



CALHOUN COUNTY  
**Continuum**  
**of Care**

**Emergency Solutions Grants Program**  
**Written Standards**

# Table of Contents

- A. Introduction
- B. Overarching Standards & Commitments for all recipients
  - Commitment to Racial Equity
  - Compliance with Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
  - Education
  - Participation in CoC initiatives
  - Participation in Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
  - Persons with Limited English Proficiency
  - Preventing Family Separation
  - Standards for Case Management
  - Lived Experience/Homeless Participation
  - Organizational Conflicts of Interest
  - Housing First
  - Equal Access/ Fair Housing/ Anti-Discrimination/ Affirmative Outreach
  - Coordinated Entry Participation
  - Termination and Grievance Procedures
  - Minimize Displacement
  - Involuntary Family Separation
  - Program Income
  - Recovered Materials
  - Lead-Based Paint Standards
  - Faith Based Activities
  - Program Coordination
  - Connections with Other Resources
  - Records and Recordkeeping
  - Program Policies and Procedures
- C. Emergency Shelter Program
- D. Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing
- E. Street Outreach
- F. Definitions

## A. Introduction

The CoC Program Interim Rule requires CoCs to establish and follow written standards for providing CoC assistance in consultation with recipients of the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program (24 CFR 578.7(9)). The ESG Program Interim Rule requires the ESG recipient to establish and consistently follow written standards for providing assistance with ESG funds (24 CFR 576.400 (e)). At a minimum, these written standards must include:

- Policies and procedures for evaluating individuals' and families' eligibility for assistance in the ESG Program;
- Policies and procedures for determining and prioritizing which eligible individuals and families will receive assistance for Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, Homelessness Prevention (HP), and Rapid Re-Housing (RRH);
- Standards for determining what percentage of rent a program participant must contribute while enrolled in a RRH or HP project.

The goals of the written standards are to:

- Establish community-wide expectations on the operations of projects within the community
- Ensure that the system is transparent to users and operators
- Establish a minimum set of standards to manage the quality of ESG-funded projects functioning in the community
- Make local priorities transparent to ESG recipients and sub recipients
- Create consistency and coordination between ESG-funded projects within the Calhoun County Continuum of Care (CCCoC).

Calhoun County Continuum of Care (CCCoC) has established these written standards and will manage the ESG Written Service Standards document. The standards are in accordance with the Interim Rule for the Emergency Solutions Grants Program, the Interim Rule for the Continuum of Care Program, and the Final Rule for the definition of homelessness released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. These standards were created in coordination with the Calhoun County Continuum of Care which includes all municipalities within Calhoun County.

All recipients or subrecipients of ESG Program funding must follow these standards and the standards must be applied consistently across the entire CCCoC's defined geographic area. The CCCoC strongly encourages projects that do not receive ESG funds to utilize these written standards. Recipients and subrecipients of ESG and other local funds may develop additional standards for administering program assistance, but these additional standards cannot conflict with those established by the CCCoC Program or ESG Program interim rules.

This document outlines the Written Standards for ESG Service Delivery which meet HUD's minimum requirements and addresses CCCoC expectations for all projects.

For each project type, the standards outline the purpose of the project type, eligibility criteria, prioritization, minimal standards of assistance, client access, and performance standards.

## B. Overarching Standards & Commitments for All Subrecipients

CCCoC is committed to ensuring that homelessness is a rare, brief, and nonrecurring event. As part of this effort, CCCoC is focused on improving access and coordination of housing services and enhancing services for highly vulnerable populations. The following standards are applicable to all project types that receive ESG program funding to promote equitable access and outcomes within our homeless system of care.

### Commitment to Racial Equity

People of color experience homelessness at disproportionately high rates due to historic and ongoing systemic racism. The CoC has a direct responsibility to minimally ensure it is not contributing to nor supporting a disparate housing and service impact on Black, Indigenous, and any people of color experiencing housing insecurity, crisis, and lack of permanent safe affordable housing. Part of CCCoC mission is to advocate for equitable solutions to end homelessness. This includes working towards equitable access to CoC services and achieving just outcomes, as well as realizing the CoC's capacity to address the impacts of inequities left by public systems tangential to homelessness.

ESG subrecipients and the CoC commits to advancing racial equity in their programs and across the system by:

- Providing and participating in ongoing training opportunities for staff to deepen their understanding and analysis of racism and oppression and strengthen their knowledge and practice of equity;
- Participating in CoC equity initiatives, including workgroups and committees, trainings, and organizational and systems assessments;
- Adopting hiring practices and procedures that encourage diversity and reach BIPOC applicants, and continuously evaluating those practices and procedures to ensure staff are reflective of the communities they serve and to promote equity and organizational accountability;
- Cultivating talent, leadership, and retention of Black Indigenous, persons of color staff.

### Compliance with the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) provides protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. VAWA protections are not only available to women but are available equally to all individuals regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Calhoun County Continuum of Care considers the safety of its tenants seriously, including the safety of tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. In accordance with VAWA, all permanent housing providers who provide Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)-funded rental assistance are required to comply with VAWA, including allowing tenants who are victims to request an emergency transfer from the tenant's current unit to another unit.

## Education

The educational needs of children and youth must be accounted for, to the maximum extent practicable, and families with children and unaccompanied youth must be placed as close as possible to the school of origin so as not to disrupt the children's education. Projects that serve homeless families with children and/or unaccompanied youth must have policies and practices in place that are consistent with the laws related to providing education services to children and youth. These recipients must have a designated staff person to ensure that children and youth are enrolled in school and receive education services. Homeless families with children and unaccompanied youth must be informed of their eligibility for McKinney-Vento education services and other available resources. Recipients shall maintain documentation in the participant's case file to demonstrate that these requirements have been met and that applicants and participants understand their rights.

## Participation in CoC Initiatives

All subrecipients agree to attend CoC- and ESG-required trainings and community meetings to provide consistent services across the Continuum that are based on best practices. In addition, all subrecipients must coordinate with other ESG-funded agencies to ensure effective and quality service delivery, including participation on the Continuum of Care's Coordinated Entry Committee.

## Participation in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

All subrecipients commit to real-time HMIS data entry, except those agencies that are exempt, such as domestic violence shelters, who must use a comparable database. If the subrecipient is exempt from using HMIS, it must establish and operate a comparable database that collects client-level data over time (i.e., longitudinal data) and generates unduplicated aggregate reports based on the data. Further, all partners agree to routinely review and correct HMIS data quality issues, monitor outcome performance, and adhere to ESG HMIS reporting requirements.

## Persons with Limited English Proficiency

Subrecipients will take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities for persons who are limited in their English proficiency, regardless of national origin. Such steps may include translating marketing materials and documents essential to providing services into languages prevalent in the community, as well as providing language assistance while providing services, including oral and written translation where appropriate.

## Preventing Family Separation

Families experiencing homelessness should not be separated when receiving services unless the health and wellbeing of children are at immediate risk. The age and gender of a child under the age of 18 shall not be used as a basis for denying a family's admission to any housing services. In addition, a broad definition of family must be used that allows for single parent households of any gender identity, two parent households including same sex parents and LGBT parents, and extended families to be served together with their children. Furthermore, in compliance with HUD's Equal Access in Accordance with Gender Identity Rule, all households that present as a family must be served together as a family, whether that family includes adults and children, or just adults, and regardless of the age, disability, marital status, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or gender identity of any member of the family.

