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"From Shelter to Sanctuary"

Presented by:
Leor Beverly | Associate Director of Housing
Dahana Louis | Director of Housing Programs
Caprice Howard | Peer Support Specialist

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Discussion Overview

Description: Healing While Housing explores the transformative power of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) when paired with culturally specific, trauma-informed, and integrated services. Drawing from the Urban League of Portland's experience, this session highlights how housing stability is only the first step—true healing requires intentional service coordination, peer support, and emotional restoration. The presentation will offer insights into bridging the gap between being housed and being healed, emphasizing the importance of lived experience, community voice, and holistic care in PSH environments

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REFLECTION




“Surviving is important. Thriving is elegant.”
— *Maya Angelou*



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Why This Work Matters



The journey from shelter to sanctuary is more than a shift in physical space — it's a transformation in philosophy, practice, and purpose. This presentation explores how trauma-informed care, culturally specific services, and healing-centered engagement can redefine housing programs as spaces of restoration, dignity, and belonging. Our goal is to move beyond crisis response and toward holistic healing



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Centering Healing in Housing



Many housing programs focus on stabilization, but healing requires more than a roof. Trauma-informed care acknowledges the impact of past harm and centers safety, choice, and empowerment. Culturally specific services honor identity, history, and community. Healing-centered engagement goes further — it sees people not as broken, but as whole, and builds environments where they can thrive.



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From Temporary Relief to Lasting Restoration

■ **Shelter** is often defined by urgency — a place to escape danger or meet immediate needs. It's necessary, but not sufficient.

■ **Sanctuary**, by contrast, is intentional. It's a space of safety, dignity, and healing. It's where people are seen, heard, and valued. In sanctuary, we don't just house people — we honor their humanity



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Healing Is a Process, Not a Destination

Healing is nonlinear. It unfolds over time, through relationships, rituals, and reflection. It requires trust, consistency, and culturally grounded support. In our programs, healing may look like reconnecting with family, reclaiming identity, or simply feeling safe enough to sleep through the night. Every step matters — and every person's path is unique.



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Understanding Our Community

We serve individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness, systemic racism, disability, and generational trauma. Many have no income, are navigating complex systems, and have been underserved or harmed by institutions.

Our participants are resilient, resourceful, and deserving of care that reflects their lived experience. To support healing, we must understand the barriers they face — and commit to removing them.



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THE HEALING FRAMEWORK



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What is Lived Experience

- Lived experience with service providers in permanent supportive housing (PSH) involves the day-to-day interactions and support that residents receive from various professionals dedicated to helping them maintain stable housing and improve their quality of life.
- Overall, the lived experience in PSH is characterized by a holistic approach to care, where service providers work collaboratively to address the diverse needs of residents. This comprehensive support system helps individuals not only maintain stable housing but also improve their overall well-being and quality of life.



Why Is Lived Experience Such an Important Factor

■ **Enhanced Empathy and Understanding:**

Service providers with lived experience of homelessness can offer a deeper level of empathy and understanding to clients. They can relate to the challenges and emotions that come with homelessness, which helps build trust and rapport¹.

■ **Effective Communication:** Individuals with lived experience often communicate more effectively with clients, as they share a common language and understanding of the issues faced. This can lead to more meaningful and impactful interactions¹.

■ **Credibility and Trust:** Clients are more likely to trust and engage with service providers who have been through similar experiences. This credibility can be crucial in encouraging clients to participate in programs and accept support¹.

■ **Informed Program Design:** Lived experience can inform the design and implementation of programs, ensuring they are more relevant and responsive to the actual needs of the homeless



Healing in Practice: The Hattie Redmond Model

At the Hattie Redmond location, services are designed with intention, dignity, and cultural relevance. This site is more than a resource hub — it's a sanctuary where participants are seen, heard, and supported holistically.

