



BUREAU OF HOMELESS SERVICES
Federal & State Funded Homeless Programs
Contract Specification Manual Overview

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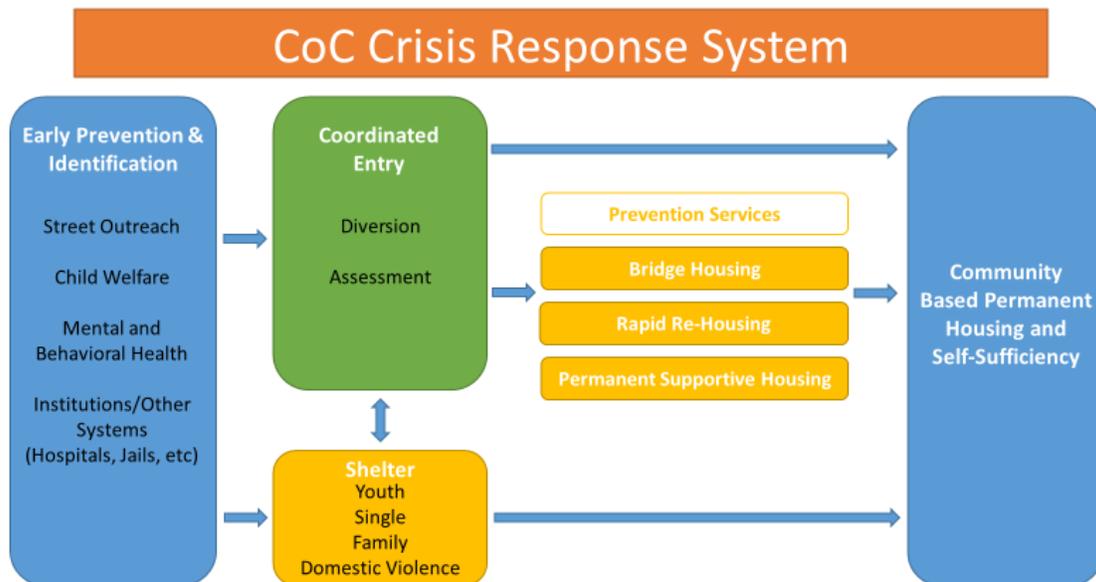
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Introduction

Overview of Allegheny County Homeless Continuum of Care System

The Allegheny County Continuum of Care (CoC) is the county’s community-based homeless assistance program planning system. It is composed of representatives from organizations such as nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons. The CoC has an array of housing and supportive services that are interwoven with funding from the federal government, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, local municipalities, and foundations.

Allegheny County’s Department of Human Services (DHS) is the Collaborative Applicant and HMIS lead agency for the Allegheny County Continuum of Care (CoC). For over 20 years, DHS has fulfilled the day-to-day and operational responsibilities to fulfill core duties of the CoC. This includes all administrative, planning, data collection/monitoring/reporting, system coordination, fiscal oversight and accountability. This designation is approved annually by the Homeless Advisory Board (HAB), which serves as the governance and policy board for the CoC.



The CoC is committed to the guiding philosophy of Housing First, an approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness so that housing can serve as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. In addition, the CoC is committed to serving the most vulnerable including special populations and needs such as chronically homeless, veterans, youth, domestic violence, mental health, drug and alcohol, HIV/AIDS, criminal justice and other disabilities.

Overview of Contracts Covered under this Contract Specification Manual

All homeless and housing programs funded through Allegheny County Department of Human Services (ACDHS or DHS) are covered by the guidance and requirements within this manual. These include Bureau of Homeless Services (BHS) programs funded by HUD, HAP (part of the state Human Services Block Grant) and Penn Free. In addition, homeless and housing programs funded, or receiving supplemental funding, from other DHS funding streams such as CYF, HSDF, PATH, CSBG, Affordable Housing Trust Fund and the Continuum of Care Supportive Services Fund must comply with these policies and procedures while also complying with the specific regulations tied to those individual funding streams.

Acronyms & Definitions

ACDHS or DHS- Allegheny County Department of Human Services, the Lead Agency who administers HMIS and serves as the CoC Collaborative Applicant.

Affordable Housing Trust Fund- An affordable housing program that complements existing Federal, state and local efforts to increase and preserve the supply of decent, safe, and sanitary affordable housing for extremely low- and very low-income households, including homeless families.

APR- Annual Performance Report, an annual progress report for all HUD funded housing programs.

BHS- Bureau of Homeless Services, Allegheny County Department of Human Services' administrative support for programs serving people experiencing homelessness.

