# Meeting Minutes 06-04-2019

**Attendees:**

* Dan, Senior Director of Housing Navigation, our main contact person
* John, Housing Location Coordinator, new to the LA Family Housing team, has been absorbing a lot of info and may be a god contact to verify some of the findings with

**Homelessness issue & LA Family Housing - background:**

* Shortage of vacant housing
* 12% rise in homelessness (mostly new homeless) from past year
* There’s an estimated 55-60K people on the street at the moment in LA
* Need to utilize existing housing more efficiently
* Supply is there, but it is hidden
* Shared housing has many benefits: shared bills, groceries, child care, other shared resources, etc.
* Shared housing works elsewhere: college roommates, your adults / professionals
* Last year LA Family Housing housed 500 families and 500 single adults, no more than 10% was shared housing
* **Examples of successful shared housing placement are just over a couple of months old - 8 units, 50 people as of now who have been successfully placed into shared housing**
* Types of housing provided by LA Family Housing:
  + Tenants sharing a space (an apartment) that’s occupied by the homeless population only
  + Homeowners renting rooms to the homeless population (mixed scenario)

**Current process walk-through:**

Shared housing placement (general process) - process walk-through:

* John's team finds unit that can support multiple people
  + Negotiate with landlords, etc.
* John then presents the unit to case manager
* Case managers with coordination w/ John schedule an open house event
* Homeless population eligible & interested in the particular shared housing option shows up & turns in a completed housing application
  + Eligibility criteria: meet income threshold, no eviction, minimum credit score
  + Currently, the eligibility standard is pretty low and covers the basic requirements
  + There is no formal criteria apart from the above that is used for vetting the population that should be eligible for shared housing & the matching process
  + People who have been on the street longer are prioritized
  + People who are more likely to get harmed on the streets are prioritized (there's a formal test / form used to determine the “risk” score associated with an individual)
  + Eligibility & prioritization criteria should be clearly defined & established
* Case managers then get together & review applications / the pool of potential residents
  + They verify whether there any red flags (e.g. of a potential red flag: placing someone who is an undocumented immignant & someone who’s on parole in the same unit, since inreased police presence wouldn’t be welcomed)
  + This process is done via talking in a group with other case managers
* Case managers make a go vs. no go decision (i.e. the matching decision)

Shared housing placement - recent example walk-through:

* 3 bed house converted into 6 bedrooms
* Conducted an open house event
* 20 ppl showed up, some couples
* Received 15 applications in total
* 10 case managers got together to discuss any red flags & agree on matching
* Case managers came out with a group of 8 people as a potential match
* Case managers got the potential tenants together in one room, in order for them to get to know each other
  + Case managers provided the potential tenants with a list of questions to facilitate the meet & greet
  + The event lasted a couple of hours
* After that, parties still interested (the potential tenants) filled out a roommate agreement
  + Standard skeleton of a roommate agreement is provided to the potential roommates, but they can edit it
  + To understand habits, like cleaning, when bills should be paid, whether food will be shared, etc.
* Then, case managers facilitate a lease signing meetup
  + The roommates come together to sign a lease
  + One lease per roommate (each roommate signs a separate lease), so lease breaking by one person doesn't affect all else in an apartment

**Current process - pain points & bottlenecks:**

Pain points, issues & bottlenecks:

* The overall "matching" process takes too long, landlords get out of it since the housing market is hot → between identifying the unit & signing the lease
  + LA Housing pays money to landlords to hold the space
* The process to get the case file "right" & fully completed takes time
  + Signatures or paperwork missing, etc.
  + ID issue?
  + Potential solution: Case file needs to be 100% for an individual to be considered for shared housing placement (so that they don’t hold up everyone else ready to sign the lease)
* The process to get landlord documentation may sometimes be a delay too
  + There are some examples of documents we need from the landlord before the lease can be signed
  + If they aren’t provided on time, this can delay the housing placement process, which can result in some individuals pulling out of the process due to waiting
  + Housing need to meet certain quality, like running water, electricity, etc. Lack of some of those things on the landlord’s part may in some cases cause delays
* Additional delays:
  + Getting enough people to get interested in the unit may take time (marketing issue), and the housing may become unavailable during this time
  + Scheduling an open house takes time
  + Scheduling a case manager meetup get together & review all housing applications takes time
* Past history / current situation of the individuals applying for shared housing: past evictions, drug abuse, etc. makes matching more difficult
* Perception issue (homeless population & landlords, home owners, etc.)
  + Stigma about sharing homes with the homeless (homeowners, landlords)
  + Getting the homeless population to embrace the idea of shared housing
    - What is the population's perception of the shared housing idea? It's mixed, hard to tell since the process is fairly new
  + Need to educate LA residents about true causes of homelessness (not all drug / alcohol-related, etc.) - need to create normalcy around this issue

What hasn't worked in the past:

