

Houseless People’s Priorities for and Experiences with the Case Management System

The HAND Housing Survey, answered by 828 houseless people, asked a number of questions about the processes for seeking housing which speak to the case management system.

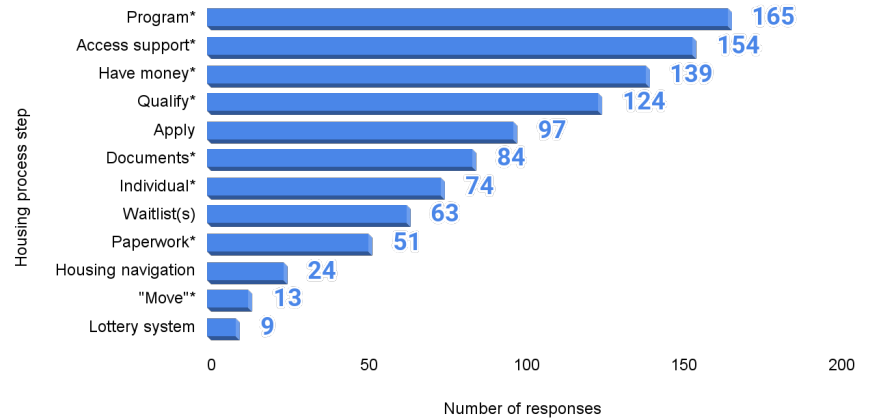
When asked “What is the process you have to go through to get Housing?” respondent’s answered as follows:

Housing Process Steps

Of 997 housing process step responses:

1. **Program participation*** - 16.5% (**n=165**)
2. **Access support*** - 15.4% (**n=154**)
3. Have money* - 13.9% (**n=139**)
4. Qualify* - 12.4% (**n=124**)
5. Apply - 9.7% (**n=97**)
6. Submit official documents* 8.4% (**n=84**)
7. Self-work/initiative* - 7.4% (**n=74**)
8. Join waitlist(s) - 6.3% (**n=63**)
9. Submit paperwork* - 5.1% (**n=51**)
10. Housing navigation - 2.4% (**n=24**)
11. "Move"* - 1.3% (**n=13**)
12. Lottery system - 0.9% (**n=9**)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Understanding of the Housing Process - Process Steps



The most alluded-to housing process step was to participate in some program through an organization. This, coupled with “access support” as the second most common answer, lend themselves to the fact that most houseless people are unable to find housing through the usual means of searching the market independently, but must instead **rely on agencies and case workers as gatekeepers to securing housing.**

Of the 154 who answered “Access Support” **Case management/counselor was 60.4% (n=93)** and expert/general support was 17.5% (**n=27**). Again emphasizing the dependency of houseless people on case managers to get housing. With only a few small exceptions, almost every housing option for people under 30% AMI requires you to go through an agency with a case manager.

"I've been doing exactly that. I've been going to different organizations and talking to 'em and putting stuff in. It never happened."

- HAND one-on-one interview

106 people named specific programs, by far the most named program was Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) at 41.5% of respondents.

"They told me I would get a case manager within the next three weeks, which ended up [being] in the next four months. I stayed at the shelter for approximately four months without knowing, seeing a case manager of my own. I call it hell in there, just like living on the street. You gotta deal with so many characters, so many attitudes, I mean, so much that goes on with the staff. The staff is horrible, and then you gotta deal with the everyday life of everybody that they bring in the shelter."

- Teri, HAND one-on-one interview

Notably, many people wrote about the **need for one to work hard and show initiative in order to get housing**.

This further reflects the struggle people have with a lack of case managers – the system-appointed gatekeepers to housing – and many simultaneously not doing their job and experiencing high rates of burnout and turnover, leading to many of the unhoused having to “do the work yourself”, i.e. navigate an opaque and inconsistent housing system that often relies on luck and personal connections without expert guidance.

"Yeah, talk to a case manager and they fill out the paperwork for you and they say, we'll get back with you. And they end up quitting, moving, quitting, moving, and [you] have to start all over. You end up dying before ever getting it..."

- Keith, HAND one-on-one interview

The Action Directives from this Housing Survey include the following specifically relevant to the case management system.

1. Create housing that does not require a case manager to be the gatekeeper to access that housing.
2. Increase the number of dedicated, quality case workers able to assist in housing navigation.
3. Improve training, pay, and work conditions for case workers.
4. Increase case workers time and ability to meet people where they are at (streets, shelters, ect) to assist with housing navigation.
5. Ensure case managers' ability to do in-person housing search assistance with houseless people seeking housing.
6. Ensure case managers time and ability to continue supporting individuals once they get into housing.

Let us put these directives into action and turn case management into advocacy for the housing we need!

