Housing Terminology Reference¹

Navigating the housing and housing programs lexicon
Please click links for more information.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are a secondary housing unit on a single-family residential lot.

Adult Day Programs (ADP) are any community-based facility or program that provides non-medical care and supervision to persons 18 years of age or older in need of personal services, supervision, or assistance essential for sustaining the activities of daily living or for the protection of these individuals, in a day care setting, on less than a 24-hour basis.

Adult Residential Facilities (ARF) provide 24-hour a day, non-medical care, and supervision for clients ages 18-59 or any person 60 years of age or older under specified requirements. These clients may have a mental, physical, or developmental disability.

Adult Residential Facilities for Persons with Special Health Care Needs (ARFPSHN) provide 24-hour a day services for up to five adults with developmental disabilities, who have special health care needs and intensive support needs.

Affordable Housing According to the federal government, housing is “affordable” if it costs no more than 30% of the monthly household income for rent and utilities. If your household income is $60,000 a year, you should pay no more than $1,500 monthly for your mortgage or rent and utilities. If you are in a sales job, making $12.00 an hour, you should be paying no more than $624 dollars a month in rent and utilities. Every community needs to offer a wide range of housing opportunities for the diverse populations that live and work there.

Boise decision aka Martin v. Boise Homeless persons cannot be punished for sleeping outside on public property in the absence of adequate alternatives. This applies to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the Ninth Circuit.

Bridge Shelters provide a safe place to stay – a “bridge” – for individuals or families enrolled in a permanent housing program but have not yet moved into a permanent unit while they await permanent housing placement.

Community Crisis Homes (CCH) means an Adult Residential Facility certified by the Department of Developmental Services and licensed by the Department that provides 24-hour nonmedical care to individuals with developmental disabilities receiving regional center services and in need of crisis intervention services under specified requirements.

¹ This document is regularly updated. Please send suggestions to theechtf@gmail.com.
**Conditional Use Permit (CUP)** allows a city or county to consider special uses which may be essential or desirable to a particular community, but which are not allowed as a matter of right within a zoning district, through a public hearing process. A conditional use permit can provide flexibility within a zoning ordinance. Another traditional purpose of the conditional use permit is to enable a municipality to control certain uses which could have detrimental effects on the community.

**Congregate Shelter** Where large numbers of individuals share sleeping, eating, and bathroom arrangements. A type of housing in which each individual or family has a private bedroom or living quarters but shares with other residents a common dining room, recreational room, or other facilities.

**Continuum of Care (CoC) Program** is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness. San Diego’s CoC is the [Regional Task Force on the Homeless](#).

**Couch-surfing** is to stay overnight with a series of hosts who typically provide basic accommodations (such as a couch to sleep on) at no cost.

**Day Center** Provides basic needs and social services to adults experiencing homelessness or who are at-risk of homelessness. Amenities include a safe place to rest during the day, restrooms, laundry, storage, showers, computer lab, phones, fax, and mailing addresses. Case management services are also onsite.

**Declaration of Shelter Crisis** The duly proclaimed existence of a situation in which a significant number of persons are without the ability to obtain shelter, resulting in a threat to their health and safety. (See CA Government Code Section 8698.)

**Drop-in Center** is an establishment designed to provide recreational, educational, or counseling services to a particular group.

**Emergency Housing Facilities** On-site common use facilities supporting emergency housing. Emergency housing facilities include, but are not limited to, kitchen areas, toilets, showers, and bathrooms with running water. The use of emergency housing facilities is limited exclusively to the occupants of the emergency housing, personnel involved in operating the housing, and other emergency personnel.

**Emergency Shelter (ES)** is defined as “housing with minimal supportive services for homeless persons that is limited to occupancy of six months or less by a homeless person. No individual or household may be denied emergency shelter because of an inability to pay.”

**Emergency Sleeping Cabins** are relocatable hard-sided structures... which may be occupied only for emergency housing if allowed by the enforcing agency.
**Enhanced Behavioral Support Homes (EBSH)** means a facility certified by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and licensed by the Department (CCLD) as an Adult Residential Facility that provides 24-hour nonmedical care to individuals with developmental disabilities who require enhanced behavioral supports under specified requirements.

**Fair Housing** The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing because of race or color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability.

**Flexible Housing Subsidy Pools** are an emerging systems-level strategy to fund, locate, and secure housing for people experiencing homelessness in a more coordinated and streamlined way.

**Foster homes / foster care** is a temporary service provided by States for children who cannot live with their families. Foster care can also refer to placement settings such as group homes, residential care facilities, emergency shelters, and supervised independent living.

**Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)** is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. Each Continuum of Care (CoC) is responsible for selecting an HMIS software solution that complies with HUD’s data collection, management, and reporting standards. San Diego’s CoC is the [Regional Task Force on the Homeless](#).