* Really big housing doesn't work; landlord presence is needed, some level of oversight
* It's easier to place a housing stabilizer per home (one stabilizer), but in the past we had multiple stabilizers per home (because they were managing multiple cases across a range of houses)
* Past history of tenants
  + Open probation + undocumented immigrant placed together may be an issue because of police present - there are RED FLGAS, or DEAL BREAKER CRITERIA
  + Gang activity & housing location matching is an issue for some individuals
* Complexity to the process (manual questionnaires), or too many questions turn off the population to the process - ***questions need to be short and sweet, yet comprehensive***
* Privacy / HIPPA issues (need to know about infectious diseases of your roommates)
* Giving people too much choice lowers their ability to get matched
  + Potential solution: ask individuals to only indicate “hard no’s” rather than preferences
* Example of failed matching #1:
  + Opened the application to anyone
  + 4-6 people moved in
  + Straight from the street / encampment
  + Shared an encampment together, but this wasn't enough
  + Income generated from sex trafficking
  + Support animal: crow
  + Once person was deathly ill
* Example of failed matching #2:
  + Severe personality disorder
  + Police calls / visits

What has worked in the past:

* Individuals, families, and older & younger adult (mixed populations) are easiest to place
* **People who know each other are easier to place**
* Private entries are better (people want privacy); also need enough bathrooms
* Open houses work well, people like to see it (since there's a fear of getting back into housing, seeing it makes it real)
* Meet & greet works well for generating enthusiasm
* **Examples are just over a couple of months - 8 units, 50 people as of now who have been successfully placed into shared housing**
* Stricter eligibility criteria work better
  + E.g. excluding individuals directly off the street from the matching process (i.e. placing them into shelters first & stabilizing their situation before making them eligible for the housing matching process)
  + E.g. excluding individuals with severe mental & personality disorders

**Current process - roles, owners & stakeholders:**

*“Case manager” is a fluid term, and is applicable to all the below depending on the step in the process:*

LA Family Housing process owners:

* Outreach team - works with people on the street
* Housing location team - finds eligible housing, identifies units, gets the paperwork from the landlord, inspects the units & hosts open house events
* Housing navigation team - works with people who are in shelters to find housing, drive interest in the available units, maintain the case file & get it 100% ready before a lease is signed
  + Individuals on this team are social workers
* Housing stabilization team - works with individuals after they’ve been placed into housing / signed the lease, to make sure they can stay off the street & be supported in the new environment
  + Individuals on this team are social workers

*Managers of the above teams could be the point-person for the Hack for LA team to get an insight into the process of each of the teams*

*Currently, 19 case managers are working with individuals, 9-12 working with families (there’s an estimated of 20-30 cases per case manager)*

Other process stakeholders:

* Homeless population / tenants
* Landlords

**Client’s problem definition:**

* LA Family Housing works with limited population (eligible pool & awareness issue)
  + By not working with other organizations to match individuals, LA Family Housing is potentially missing on “good matches” that could be made if the pool of eligible individuals was bigger
* Matching is manual & multi-faceted
* Client need:
  + Solution to enable a more efficient / quicker matching process
  + Centralized platform for managing the entire process from finding eligible housing, to finding eligible tenants, through matching & signing a lease
  + More streamlined end-to-end process
  + Solution for the challenge of being able to fill somebody in who has left the unit
  + Ability to combine populations (individuals / singles & families) is hard manually - but could be done via an algorithm
  + Ability to combine populations across different agencies (LA Family Housing & others)

**Client’s definition of success:**

* Eliminate homelessness (LA Family Housing's ultimate goal as an organization is to end homelessness)
* Provide a housing placement solution that's more sustainable
* Get rid of the stigma around homelessness

**What do we need to get right?:**

* Empathy
* Fully understanding the process & feelings involved in looking for housing as a homeless person

**Potential solutions:**

“Matching application” - target audience:

* Matching needs to happen between individuals, but also to housing & landlord standards
* Dan envisions the app to be used directly by the homeless population
  + They may ask case managers for help in filling out the application (all case managers have a tablet), but the idea is for the app to be accesses & the form filled out directly by the homeless population
* The app & the form need to be quick & easy to navigate
  + Needs to accommodate older individuals
  + Needs to accommodate individuals with attention deficit

Other solutions:

* Another app that matches struggling homeowners with the homeless population, those who struggle to make ends meet but do have housing & could use an extra income from someone who is currently homeless
* E.g. empty nesters, retirees, people who struggle with loneliness or a lack of social engagement

**Action items - Hack for LA team:**

* Provide Dan w/ next steps / high-level project plan
* Determine stakeholders to talk to first
* Schedule on-site visits (or invite case managers) to talk to case managers and further investigate the criteria behind successful matching
  + Identify basic eligibility criteria to be considered for matching
  + Identify matching success criteria

**Action items - LA Family Housing team:**

* Dan to provide us with a login to the current matching form
* Dan to provide us with a list of contacts for individuals to serve as “point persons” for scheduling site visits, interviews, etc.