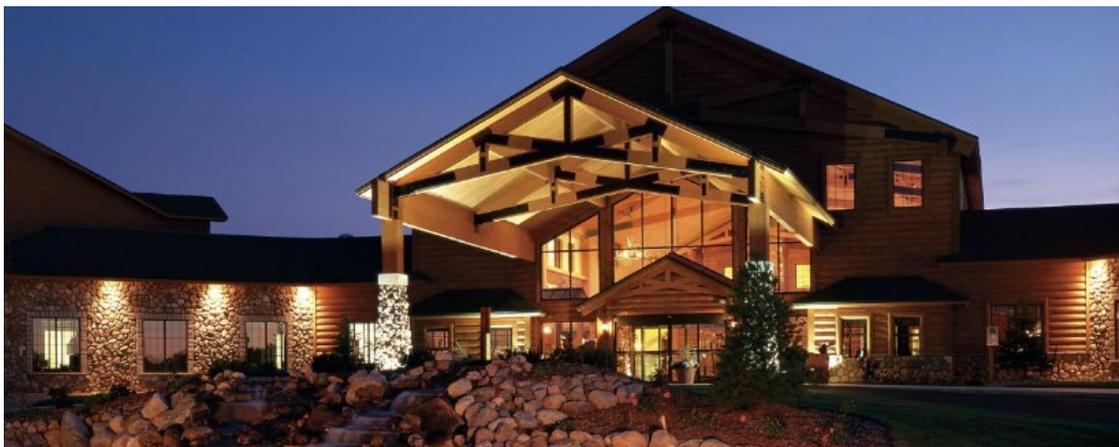




Wisconsin Balance of State Newsletter - January 2025 1st Edition

February is fast approaching! [Registration is now live for the Wisconsin Balance of State second annual conference.](#)

The 2025 theme words are: **INNOVATE** | **ADVOCATE** | **COLLABORATE**
February 17th Housing First Pre-Conference and Conference February 18-19,
2025 - Tundra Lodge Green Bay, WI



The Case Against Housing First is Making a

Comeback

I heard recently at a conference from a fellow attendee that we should "operate a Housing First program and a non-Housing First program at the same time to test and see which one worked better." I thought, "How could this person discount the thirty years before Housing First came to be?" This experiment has already been run through decades of homelessness services policy, but the argument against Housing First is coming once again into the foreground.

The Cicero Institute is continuing its campaign against Housing First, [highlighting a return](#) to the outdated "Treatment-First" model. They claim federal homelessness funding "prioritizes inefficient approaches", primarily Housing First. The article makes it clear that the author and the institute do not have an accurate understanding of what Housing First is [and the data proving its worth](#).

[Read more here!](#)

"Public camping restrictions have shown promise in other states"

While it may seem on the surface that having places for people to be in the form of sanctioned areas or campgrounds allows for people to have more access to services, forcing people to gather in this way invites more risk than reward. Instead of paying to rent space for people to camp, paying for people to monitor those in the sanctioned places, and paying for transportation to those areas; [providing funds for housing and services is cheaper and more efficient](#). Yes, the sanctioned campground approach is more efficient at making people experiencing homelessness further disrupted and bending to the whim of Not In My Backyard -ers (NIMBYs). Consolidating people experiencing homelessness into one area and under strict rules can be triggering for those who have been incarcerated before or have a history of trauma. Congregate areas can lead to the spread of water and air borne viruses. [Involuntary sweeps and sanctioned campgrounds have also been proven to not improve public safety](#). Providing housing and services achieves the same result of people visibly off the street without such hurtful and risky means.

"People who live on the street resist getting the help they desperately need"

[The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration contextualizes this claim: "Some approaches to substance use disorder treatment may be perceived by people who use drugs as punitive, leading to stigmatization and limited treatment engagement. Low barrier care provides a](#)

[non judgmental, welcoming, and accepting environment that encourages individuals to seek help without fear of stigma or discrimination.](#)" Opponents are correct in that Housing First as a practice does not work well when it is implemented without the supportive services, commonly referred to as "Housing Only". What works about Housing First is the client-led, recovery oriented, and individualized services. Forcing services that individuals and families do not want will not achieve anything and is a waste of funds and expertise. What does work is a collaborative partnership between worker and consumer where the person is seen as the expert on their own life and the worker can advocate for what the client needs and wants.