**Housing Choice Voucher Program** This program is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities to afford decent, safe, and quality housing in the private market. It was previously known as “Section 8.”

**Host Homes** Short-term host homes are an intervention for youth who are currently experiencing homelessness for any variety of reasons, including but not limited to family conflict, poverty, gender identity and sexual orientation. The goal of short-term host homes is to provide a safe, temporary, welcoming space for up to six months where the young person has time to repair their relationships with self-identified family or make decisions about other housing options with the support of a caring housing case manager.

**Housing Element** Since 1969, California has required that all local governments (cities and counties) adequately plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community. California’s local governments meet this requirement by adopting housing plans as part of their “general plan” (also required by the state). General plans serve as the local government’s "blueprint" for how the city and/or county will grow and develop and include seven elements: land use, transportation, conservation, noise, open space, safety, and housing.

**Housing First** is an approach to connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness quickly and successfully to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals prior to permanent housing entry.

**Housing Navigators** work alongside a team of case managers, housing locators and community providers to provide clients with case management services focused in obtaining and maintaining stable housing.
**Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)** was established to provide housing assistance and related supportive services for low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

**Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program** is a collaborative program between HUD and VA combining HUD housing vouchers with VA supportive services to help Veterans who are homeless, and their families find and sustain permanent housing.

**Housing Voucher** This is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities to afford decent, safe, and quality housing in the private market. See “Housing Choice Voucher Program” above.

**Inclusionary Housing** Inclusionary housing programs are local policies that tap the economic gains from rising real estate values to create affordable housing for lower income families. An inclusionary housing program might require developers to sell or rent 10 to 30 percent of new residential units to lower-income residents.

**Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs)** are within the walls of a proposed or existing single-family residence.

**Low Barrier Shelters** do not have curfews, nor do they require background checks, employment or savings, chores, or mandatory attendance at meals or workshops.

**Non-congregate Shelters** are locations where each individual or household has living space that offers some level of privacy such as hotels, motels, or dormitories.

**Opportunity Zones** are an economic development tool that allows people to invest in distressed areas in the United States. Their purpose is to spur economic growth and job creation in low-income communities while providing tax benefits to investors.

**Partial Hospitalization** As defined by Congress, partial hospitalization means an outpatient program specifically designed for the diagnosis or active treatment of a serious mental disorder when there is a reasonable expectation for improvement or when it is necessary to maintain a patient's functional level and prevent relapse or full hospitalization.

**Permanent Housing (PH)** is defined as community-based housing without a designated length of stay in which formerly homeless individuals and families live as independently as possible. Under PH, a program participant must be the tenant on a lease (or sublease) for an initial term of at least one year that is renewable and is terminable only for cause.

**Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)** is permanent housing with indefinite leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist homeless persons with a disability or families with an adult or child member with a disability achieve housing stability.

**Project-Based Vouchers (PBV)** The project-based component of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program allows rental assistance to be attached to a specific unit and/or project instead of to an eligible assisted family.
**Project Homekey** was a grant program for agencies to acquire hotels, motels, apartments, and other buildings to provide homes for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The funds were to convert the buildings into interim or permanent, long-term housing. The City of San Diego and the San Diego Housing Commission used Project Homekey funds to purchase and convert two hotels into permanent supportive housing for the homeless. The City of La Mesa had an opportunity to use Project Homekey funds in Aug/Sep 2020 to convert the Holiday Inn on Parkway Drive into transitional housing. However, the City Council voted against the purchase.

**Project Roomkey** was established in March 2020 as part of the state response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of Project Roomkey is to provide non-congregate shelter options for people experiencing homelessness, protect human life, and minimize strain on health care system capacity. The program is administered locally, and eligibility varies by community.

**Public Housing** Public Housing provides decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Approximately 1.2 million households live in public housing units, managed by over 3,300 housing agencies (HAs). HUD administers Federal aid to local housing agencies (HAs) that manage the housing for low-income residents at rents they can afford.

**Public Housing Authority or Agency (HA)** A housing authority is responsible for the management and operation of its local public housing program. They may also operate other types of housing programs. There are six HA’s in San Diego County. East County’s HA is the Housing Authority of the County of San Diego.

**Rapid Re-housing (RRH)** provides short-term rental assistance and services. The goals are to help people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed. It is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are typically tailored to the needs of the person.

**Recuperative Care** offers healthcare providers a safe place to discharge homeless patients when they no longer require hospitalization but still need to heal from an illness or injury.

**Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)** In order to create a housing plan (aka housing element) showing it could meet the local housing needs, a jurisdiction must first know how much housing it must plan for (and estimate how much will be needed at a variety of affordability levels to match the needs of the people who will live there). This is determined by a process called the regional housing needs assessment.

**Residential Care Facilities for the Chronically Ill (RCFCI)** provides care and supervision to adults who have HIV disease or AIDS, emancipated minors with HIV disease or AIDS, or family units with adults or children or both with HIV disease or AIDS or have a terminal illness.