## Standards for Case Management

When utilizing ESG funding for case management under any program component, subrecipients agree to adhere to client-centered, housing first practices. This includes: case management, services are comprehensive and highly flexible, seeking to meet households where they are and assisting the household along the stages of change; services are strengths-based; services are consumer-driven, respecting client right of self-determination; and services respect client choice and promote autonomy. Staff will utilize principles of harm reduction and practice trauma-informed care when engaging with program participants.

## Lived Experience/Homeless Participation:

All recipients and sub recipients of ESG program funds are required to follow the minimum standards for homeless participation.

Minimum standards for homeless participation are:

ESG (24 CFR 576.405):

- Each funded provider of ESG assistance must have at least one homeless individual or formerly homeless individual on the Board of Directors or equivalent policymaking entity of the provider.
- To the maximum extent possible, the provider shall involve homeless individuals and families in paid or volunteer work for the ESG program. Must show reasonable proof of attempts made if no individuals are currently seated.

## Organizational Conflicts of Interest:

An organizational conflict of interest arises when activities or relationships with other persons or organizations (the recipient or subrecipient) is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance in the provision of any type or amount of assistance. Such an organizational conflict would arise when a board member of an applicant participates in a decision concerning the award of a grant, or provision of other financial benefits to the organization that member represents. It would also arise when an employee of a recipient or subrecipient participates in making rent reasonableness determinations under § 578.49(b)(2) and § 578.51(g) and housing quality inspections of property under § 578.75(b) that the recipient, subrecipient, or related entity owns.

ESG assistance will not be contingent on the individual's or family's acceptance, or occupancy of emergency shelter or housing owned by the provider or a provider's subsidiary or parent.

No provider, with respect to individuals or families occupying housing owned by the provider or a provider's subsidiary or parent, will carry out the initial evaluation under 24 CFR 576.401 or 578.75(b) or administer homelessness prevention assistance under 24 CFR 576.103.

## Individual Conflicts of Interest:

When procuring goods and services, the provider will comply with codes of conduct and conflict of interest requirements under 24 CFR 84.42 (private non-profit) or 24 CFR 85.36 (government). No CCCoC board member may participate in or influence discussions or resulting decisions concerning the award of a grant or other financial benefits to the organization that the member represents.

### Prohibited Conflicts:

No person involved with the ESG programs or who is in a position to participate in a decision-making process or gain inside information regarding the program's activities, shall obtain a financial interest or benefit from an assisted activity; have a financial interest in any related contract, subcontract, or assisted activity; or have a financial interest in the activity's proceeds (either himself or herself or those with whom he or she has family or business ties) during his or her tenure or for one year following tenure.

### *Persons Covered:*

These conflict-of-interest provisions apply to any employee, agent, consultant, officer or elected or appointed official of the provider's agency. The key issues to consider are the individual's role in the organization, influence over ESG decisions, and access to inside information.

### *Exceptions:*

A recipient may request an exception to the individual conflicts of interest provision from HUD, only if he or she meets the threshold requirements identified in 24 CFR 576.404 and/or 578.95(d)(2).

### Housing First:

Housing First is an approach to connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness quickly and successfully to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals prior to permanent housing entry. Housing First is premised on the Following Principles:

- Homelessness is first, and foremost, a housing crisis and can be addressed through the provision of safe and affordable housing.
- All people experiencing homelessness, regardless of their housing history and duration of homelessness, can achieve housing stability in permanent housing. Some may need very little support for a brief period, while others may need more intensive and long-term supports.
- Everyone is "housing ready." Sobriety, compliance in treatment, or clean criminal records are not necessary to succeed in housing. Rather, homelessness programs and housing providers must be "consumer ready".
- Many people experience improvements in quality of life, in the areas of health, mental health, substance use, and employment, because of achieving housing.
- People experiencing homelessness have the right to self-determination and should be treated with dignity and respect.

The exact configuration of housing and services depends upon the needs and preferences of the population.

### Housing First Core Features:

1. Few to no programmatic prerequisites to permanent housing entry – People experiencing homelessness are offered permanent housing with no programmatic preconditions such as demonstration of sobriety, completion of alcohol or drug treatment, or agreeing to comply with a treatment regimen upon entry into the program. People are also not required to first enter a transitional housing program to enter permanent housing.

2. Low barrier admission policies – Permanent Supportive Housing’s admissions policies are designed to “screen-in” rather than screen-out applicants with the greatest barriers to housing, such as having no or very low income, poor rental history and past evictions, or criminal histories. Housing programs may have tenant selection policies that prioritize people who have been homeless the longest or who have the highest service needs as evidenced by vulnerability assessments or the high utilization of crisis services.

3. Rapid and streamlined entry into housing – Many people experiencing chronic homelessness may experience anxiety and uncertainty during a lengthy housing application and approval process. In order to ameliorate this, Housing First permanent supportive housing models make efforts to help people experiencing homelessness move into permanent housing as quickly as possible, streamlining application and approval processes, and reducing wait times.

4. Supportive services are voluntary but can and should be used to persistently engage tenants to ensure housing stability - Supportive services are proactively offered to help tenants achieve and maintain housing stability, but tenants are not required to participate in services as a condition of tenancy. Techniques such as harm reduction and motivational interviewing may be useful. Harm reduction techniques can confront and mitigate the harms of drug and alcohol use through non-judgmental communication while motivational interviewing may be useful in helping households acquire and utilize new skills and information.

5. Tenants have full rights, responsibilities, and legal protections – The goal of the Housing First approach is to help people experiencing homelessness achieve long-term housing stability in permanent housing. Permanent housing is defined as housing where tenants have leases that confer the full rights, responsibilities, and legal protections under Federal, state, and local housing laws. Tenants are educated about their lease terms, given access to legal assistance, and encouraged to exercise their full legal rights and responsibilities. Landlords and providers in Housing First models abide by their legally defined roles and obligations. For instance, landlords and providers do not enter tenants’ apartments without tenants’ knowledge and permission except under legally defined emergency circumstances. Many Housing First permanent supportive housing programs also have a tenant association or council to review program policies and provide feedback, and formal processes for tenants to submit suggestions or grievances.

6. Practices and policies to prevent lease violations and evictions – Housing First supportive housing programs should incorporate practices and policies that prevent lease violations and evictions among tenants. For instance, program policies consistent with a Housing First approach do not consider alcohol or drug use to be lease violations. Housing First models may also have policies that give tenants some flexibility and recourse in the rent payment, which in many subsidized housing programs is 30% of the participant’s income. For example, rather than moving towards eviction proceedings due to missed rent payments, programs may allow tenants to enter payment installment plans for rent arrearages or offer money management assistance to tenants.

7. Applicable in a variety of housing models – The Housing First approach can be implemented in different types of supportive housing settings, including: scattered-site models in private market apartments, where rental assistance is provided, and tenants have access mobile and site-based supportive services; single-site models in which permanent supportive housing buildings are newly constructed or rehabilitated and tenants have access to voluntary on-site services; and set-asides, where supportive services are offered to participants in designated units within affordable housing developments.

