

Appendix A:
Site Visit Interview Guide

HPRP Prevention Assessment
Site Visit Discussion Guide

INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION

Hi. My name is _____, and I am part of a team of researchers from the Urban Institute, Abt Associates, and the Cloudburst Group that is working on a study for HUD of prevention activities being conducted under the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing (HPRP) program. We are visiting several communities that are doing interesting things with their HPRP prevention funds because we want to learn firsthand how communities are tackling the challenges of preventing homelessness. We are interested in many issues with respect to the use of HPRP funds for prevention. We assume that some will be more relevant to your own experience than others. Therefore, to understand your involvement in HPRP prevention programs, let me first start by asking questions about you and the agency where you work. Then, so I ask you the right questions, I'll ask you about the issues you feel knowledgeable talking about.

1. What is your agency's role with respect to HPRP prevention?

HPRP Grantee

Did your agency get the HPRP money directly from HUD? Yes No

If **no**, which office/department/agency *did* get the money from HUD and then designated your agency as the HPRP grantee/administrator (e.g., mayor, governor, etc.)?
_____)

Do you directly provide HPRP-funded prevention services? Yes No

HPRP Subgrantee

Other

Continuum of Care	Role in HPRP PREVENTION: _____
HMIS Administering Agency	Role in HPRP PREVENTION: _____
Mainstream Agency	Role in HPRP PREVENTION: _____
Community based nonprofit	Role in HPRP PREVENTION: _____

2. Understanding Respondent's Role in HPRP prevention

Please tell me about your **agency**.

a. What type of agency are you?

- Emergency shelter
- Central intake agency for homeless system
- Other homeless system agency
- Central referral agency for many issues (e.g., 211)
- Community action/anti-poverty agency
- Government agency (e.g., welfare, community services)

Name: _____

Name: _____

▪ Other: _____

b. What geographic area does your agency serve?

c. Does your agency provide direct services to homeless populations? Other populations?

d. Where does your agency fit in the community?

- Is your agency part of the Continuum of Care?
- Is your agency part of a local ten year planning effort to end homelessness?
- Is your agency part of a network of community action or anti-poverty agencies?
- Is your agency part of the government?

- e. Does your agency report data into HMIS?
 - For HPRP prevention?
 - For anything else?

Please tell me about your **role** at the agency.

- a. What is your role at [NAME OF AGENCY]?
- b. How long have you been in this role?
- c. How long have you been at [NAME OF AGENCY]?

3. Understanding the Respondent's Knowledge

Please tell me the issues that you know and feel comfortable talking about. I will also ask you if you know about how things work and how decisions are made in your community as a whole, and what you know about your specific agency and its programs. This will help me understand what type of questions to ask you.

Note to interviewer: Check all that apply and then check appropriate pages of protocol to indicate you should ask the questions in

- A. Previous homelessness prevention programs in [NAME OF COMMUNITY]
 - Community level knowledge Program level knowledge
- B. Key decision-making around HPRP prevention planning and design [NAME OF COMMUNITY]
 - Community level knowledge Program level knowledge
- C. Targeting preferences for HPRP prevention programs
 - Community level knowledge Program level knowledge
- D. Eligibility determination, including how households find their way to HPRP homelessness prevention programs in the community (points of entry, screening for eligibility, client selection, assessment, triage)
 - Community level knowledge Program level knowledge
- E. Direct provision of HPRP prevention services (e.g., rental assistance and case management services)
 - Community level knowledge Program level knowledge
- F. What types of data are entered into HMIS for HPRP prevention
 - Community level knowledge Program level knowledge
- G. Effectiveness of HPRP prevention programs and plans for evaluation
 - Community level knowledge Program level knowledge

Community Level and Policy Questions

A. Previous Prevention Programs

I would like to start by asking you about prevention programs in your community *prior* to HPRP.

1. Prior to HPRP funding, did your community have a homelessness prevention program in place?
 - If **so**:
 - a. When did your community start providing homelessness prevention assistance?
 - b. Which agencies provided homelessness prevention services?
 - c. What types of services did agencies provide through this prevention program?
 - d. What was the source of funding for this program? [probe: ESG, FEMA]
 - e. Roughly, how much was the program funding?
 - f. Did you evaluate this prevention program? If so, how did you do so? What did you learn?
 - g. How was the CoC or local homeless service network involved?
 - h. Were agencies in the community action/anti-poverty network involved? How?
 - i. Were mainstream agencies (e.g., corrections, for releases with disabilities, mental health for hospital discharges, child welfare or TANF agency, for families in housing crisis) involved? How?
 - If **not**:
 - a. Had your agency or community considered launching a homelessness prevention program before HPRP? Why or why not?