Chronically Homeless- The definition of "chronically homeless" currently in effect is that which is defined in the [Final Rule 24 CFR Parts 91 and 578](#) which states that a chronically homeless person is:

1. An individual who:
 - a) Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and
 - b) Has been homeless (as described above) continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined occasions must total at least 12 months. Occasions are separated by a break of at least seven nights.
 - c) Can be diagnosed with one or more of the following conditions: substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability (as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002)), post- traumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability;
2. An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition before entering that facility; or
3. A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless. In order for a family to qualify as chronically homeless, the Head of Household must have a documented disability.

CoC- Continuum of Care. Continuum means the group organized to carry out the

responsibilities required under the CoC Program Interim Rule (24 CFR Part 578) and is comprised of representatives of organizations, including nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, and law enforcement, and organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless persons to the extent that these groups are represented within the geographic area and are available to participate.

Collaborative Applicant- The Collaborative Applicant collects and combines the required application information from all projects within the CoC and also applies for planning funds on behalf of the CoC. The HAB on behalf of the CoC has designated the Allegheny County DHS to serve as the CoC's Collaborative Applicant. [Hearth Act §578.9(a3)]

Continuum of Care Supportive Services Fund – Pooled foundation funding offered to HUD CoC-funded projects through an annual competitive application process to improve outcomes and meet HUD's match requirement.

CSBG- Community Services Block Grant is a federal, anti-poverty block grant which funds the operations of a state-administered network of local agencies.

CYF- Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families

ESG- The Emergency Solutions Grant. HUD administers ESG funds to engage homeless individuals and families living on the street, to improve the number and quality of emergency shelters, help operate emergency shelters and provide essential services to residents, rapidly rehouse individuals and families and prevent families and individuals from becoming homeless.

HAB-Homeless Advisory Board, is a public/private partnership formed to assist and recommend Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the Municipality of Penn Hills on public policy, programs, activities, data and all other efforts that will eliminate homelessness and improve the wellbeing of homeless persons and families.

HAP- Homeless Assistance Programs, administered by the state of Pennsylvania. HAP administers funding for case management, rental assistance, bridge housing, emergency shelter, and innovative supportive housing programs. It is part of the Human Services Block Grant.

Homeless- The [Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing \(HEARTH\) Act Final Rule](#) defines a homeless person or family as:

1. Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a subset for an individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution;
2. Individuals and families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence;
3. Unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who are defined as

homeless under other federal statutes who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition;¹ or

4. Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member.

HMIS- A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the information system designated by a local Continuum of Care (CoC) to comply with the requirements of CoC Program interim rule 24 CFR 578. It is a locally-administered data system used to record and analyze client, service and housing data for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. HMIS is a valuable resource because of its capacity to integrate and unduplicated data across projects in a community. Aggregate HMIS data can be used to understand the size, characteristics, and needs of the homeless population at multiple levels: project, system, local, state, and national.

Housing First- The guiding principle for the homeless system that prioritizes providing housing to people experiencing homelessness so that housing can serve as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people can better address complex life challenges -- getting a job, budgeting properly or attending to unhealthy substance use issues -- after their basic needs are met: food and a safe, permanent place to live.

HSDF- Human Services Development Fund provides Pennsylvania counties the necessary funds to address the needs of specific populations. The HSDF allows the county to be flexible in the design and provision of programs and services for low-income adults, the aging, dependent and delinquent children, the homeless or near homeless, and individuals with substance use disorders, mental health issues or intellectual disabilities.

HUD- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD serves over 1 million people through emergency, transitional, and permanent housing programs each year.

IO- In Allegheny County DHS serves as the Infrastructure Organization. The HAB has delegated to the IO the day-to-day and operational responsibilities that fulfill the core duties of the CoC. These, in part, include acting as the CoC's Collaborative Applicant, providing overall financial management, developing and maintaining the HMIS, developing and running a centralized assessment and coordinated intake system, monitoring performance, providing data and reports, and staffing HAB meetings and initiatives.

PATH- Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness is a SAMHSA funded program aimed to service people with serious mental illness (SMI) and how are experiencing homelessness.

¹ At this time, the Allegheny County CoC does not have permission to use definition #3 to qualify persons as homeless.

Penn-Free Bridge Housing- A housing program designed to serve individuals and families with members who have a history of unhealthy substance use and who are experiencing homelessness. Penn-Free Bridge Housing provides rental assistance and supportive services for up to one year with the goal of successfully exiting the program to permanent housing.

VI-SPDAT- Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool is a survey administered both to individuals and families to determine risk and prioritization when providing assistance to homeless and at-risk of homelessness persons.