### Equal Access / Fair Housing / Anti-Discrimination / Affirmative Outreach:

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is committed to enforcing the federal Fair Housing Act and other civil rights laws with the fundamental goal of making housing opportunities available to all. All recipients and subrecipients of ESG funds must ensure full compliance with these federal laws and must also ensure compliance by all sub-recipients to whom funds are distributed. It is important to HUD, and the local CoC, that its own programs do not involve arbitrary discrimination against any individual or family otherwise eligible for HUD-assisted or -insured housing, and that its policies and programs serve as models for equal housing opportunity. All recipients and subrecipients of ESG funds are required to abide by the following equal access & anti-discrimination components:

- Providers must comply with all federal statutes and rules including the Fair Housing Act<sup>6</sup>, the Americans with Disabilities Act<sup>7</sup>, Equal Access to Housing Final Rule 8, and Equal Access in Accordance with an Individual's Gender Identity Rule.
- Providers must comply with all state and local fair housing
- All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds must have non-discrimination policies in place and assertively outreach to people least likely to engage in the homeless system. This includes, but not limited to, chronically homeless, homeless veterans, youth, families with children, LGBTQ, and survivors of domestic violence.
- Recognize that individuals who present together for assistance, regardless of age or relationship, are considered a household and are eligible for assistance as a household.
- Projects that serve families with children must serve all types of families with children; if a project targets a specific population (e.g., women with children), these projects must serve all families with children that are otherwise eligible for assistance, including families with children that are headed by a single adult or consist of multiple adults that reside together.
- The age and gender of a child under 18 must not be used as a basis for denying any family's admission to a project.
- Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities must be available to ensure disabled participants have an equal opportunity to utilize housing, including shelters, and receive essential

services. Greater levels of accessibility may be required for some shelters in compliance with The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- This CoC practices a person-centered model that strongly incorporates participant choice and inclusion of subpopulations present in Calhoun County, including, but not limited to chronically homeless, homeless veterans, youth, families with children, LGBTQ, and survivors of domestic violence.

Participants are made aware of any service eligibility time limits and are provided available resources when leaving a program. Services cannot be denied or terminated because of a participant's alcohol or drug use. In assessments, participant's sense of comfort and safety may dictate that the assessment be completed over several sessions. Admission will not be delayed because of this.

### Coordinated Entry Participation:

Under the requirements of the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act as well as requirements identified by the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program Interim Rule, and HUD's Notice Establishing Additional Requirements; Calhoun County Continuum of Care has established a Coordinated Entry (CE) process that aims to increase the efficiency of the local crisis response system and improve fairness and ease of access to resources, including mainstream resources. Additional goals of Coordinated Entry process include:

- Reduce the burden on households experiencing a housing crisis
- Identify the most appropriate housing resource to facilitate a rapid and permanent exit from Homelessness
- Prioritize the most vulnerable households with the longest time homeless for housing resources
- Collect system-wide data to inform necessary shifts in resources, identify gaps, and enable data-driven decision making at the CoC, organizational and project levels.

### Termination and Grievance Procedures:

Minimum standards for termination of assistance are:

In general:

If a program violation occurs and the provider terminates assistance as a result, the termination shall follow an established process that recognizes the rights of the individuals affected. Termination shall only occur in the most severe cases after other remedies have been attempted. Termination of individuals and families in projects funded through the CoC program must be consistent with 578.91 and 576.402 for those projects funded through the ESG program.

- Due process rights for individuals and families facing program termination: When terminating assistance to an ESG program participant receiving rental assistance or housing relocation and

stabilization services or to any CoC program participant, the required formal process shall minimally consist of:

- o Written notice clearly stating their reasons for termination;
- o Review of the decision that gives the participant opportunity to present objections to the decision and to have representation. Any appeal of a decision shall be heard by an individual different from and not subordinate to the initial decision-maker; and
- o Prompt written notice of the final decision on the appeal.
- o Ability to provide further assistance: Termination will not bar the provider from providing later, additional assistance to the same family or individual.

#### Displacement:

A “displaced person” is defined as any person that moves from a permanent home because of ESG funded acquisition, rehabilitation, or demolition of a project. Exceptions include:

- A person does not qualify as a “displaced person” if the person was evicted based on a violation of the lease or occupancy agreement; violation of the law; and
- The recipient determines that the eviction was not undertaken to evade the obligation to provide relocation assistance.
- Moved into the property after the application was submitted but was provided with written notice that he or she would not qualify as a “displaced person.”
- The person is ineligible under 49 CFR 24.2.
- HUD determines that the person was not displaced because of the project. Minimum standards for reducing the displacement of persons (families, individuals, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and farms) because of a project assisted under ESG shall comply with §576.408 and/or 578.83.

#### Minimizing Displacement:

Consistent with ESG goals and objectives, the providers shall minimize displacing people because of ESG funded projects. No provider may implement any project or activity funded with either ESG funds without specific approval of the CCCoC Board. Homeless assistance funding is limited and projects involving displacement will only be approved if there is a significant disproportionate benefit provided.

#### *Temporary Relocation Not Permitted:*

No temporary relocation shall be required for an ESG funded project. When a tenant must move for an ESG funded project, the tenant shall be treated as permanently displaced and offered relocation assistance and payments.

### *Relocation Assistance for Displaced Persons:*

- In general: A displaced person shall be provided relocation assistance and advised of his or her Fair Housing Rights.
- Real property acquisition requirements: The acquisition of real property for an ESG funded project is subject to the Uniform Act (URA) and Federal government wide regulations.
- Appeals: A person who disagrees with the recipient's determination concerning whether the person qualifies as a displaced person, or the amount of relocation assistance may file a written appeal with the CCCoC. If it is determined that the appeal has merit, the appeal will be heard by the Continuum of Care staff. The CoC Board will make a final determination.

### **Involuntary Family Separation:**

The age and gender of a child under age 18 must not be used as a basis for denying any family's admission to any housing or shelter. All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds are required to comply with ESG program admission and prohibition against involuntary family separation standards (24 CFR 576.102(b) and 578.93(e)).

### **Program Income:**

All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds must follow minimum standards for private non-profit organizations regarding the program's income during the project period. Income shall be retained and used to finance the non-Federal share of the project or program. Records of the receipt and use of program income shall be retained. Under the ESG Program, program income is to be used as match, and ESG match funds must be used in accordance with 24 CFR § 576.201(f)28. This includes a requirement that matching funds must be contributed to the ESG program and expended for the recipient's or subrecipient's allowable ESG costs.

### **Recovered Materials:**

All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds must follow minimum standards for the procurement of recovered materials and shall comply with the requirements identified in §576.407(f) and §578.99(b), including that the recipient and its contractors must comply with Section 6002 of the Solid Waste Disposal Act<sup>29</sup>, as amended by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The requirements of Section 6002 include procuring only items designated in guidelines of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at 40 CFR part 247 that contain the highest percentage of recovered materials practicable, consistent with maintaining a satisfactory level of competition, where the purchase price of the item exceeds \$10,000 or the value of the quantity acquired by the preceding fiscal year exceeded \$10,000; procuring solid waste management services in a manner that maximizes energy and resource recovery; and establishing an affirmative procurement program for procurement of recovered materials identified in the EPA guidelines.

### Lead-Based Paint Standards:

All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds must follow minimum standards for compliance with the lead-based paint remediation and disclosure requirements identified in 24 CFR 576.403 and 578.99(f), including the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act<sup>30</sup>, the Residential Lead- Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992<sup>31</sup> and implementing regulations in 24 CFR part 35, subparts A, B, H, J, K, M and R.

### Faith-Based Activities:

All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds must follow minimum standards for faith-based activities (24 CFR §576.406 and §578.87).