2. Did the availability of HPRP funds for prevention change your community approach to homelessness prevention? If so, how? If not, how did it stay the same?

B. Decision-making about HPRP Prevention

HPRP funding came down to communities very quickly, and communities had to make decisions quickly about how to use the money. Some of the issues that needed quick decisions include whether to do prevention, rapid rehousing or both; how much of the money to allocate to prevention vs. rapid rehousing; how to disburse the funds to the agencies that would do direct services; which agencies were actually going to do the work; what types of households to serve (e.g., families, single adults, special targeting); what eligibility criteria to use, and so on.

First I'd like to know how these decisions were made, and then I'll ask you about each type of decision separately.

1. How did your community make the types of decisions I've just described about the HPRP prevention program?
 - a. Who made them? What was the process?
[Probe: top down decisions from HPRP grantee, community wide decision making process that involved key stakeholders, connection to ten year plan?]

 - b. How does HPRP fit into the community's response to homelessness? [Check all that apply]:
 - i. Part of the CoC?
 - ii. Part of an anti-poverty network of agencies?
 - iii. A government function—being done by a government agency with government staff, independent of either the CoC or anti-poverty programs?
 - iv. Other: _____

2. How much of your HPRP grant goes to prevention and how much goes to rapid re-housing activities?
 - a. How did your community decide on the mix of prevention and rapid re-housing activities?
 - b. Were any of these decisions based on previous programs or ten year planning efforts?
 - c. Were any of these decisions based on analysis of local data?

3. How were HPRP subgrantees identified? Did you:
 - a. Issue an RFP and award the grant through a competitive process?

- b. Identify existing anti-poverty agencies in the community
 - i. Were they already providing homelessness prevention services (e.g., using FEMA/EFSG funds)?
 - c. Identify existing homeless service providers in the community?
 - i. Were they already providing homelessness prevention services? If yes, what funding were they using to do this?
4. How many agencies in your community currently offer HPRP prevention services?
- a. Please list all subgrantees currently operating HPRP prevention programs
 - b. Have any subgrantees dropped out or have you stopped funding them (i.e., you funded them at the beginning, but they no longer offer prevention services)? If yes, please tell me what happened.
 - c. Have you added any subgrantees since you first distributed your HPRP prevention funds? If yes, which ones, and why?

Note to interviewer: Double check with subgrantee list. Make sure to confirm that each subgrantee on the list is actually doing homelessness prevention, or note if they are not. Add any subgrantees to the list if they are not there already.

C. Target Populations

1. Which populations do these HPRP homelessness prevention program(s) target?
 - a. Families (at least 1 adult and 1 child under 18)
 - b. Single adults
 - c. Special populations they focus on? (e.g., youth, veterans, people with mental illness)
2. How did your community decide which populations to focus on?
 - a. Were any of these decisions based on knowledge gained from previous programs or goals of ten year planning efforts? If yes, please explain.
 - b. Were any of these decisions based on analysis of local data showing increased risk of homelessness among particular groups of people? If yes, please explain.
 - c. Did your community examine the “predictors” of homelessness for these target populations? If yes, please explain what characteristics or circumstances you think are associated with a high likelihood of becoming homeless?
 - d. Other: _____
 - e. Other: _____

D. Eligibility Determination, Including Point(s) of Entry, Screening, Assessment and Triage

Now let's talk about how clients find their way to agencies offering HPRP homelessness prevention services in your community, and how the agencies decide whom to serve and what to offer them.

Eligibility Determination, Including Point(s) of Entry and Screening

1. How do households **find their way** to HPRP homelessness prevention agencies? Please describe all the ways currently happening in your community.
 - a. CENTRAL INTAKE POINT -- (e.g., 211 call in, central intake location, coordinated entry among different providers)
 - i. How does it work?
 - ii. Do all households enter through the central intake point?

