

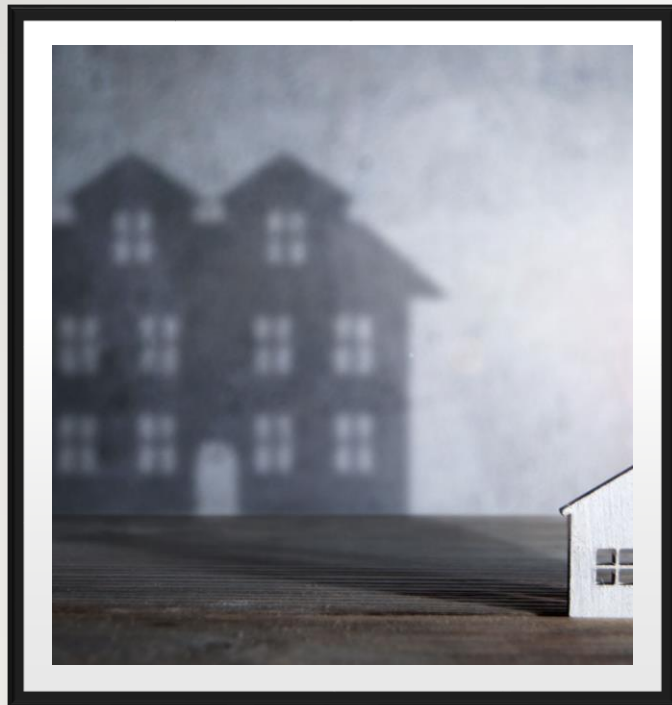
YMCA:  
Community &  
Employment  
Services

PRESENTATION FOR THE MENTAL  
HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS TASK  
FORCE

MAY 17<sup>TH</sup>, 2022



# Homelessness and Social Determinants of Health



- Homelessness happens because incomes don't match housing costs
- Inadequate personal income (cycle of poverty) + skyrocketing rents has placed independent housing (various forms) out of reach for many
- The lack of affordable housing has a dual effect:
  - Pushing more people into the homelessness system
  - Making it more difficult to help these same people exit into housing



# YMCA - Community and Employment Programs

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- Employment Ontario
- Canadian Ontario Job Grant
- Youth Job Connection
- Youth Job Connection Summer
- Skills Development Funding
- Skills Advance Ontario
- In Motion and Momentum

## COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

- Youth in Transition Housing Support
- Youth in Transition
- Youth and Adult Justice Programs
- Settlement and Language Services
- **Housing and Shelter Services**
  - **Temporary Shelter and Shelter Diversion**
  - **Temporary Shelter Outreach**
  - **Rent Supplements**
  - **Landlord Support and Engagement**

# Today's Presentation



Temporary Shelter Purpose

Temporary Shelter Process

Temporary Shelter Need

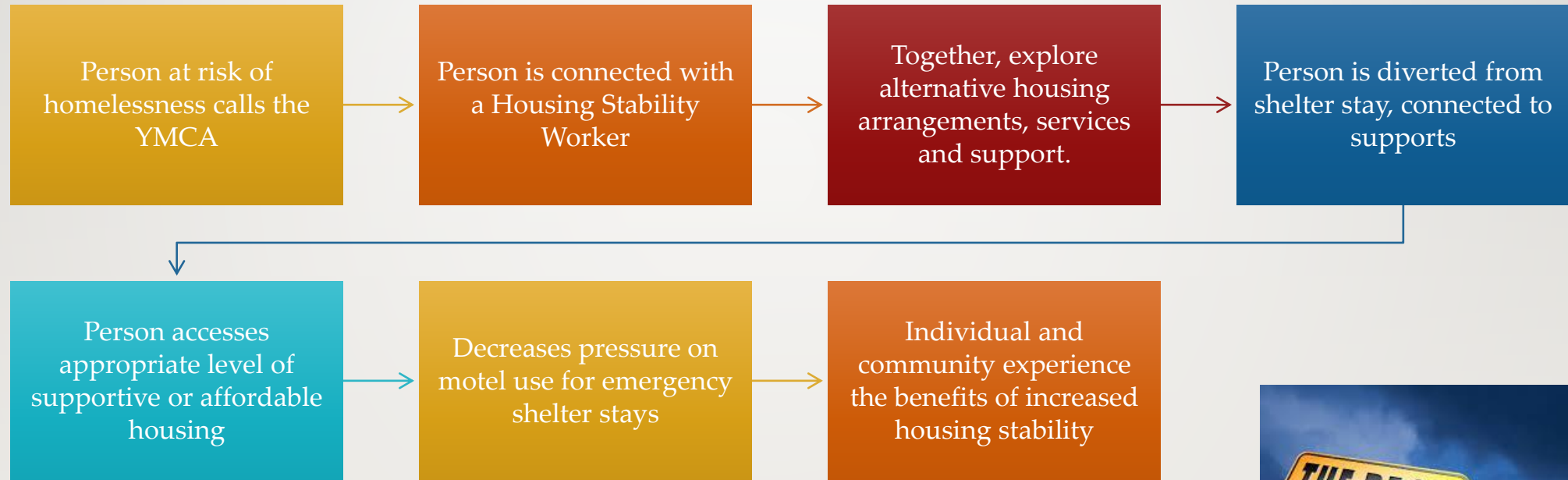
Temporary Shelter within the Broader System