- Providers receiving ESG funding shall not engage in inherently religious activities as part of the ESG funded programs or services. Such activities must be offered separately from ESG funded programs and services and participation must be voluntary.
- A religious organization receiving ESG funding retains independence from government and may continue with its mission provided that ESG funds are not used to support inherently religious activities. An ESG-funded organization retains its authority over its internal governance.
- An organization receiving ESG funding shall not discriminate against a participant or prospective participant based on religion or religious beliefs.
- ESG funding shall not be used for the rehabilitation of structures used specifically for religious activities but may be used for rehabilitating structures that are used for ESG- eligible activities.

### Program Coordination:

All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds are expected to maintain the minimum standards for on-going system and program coordination and integration of ESG funded activities to the maximum extent practicable. This includes coordination with the following:

- Street Outreach (SO) providers
- Emergency Shelter (ES) providers
- Homelessness Prevention (HP) providers
- Rapid Re-housing (RRH) assistance providers

#### *Other Homeless Assistance Programs:*

- HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH);
- Education for Homeless Children and Youth Grants for State and Local Activities (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act);
- Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals;
- Healthcare for the Homeless;
- Programs for Runaway and Homeless Youth;
- Projects for the Assistance in the Transition from Homelessness;
  - Services in Supportive Housing Grants;
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program;

*Mainstream Services & Housing Programs:*

- Public housing programs assisted under section 9 of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937;
- Housing programs receiving Section 8 tenant based or project-based assistance;
- Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities;
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program;
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Other essential services providers
- Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Survivors of Sexual Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Stalking Program;
- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program;
- Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program;
- VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program;
- Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program;
- Homeless Veterans Dental Program;
- Supportive Services for Veterans Families Program; and
- Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative
- Health Center Program;
- State Children's Health Insurance
- Program;
- Head Start;
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Block Grants;
- Services funded under the Workforce Investment Act; and
- State Housing Related Assistance Program for Adults with Serious Mental Illness

**Connections with Other Resources:**

All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds are expected to follow the minimum standards for assisting each participant in connecting with other supportive and stabilization resources (as applicable). Appropriate supportive services and stabilization resources include the following:

*Supportive Services:*

- Permanent housing;
- Medical health treatment;
- Behavioral health services;
- Counseling;

*Stabilization Services:*

- Medicaid;
- Medicare;
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program;
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC);
- Federal-State Unemployment Insurance Program;

- Supervision; and

#### *Other services needed for independent living*

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI);
- Child and Adult Care Food Program; and
- Other available assistance

### **Income Determination:**

All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds are expected to comply with the minimum standards for determining an individual's or family's annual income. This includes calculating income in compliance with 24 CFR §5.609. Annual income is defined as all amounts, monetary or not, which:

- Go to, or on behalf of, the family head or spouse (even if temporarily absent) or to any other family member; or
- Are anticipated to be received from a source outside the family during the 12- month period following admission or annual reexamination effective date; and
- Which are not specifically excluded in paragraph (c) of 24 CFR §5.609.

Annual income also means amounts derived (during the 12-month period) from assets to which any member of the family has access.

In verifying income, ESG funded providers are required to obtain source documents whenever possible. Self-certification or verification is to be accepted only when all efforts have been made to obtain source documents or third-party verification have not produced results.

### **Records and Recordkeeping:**

All recipients and subrecipients of ESG program funds must follow the minimum standards, which include, ensuring sufficient written records are established and maintained to enable the ESG recipient, the CCCoC, and HUD to determine whether ESG requirements are being met and comply with §576.500 and §578.103.

### **Program Policies and Procedures:**

Services are coordinated with Continuum(s) of Care, other homeless assistance/prevention programs and mainstream service and assistance programs.

Compliance with HUD's ESG (24 CFR §576 and 578) requirements for:

#### *Shelter and housing:*

- Conflict of interest
- Homeless participation
- Faith-based activity

- Nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and affirmative outreach
- Uniform administrative rules (24 CFR part 84)
- Program participant records are kept secure and confidential
- Participation in HMIS or comparable database
- Homeless status
- At risk of homelessness status
- Determination of ineligibility
- Annual income
- Program participant records
- Centralized or coordinated assessment systems and procedures
- Rental assistance agreements and payments
- Environmental review
- Lobbying and disclosure (24 CFR part 87)
- Displacement, relocation, and acquisition
- Procurement (24 CFR §84.40-84.48)
- Utility allowance
- Emergency shelter facilities
- Services and assistance provided
- Coordination with CoCs and other programs
- Matching
- Financial records
- Subrecipients and contractors
- Period of record retention
- Access to records
- Reports

*ESG Program Participation Records:*

- Evidence of homeless status or at risk of homelessness status, as applicable
- The services and assistance provided to the program participant including, as applicable, the security deposit, rental assistance, and utility payments
- Compliance with applicable requirements for providing services to that program participant under the program components and eligible activities (576.101-576.106)
- Compliance with applicable requirements for providing services to that program participant under the provision on determining eligibility and the amount and type of assistance (576.401(a) and (b)).
- Compliance with applicable requirements for providing services to that program participant under the provision on using appropriate assistance and services (576.401(d) and (e)).

*Case Management:*

- Notes verifying case management services were provided at least monthly, unless exempt from this requirement
- Notes verifying program participant's eligibility was re-evaluated at least every 3 months for homelessness prevention services or at least annually for rapid rehousing services
- Notes verifying program participant was assisted to obtain necessary mainstream and other resources

- Notes documenting reported changes in the program participant Eligibility Requirements:
- A copy of the CoC-approved coordinated assessment of the program participant and recording that information in HMIS. This assessment must be periodically updated for all homeless participants.
- Determination and verification/certification that the program participant was eligible for the services and/or financial assistance
- Determination and verification/certification of the program participant's homeless or at risk of homelessness status
- Determination and verification/certification that the program participant lacked sufficient resources and support networks to obtain assistance from other sources.
- Determination and verification/certification that the program participant met income requirements, as applicable, and that an effort was made to obtain source documents or written third-party verification, when possible and applicable. This includes annual documentation of income for each program participant who receives housing assistance where rent or an occupancy charge is paid by the program participant.
- When applicable, determination that individual or family was ineligible for ESG assistance, which should include the reason for that determination in sufficient detail that the logic behind determination is clear.

*Financial Assistance Information Requirements:*

- Identification of the specific services and financial assistance amounts that were provided to the program participant
- Copies of written leases and rental agreements, documentation of payments made, including dates of occupancy, and compliance with fair market rent, rent reasonableness and utility allowance requirements
- Determination and verification that the housing unit met HUDs habitability and lead based paint standards

*Housing Relocation & Stabilization Requirements:*

- When applicable, verification that the services were terminated in compliance with 576.402 and/or 578.91.
- Copy of individualized housing stability plan

*Homelessness Prevention (HP) Only Requirements:*

- Determination and verification/certification that the program participant met the criteria for being Homeless or At-Risk of Homelessness and that an effort was made to obtain written third- party verification, when possible and applicable.

*Rapid Rehousing (RRH) Only Requirements:*

- Determination and verification/certification that the program participant met the criteria for being Category 1 or Category 4 Homeless (as long as the individuals/families fleeing or attempting to flee DV are also literally homeless) and that an effort was made to obtain written third-party verification, when possible and applicable.