HAP Program Overview

The Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) includes five components: Bridge Housing, Case Management, Rental Assistance, Emergency Shelter, and Innovative supportive housing services. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania funds HAP through an annual block grant, the Human Services Block Grant (HSBG). The Pennsylvania DHS Office of Income Maintenance (OIM) administers HAP and allocates a portion of the HSBG funds to each county with the expectation that counties will design homeless assistance programs that meet HAP goals within the parameters outlined by the state.

The following is an overview of the five types of programs funded under HAP:

Bridge Housing: The purpose of Bridge Housing is to provide temporary housing for up to one year, case management and linkages with other appropriate supportive services. Bridge Housing allows homeless individuals and families who are in temporary housing to move to permanent living arrangements while preparing them to live independently.

Case Management: The purpose of the Case Management Program to provide homeless individuals and families in need of supportive services, with a coordinated link to needed services, to advise the consumer(s) on various housing options, and to work with the consumer(s) to resolve problems related to homelessness. Case management is defined as a collaborative process that assesses, plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates the options and services required to meet the client's health and human service needs. It is characterized by advocacy, communication, and resource management and promotes quality and cost-effective interventions and outcomes.

Emergency Shelter: An Emergency Shelter is defined as refuge and care to persons who are in immediate need and are homeless; i.e., have no permanent legal residence of their own. Services include mass or individual shelter in congregate settings, and individual shelter paid through a voucher system to house consumers in hotels or motels. Emergency shelter programs are not permitted to charge clients a fee for services. Client counts are recorded in HMIS. Subsequently, emergency shelter providers invoice DHS on a per diem basis.

Innovative Services: The purpose of the Innovative Services Program is to provide services that are not otherwise readily available in HAP. This program acts as a "catch all" to support households with necessities that no other program in the CoC may be able to provide such as assistance with transportation, documents, outreach supplies, moving assistance and furniture. The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Social Programs has approved the program as operating as an Innovative Services Program.

Rental Assistance: The purpose of the Rental Assistance Program is to prevent and/or end homelessness by providing payment for rent, security deposit, or utilities to individuals or families experiencing homelessness. Assistance includes intervention where an eviction is imminent and may also be used to expedite the movement of people out of shelters into existing housing.

Copies of the DHS Scopes of Service for the above programs can be requested from Kathryn Holko, Homeless Services Assistant Administrator, Kathryn.Holko@alleghenycounty.us

Penn-Free Bridge Housing: Penn-Free Bridge Housing is for individuals and families with a history of unhealthy drug and alcohol use who are experiencing homelessness. It provides up to one year of rental assistance in scattered-site housing along with case management and linkages to supportive services. It is designed to support homeless individuals and families that are at any point on their path to recovery (i.e. from still using to up to two years sober).

Penn-Free Bridge Housing must follow the [Standards of Care for Rapid Re-Housing](#).

HAP Program Requirements

Provider Guidelines

Providers must:

- Maximize the use of other public and private community resources to leverage state HAP funds for both the county and service providers. Counties and service providers may accept monetary contributions from public and private organizations, as well as donations of property, equipment, and supplies, including accessing food and clothing banks, and utilizing volunteers.
- Ensure that participation in the HAP is not dependent upon a client's affiliation with, or attendance at, religious or political activities.
- Ensure that the program does not discriminate against any person because of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, age, sex, disability, life style, or sexual orientation. Any person who believes that denial or termination of services is based on discrimination because of any of these reasons must be informed by the county of their right to appeal to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.
- Ensure that only homeless or near homeless clients are served with HAP funds and that funds are expended only on allowable services as described in these Instructions and Requirements.
- Collaborate with other community organizations or agencies such as County Mental Health and Intellectual Disability Programs; CAOs; private industry councils; Social Security Administration; local food banks; Veterans Administration; and other agencies for necessary services for each client. Service Providers that serve homeless children should work with the school district's liaison to insure the education of homeless children. The names of the liaisons are available from local school districts or the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- Meet applicable Fire and Panic Regulations, and applicable health and safety requirements for all facilities where service is provided, whether rented or owned by the county or service provider.
- Purchase or rent facilities that fall within the fair market value for the area. This does not apply to the Rental Assistance and Case Management components.
- Involve local fire officials in purchase and renovation decisions.
- Secure insurance on purchased facilities, which protects the program's investment.
- Ensure the protection and privacy of sleeping arrangements for all clients in facilities housing more than one target population.

Client Records: Service providers must maintain client case records, client intake procedures, and maintenance of service records for each client. The provider must maintain records that consider client confidentiality, but which share information that benefits the client. Counties and providers should consider the populations they serve and understand the risks and implications for particular clients if confidentiality is breached (e.g. when serving people experiencing both homelessness and domestic violence, the service provider must be cognizant of the risks facing the client and not allow breaches of confidentiality to place the person at increased risk).