# Purpose of Temporary Shelter

- Beneficial in the short-term for people who experience a crisis and need an immediate safe place to sleep.
- Under the right conditions, shelters can help people get out of the elements, give beds to people escaping a dangerous situation, and be a starting point toward a permanent housing solution. They can connect people to valuable resources and allow them a reprieve when they need it most.
- When emergency shelters work best, they are fair, equitable, and act as a bridge to help a person experiencing homelessness find a successful path to housing.
- In short, these temporary shelter solutions should be exactly that: extremely temporary.



# Past Process Related to Shelter Access



# Homelessness Typology

- About 80% are “transitionally homeless”
- They are homeless once in their lives, usually for about a week
- They are able to quickly find new housing, and don’t experience homeless again
- Many emergency shelter programs were initially designed for people in this type of a situation



## What about the other two types?



- About 10% are “episodically homeless”
- People cycle in and out of homelessness
  
- About 10% are “chronically homeless”
- These people are homeless for over a year... some for much longer
  
- Quick pause for thought... “homeless for over a year”



# A Day with YMCA Shelter Staff

## TEMPORARY SHELTER SUPPORT

- Arrange temporary shelter support
- Follow-up the day after initial shelter for needs assessments and establish alternative plans **if required**
- Assist clients to develop longer term housing options to achieve goals
- Coordinate services with the client and monitor their ongoing effectiveness



**Operational Goal – Minimize time spent in shelter settings**



# Initial Contact with Homelessness Services

- Understand the context of a client's situation and concurrent oppressions and traumas
- Support client decision making power
- Set realistic expectations and boundaries
- Often need to initiate service planning - some clients may need thorough guidance or support, and some very little at all
- Understand that how someone experiences homelessness is not how they experience housing.
- Remember...the past does not predict the future