Client-Centered Approach:

- Staff build relationships rooted in trust, respect, and lived experience.
- Services are tailored to individual needs, honoring each participant's journey.
- Participants are engaged as partners, not recipients — their voice shapes programming.

Impactful Services Include:

- A welcoming store, food pantry, and clothing closet that meet basic needs with care.
- Healing-centered events, memorials, and cultural celebrations that foster community.
- Integrated support for housing, income, wellness, and identity restoration.

Hattie Redmond is a living example of what it means to move from shelter to sanctuary — where healing begins with belonging.



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SAFETY FIRST PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL

Safety is the foundation of healing. Without it, trust cannot grow and transformation cannot begin.

At the Urban League, we prioritize both **physical safety** — clean, secure, and welcoming environments — and **emotional safety** — spaces where participants feel respected, heard, and free from judgment.

■ Key Elements of Safety-Centered Practice:

- Predictable routines and transparent communication
- Staff trained in trauma-informed care and de-escalation
- Affirming language, cultural representation, and choice

When participants feel safe, they begin to open up. When they feel emotionally secure, they begin to heal.



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BELONGING AND IDENTITY

Healing begins when people feel they belong. Culturally specific services create spaces where participants are not just accommodated — they are affirmed.

At the Urban League, we honor the histories, identities, and lived experiences of Black and African American communities. Our programs are rooted in cultural pride, ancestral wisdom, and collective resilience.

■ **Belonging** is cultivated through language, rituals, representation, and relationships.

■ **Identity reclamation** happens when participants reconnect with who they are — beyond trauma, beyond systems, beyond survival.

When people feel seen, they begin to heal. When they feel they belong, they begin to thrive.



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RESTORATION THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

Healing is relational. At the heart of our work is the belief that **people heal in connection with others** — not in isolation.

- **Staff** offer more than services; they offer presence, consistency, and compassion. Many bring lived experience, cultural understanding, and deep empathy to their roles.
- **Peers** provide solidarity, shared wisdom, and hope. Their stories remind participants that healing is possible.
- **Community** creates belonging. Through rituals, celebrations, and shared spaces, we foster environments where people feel valued and connected.

Relationships are the bridge from trauma to transformation. They are the foundation of sanctuary.



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INTEGRATED SERVICES

Healing doesn't happen in silos. At the Urban League, we offer **integrated services** that address the full spectrum of participant needs — physical, emotional, spiritual, and structural.

■ Core Service Areas:

- **Mental Health Support:** Trauma-informed counseling, crisis intervention, and culturally grounded wellness practices.
- **Substance Use Services:** Harm reduction, recovery support, and compassionate care without judgment.
- **Housing Navigation:** Advocacy, application assistance, and long-term stabilization planning.
- **Spiritual Care & Cultural Healing:** Space for reflection, ritual, and reconnection with identity and ancestry.

These services are not just co-located — they are **coordinated**. Staff collaborate across disciplines to ensure participants experience continuity, dignity, and empowerment at every step.



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FROM CRISIS TO CONNECTION

Many of our participants arrive in survival mode — navigating trauma, instability, and systems that have failed them. In this state, the focus is on immediate needs: food, shelter, safety.

■ **Intentional programming** helps shift the focus from crisis to connection. We create environments where participants can:

- Build trusting relationships with staff and peers
- Engage in culturally affirming practices
- Access consistent, wraparound support
- Reclaim agency and identity

Connection is the foundation of healing. When people feel safe, seen, and supported, they begin to thrive — not just survive.



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THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment plays a critical role in shaping emotional safety and healing. Trauma-informed design recognizes that every detail — from lighting to layout — can either soothe or trigger.

■ Key Elements of Healing-Centered Spaces:

- **Trauma-Informed Design:** Spaces are predictable, calming, and free of clutter. Privacy and choice are prioritized.
- **Sensory Considerations:** Gentle lighting, soft textures, and quiet zones help reduce overstimulation and anxiety.
- **Aesthetics Matter:** Art, color, and cultural symbols foster dignity, pride, and connection. Beauty is not a luxury — it's a healing tool.