[Read more here!](#)

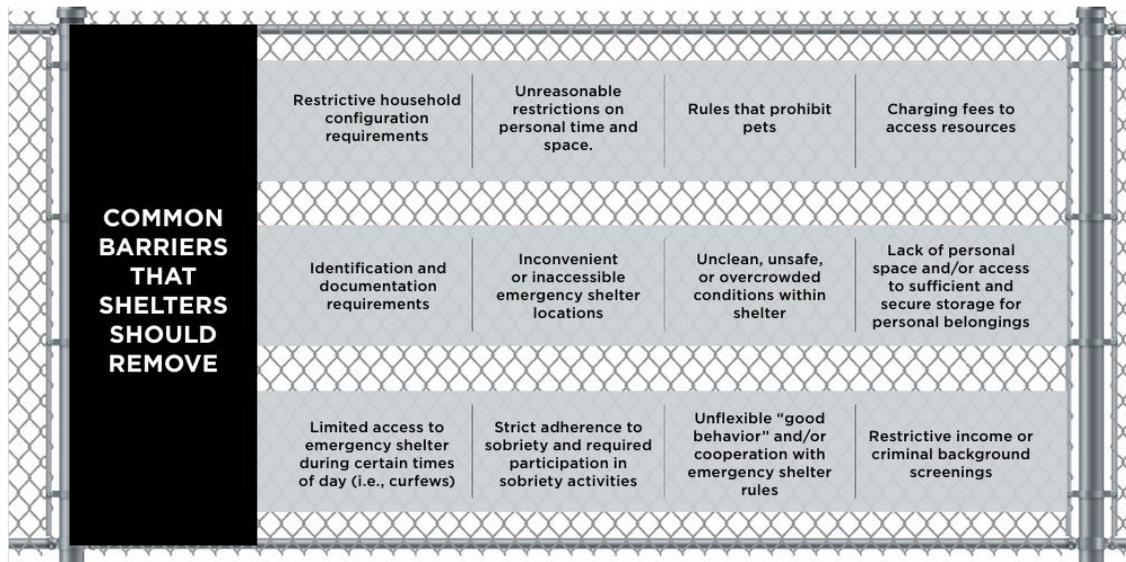
"Housing First—is not effective at reaching the chronically homeless. It is a one-size-fits-all model"

The Cicero Institute reports Housing First as one-size fits all, which is an oversimplification of a model that has 5 principles and years of literature on implementation. Two key principles this viewpoint discounts are consumer choice and self-determination and individualized, dignified, client-driven supports. [In a true Housing First implementation: treatment programs are voluntary and customized to meet the needs of the client — the opposite of 'one-size-fits-all.](#)

"This isn't about criminalizing homelessness. It's about empowering cities to take action when members of their community are in desperate need instead of standing idly by as homeless individuals heartbreakingly succumb to the elements."

The solutions to this crisis are more multifaceted than the Cicero Institute would lead you to believe. Our options include more than the two choices: criminalization and sanctioned camping areas or doing nothing and allowing people to die outside. We recommend the [National Alliance to End Homelessness' Interim Strategies For Responding To Unsheltered Homelessness](#). We agree that communities should take action, but know that criminalization is inefficient, ineffective, and inhumane.

Lower barrier shelters are more Housing First, more compassionate, and more effective. Consider these methods for making shelters more low barrier.



The January Point In Time Count (PIT) is coming!

Please connect with the leads in your community and update the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) in preparation. If you have questions about the PIT or the HIC, please reach out to your Balance of State staff person.

Upcoming PIT Deadlines:

- 1/29/25 – Service based count ends
- 2/5/25: 4pm – First PIT data review due
- 3/7/25: 4pm – PIT Match due and locations visited due
- 3/21/25: 4pm – Post PIT survey due

The Wisconsin Balance of State's Social Media Policy draft is open for public comment, the due date has been extended until 1/20/25 . See the draft policy [here](#) and email any comments to wiboscoc@gmail.com.

Small action steps add up in advocacy and social change! Choose one action step from this newsletter to take in the next week:

- Talk to your supervisor about hosting a Housing First training at your organization
- reach out to your board about hosting a homelessness services town hall
- in a case conferencing or staff meeting, bring up any barriers you have to entry into your shelter, advocate for changing them in policies and procedures
- Have coffee with your local alderperson or city council representative
- Join the Point in Time committee or volunteer your time and resources

- Follow the Balance of State on social media for regular advocacy updates
- Register for the Wisconsin Balance of State conference in February

Are your cost allocation plans and audits uploaded into the finance dropbox?:

If these have been or will be updated for 2025, please send in the most current one. Grant Specialists review the allocation plans during reimbursement requests. It should be uploaded to the FINANCE DropBox. If you need help in this process, please email kate.markwardt@wibos.org and molly.betts@wibos.org.

Do you have content or announcements you would like highlighted in our newsletter? Reach out to erika.olson@wibos.org