- iii. How do households find out about the central intake?
 - a. Does the central intake point do any type of **screening** to determine HPRP eligibility, or does it just refer people to the HPRP prevention providers?
 - b. If it does some type of screening, please describe it.
 - iv. Of all households screened by the central intake point, about what proportion are considered eligible and go on to be referred to HPRP prevention providers? What happens to households who are found to be ineligible for HPRP as a result of the screening at the central intake point?
 - b. REFERRALS DIRECTLY TO HPRP PROVIDERS
 - i. What types of agencies are referring clients to HPRP prevention providers? Who are their clients?
 - ii. Once a household reaches an HPRP prevention provider, does the provider conduct a **screening process** to see if the household is eligible? If so, please describe it.
 - iii. Of all households screened at the HPRP prevention providers, about what proportion are considered eligible to receive HPRP prevention? What happens to households who are screened out of HPRP?
 - c. OUTREACH TO AT-RISK HOUSEHOLDS
 - i. Do community agencies conduct outreach to at-risk households? If so, where do they do it?
 - a. In community-based nonprofit agencies that serve vulnerable populations? If yes, which ones?
 - i. Name: _____
 - ii. Name: _____
 - iii. Name: _____
 - b. At mainstream agencies serving vulnerable populations, such as TANF, child welfare, corrections? If yes, which ones?
 - i. Name: _____
 - ii. Name: _____
 - c. At schools?
 - d. Other: _____
 - e. Other: _____
 - ii. Is there a formal **screening process** done at the time when contact with a household is made through outreach? If yes, please describe it.
 - iii. Of all households screened at the HPRP prevention providers, about what proportion are considered eligible to receive HPRP prevention? What happens to households who are screened out of HPRP?
- 2. Once HPRP prevention providers establish through the screener that a household is eligible for HPRP, what happens then?
 - a. Do they do a more complete assessment?
 - If yes, what do they use this assessment for?
 - i. Further screening to decide which of the eligible households they will actually serve?
 - ii. Helping to decide what types of HPRP financial assistance and supportive services to offer?
 - iii. May we have a copy of the assessment form, if such exists?
 - b. Do they repeat the assessment at any point? When? What do they use the reassessment for?

3. As grantee, do you provide a common screening form used by all HPRP prevention programs, outreach staff, and/or central intake?
 - a. If **yes**, could you please give me a copy?
 - i. How did you develop this screener?
 1. We adapted a screener we had used in previous homelessness prevention programs
 2. We used, or modified, one of the nationally known screeners (e.g., Hennepin County's, Arizona self-sufficiency matrix)
 3. We made up our own
 4. Other: _____
 - b. If **no**, do you specify the data elements that must be collected and recorded for screening and eligibility determination?
4. How do you assure that you will receive the performance and reporting data on screening that you need to know what is happening with subgrantees and to monitor their performance?

Assessment and Triage

1. Do you provide a common assessment instrument used by all HPRP prevention subgrantees?
2. If you don't provide a common assessment form, do you specify the data elements that must be collected and recorded for assessment?
3. How do you assure that you will receive the performance and reporting data on assessment that you need to know how well subgrantees are doing?

E. Prevention Services: Community Level

1. What types of prevention financial assistance do HPRP subgrantees provide to households in your community?
 - a. How did your community decide on the types of services provided?
 - b. Were any of these decisions based on previous programs or ten-year planning efforts?
 - c. Were any of these decisions based on analysis of local data?
 - d. Does the type of assistance offered depend on what type of household is being served? (e.g., different supports offered to families vs. single adults?)
2. What types of prevention supportive services do HPRP subgrantees provide to households in your community?
 - a. How did your community decide on the types of services provided?
 - b. Were any of these decisions based on previous programs or ten-year planning efforts?
 - c. Were any of these decisions based on analysis of local data?
 - d. Does the type of assistance offered depend on what type of household is being served? (e.g., different supports offered to families vs. single adults?)

F. Monitoring and Data: Community Level

1. What types of data are HPRP prevention subgrantees required to collect?
2. What happens with these data? What part gets into HMIS?
 - a. Are there data elements that do not get into HMIS? What are they? What do subgrantees do with them? What do you, as grantee, do with them, if anything?
 - b. Are there any issues that you know of with data collection and transfer to HMIS?
 - i. The time it takes to enter the data, and who has to do it?
 - ii. The completeness of the data as collected? As entered into HMIS?
 - iii. Other?
3. Is your agency using HMIS data (or an equivalent client-level database) to monitor HPRP prevention outcomes?
 - a. If yes, how are you using this information?
4. Is your agency using HMIS data or some other system (what?) to keep track of funds committed? Please describe.
 - a. Are you “on track” with funds—that is, the funding commitments you made for HPRP prevention are functioning as you expected?
 - b. Do you have/have you had enough money to fulfill all the commitments you made, or have some households ended up receiving less than they were led to expect because the money ran out? Please explain.