At Hattie Redmond and across our programs, we design spaces that say: *You belong here. You are safe. You are valued.*

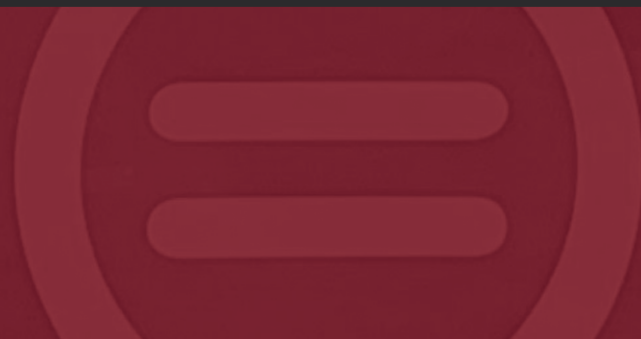


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A Collaborative Discussion About How We Promote Healing

Break Out Sessions



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REFLECTION

“Each one of us has lived through some devastation, some loneliness, some weather superstorm or spiritual superstorm... We must support each other and empathize with each other because each of us is more alike than we are unlike.”

— Maya Angelou



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Healing Centered Events

What are you doing at your properties to promote Healing

Memorials, celebrations, cultural rituals, and community meals.



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Staff Wellness & Sustainability

Vicarious trauma, grief support,
and reflective supervision.



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Participant Voice & Leadership

Discuss how you
give voice in your
communities

Co-creation,
advisory boards,
and storytelling.



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Let's Measure Healing

What are some Indications of success



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Creating Sanctuary: What Makes Housing Feel Safe and Healing?

Define what “sanctuary” means in the context of housing.

Discuss trauma-informed design, community integration, and the emotional/spiritual aspects of home.



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Reflection

“The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.”

— Maya Angelou



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Opportunities for Impact

- ❑ **Enhanced Mental Health Services:** Provide accessible mental health care, including counseling, therapy, and support groups. Regular mental health check-ins can help individuals manage stress and emotional challenges.
- ❑ **Substance Abuse Programs:** Offer robust substance abuse treatment programs, including detox services, rehabilitation, and ongoing support through NA or AA meetings. Ensuring these services are easily accessible can help individuals maintain sobriety.
- ❑ **Job Training and Employment Services:** Implement job training programs that equip individuals with the skills needed to secure employment. Partner with local businesses to create job opportunities and provide ongoing support to help individuals retain their jobs.
- ❑ **Healthcare Access:** Ensure that individuals have access to comprehensive healthcare services, including regular check-ups, chronic disease management, and preventive care. Mobile health clinics can be particularly effective in reaching those who may have difficulty accessing traditional healthcare facilities.
- ❑ **Peer Support Programs:** Develop peer support networks where individuals can connect with others who have similar experiences. Peer support specialists can provide guidance, encouragement, and practical advice based on their own journeys.
- ❑ **Life Skills Training:** Offer classes and workshops on essential life skills such as budgeting, cooking, and time management. These skills can help individuals live more independently and confidently.
- ❑ **Housing Stability Services:** Provide ongoing support to help individuals maintain their housing. This can include assistance with rent, utilities, and navigating housing policies. Regular home visits can help identify and address any issues early on.
- ❑ **Community Building Activities:** Organize community events and activities that foster a sense of belonging and connection. Social events, group outings, and community service projects can help individuals build relationships and feel more integrated into their community.



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■ Ways to Connect:

■ Visit Us:

 10 N Russell Street, Portland, OR
97212

■ Call Us:

 503-280-2600



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**“The mission of the Urban League is to empower
African-Americans and others to achieve
equality in education, employment, health,
economic security and quality of life.”**

— *Urban League of Portland*

Thank you!



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