**Residential Care Facility for the Elderly (RCFE)** is a housing arrangement for persons, 60 years of age and over, where 24-hour non-medical care and supervision is provided. Residential Care Facility for the Elderly are often referred to as assisted living facilities, or board and care homes.

**Residential Care Facility for the Elderly-Continuing Care Retirement Community (RCFE-CCRC)** Offer a long-term continuing care contract that provides for housing, residential services, and nursing care, usually in one location, and usually for a resident’s lifetime.
**Residential Treatment** usually refers to behavioral health treatment that takes place within a private residence, offering a level of care that approaches inpatient treatment or hospitalization. However, residential treatment differs from inpatient treatment in many ways. Residential treatment offers a more intimate setting that approximates a home, while members live in a supportive group environment. Residential treatment arose as a reaction to the negative aspects of psychiatric or addiction hospitalization such as isolation, traumatization, high cost, and often poor treatment outcome.

**Rotational Shelter** An overnight emergency shelter that moves to different locations.

**Safe Haven**, as defined in the Supportive Housing Program, is a form of supportive housing that serves hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who come primarily from the streets and have been unable or unwilling to participate in housing or supportive services.

**Safe Parking** refers to a night-time program for people who are experiencing homelessness and sleeping in their vehicles at night, providing a safe and stable place to park the vehicle, remain compliant with local laws, and have access to restroom facilities.

**Section 8** allows private landlords to rent apartments and homes at fair market rates to qualified low-income tenants, with a rental subsidy administered by Home Forward. “Section 8” is a common name for the [Housing Choice Voucher Program](https://www.hud.gov/multifamily/rental_assistance/hcv), funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Serial inebriate program (SIP)** is an outpatient program coupled with transitional living for chronic homeless inebriates. The program diverts chronic homeless inebriates off the street, out of jails, emergency departments and the legal system and into treatment and a life of sobriety and stability.

**Shared housing** Home sharing is a living arrangement in which two or more unrelated people share a house or apartment. A home share program provides a service that helps to match a person who has an extra room or separate unit available (a provider) with a seeker who is looking for a place to live.

**Short-term Residential Treatment** programs typically have lengths of stay between 30 and 90 days.

**Single Room Occupancy (SRO)** A residential property that includes multiple single room dwelling units. Each unit is for occupancy by a single eligible individual. The unit need not, but may, contain food preparation or sanitary facilities, or both.

**Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF)** A SNF is required to provide 24-hour skilled nursing care, as well as related or rehabilitative services. The typical resident is a person who is chronically ill or recuperating from an illness or surgery and needs regular nursing care and other health related services.

**Sober Living Home** (sometimes called a halfway house) operates as a bridge between an inpatient facility and the “real world.”

**Social Rehabilitation Facilities (SRF)** provide 24 hour a day non-medical care and supervision in a group setting to adults recovering from a mental illness who temporarily need assistance, guidance or counseling. Mental Health certification from the California Department of Mental Health is required for this type of facility.
**State Hospital** The Department of State Hospitals (DSH) manages the California state hospital system, which provides mental health services to patients admitted into DSH facilities. Patients admitted to DSH are mandated for treatment by a criminal or civil court judge. These patients are sent to DSH through the criminal court system and have committed or have been accused of committing crimes linked to their mental illness. The DSH also treats patients who have been classified by a judge or jury as Sexually Violent Predators (SVP). These patients have served prison sentences for committing crimes enumerated under the Sexually Violent Predator Act (Welfare and Inst. Code Sections 6600 et. al.). They are committed to DSH for treatment until a judge deems they are no longer a threat to the community. The remainder of the department's population has been committed in civil court for being a danger to themselves or others. These patients are commonly referred to as Lanterman-Petris-Short commitments.

**Supportive Housing** is defined as “housing with no limit on length of stay, that is occupied by the target population, and that is linked to onsite or offsite service that assists the supportive housing resident in retaining the housing, improving his or her health status, and maximizing his or her ability to live and, when possible, work in the community.” Supportive housing is generally described as permanent housing linked to a range of support services designed to enable residents to maintain stable housing and lead fuller lives.

**Tiny Houses / Tiny Home** While there is no official definition of a tiny house, it is generally thought of as a small house, typically sized under 600 square feet. While they can be built on foundations, most tiny homes are built on trailers.

**Transitional Housing (TH)** is defined as “buildings configured as rental housing developments but operated under program requirements that require the termination of assistance and recirculating of the assisted unit to another eligible program recipient at a predetermined future point in time that shall be no less than six months from the beginning of the assistance.” Transitional housing is generally described as a type of supportive housing used to facilitate the movement of people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and independent living.

**Additional resources**

HUDUser Glossary

National Low Income Housing Coalition Glossary

For most the most up-to-date ECHTF Housing Terminology Reference, please visit the [ECHTF Resources website](#).