G. Effectiveness of HPRP and Plans for the Future

1. How effective do you think your HPRP prevention efforts have been in preventing homelessness?
 - a. Is your community completing an evaluation of HPRP prevention? If so, please describe the evaluation?

- i. What are you evaluating?
 - ii. Are you tracking whether or not people who receive HPRP prevention actually become homeless and enter the homeless system (e.g., shelters and transitional housing)? How are you tracking this?
 - iii. Who is completing the evaluation?
 - iv. What are you learning?
 - v. Would you share data from this evaluation with us?
2. Would your community be interested in participating in an evaluation of homelessness prevention programs?
 3. What are your plans for prevention programming after HPRP?

Program Level and Practice Questions

A. Previous Prevention Programs

1. **Prior** to HPRP, did your agency provide homelessness prevention assistance?
 - a. When did your agency start providing homelessness prevention assistance?
 - b. What types of services did your agency provide through this prevention program?
 - c. What was the source of funding for this program? [probe: ESG, FEMA]
 - d. Roughly, how much was the program funding?
 - e. What the impetus for starting this up?
 - f. Did you evaluate this prevention program? What did you learn?
 - g. How was the CoC or local homelessness service network involved, if at all?
 - h. How were anti-poverty agencies such as community action programs involved, if at all?
 - i. How were mainstream agencies (e.g., corrections, for releases with disabilities, mental health for hospital discharges, child welfare or TANF agency, for families in housing crisis) involved, if at all?
2. Did the availability of HPRP funds for prevention change your response to homelessness prevention?
 - a. If yes, how and why?
 - b. If no, why not?

B. Decision-making about HPRP Prevention

1. To the best of your knowledge, how were key decisions about the design of HPRP homelessness prevention program made in your community?
 - a. Who made them? What was the process? [*probe: top down decisions from HPRP grantee, community wide decision making process that involved key stakeholders, connection to ten year plan?*]
 - b. How do you think HPRP fits into the community's response to homelessness? Is it (check all that apply):
 - i. Part of the CoC?
 - ii. Part of an anti-poverty network of agencies?
 - iii. A government function—being done by a government agency with government staff, independent of either the CoC or anti-poverty programs?
 - iv. Other: _____

2. Was your agency involved in these decisions? If so, please describe your agency's role.

C+D. Target Populations and Eligibility Determination, Including Point(s) of Entry, Screening, Assessment and Triage

Target Populations

1. Does your agency target specific populations at risk of homelessness?
 - a. Families
 - b. Single adults
 - c. Special populations (.e.g., youth, veterans, people with mental illness)
 - d. Other: _____

Eligibility Determination, Including Point(s) of Entry and Screening

2. How do households find your HPRP homelessness prevention program?
 - a. Referred from central intake?
 - b. Referred by one or more service providers in the community? Which ones? What type of households?
 - c. Contacted through our outreach efforts? Please describe.
 - d. Come through our own agency programs?
 - e. Other: _____
3. What are the eligibility guidelines for your HPRP prevention program?
4. Are they more restrictive than the HUD guidelines? In what ways? What criteria do you add?
5. Please describe the screener your agency uses to determine eligibility for HPRP prevention.
 - a. How did you develop this screener?
 - i. The grantee that got the HPRP funds mandated that we use this screener
 - ii. We adapted a screener we had used in previous homelessness prevention programs
 - iii. We use a modified version of one of the nationally known screeners (e.g., Hennepin County's, Arizona self-sufficiency matrix)
 - b. Is this screener a common form used by all HPRP subgrantees?
 - c. Could we please have a copy of your screener?
 - d. What proportion of households screened do you determine to be eligible for HPRP prevention assistance?
 - i. What happens to the households you decide are not eligible?
 - e. How do you decide that a household requesting help to prevent homelessness is actually at imminent risk of homelessness?

- i. Do you use specific risk factors? If so, what are they?
 - ii. Are these risk factors part of your screener?
- f. How do you decide if a household would be homeless “but for this assistance?”
 - i. Is the information you need to make this decision gathered through your screener?
- g. Of all households that your agency screens *in* as eligible for HPRP prevention, do you serve them all, or do you serve only a portion of them?
 - i. If not all, what proportion do you serve?
 - ii. How do you decide which households you will serve? What criteria do you use to select the household you will serve?
- h. How do you decide if a household will be able to sustain housing after the prevention services run out? Is this part of your screener?