At a minimum, client records must contain:

- Releases of information.
- Copies of client ID, SS card, and other proofs of identification (not required for Emergency Shelter).

- Intake and assessment forms.
- Acknowledgements of rules and regulations, rights and responsibilities, appeal process, etc.
- Service Plans and Progress Notes
- Referral form if not referred through the Allegheny Link.
- Proof of income and resources.
- Verifications provided demonstrating need for services (e.g. eviction notices, leases, bills, utility termination notices, etc.)
- Calculation worksheets used to determine eligibility and amount of assistance.
- The amounts and dates of assistance.
- Case notes.
- Approval or denial notices for Rental Assistance programs.
- Any document specific to a client's participation in a particular component (Program Agreement).

Written Agreements: Service providers must develop written agreements between the provider agency and the client. At a minimum, the written agreement must include the following items:

- Basic expectations of the client.
- The criteria for termination from the program and the procedures a client follows if they want to appeal denied or terminated services (County Termination and Appeal Policies).
- Fee schedules for room and board, where appropriate. This is not required in the Emergency Shelter component.
- Notification that the Landlord-Tenant Act is not applicable to housing provided with HAP funds. NOTE: The Landlord-Tenant Act applies only to scattered site units where the client signs the lease with the landlord versus the provider.
- Notify rental assistance clients who return for services after the 24-month period that they may be eligible for a lesser amount and must be required to participate in case management in order to receive any rental assistance.

In addition to these items, the provider agency may want to consider including the amount of client contribution the client is responsible for as well as any other type of pertinent information of which the client should be aware. For example, the service provider should provide Bridge Housing clients written information that the provider can access client's savings for damages to the unit or for non-payment of rent.

Maintaining Fiscal Records

The counties and service providers must maintain books, records, documents, and other evidence pertaining to costs and expenses of the grant to the extent and in such detail as will properly reflect all costs and expenses of whatever nature for which reimbursement is claimed or payment is made under the grant. Books, records, documents, and other evidence will be maintained according to generally accepted accounting principles.

Financial records, supporting documents, statistical records, records for nonexpendable property, and all other records pertinent to HAP grants will be retained for a period of four years following submission of the Final Expenditure and Client Reports to the department.

If any litigation, claims, or audit is started before the expiration of the four-year retention period, the records will be retained until litigation, claims, or audit findings involving the records is resolved.

Authorized representatives of the department or federal government, where applicable, will have access to any pertinent books, documents, papers, and records to make audits, examinations, excerpts, and transcripts. If it is determined that the records possess a long-term value, they will be transferred, as requested, to the department.

[County Human Services Planning and Expenditure Reports](#): Act 80 of 2012 requires the Department of Human Services to streamline the planning and reporting requirements for county human services programs. The Homeless Assistance Program Manager no longer provides the guidelines for completing the annual County Human Services Plan and Expenditure Reports. The Department of Human Services, Bureau of Financial Operations provides the reporting guidelines, templates, and reporting due dates to both block grant participating counties and nonblock grant counties.

Additional parameters for Homeless Assistance Programs can be found in the [Homeless Assistance Program Instructions and Requirements](#). **Please refer to the manual for full details and program regulations.**

HUD Program Overview

Within its role as the collaborative applicant and Infrastructure Organization (IO), DHS is the designated grantee for all HUD Continuum of Care grants. DHS applies for funding through the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), once awarded enters into contract with HUD, and manages the distribution of funds to sub-recipients. As such, all sub-recipients are contracted providers with DHS and must abide by DHS's contract and fiscal policies and procedures. Within this contracting procedure, and in accordance with HUD requirements, DHS monitors the sub-recipient, reimburses expenses to the sub-recipient and audits the sub-recipients.

Each collaborative applicant must keep the following documentation related to establishing and operating a Continuum of Care:

1. Evidence that the Board selected by the Continuum of Care meets the requirements that the board be representative of the relevant organizations and of projects serving homeless subpopulations; and include at least one homeless or formerly homeless individual.
2. Evidence that the Continuum has been established and operates an approved Governance Charter that is reviewed and updated annually, a written process for selecting a board that is reviewed and updated at least once every 5 years, publishes agendas and meeting minutes, has a designating single HMIS for the Continuum, and monitors reports of recipients and subrecipients;
3. Evidence that the Continuum has prepared the application for funds as set forth in the NOFA.

All HUD housing programs fall into one of two permanent housing categories, Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) or Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).