#### *Financial Records Requirements:*

- Supporting documentation for all costs charged to ESG
- Documentation showing ESG funds were spent on allowable costs in accordance with the requirements for eligible activities (24 CFR 576 and 578) and costs principles (2 CFR Part 200)
- Time sheets and time allocation for all personnel paid for with ESG funding
- Documentation of the receipt and use of program income
- Documentation of the receipt and use of matching funds
- Copies of procurement contracts

## **C. Emergency Shelter Programs**

An effective crisis response system provides immediate and low-barrier access to safe and decent shelter to anyone that needs it and aims to house people as quickly as possible. Emergency shelters, and other types of crisis housing, play a critical role in the community's response system and strategy to end homelessness.

### **Participant Eligibility:**

People are eligible for these services if they qualify as "homeless" based on categories (1, 2, or 4) of the "homeless" definition found at 24 CFR 576.232. Eligible activities, in compliance with federal ESG rules (24 CFR 576.102) in addition to the provision of decent, safe, and sanitary emergency shelter accommodations include:

- Case management;
- Child Care;
- Education,
- Employment and Life Skills Services;
- Legal Services;
- Health,
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services;
- Transportation

### **Minimum Standards:**

#### *Safety, Sanitation, & Privacy:*

- Any building for which ESG funds were used for conversion, major rehabilitation, or other renovation or that receives ESG assistance for shelter operations shall meet state/local government safety and sanitation standards, as well as the following:
  - **Structure and materials:** The building must be structurally sound, protect participants from the elements and not pose any threats to their health or safety.
  - **Products and appliances:** Any ESG funded renovation, including major rehabilitation and conversion, must use Energy Star and WaterSense products/appliances.
  - **Access:** The shelter must comply with the applicable Rehabilitation, Fair Housing, and Americans with Disabilities Acts and implement regulations.

- **Space and security:** Unless it is a day shelter, it must provide appropriate places to sleep, adequate space, and security for residents and their belongings.
- **Interior air quality:** Each shelter room/space must have proper ventilation and be pollutant free.
- **Water supply:** Must be free of contamination.
- **Sanitary facilities:** Each participant must have access to sufficient, sanitary facilities that are in proper operating condition, private and adequate for personal cleanliness and disposal of human waste.
- **Thermal environment:** The shelter must have the necessary, properly operating heating/cooling facilities.
- **Illumination and electricity:** The shelter must have adequate and appropriate lighting and safe electrical sources.
- **Food preparation:** Any food preparation areas must be able to store, prepare, and serve safe and sanitary food.
- **Sanitary conditions:** The shelter must be in sanitary condition.
- **Fire safety:** Each occupied unit of the shelter must have at least one working smoke detector and when possible, they should be near sleeping areas. The fire alarm system must be designed for hearing-impaired residents. All public areas must have at least one working detector and there must be a second means of exiting the building in the event of an emergency.

### *Shelter Diversion:*

Shelter Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness at the front door by helping to identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting people experiencing homelessness with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing. Diversion should be attempted with all households seeking homeless services assistance.

### *Admission:*

Providers of Emergency Shelter services shall admit individuals and families who meet the HUD definition of "homeless," as specified in 24 CFR 576.2 (1, 2, & 4) and agencies' eligibility criteria. No provider funded under ESG program may serve homeless persons in Category 3 until it has been notified by Calhoun County Continuum of Care that a request has been made to serve this population and the request has been approved by HUD.

### *Assessment:*

- Individuals and families shall be assessed for Coordinated Entry using the CoC-Approved Coordinated Entry assessment, and that assessment must be recorded into HMIS.
- Families and individuals remaining in shelter for longer than thirty (30) days shall be reassessed by a Case Manager for housing every 30-45 days.

### *Intake:*

When appropriate, based on the individual's needs and wishes, the provision of or referral to Homelessness Prevention (HP) or Rapid Rehousing (RRH) services that can quickly assist individuals to maintain or obtain safe, permanent housing shall be prioritized over the provision of Emergency Shelter (ES)

Emergency shelters will prioritize shelter services for those:

- Individuals and families lacking other resources in the community even if limited assistance could be provided to end their homelessness.
- Are literally homeless and in the absence of shelter are likely to be living in an unsheltered setting.
- Individuals and families vulnerable to injury or illness if not sheltered. Transgender placement will be based on gender self-identification.

### *Discharge / Length of Stay:*

Program participants shall be discharged from Emergency Shelter services when they choose to leave or when they have successfully obtained safe, permanent housing. Any Length of Stay limitations shall be determined by the individual service provider's policies and clearly communicated to program participants. Providers of shelter services are strongly encouraged not to discharge individuals and families who have not secured permanent housing and maintain those households in shelter until they can be placed in appropriate permanent housing.

### *Safety and Shelter Safeguards for Special Populations:*

Safety and Shelter Safeguards shall be determined by the individual Special Population service provider's policies and clearly communicated to program participants.

## **D. Homeless Prevention (HP) and Rapid Rehousing (RRH) Programs**

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) and Homelessness Prevention (HP) Programs provide housing relocation and stabilization services and short or medium-term rental assistance to help a family or individual retain permanent housing or move as quickly as possible to permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing.

### Participant Eligibility:

#### **Homelessness Prevention (HP):**

To be eligible for HP Relocation and Stabilization Services and Short-Term and Medium-Term Rental Assistance, people must qualify as "at risk of homelessness" based on categories (2 or 4) of the HUD "homeless" definition or based on the "at risk of homelessness" definition found at 24 CFR 576.2, require HP services to prevent moving into an emergency shelter or another place described in category (1) of the "homeless" definition in 24 CFR 576.2, have an annual income below 30% of the median income for the area and be a resident of Calhoun County for at least 30 days prior to requesting assistance. (24 CFR 576.103, 576.105, 576.106)

#### **Rapid Re-Housing (RRH):**

ESG funded rapid rehousing will follow the standards as set forth during the NOFA under which the program funds were awarded.

In all instances in which participants are charged rent or occupancy charges, the amount charged must be based on participants verified annual income for all sources. All participants must lack sufficient resources or support networks to retain housing without ESG assistance. Individuals & families assisted

under ESG are required to have annual incomes at or below 30% of the area median at annual assessment.

#### Eligible Activities for HP and RRH:

- Housing Relocation & Stabilization Services:
- Moving Costs;
- Rent Application Fees;
- Security Deposits;
- Last Month's Rent;
- Utility Deposits;
- Utility Payments ;
- Housing Search/Placement;
- Housing Stability Case Management;
- Mediation and Legal Services;
- Credit Repair/Budgeting/Money Management

#### RRH Rental Assistance:

Short-Term (up to 3 months) and Medium-Term (4-24 months) Rental Assistance, up to 24 months total during a 3-year period in tenant-based or project-based housing. Project-based rental assistance for RRH allowable for ESG funded programs only.

- The 24 months may include a one-time payment for up to 6 months of rent arrears on the tenant's portion of the rent (arrears covered under ESG only).
- Rent amount must not exceed HUD's published Fair Market Rent (ESG funded rapid rehousing only) and the HUD standard for rent reasonableness (ESG funded rapid rehousing) (24 CFR 982.507).
- There must be a rental assistance agreement between the landlord and agency and a legally binding, written lease between tenant and landlord.
- Eligibility and income shall be reviewed no less frequently than annually.
- Participants in rapid rehousing are required to meet with case managers no less frequently than monthly.