Assessment and Triage

1. Do you complete a more detailed **assessment** after the screener? If so, please describe this assessment tool you use to do this. May we have a copy?
 - a. What types of questions does the assessment ask? How is it different from the screener?
 - b. How does your agency use the information you gather during the assessment? (all that apply)
 - i. Making the final decision whether you will serve the household?
 - ii. Matching different levels and types of service to clients based on need as determined by the assessment)? If yes, please describe.
 - iii. For ongoing case management?
 - iv. Other?
 - c. Do you do reassessments of households receiving prevention assistance?
 - i. If yes, when?
 - ii. Do you use the same assessment tool to do reassessments as you used at intake? If no, what are the differences?
 - iii. How do you use the information you gather during reassessment in terms of working with/continuing to serve a particular household?
 - d. Are the data from the initial assessment entered into HMIS? Into your own agency's client database?
 - i. If only some of the data are entered into HMIS, which questions/what topics? Why not all?
 - e. Are the data from any reassessments entered into HMIS? Into your own agency's client database?

E. Prevention Services Program-level

Please describe the types of HPRP-funded prevention services that your agency offers.

1. What types of **financial assistance** does your agency offer?
 - a. Rental assistance (for how long?)
 - b. Security and utility deposits
 - c. Rent arrearages
 - d. Utility arrearages
 - e. Utility payments
 - f. Moving cost assistance
 - g. Motel/hotel vouchers for emergency stays
 - h. Other: _____

2. **If providing rental assistance: how is the rental assistance structured?** (note all that apply)
 - a. Rent arrears
 - b. Is the subsidy a flat amount (e.g., \$500 per month)?
 - c. Based on tenant income (e.g., the difference between the contract rent and 30 percent of tenant income)?
 - d. Declining over time?
 - e. Bridge subsidy provided temporarily until household receives permanent subsidy?

3. **How does your agency decide on the amount of rental assistance each household will get, and for how long?**
[probe: based on client assessment and needs, resources available, other?]
 - a. What expectations are households given for what they may ultimately receive?
 - b. Is it the same for all target populations? If not, what is different?

4. What types of **supportive services** does your agency offer?
 - a. Outreach and engagement
 - b. Case management, linking to mainstream services and benefits programs
 - c. Housing search and placement
 - d. Legal services
 - e. Credit repair
 - f. Other: _____

5. **If providing case management: how is the case management structured?**
 - a. How is case management visits conducted (i.e., telephone, home visits, office visits?)
 - b. How long and frequent are case manager meetings with HPRP prevention clients?
 - c. For how many months does your agency provide case management?
 - d. Is case management offered after the housing subsidy ends?
 - e. Are case management services the same for all target populations? If not, what's different?

6. **How do you decide which clients receive case management?**
[probe: based on client assessment and needs, resources available, other?]

F. Monitoring and Data: Program-Level

Next I'd like to know about HMIS and how it relates to HPRP prevention.

1. Is your agency entering data from HPRP prevention programs into HMIS or another client level database?

2. What types of information does your agency collect about HPRP prevention programs and enter into HMIS?
 - a. HUD required HPRP data elements?
 - b. Other data elements?
 - i. Information from screening?
 - ii. Information from assessment?
 - iii. Information from financial services or case management activities?
 - iv. Information on participants who apply but do not receive HPRP prevention?
3. Have there been any challenges with entering data into HMIS? If so, please describe them?
 - a. Takes our case managers too much time, and we don't get paid for it
 - b. System is difficult to use, often can't get onto it, it crashes, can't find the right data fields, etc.
 - c. Other: _____

G. Effectiveness of HPRP and Plans for the Future

1. How effective do you think your HPRP prevention efforts have been in preventing homelessness?
2. Is your agency doing anything to assess/evaluate the success of your HPRP prevention activities? If **yes**, what:
 - a. Tracking recidivism
 - b. Tracking client activities and progress through case notes
 - c. Holding case conferences about particular households to coordinate services and track progress
 - d. Partnering with a researcher to do an evaluation
 - e. Other: _____
3. Would your community be interested in participating in an evaluation of homelessness prevention programs?

INTERVIEW CLOSE

As we close, is there anyone else we should talk to in your community?

- If **so**, may we have [his/her] contact information?
- If **not**, then those are all the questions we have for you.

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

