial barriers to housing stability. HUD Exchange’s [Emergency Solutions Grants](https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/esg/) is one program which funds short-term financial assistance for move-in costs.
4. Rent Subsidies:Connect with local housing organizations and authorities fortemporary rent subsidies or housing vouchers to make housing more affordable for the newcomer. These subsidies are subject to local availability and eligibility; they can supplement the newcomer's income and help cover ongoing housing expenses, ensuring that they can afford to remain housed in the long term. See [Local Housing Authorities](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts) for rent subsidy programs available in your area.
5. Case Management and Support Services: Assign a case manager to provide budgeting help, life skills training, employment advice, and connections with community resources for housing stability. Seek local nonprofits specializing in housing support and case management.
6. Tenant Education and Rights: Educate the newcomer about their rights and responsibilities as tenants, including understanding lease agreements, communicating with landlords, and maintaining a safe and healthy living environment. Empower the newcomer to advocate for themselves and address any housing-related issues that may arise. HUD Exchange’s [Tenant Rights and Responsibilities](https://www.hud.gov/topics/rental_assistance/tenantrights) provides information on tenant rights and responsibilities under federal law for each state.
7. Follow-up and Monitoring: Conduct regular follow-up meetings with the newcomer to monitor their housing situation and assess their progress. Offer ongoing support and assistance as needed. Be prepared to intervene quickly if the newcomer's housing stability is at risk. Connect with local Continuum of Care agencies to inquire about follow-up and monitoring services available in your area.

By following these steps, rapid rehousing programs can effectively assist newcomers in accessing and maintaining housing with some support, enabling them to transition quickly from homelessness to stable housing. This approach balances the need for rapid housing placement with the provision of necessary support services to promote long-term housing stability.

Housing First Scored 35-60+

For newcomers with more complex needs who are likely to benefit from Housing First with Intensive Case Management support, the following steps are worth considering, contingent on availability and eligibility:

1. NHSAT Assessment and Engagement:Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the newcomer's housing history, support needs, and underlying challenges contributing to homelessness. Engage the newcomer in discussions about their housing goals, preferences, and aspirations.
2. Housing Placement:Prioritize rapid access to permanent housing without preconditions or barriers. Work collaboratively with your local housing authority, landlords, and housing providers to secure suitable housing options that meet the newcomer's needs and preferences. Implement a Housing First approach, focusing on housing stability as the primary goal. Locate a local shelter and other emergency housing options—you can find Refugee Housing Solutions’ guidance on this [here](https://refugeehousing.org/resources/emergency-housing-three-ways-to-connect-with-local-shelter-systems/).
3. Intensive Case Management: Assign a case manager to provide budgeting help, life skills training, employment advice, and connections with community resources for housing stability. Seek local nonprofits specializing in housing support and case management. This [Compreshensive Case Management Onboarding Guide](https://www.switchboardta.org/resource/sample-comprehensive-case-management-onboarding-guide/) provides a framework for onboarding new staff members who provide case management services in the context of regugee service delivery.
4. Wraparound Support Services:Coordinate a comprehensive array of wraparound support services to address the newcomer’s complex needs and promote housing stability. This may include access to healthcare, psychiatric care, substance abuse treatment, vocational training, legal assistance, and social support networks. Visit HUD Exchange’s [Homelessness Assistance Programs](https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/) for more.
5. Stability Planning and Crisis Intervention: Develop stability plans with the newcomer to identify potential triggers or challenges to housing stability. Establish strategies for mitigating risks. Provide intervention and support during times of crisis or housing instability, ensuring that the newcomer's safety and well-being are prioritized. The [National Health Care for the Homeless Council](https://nhchc.org/) provides guidance on stability planning for individuals experiencing homelessness.
6. Tenant Empowerment and Skill-Building: Empower newcomers to take an active role in managing their housing and navigating community resources. Offer skill-building opportunities, such as budgeting, household management, and conflict resolution, to enhance the newcomer's ability to maintain stable housing independently. The [National Low Income Housing Coalition](https://nlihc.org/tenant-protections) offers resources on tenant rights and empowerment.
7. Ongoing Monitoring and Support: Conduct regular follow-up meetings and assessments to monitor the newcomer's progress and adjust support services as needed. Maintain open communication with the newcomer, housing providers, and other service providers to ensure coordinated care and continuous support. Connect with local Continuum of Care agencies to inquire about follow-up and monitoring services available in your area.

By implementing these steps within a Housing First framework with Intensive Case Management support, newcomers with more complex needs can access and maintain stable housing while receiving the comprehensive support they need to address underlying challenges and achieve long-term housing stability. This approach prioritizes newcomer-centered care, empowerment, and collaboration to promote successful outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness.

*The IRC received competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant #90RB0052 and Grant #90RB0053. The project is 100% financed by federal funds. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.*