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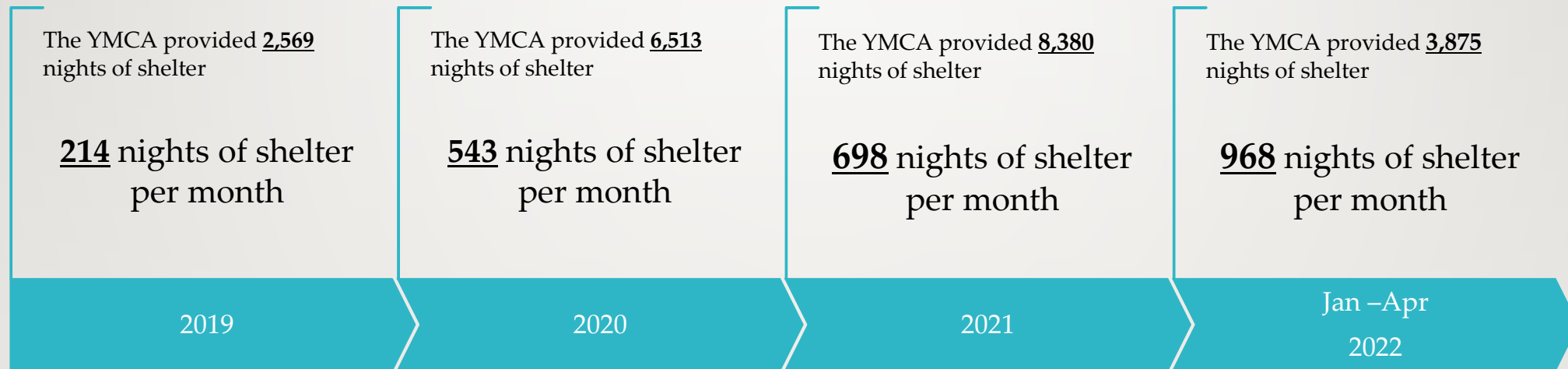
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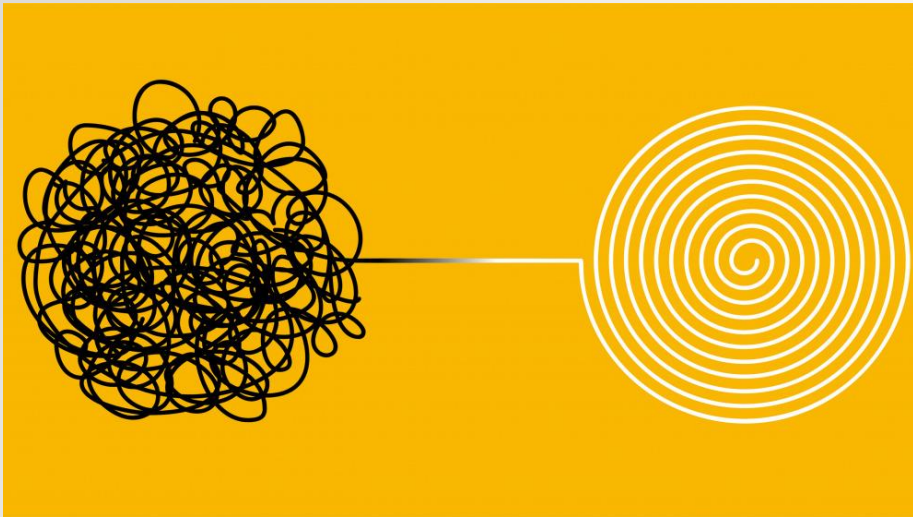
Temporary Shelter Need

# Year over Year Increase in Need

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# Increasing Complexity and Strained Resources



The aforementioned 20% is increasing in volume and complexity

Many individuals are relying on shelter as a regular means of survival

Support needs of people in temporary shelter are significantly higher than previous years