Rapid Re-Housing: Rapid re-housing is an intervention designed to help families and individuals move quickly out of homelessness and into permanent housing in the community. Built upon Housing First and Progressive Engagement approaches, rapid re-housing seeks to get those experiencing homelessness permanently housed as quickly as possible, utilizing the core components of housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and voluntary case management services. Within the Allegheny Counting Continuum of Care (CoC), rapid re-housing is one form of permanent housing intervention used, aimed at resolving the immediate housing crisis of individuals and families with moderate service needs. In some cases, it can also be used as a short-term bridge to permanent supportive housing (PSH) while an individual or family is waiting for a PSH unit to become available.

Further information, including principles and services of Rapid Re-Housing, can be found in the [Standards of Care for Rapid Re-Housing](#).

Permanent Supportive Housing: Permanent supportive housing is longer-term housing intervention with leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist homeless persons with a disability or families with an adult or child member with a disability achieve housing stability. It is the most service rich of all housing interventions in the Continuum of Care and, thus, should be reserved for those who most need that level of service.

Standards of Care for Permanent Supportive Housing are being developed. Please contact the Bureau of Homeless Services for more information.

HUD program expenses are broken down into five line-items:

- Rental Assistance
- Leasing
- Operating Costs
- Supportive Services
- Administrative Costs

Sub-recipients bill 100% of expenses to the County. For rental assistance, operating, supportive services and administration costs, the sub-recipient receives 100% reimbursement so long as the provider can show the required match (25%). There is no match for property leasing.

Funding specifications and eligible costs can be found in the [ACDHS HUD Fiscal Guidebook](#).

HUD Program Requirements

578.73 Matching requirements.

In general, the recipient or subrecipient must match all grant funds, except for leasing funds, with no less than 25 percent of funds or in-kind contributions from other sources.

For Continuum of Care geographic areas in which there is more than one grant agreement, the 25 percent match must be provided on a grant-by-grant basis. Recipients that are UFAs or are the sole recipient for their Continuum, may provide match on a Continuum-wide basis.

Cash sources. A recipient or subrecipient may use funds from any source, including any other federal sources (excluding Continuum of Care program funds), as well as State, local, and private sources, provided that funds from the source are not statutorily prohibited to be used as a match. The recipient must ensure that any funds used to satisfy the matching requirements of this section are eligible under the laws governing the funds in order to be used as matching funds for a grant awarded under this program.

In-kind contributions.

1. The recipient or subrecipient may use the value of any real property, equipment, goods, or services contributed to the project as match, provided that if the recipient or subrecipient had to pay for them with grant funds, the costs would have been eligible under Subpart D, or, in the case of HPCs, eligible under § 578.71.
2. The requirements of 2 CFR 200.306, with the exception of 200.306(b)(5) apply, as stated in Section 578.73(c)(2) of the CoC regulations.
3. Before grant execution, services to be provided by a third party must be documented by a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the recipient or subrecipient and the third party that will provide the services. Services provided by individuals must be valued at rates consistent with those ordinarily paid for similar work in the recipient's or subrecipient's organization. If the recipient or subrecipient does not have employees performing similar work, the rates must be consistent with those ordinarily paid by other employers for similar work in the same labor market.
 - a. The MOU must establish the unconditional commitment, except for selection to receive a grant, by the third party to provide the services, the specific service to be provided, the profession of the persons providing the service, and the hourly cost of the service to be provided.
 - b. During the term of the grant, the recipient or subrecipient must keep and make available, for inspection, records documenting the service hours provided.

578.75 General operations.

State and local requirements. Housing and facilities constructed or rehabilitated with assistance under this part must meet State or local building codes, and in the absence of State or local building codes, the International Residential Code or International Building Code (as applicable to the type of structure) of the International Code Council.

Services provided with assistance under this part must be provided in compliance with all applicable State and local requirements, including licensing requirements.

Housing quality standards. Housing leased with Continuum of Care program funds, or for which rental assistance payments are made with Continuum of Care program funds, must meet the applicable housing quality standards (HQS) as well as The Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act (42 U.S.C. 4821-4846). The Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (42 U.S.C. 4851-4856), and implementing regulations at 24 CFR part 35, subparts A, B, H, J, K, M, and R apply to activities under this program.

Please see attachment regarding [Housing Quality Standards](#).

Before any assistance will be provided on behalf of a program participant, the recipient, or subrecipient, must physically inspect each unit to assure that the unit meets all HQS and Lead-Based Paint Requirements. Assistance will not be provided for units that fail to meet HQS, unless the owner corrects any deficiencies within 30 days from the date of the initial inspection and the recipient or subrecipient verifies that all deficiencies have been corrected.

Recipients or subrecipients must inspect all units at least annually during the grant period to ensure that the units continue to meet HQS.

Suitable dwelling size. The dwelling unit must have at least one bedroom or living/sleeping room for each two persons.

Children of opposite sex, other than very young children, may not be required to occupy the same bedroom or living/sleeping room.

