



Project Reconnect

shelter diversion and rapid-exit
program for unaccompanied adults

What is Project Reconnect? It is a new shelter diversion and rapid-exit program for unaccompanied adults. By working with clients in an open and strengths-focused conversation, diversion experts at one of the District's daytime services centers, along with our partners, can help clients avoid and/or reduce their utilization of emergency shelter.

Who is it for? The program is not for everyone. In fact, Project Reconnect will serve only 1,000 individuals a year who fit one of the following profiles:

- A. **New Arrivals:** Those who present at low-barrier shelters for at least one week but have no prior documentation of homelessness in HMIS;
- B. **Non-Recent Returners:** individuals who return to a low-barrier shelter for at least a week, after an extended absence from shelter (e.g. at least one month);
- C. **Transitioning from System Involvement:** individuals who are transitioning from jail/prison, or are aging out of the foster care system without housing supports in place
- D. **Family Engaged:** individuals who demonstrate a willingness and ability to connect with friends and family

How will it work? DHS is still in the process of drafting the exact service delivery model, but the idea is to follow a five-step process:

1. **Identifying Clients for Diversion/Rapid Exit:** When a low-barrier shelter or daytime service center does an intake, the provider must talk to the client to understand the client's situation, presenting story, and obtain background information. The provider must also look in HMIS to determine whether the client fits the criteria for referral to the singles diversion program. If the client is a good candidate, then the provider must book the individual into the next available Project Connect appointment slot at either the Adams Place Drop-In Center or the Downtown Services Center.
2. **Scheduling and Keeping Appointments:** The District's Daytime Services Centers will maintain a daily schedule for Project Reconnect appointments and will be able to accommodate multiple appointments per day, five days per week. To ensure clients keep their appointments, the shelter provider must make every effort to ensure the client uses the regular UPO shuttle from shelter.
3. **Strengths-Based Conversation:** Once at a Daytime Services Center, the client will engage in a strengths-based conversation with a diversion expert who will help them identify (a) times when they demonstrated interdependence and helped or supported others; and (b) networks and support persons that may be able to help them with income or housing. Begin to identify networks and support persons that may be able to help them with income or housing.
4. **Desired Outcomes:** After listening to the client, exploring past strengths, relationships, and networks, the client and staff will talk about what housing options they want to pursue: (a) permanently reuniting them with family and friends; (b) helping them return to their own residence; (c) temporarily diverting them as they seek new housing; or (d) permanently relocating to a safe place out of town.
5. **Direct Interventions:** Based on the desired outcome, DHS will partner with a non-governmental agency to execute a diversion agreement and related light-touch transaction. The interventions include:
 - a. **Recurring Transportation Assistance:** public and/or private transportation resources to



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assist individuals with returning to/from a location within the metropolitan Washington region in order to help with employment/employability.

- b. **One-Time Transportation Assistance:** private transportation resources to persons who need assistance with returning to family or friends, or those who need a one-time repair to stabilize their transportation options. Examples of one-time transportation assistance include:
 - i. **Travel Assistance:** private transportation for someone who wishes to return to family and/or friends outside of the metropolitan area. It may include the purchase of an airline or train ticket.
 - ii. **Automotive Repair:** This type of assistance provides assistance with functional (non-cosmetic) car repairs that, if repaired, would increase the client's ability to maintain employment and/or stabilize their housing.
 - iii. **Travelers' Aid:** bus transportation, through a non-profit organization, to persons who need assistance with returning to family or friends.
- c. **Support to Host Household:** offsets the cost to a household from hosting a diversion/rapid exit participant.
- d. **First Month's Rent/Security Deposit:** covers some or all of the cost of the first month's rent and security deposit for a participant's new housing agreement.
- e. **Small-Denomination Arrears Payment:** a small-debt forgiveness program, so long as the debt was accrued through legal means (e.g. credit card debt) and can be shown as a contributing factor preventing the individual from being housed outside of shelter.
- f. **Moving Costs:** covers the cost of moving expenses for the participant
- g. **Mediation Services:** covers the fee for mediation facilitation

There will also be Indirect Services [delivered through a partnership with Project Reconnect, but not paid through Project Reconnect funding]:

- **Benefits Optimization:** helps the individual get enrolled in all benefits programs to which they are potentially eligible.
- **Employment Assistance:** helps the individual get connected to all employment services which may be appropriate for them.
- **Short Term Rental Assistance:** connects the participant, through an expedited referral, to the District's Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) program for unaccompanied adults
- **Referral to Residential Treatment:** helps participants can gain access to residential treatment services instead of staying in shelter.
- **Foster Care Transition Services:** expedited referral process to youth homeless services as well as those services offered by the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).

How will we measure success? The District will use a four-tiered model for measuring success:

- **Unsuccessful:** time between episodes is less than three months
- **Moderately Successful:** time between episodes is more than three months, but less than six
- **Successful:** time between episodes is more than six months, but less than 12
- **Highly Successful:** time between episodes is more than 12 months