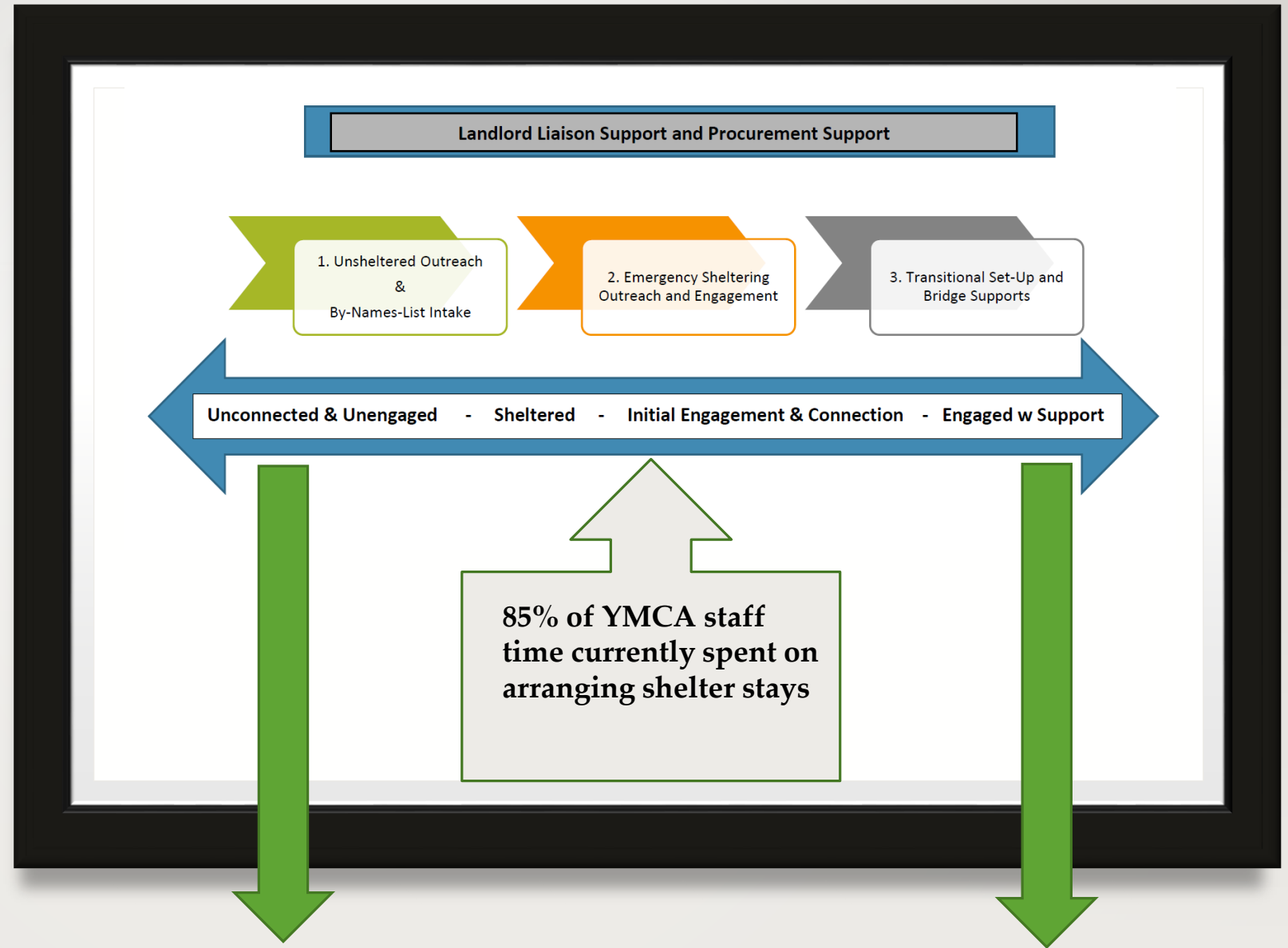
# Contributing to Increased Complexity

- In-flow into homelessness is maintaining or increasing
- Increasing number of people with significant comorbidities
- Fluctuating access to emergency shelter services  
\*(dependent on seasonal variation)
- Increased wait times for longer term, complimentary or specialized services
- Long lengths of stay in shelter
- People viewing temporary shelter as a home
- Average length of episodic homelessness is not decreasing
- Significant amount of people aren't receiving the type of assistance required

# Temporary Shelter and the Broader System



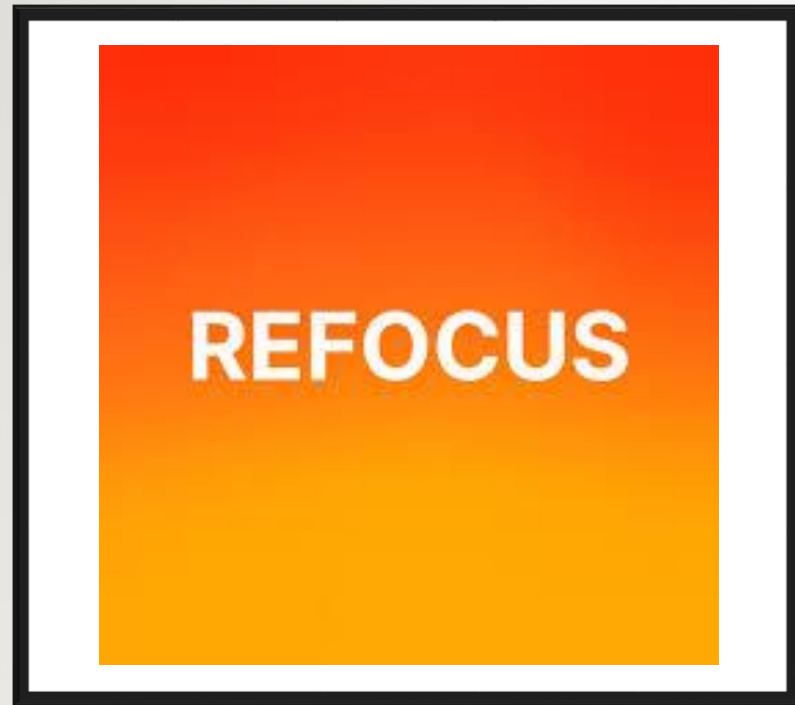
# Opportunities for System/Service Improvements



Key area of pressure, need and opportunity

Key area of pressure, need and opportunity

# Refocusing Our Work with People



1. Diversion – Have a Place, Keep a Place and Plan
2. Progressive Outreach – Coordination of Basic Human Needs
3. Support in Transition – From Homelessness to Home

# What is Diversion?

- Diversion is NOT a refusal of service.
- Diversion is the service.
- Diversion is about saying “YES” to helping people navigate a safe alternative to shelter that is appropriate to their circumstances
- A thorough investment by dedicated staff that have specific problem-solving skills and access to flexible resources to put the solution into action.
- Diversion must mean a safe option has been identified.