If household composition changes during the term of assistance, recipients and subrecipients may relocate the household to a more appropriately sized unit. The household must still have access to appropriate supportive services.

Meals. Each recipient and subrecipient of assistance under this part who provides supportive housing for homeless persons with disabilities must provide meals or meal preparation facilities for residents.

Ongoing assessment of supportive services. To the extent practicable, each project must provide supportive services for residents of the project and homeless persons using the project, which may be designed by the recipient or participants. Each recipient and subrecipient of assistance must conduct an ongoing assessment of the supportive services needed by the residents of the project, the availability of such services, and the coordination of services needed to ensure long-term housing stability and must make adjustments, as appropriate. Ongoing supportive service assessment must be completed monthly.

Residential supervision. Each recipient and subrecipient of assistance under this part must provide residential supervision as necessary to facilitate the adequate provision of supportive services to the residents of the housing throughout the term of the commitment to operate

supportive housing. Residential supervision may include the employment of a full- or part-time residential supervisor with sufficient knowledge to provide or to supervise the provision of supportive services to the residents.

Participation of homeless individuals. Each recipient and subrecipient must provide for the participation of not less than one homeless individual or formerly homeless individual on the board of directors or other equivalent policymaking entity of the recipient or subrecipient, to the extent that such entity considers and makes policies and decisions regarding any project, supportive services, or assistance provided under this part. *This requirement is waived if a recipient or subrecipient is unable to meet such requirement and obtains HUD approval for a plan to otherwise consult with homeless or formerly homeless persons when considering and making policies and decisions.*

Each recipient and subrecipient of assistance under this part must, to the maximum extent practicable, involve homeless individuals and families through employment; volunteer services; or otherwise in constructing, rehabilitating, maintaining, and operating the project, and in providing supportive services for the project.

Supportive service agreement. Recipients and subrecipients may require the program participants to take part in supportive services that are not disability-related services provided through the project as a condition of continued participation in the program. Examples of disability-related services include, but are not limited to, mental health services, outpatient health services, and provision of medication, which are provided to a person with a disability to address a condition caused by the disability. *Notwithstanding this provision, if the purpose of the project is to provide substance abuse treatment services, recipients and subrecipients may require program participants to take part in such services as a condition of continued participation in the program.*

Retention of assistance after death, incarceration, or institutionalization for more than 90 days of qualifying member. For permanent supportive housing projects, surviving members of any household who were living in a unit assisted under this part at the time of the qualifying member's death, long-term incarceration, or long-term institutionalization, have the right to rental assistance under this section until the expiration of the lease in effect at the time of the qualifying member's death, long-term incarceration, or long-term institutionalization.

578.77 Calculating occupancy charges and rent.

Occupancy agreements and leases. Recipients and subrecipients must have signed occupancy agreements or leases (or subleases) with program participants residing in housing.

Calculation of occupancy charges. If occupancy charges are imposed, each program participant on whose behalf rental assistance payments are made must pay a contribution toward rent in accordance with the U.S. Housing Act of 1937. They may not exceed the highest of:

1. 30 percent of the family's monthly adjusted income (adjustment factors include the number of people in the family, age of family members, medical expenses, and child-care expenses)
2. 10 percent of the family's monthly income
3. If the family is receiving payments for welfare assistance from a public agency and a part of the payments (adjusted in accordance with the family's actual housing costs) is specifically designated by the agency to meet the family's housing costs, the portion of the payments that is designated for housing costs.

Income. Income must be calculated in accordance with 24 CFR 5.609 and 24 CFR 5.611(a). Please reference [Income Inclusions and Exclusions](#) for clarification. Recipients and subrecipients must examine a program participant's income initially, and if there is a change in family composition (e.g., birth of a child or marriage) or a decrease in the resident's income during the year, the resident may request an interim reexamination, and the occupancy charge will be adjusted accordingly.

[Resident rent/amount of rent.](#)

Each program participant on whose behalf rental assistance payments are made must pay a contribution toward rent in accordance with the U.S. Housing Act of 1937.

Recipients or subrecipients must examine a program participant's income initially, and at least annually thereafter, to determine the amount of the contribution toward rent payable by the program participant. Adjustments to a program participant's contribution toward the rental payment must be made as changes in income are identified.

Verification. As a condition of participation in the program, each program participant must agree to supply the information or documentation necessary to verify the program participant's income. Program participants must provide the recipient or subrecipient with information at any time regarding changes in income or other circumstances that may result in changes to a program participant's contribution toward the rental payment.