#### HP Assistance:

Short-Term (up to 3 months) and Medium-Term (4-24 months) Rental Assistance, up to 24 months total during a 3- year period in tenant-based or project-based housing

- The 24 months may include a one-time payment for up to 6 months of rent arrears on the tenant's portion of the rent. Rent amount must meet the federal requirements for Fair Market Rent (24 CFR 888) and the HUD standard for rent reasonableness (24 CFR 982.507). There must be a rental agreement between the landlord and agency and a written lease between tenant and landlord.

### Prioritization / Diversion / Referral:

When appropriate, based on the individual's needs and wishes, the provision of or referral to Homelessness Prevention (HP) or Rapid Rehousing (RRH) services that can quickly assist individuals to maintain or obtain safe, permanent housing shall be prioritized over the provision of Emergency Shelter (ES). ESG Program-funded RRH and ESG Prevention projects must serve participants referred from the local Coordinated Entry System, which prioritizes the following characteristics:

- Households with the highest service needs
- Households with the longest history of homelessness
- Households sleeping in an unsheltered location

### Assessment:

Rapid Re-Housing and Homelessness Prevention is matched to individuals by the local Coordinated Entry assessment, which is reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Coordinated Entry Committee. All ESG-funded agencies are encouraged to participate in that process.

### Exceptions:

There may be instances in which a household scored higher or lower on the assessment tool than expected. To ensure an appropriate housing assignment is made for every special circumstance, the CoC will hold monthly case conferencing sessions to override the automated system score when necessary. Service providers must attend case conferencing, or send a representative, to manually override the Coordinated Entry system score.

### Subpopulations:

In providing RRH or Homelessness Prevention assistance, providers will receive referrals based on the prioritization established in the local Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures. This prioritization will be updated periodically through the Coordinated Entry Committee based on subpopulation data and community input.

### Participant Contribution:

Minimum standards for determining what percentage or amount of rent and utilities costs each program participant shall pay while receiving Homelessness Prevention (HP) or Rapid-Rehousing (RRH) assistance are:

- Participant's income shall be verified prior to approval for initial and additional financial assistance. Documentation of the participant's income and expenses, including how the participant is contributing to housing costs, if at all, shall be maintained in participant's file. This file shall also contain a plan to sustain housing following the assistance, including either a plan to increase income or decrease expenses or both.
- Providers must establish policies concerning notification of changes in participant income and/or family composition. Providers may establish a minimum income change required to be reported of no greater than Fifty Dollars (\$50) per month and a maximum period in which the income change must be reported of no greater than thirty (30) days.

- Providers funded under ESG may pay up to 100 percent of the reasonable rent and utility costs for program participants. Providers may, at their discretion, choose to impose rental charges on participants. If providers elect to charge rent, these charges may not exceed those established in 24 CFR 576.106 or 578.77 for CoC program and as limited, below.
- CoC providers may but are not required to impose occupancy charges but if they elect to do so, the charges must be universally and consistently applied to all participants served.
- Participants are not required to contribute rent for the initial three (3) months in which the participant receives rental assistance. Participants who are assessed to require rental assistance beyond the initial three-month term will be expected to pay rent based on income as calculated at: 24 CFR 5.609, for CoC and ESG and 24 CFR 5.611(a) and as limited by 578.77(b) for CoC only.
- The maximum occupancy charge will not exceed the highest of 30% of the household's adjusted income or 10% of the total monthly income.
- Providers may not impose 'minimum rents'. Any occupancy charges imposed must be based on participant's income and may not exceed those established in 24 CFR 578.77.
- Providers are expected to provide hardship exemptions to any rental charges if such charges could lead to the loss of housing for the assisted household.
- CCCoC policy is that sufficient financial assistance should be provided to ensure the likelihood of positive housing outcomes after assistance and that every effort should be made to limit assistance to that which is necessary for housing stability.
- Any additional requirements regarding the percentage or amount of rent and utilities costs each program participant shall pay shall be determined by the individual service provider's policies and clearly communicated to program participants.
- The calculation of participant's income, the level of financial assistance provided, whether a hardship exemption is granted are all decisions that must be appealable to the provider and, if the participant is not satisfied with the response, to the CoC.

#### Rental Assistance Duration and Adjustment:

Minimum standards for determining how long a program participant shall be provided with rental assistance and how the amount of that assistance shall be adjusted over time are:

- Participants shall receive approval for the minimum amount of financial assistance necessary to prevent homelessness. Documentation of financial need shall be kept in the participant's file for each quarterly assessment. Participants shall not be approved for more rental assistance than can be justified given their income and expenses at a given time.

- Providers must re-assess the continuing need for rental assistance before approving an additional increment. In no event will assistance under rapid rehousing exceed 24 months in any 36-month period.
- Any additional requirements regarding how long a program participant shall be provided with rental assistance and whether and how the amount of that assistance shall be adjusted over time shall be determined by the individual service provider's policies and clearly communicated to program participants.

#### Limitations on Financial Assistance:

Financial assistance provided to participants under ESG funded prevention and rapid rehousing services may not exceed the limitations set forth below:

- Prohibition on use with other subsidies: Payment for Financial Assistance costs shall not be provided to a participant who is receiving the same type of financial assistance through other public sources or to a participant who has been provided with replacement housing payments under the URA, during the period covered by the URA payments.
- Rental application fees: Payment shall only be made for fees charged by the owner to all applicants.
- Security deposits: Payment shall not exceed one and a half (1.5) month's rent.
- Last month's rent: Payment shall not exceed one (1) month's rent and shall be included in calculating the participant's total rental assistance.
- Utility deposits: Payment shall only be made for gas, electric, water and sewage deposits.
- Utility payments:
  - Payment shall not exceed 24 months per participant, including no more than 6 months of utility payments in arrears, per service.
  - A partial payment counts as 1 month.
  - Payment shall only be made if the utility account is in the name of the participant or a member of the same household.
  - Payment shall only be made for gas, electric, water and sewage costs.
  - Participants shall not receive more than 24 months of utility assistance within any 3-year period.
  - Moving costs: Reasonable one-time moving expenses are eligible.

### Rental Assistance:

Payment shall not exceed 24 months total during a 3-year period in tenant- based or project- based housing.

- Payment for short-term rental assistance shall not exceed 3 months.
- Payment for medium-term rental assistance shall not exceed 24 months.
- Payment for rent arrears shall not exceed 6 months and shall be a one-time payment, including any late fees
- Prohibition on use with other subsidies: Except for a one-time payment of rental arrears on the participant's portion, payment shall not be provided to a participant who is receiving tenant- based rental assistance or living in a unit receiving project-based assistance or to a participant who has been provided with replacement housing payments under the URA, during the period covered by the URA payments.
- Payment shall comply with HUD's standard of rent reasonableness (24 CFR 982.507).
- Calculation of the rental payment amount shall only include monthly rent for the unit, any occupancy fees under the lease (except for pet and late fees) and if the participant pays separately for utilities, the monthly utility allowance established by the public housing authority for the area in which the housing is located.
- Payment for rental assistance shall only be made when there is a rental assistance agreement between the provider and the owner, which sets forth the terms under which rental assistance will be provided, including the prior requirements; a requirement that the owner provide the subrecipient with a copy of any notice to vacate given to the participant or any complaint used to commence an eviction action; and the same payment due date, grace period and late payment penalty requirement as the participant's lease.
- Payment of any late payment penalties incurred by the agency shall not be claimed for reimbursement.
- Payment shall only be made when there is a legally binding, written lease for the rental unit between the participant and the owner, except for payment of rental arrears.
- For rental arrears an oral agreement may be accepted in place of a written lease, if the agreement gives the program participant an enforceable leasehold interest under state law and the agreement and rent owed are sufficiently documented by the owner's financial records.
- Payment shall only be made for units that have been inspected for HUD Housing Quality Standards and ESG standard for fire safety (576.403(c) (10)) and re-inspected no less frequently than annually for Rapid Rehousing and Homelessness Prevention. Rental assistance shall not be paid on behalf of any unit that does not meet Housing Quality Standards and ESG fire safety standards.