# Safe and Appropriate Diversion

## PHILOSOPHY SHIFT

- A call for shelter doesn't mean there is no other option
- Belief in a strength-based approach – individuals are their own best resource for problem solving
- Shifting from the idea that the shelter is a household's only resources

## PRACTICE SHIFT

- Use a strength-based assessment vs a needs-based assessment
- Before conducting intake, engage individuals in a conversations, identifying safe alternatives to temporary shelter
- Assist in connecting to community resources to avoid shelter stay



# A Diversion Specialist ... Shared Ways of Working

- Solution-focused
- Objective
- Maintains confidentiality
- Willingness to find alternatives
- Integrity of process
- Professional boundaries
- Embraces self-determination
- Honesty



# Progressive Outreach

- Prevention
- Diversion
- Support people with Self-Resolving in shelter
- Shelter is a process, not a destination
- At 4 days, increase services and service planning
- Assess for intensity of housing stability supports that inform service planning
- Access more intensive services as needed\*\*

Skilled outreach connected to temporary shelter access and established pathways of referral to systems of care

Low-barrier and housing-focused emergency shelter program

Support toward safe short-term solutions and longer term preferred permanent housing

Maximize Rapid re-housing

Permanent supportive housing (long-term rental subsidy with intensive services)

Increase involvement from natural and community supports

Coordination between support services and shelter services

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## Shelter, Services and Housing...with Support

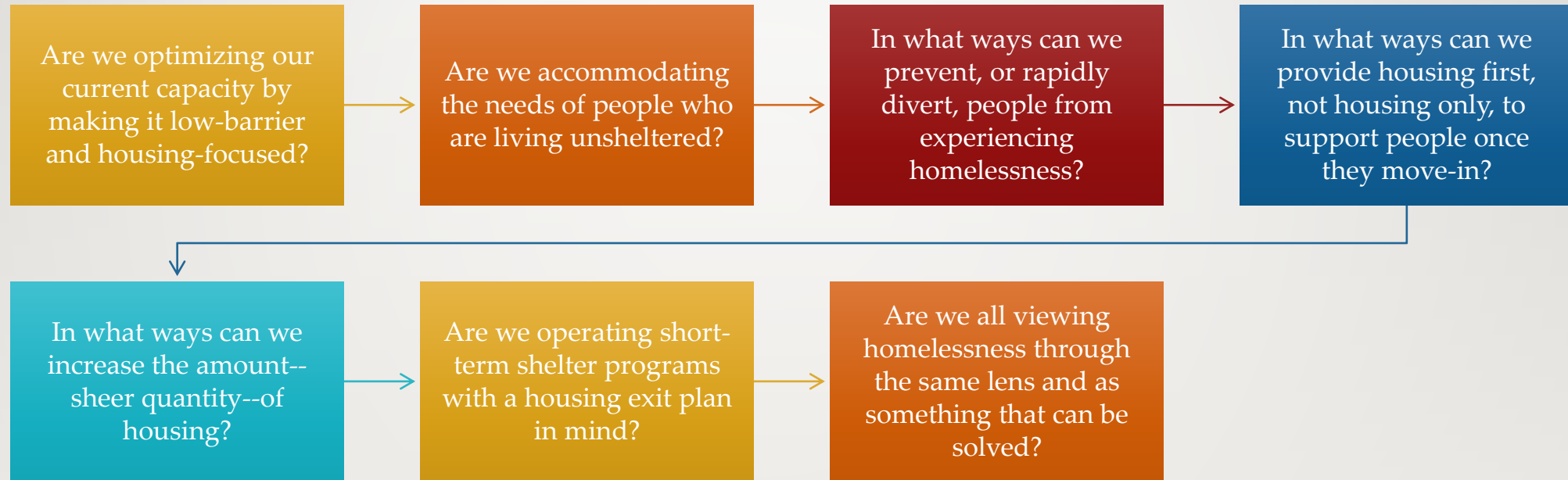


# A Coordinated Homelessness Response

- Temporary shelter is part of a process of getting people housed
- Programs need to be equipped and resourced to help people get housed as soon as they come into the temporary shelter program
- Everything within the temporary shelter program needs to be focused on getting people housed with whatever resources they have, while connecting them to additional supportive programs



# Are we asking the Right Questions



*thank you*

**Matthew Shute**

Director

Community Initiatives and Employment Services

YMCA of Owen Sound Grey-Bruce