[578.81 Term of commitment, repayment of grants, and prevention of undue benefits.](#)

In general, all recipients and subrecipients receiving grant funds for acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction must operate the housing or provide supportive services in accordance with this part, for at least 15 years from the date of initial occupancy or date of initial service provision. Recipient and subrecipients must execute and record a HUD-approved Declaration of Restrictive Covenants before receiving payment of grant funds.

Conversion. Recipients and subrecipients carrying out a project that provides transitional or permanent housing or supportive services in a structure may submit a request to HUD to convert a project for the direct benefit of very low-income persons. The request must be made while the project is operating as homeless housing or supportive services for homeless individuals and families, must be in writing, and must include an explanation of why the project

is no longer needed to provide transitional or permanent housing or supportive services. The primary factor in HUD's decision on the proposed conversion is the unmet need for transitional or permanent housing or supportive services in the Continuum of Care's geographic area.

Repayment of grant funds. If a project is not operated as transitional or permanent housing for 10 years following the date of initial occupancy, HUD will require repayment of the entire amount of the grant used for acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction, unless conversion of the project has been authorized under paragraph of this section.

If the housing is used for such purposes for more than 10 years, the payment amount will be reduced by 20 percentage points for each year, beyond the 10-year period in which the project is used for transitional or permanent housing.

Prevention of undue benefits. Except as provided under the Exception section, upon any sale or other disposition of a project site that received grant funds for acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction, occurring before the 15-year period, the recipient must comply with such terms and conditions as HUD may prescribe to prevent the recipient or subrecipient from unduly benefiting from such sale or disposition.

Exception. A recipient or subrecipient will not be required to comply with the terms and conditions prescribed under paragraphs, Repayment of grant funds and Prevention of undue benefits if:

1. The sale or disposition of the property used for the project results in the use of the property for the direct benefit of very low-income persons;
2. All the proceeds are used to provide transitional or permanent housing that meet the requirements of this part;
3. Project-based rental assistance or operating cost assistance from any federal program or an equivalent State or local program is no longer made available and the project is meeting applicable performance standards, provided that the portion of the project that had benefitted from such assistance continues to meet the tenant income and rent restrictions for low-income units under section 42(g) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; or
4. There are no individuals and families in the Continuum of Care geographic area who are homeless, in which case the project may serve individuals and families at risk of homelessness.

578.87 Limitation on use of funds.

Maintenance of effort. No assistance provided under this part (or any State or local government funds used to supplement this assistance) may be used to replace State or local funds previously used, or designated for use, to assist homeless persons.

Faith-based activities.

Equal treatment of program participants and program beneficiaries.

Program participants. Organizations that are religious or faith-based are eligible, on the same basis as any other organization, to participate in the Continuum of Care program. Neither the Federal Government nor a State or local government receiving funds under the Continuum of Care program shall discriminate against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character or affiliation. Recipients and subrecipients of program funds shall not, in providing program assistance, discriminate against a program participant or prospective program participant on the basis of religion or religious belief.

Beneficiaries. In providing services supported in whole or in part with federal financial assistance, and in their outreach activities related to such services, program participants shall not discriminate against current or prospective program beneficiaries on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice.

Separation of explicitly religious activities. Recipients and subrecipients of Continuum of Care funds that engage in explicitly religious activities, including activities that involve overt religious content such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization, must perform such activities and offer such services outside of programs that are supported with federal financial assistance separately, in time or location, from the programs or services funded under this part, and participation in any such explicitly religious activities must be voluntary for the program beneficiaries of the HUD-funded programs or services.

Religious identity. A faith-based organization that is a recipient or subrecipient of Continuum of Care program funds is eligible to use such funds as provided under the regulations of this part without impairing its independence, autonomy, expression of religious beliefs, or religious character. Such organization will retain its independence from federal, State, and local government, and may continue to carry out its mission, including the definition, development, practice, and expression of its religious beliefs, provided that it does not use direct program funds to support or engage in any explicitly religious activities, including activities that involve overt religious content, such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization, or any manner prohibited by law. Among other things, faith-based organizations may use space in their facilities to provide program-funded services, without removing or altering religious art, icons, scriptures, or other religious symbols. In addition, a Continuum of Care program funded religious organization retains its authority over its internal governance, and it may retain religious terms in its organization's name, select its board members on a religious basis, and include religious references in its organization's mission statements and other governing documents.

Alternative provider. If a program participant or prospective program participant of the Continuum of Care program supported by HUD objects to the religious character of an organization that provides services under the program, that organization shall, within a reasonably prompt time after the objection, undertake reasonable efforts to identify and refer the program participant to an alternative provider to which the prospective program participant has no objection. Except for services provided by telephone, the Internet, or similar means, the referral must be to an alternate provider in reasonable geographic proximity to the organization making the referral. In making the referral, the organization shall comply with applicable privacy laws and regulations. Recipients and subrecipients shall document any objections from program participants and prospective program participants and any efforts to refer such participants to alternative providers in accordance with the requirements of § 578.103(a)(13). Recipients shall ensure that all subrecipient agreements make organizations receiving program funds aware of these requirements.

