



# 100-DAY CHALLENGE CASE STUDIES

## PALM BEACH, FL: SHARED HOUSING MODEL FOR YOUTH

**Palm Beach worked with a housing navigator to expand shared housing opportunities for youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness. The shared housing model increases access to housing options in communities with tight, high-cost rental markets, particularly for youth with little or no income, credit, or rental history. During the 100-Day Challenge in Palm Beach, 121 youth and young adults accessed housing.**

### HOW PALM BEACH MADE IT HAPPEN

Palm Beach used the momentum of the 100-Day Challenge to expand rental options for youth and young adults at-risk of and experiencing homelessness. Shared housing emerged as a strong model for young people because it provides additional security (e.g., deposits, guaranteed rent) to landlords, thereby increasing opportunities for individuals with limited credit and rental histories.

The community took two key steps to help make the shared housing model work for youth experiencing homelessness in Palm Beach:

#### **Held Open House and “Meet and Greets” to Match Roommates**

To support the shared housing model, the Palm Beach 100-Day Challenge team facilitated an Open House for youth and landlords to connect and also implemented “Meet and Greets” to match roommates together. The Meet and Greets, which include a formal agenda and brochure, became a successful forum for youth to connect and share their interests, limitations, and compatibility for shared housing opportunities. Conversations at the Meet and Greets are youth-led and sometimes turned to discussions of communication and conflict management among potential roommates. Following the Meet and Greets, the team administered a feedback survey for youth to evaluate the events and make any recommended changes.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- A shared housing model can expand housing options in communities with tight, high-cost housing, particularly for youth with little or no income, credit, or rental history by providing additional security to landlords.
- Landlords are vital partners in making the shared housing model a success.
- Youth choice is at the heart of the shared housing model, including the roommate matching process, which is youth-driven and built on housing compatibility.
- It is crucial to provide resources on safety, conflict resolution, and communication in order to support youth in a successful shared housing tenancy.
- Dedicated staff, including housing navigators, play a number of important roles working with youth and landlords to make the shared housing model a success.

## **Built Relationships with Landlords**

Palm Beach County has also established strong relationships with landlords to support the shared housing model and increase access to rental units for youth. An important factor in the successful launch was the execution of individual leases for each tenant, ensuring that in the unfortunate instance where missed rent payments or lease violations could result in the eviction of one roommate, the other roommate would be able to retain their tenancy. Palm Beach successfully increased the number of landlords participating in the shared housing model by creating a dedicated pot of funds available to support the landlord and household by allowing double deposits, making guaranteed rent for 12 months, or other similar financial supports.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

**Following the completion of the 100-Day Challenge, the Palm Beach Community assessed its progress in expanding shared housing opportunities, identifying several key lessons:**

### **1) Provide Shared Housing as a Choice, not a Requirement**

Youth choice is central to effectively preventing and ending homelessness for youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Palm Beach's housing navigator engaged every 100-Day Challenge client and conducted a basic assessment to determine service and housing needs and to make connections as appropriate. The housing navigator ensured that all youth were aware of shared housing as an option and offered to show clients open units with a roommate, with youth choice always at the forefront. Some youth with income and employment were able to consider individual renting options. Additionally, some youth know from past experiences that a shared housing model is not the best situation for them. Key to the success of the shared housing model is respect for youth choice and working with each individual client to determine an appropriate housing solution.

### **2) Create a Roommate Matching Process Based on Compatibility**

The Palm Beach Meet and Greets have been successful in supporting the shared housing model because they allow potential roommates to connect in a safe, fun, and informal setting to determine their housing compatibility. Palm Beach is looking to strengthen this matching process through the development of an app similar to [match.com](https://www.match.com) that matches roommates together based on compatibility and can be used to determine shared housing arrangements. The community has found that an important factor in the matching process is asking the right questions and having focused conversations with potential roommates to determine what would make for a successful shared housing situation for each party.

### **3) Establish Strong Partnerships with Landlords**

Landlord engagement and buy-in has been an important factor in expanding and sustaining the shared housing model for youth in Palm Beach. Landlords are informed of how the shared housing model works, including the roommate matching process and the importance of youth choice, and have been patient as tenants identify roommates with whom they are compatible. The use of separate leases for each tenant in a shared housing unit also provides increased security of tenancy and rental payments for landlords. Additionally, the 100-Day Challenge team works quickly to support landlords and respond to questions, concerns, or when issues arise.

#### **4) Provide Resources to Support Youth in their Shared Housing Tenancy**

Palm Beach provided information that was useful and friendly for youth entering shared housing arrangements regarding maintaining and sustaining housing, including safety, conflict resolution, and effective communication strategies with roommates and landlords regarding rent and tenancy expectations. Palm Beach's housing navigator also utilizes a basic inventory sheet to identify housing needs for youth, such as furniture and other household items, that can be provided via donation. The housing navigator is also able to assist if any issues arise, including facilitated mediation in the case of conflict.

#### **5) Have Dedicated Staff to Support Landlord Engagement and Housing Requirements**

A housing navigator or housing specialist plays an important role in communicating with landlords, building trust, and brokering deals to support increased rental housing options, including shared housing, for youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Additionally, Palm Beach utilizes tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) funds to support shared housing, which requires that an inspection be completed for each unit. Palm Beach recommends ensuring that there is a dedicated staff person or entity to complete unit inspections in a timely manner, which helps maintain strong landlord relationships and facilitates a quick matching and move-in process for youth.