### Limitations on Tenant-Based Rental Assistance:

The rental assistance agreement with the unit owner shall be terminated without further payment if:

- The participant moves out of the unit
- The lease terminates and is not renewed
- The participant becomes ineligible to receive ESG rental assistance

### Limitations on Project-Based Rental Assistance:

Payment shall only be made under the following conditions:

- The lease has an initial term of one year

- The rental assistance agreement covers one or more permanent housing units in the same building
- Each unit covered by the agreement is only occupied by participants
- Payment will only be made for up to 100% of the first month's rent, if the participant signs a lease and moves into the unit before the end of the month.

### Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services – Service Type, Amount, and Duration:

Determining the type, amount, and duration of housing stabilization and/or relocation services to provide to a program participant, including the limits, if any, on the homelessness prevention or rapid rehousing assistance that each program participant shall receive, such as the maximum amount of assistance, maximum number of months the program participant may receive assistance; or the maximum number of times the program participant may receive assistance are detailed in the following subsections.

Any additional requirements regarding the type, amount, and duration of housing stabilization and/or relocation services that will be provided to a program participant, including any limitations shall be determined by the individual service provider's policies and clearly communicated to program participants.

### Housing Search and Placement Services:

Payment shall only be made for assisting participants to locate, obtain and retain suitable permanent housing through provision of the following services:

- Assessment of housing barriers, needs and preferences
- Development of an action plan for locating housing
- Housing search
- Outreach to and negotiation with owners
- Assistance with submitting rental applications and understanding leases
- Assessment of housing for compliance with ESG requirements for habitability, lead-based paint and rent reasonableness
- Assistance with obtaining utilities and making moving arrangements
- Tenant counseling

### Housing Stability Case Management:

Payment shall only be made for assessing, arranging, coordinating, and monitoring the delivery of individualized services to facilitate housing stability for a participant who resides in permanent housing or to assist a participant in overcoming immediate barriers to obtaining housing through provision of the following services:

- Using the Coordinated Entry system
- Conducting the initial evaluation, including verifying and documenting participant eligibility
- Counseling
- Developing, securing, and coordinating services and obtaining Federal, State and local benefits
- Monitoring and evaluating participant progress
- Providing information and referral to other providers

- Developing an individualized housing and service plan and supporting the participant in accomplishing the plan.
- Conducting re-evaluations

Under the Rapid Re-Housing component, Payment for housing stability case management services provided while the participant is seeking permanent housing shall not exceed 30 days for ESG funded services. Payment for housing stability case management services provided while the participant is living in permanent housing shall not exceed 24 months. Housing stability case managers are expected to meet with participants in their homes, or at a location convenient for the participant, and must have a minimum of one contact per month with participants. All contact between case managers and program participants shall be documented in case notes in the local HMIS.

#### Mediation:

Payment shall only be made for the cost of mediation between the participant and the owner or person with whom the participant is living, if it is necessary to prevent the participant from losing the permanent housing where he/she resides. Payment for mediation services shall not exceed 24 months during any 3-year period.

#### Legal Services:

Necessary legal services regarding matters that interfere with the program participant's ability to obtain or retain housing are eligible costs, including:

- Child support
- Guardianship
- Paternity
- Emancipation
- Legal separation
- Resolution of outstanding criminal warrants
- Appeal of veterans and public benefit claim denials
- Orders of protection and other civil remedies for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking

#### Re-Evaluations:

Minimum standards for completing eligibility re-evaluations of individuals and families are listed below.

#### *Homeless Prevention (HP):*

- Participants shall be re-evaluated not less than once every three months.

#### *Rapid Re-Housing (RRH):*

- Participants shall be re-evaluated not less than once annually.

#### Eligibility:

- o the participant shall have an annual income that does not exceed 30 percent of median family income for the area or less, as determined by HUD at the time of annual re-evaluation; and
- o the participant shall lack sufficient resources and support networks necessary to retain

housing without ESG assistance.

### Minimum Standards:

Minimum standards for all shelters and program participant-occupied housing consist of compliance with the safety, sanitation & privacy requirements identified in 24 CFR 576.403 and 578.75. Providers shall not use ESG funding to help someone remain or move into housing if the housing does not meet the following minimum habitability standards:

- **Structure and Materials:** The building must be structurally sound, protect participants from the elements and not pose any threats to their health or safety.
- **Space and security:** Each resident must have adequate space and security for themselves and their belongings and an acceptable place to sleep.
- **Interior air quality:** Each room or space must have proper ventilation and be pollutant free.
- **Water supply:** Must be free of contamination.
- **Sanitary facilities:** Residents must have access to sufficient, sanitary facilities that are in proper operating condition, private and adequate for personal cleanliness and disposal of human waste.
- **Thermal environment:** The housing must have the necessary, properly operating heating/cooling facilities.
- **Illumination and electricity:** The structure must have adequate and appropriate lighting and safe electrical sources.
- **Food preparation:** All food preparation areas contain suitable space and equipment to store, prepare, and serve safe and sanitary food.
- **Sanitary conditions:** The housing must be in sanitary condition.
- **Fire safety:**
  - There must be a second means of exiting the building in the event of an emergency.
  - Each unit must include at least one properly working smoke detector on each occupied level of the unit, located when possible in a hallway adjacent to a bedroom.
  - If the unit is occupied by a hearing-impaired person, smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for hearing-impaired persons in each bedroom he or she occupies.
  - The public areas of the housing must be equipped with enough detectors, but not less than one for each area.

### Participant Eligibility:

Individuals and families who meet the federal criteria under category (1) or (4) of the “homeless” definition in 24 CFR 576.2. Eligible households include individuals with disabilities and families in which one adult or child has a disability.

- All referrals must come from the local Coordinated Entry System and prioritization method.
- If no Chronically Homeless Individuals or Families remain, CE will prioritize following HUD’s Established Order of Priority for Permanent Supportive Housing (Notice CPD 16-11).
  - o Households must meet the HUD definition of homelessness
  - o One adult or child member of the household must have a disability
- Must follow any additional eligibility criteria set forth in the NOFA through which a project was funded and the grant agreement (e.g., Projects originally funded must continue to serve chronically homeless

individuals and families; projects funded under the Permanent Supportive Housing Bonus must continue to serve the homeless population outlined in the NOFA under which the project was originally awarded).

- Programs may not establish additional eligibility requirements beyond those specified here and those required by funders.

#### Housing First for PSH Projects:

Providers of Permanent Supportive Housing shall use the Housing First model as outlined below. Any new projects funded by the CoC must use the Housing First model.

#### Appeals Process:

All ESG funded providers must provide a written copy of their program's rules and the termination process, and the right to appeal, before the participant begins to receive assistance. The initial appeal of any decision shall be made to the ESG funded provider pursuant to the process described below. Should the participant not be satisfied with the appeal decision, he/she has the right to appeal that decision to the CoC Board. The CoC Board shall follow the process for appeals specified below.

#### Reasons for Appeal:

- The decision whether to admit the participant into the program
- The determination of the household's income or the households calculated rent
- payment/occupancy charge
- Denial of a request to add a member to the assisted household
- Whether to terminate the participation of any participant

#### Minimum Appeal Requirements:

- Participants may request an appeal verbally or in writing.
- The provider will respond to the appeal request as soon as practicable but no later than one month following the request.
- As part of the appeal, the participant may present written or oral objections before a person other than the person (or a subordinate of that person) who made the decision that is subject to appeal.
- The participant may be represented in the appeal but neither the CoC, ESG recipient nor the provider is responsible for providing or funding someone to represent the participant.
- A written response must be promptly provided to the participant.

#### Appeals of Decisions to Terminate:

- These decisions must be made in compliance with 24 CFR 576.402 or 578.91. Appeals of Decisions Other Than to Terminate the Participant from the Program:

- These appeals are initiated by the participant. The participant must notify the ESG funded provider that he/she wishes to appeal a decision or determination of the provider.

#### Appeals to the CoC Board:

If the participant is not satisfied with the response to his/her appeal from the ESG funded provider, the appeal may be made to the Board.

#### Minimum Requirements:

- The appeal may be in writing, orally or both.
- The participant may be represented but the CoC Board is not responsible for providing representation.
- The CoC Board may designate a subcommittee to hear appeals.
  - o If the appeal has been designated to a subcommittee, the participant shall have the right to appeal to the CoC Board.
- Appeals shall be addressed within sixty (days) of receipt of the appeal by the Board.
- Participants will receive prompt written notification of the outcome of the appeal.

#### Participant Termination:

Participants who are to be terminated must be provided written notice containing a clear statement of the reasons for termination.

#### Minimum Requirements:

- Participants may request an appeal verbally or in writing.
- The provider will respond to the appeal request as soon as possible but no later than one month following the request.
- As part of the appeal, the participant may present written or oral objections before a person other than the person (or a subordinate of that person) who made the decision that is subject to appeal.
- The participant may be represented in the appeal but neither the CoC, ESG recipient, nor the provider is responsible for providing or funding someone to represent the participant.
- A written response must be promptly provided to the participant.
- The appeal may be in writing, orally or both.
- The participant may be represented but the CoC Board is not responsible for providing representation.
- The CoC Board may designate a subcommittee to hear appeals.
  - o If the appeal has been designated to a subcommittee, the participant shall have the right to appeal to the CoC Board.
- Appeals shall be addressed within sixty (days) of receipt of the appeal by the Board.
- Participants will receive prompt written notification of the outcome of the appeal.

## E. Street Outreach (SO)

**Target Population:** Although all homeless persons are considered a vulnerable population, street outreach activities should work to prioritize those who are extremely vulnerable (ex. Chronically homeless, unaccompanied youth, acute medical) --focusing on quality over volume of interactions.

**Eligibility: Homeless Status:** Individuals/families who meet the HUD criteria for the following definitions are eligible for Street Outreach services under ESG funding:

- Homeless Category 1: Literally Homeless
- Homeless Category 4: Fleeing/attempting to flee DV (where the individuals/families also

meet the criteria for Category 1)

- In addition, individuals and families must be living on the streets or other places not meant for human habitation and be unwilling or unable to access services in an emergency shelter

#### Engagement/Collaboration:

CCCoC requires that agencies conducting street outreach activities must engage with unsheltered homeless persons for the purpose of providing immediate support, intervention or connections with coordinated entry and mainstream social service programs. The connection of any unsheltered person to an emergency shelter, supportive housing, and/or referral to social service agencies will serve as immediate support and intervention for housing stabilization or critical services.

Agencies are encouraged to use evidenced based practices for their street outreach efforts; including the Housing First Model that quickly connects individuals to permanent housing in the face of acute barriers to entry into housing programs.

Eligibility, Intake and Assessment: CCCoC requires that agencies conducting street outreach activities must provide individuals and families with an assessment and enter data into HMIS or a comparable database for DV providers. CCCoC encourages providers to develop relationships with unsheltered homeless persons that will help connect them with emergency shelter and housing services primarily through a referral to the CCCoC Coordinated Entry System.

Given this context, sub-recipients who receive funding through ESG will be subject to the following coordination requirements:

Street Outreach sub-recipients must coordinate their services with emergency shelters and CE whenever possible, including:

- Reviewing HMIS to determine if unsheltered persons have already used services within the homeless crisis response system
- Ensure adequate information about families with children is in HMIS so that the Family Shelter Prioritization Tool can be used to assess prioritization for family shelter beds
- Refer individuals to emergency shelters to meet immediate needs
- Refer veterans to veterans' outreach staff for confirmation of veteran status and linkage to VA funded emergency shelter beds.

## F. Definitions

Continuum of Care (CoC) – A collaborative planning body designed to address homelessness through a coordinated community-based process of identifying needs and building a system of housing and services to address those needs. It is the body responsible for meeting the goals of HUD’s Continuum of Care Program.

CE-Coordinated Entry or Coordinated Assessment: Process for entry into housing assistance. Formerly it may have been called POE or Point of Entry. MSHDA’s HARA (Housing Assessment and Resource Agency) is a form of Coordinated Entry.

Emergency Shelter (ES) – A facility with overnight sleeping accommodations, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter for persons experiencing homelessness.

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) – a federally funded program to assist individuals and families to quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis or homelessness. ESG provides grants by formula to states, metropolitan cities, urban counties, and U.S. territories to support homelessness prevention, emergency shelter and related services.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) – A computerized data collection system that tracks services received by homeless people, helps identify gaps in services within the continuum, and allows for greater collaboration among service providers as the system provides a “history” of a homeless person’s involvement in the system of care making it easier for caseworkers to evaluate the situation and provide services in the most efficient manner. In addition, the HMIS system can help accurately describe a community’s homeless population including unduplicated census counts, need for increased capacity to fill service gaps. This system is required by HUD for all continuums of care.

Homelessness Prevention – Housing relocation and stabilization services and short-and/or medium-term rental assistance as necessary to prevent the individual or family from moving to an emergency shelter, a place not meant for human habitation, or another place described in HUD Category 1.

HUD – short for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the federal agency that oversees, regulates, and administers the ESG program nationwide.

Lived Experience - personal knowledge gained through direct first-hand involvement being homelessness or in housing crisis within the past two years, including but not limited to both homeowners and renters

MSHDA – short for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, the state agency that oversees, regulates, and administers Michigan’s statewide allocation of ESG funds;

Prioritization – Common, community-wide standards that determine who programs serve next from among multiple potential referrals with different vulnerabilities and needs

Program Participant – an individual or family who is assisted under ESG program, also often referred to as household.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) – An intervention that rapidly connects families and individuals experiencing homelessness (HUD Category 1 or Category 4) to permanent housing through housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and case management and services.

Sub-recipient – a unit of general purpose local government or private nonprofit organization to which a recipient makes available ESG funds.

Vulnerability – a combination of variables that indicate an individual or family is at a higher risk of death or harm due to continued homelessness.

- o VI-SPDAT: a standardized, shared housing assessment called the Vulnerability Index & Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) designed to identify a household's service needs as well as potential program eligibility.

- o Family VI-SPDAT: a version of the VI-SPDAT specialized for families with minor children.

- o TAY VI-SPD AT: "Transition Aged Youth Vulnerability Index & Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool" a version of the VI-SPDAT specialized for unaccompanied youth