Structures. Program funds may not be used for the acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of structures to the extent that those structures are used for explicitly religious activities. Program funds may be used for the acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of structures only to the extent that those structures are used for conducting eligible activities under this part. When a structure is used for both eligible and explicitly religious activities, program funds may not exceed the cost of those portions of the acquisition, new construction, or rehabilitation that are attributable to eligible activities in accordance with the cost accounting requirements applicable to the Continuum of Care program. Sanctuaries, chapels, or other rooms that a Continuum of Care program-funded religious congregation uses as its principal place of worship, however, are ineligible for Continuum of Care program-funded improvements. Disposition of real property after the term of the grant, or any change in the use of the property during the term of the grant, is subject to governmentwide regulations governing real property disposition.

578.93 Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.

Nondiscrimination and equal opportunity requirements. The nondiscrimination and equal opportunity requirements set forth in 24 CFR 5.105(a) are applicable.

Housing for specific subpopulations. Recipients and subrecipients may exclusively serve a particular homeless subpopulation in transitional or permanent housing if the housing addresses a need identified by the Continuum of Care for the geographic area and meets one of the following:

1. The housing may be limited to one sex where such housing consists of a single structure with shared bedrooms or bathing facilities such that the considerations of personal privacy and the physical limitations of the configuration of the housing make it appropriate for the housing to be limited to one sex;

2. The housing may be limited to a specific subpopulation, so long as admission does not discriminate against any protected class under federal nondiscrimination laws in 24 CFR 5.105 (e.g., the housing may be limited to homeless veterans, victims of domestic violence and their children, or chronically homeless persons and families).
3. The housing may be limited to families with children.
4. If the housing has in residence at least one family with a child under the age of 18, the housing may exclude registered sex offenders and persons with a criminal record that includes a violent crime from the project so long as the child resides in the housing.
5. Sober housing may exclude persons who refuse to sign an occupancy agreement or lease that prohibits program participants from possessing, using, or being under the influence of illegal substances and/or alcohol on the premises.
6. If the housing is assisted with funds under a federal program that is limited by federal statute or Executive Order to a specific subpopulation, the housing may be limited to that subpopulation (e.g., housing also assisted with funding from the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program under 24 CFR part 574 may be limited to persons with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome or related diseases).
7. Recipients may limit admission to or provide a preference for the housing to subpopulations of homeless persons and families who need the specialized supportive services that are provided in the housing (e.g., substance abuse addiction treatment, domestic violence services, or a high intensity package designed to meet the needs of hard-to-reach homeless persons). While the housing may offer services for a particular type of disability, no otherwise eligible individuals with disabilities or families including an individual with a disability, who may benefit from the services provided may be excluded on the grounds that they do not have a particular disability.

Affirmatively furthering fair housing. A recipient must implement its programs in a manner that affirmatively furthers fair housing, which means that the recipient must:

1. Affirmatively market their housing and supportive services to eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, or handicap who are least likely to apply in the absence of special outreach, and maintain records of those marketing activities;
2. Where a recipient encounters a condition or action that impedes fair housing choice for current or prospective program participants, provide such information to the jurisdiction that provided the certification of consistency with the Consolidated Plan; and
3. Provide program participants with information on rights and remedies available under applicable federal, State and local fair housing and civil rights laws.

Accessibility and integrative housing and services for persons with disabilities. Recipients and subrecipients must comply with the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act (24 CFR part 100), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (24 CFR part 8), and Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as applicable (28 CFR parts 35 and 36). In accordance with the requirements of 24 CFR 8.4(d), recipients must ensure that their program's housing and

supportive services are provided in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Prohibition against 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 a project that receives funds under this part.

578.95 Conflicts of interest.

Procurement. For the procurement of property (goods, supplies, or equipment) and services, the recipient and its subrecipients must comply with the codes of conduct and conflict-of-interest requirements under 2 CFR 200.317 (for governments) and 2 CFR 200.318 (for private nonprofit organizations).

Continuum of Care board members. No Continuum of Care 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.

Organizational conflict. An organizational conflict of interest arises when, because of 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 under this part, objectivity in performing work with respect to any activity assisted under this part is or might be otherwise impaired.

Such an organizational conflict would arise when a board member of an applicant participates in decision of the applicant concerning the award of a grant, or provision of other financial benefits, to the organization that such member represents. It would also arise when an employee of a recipient or subrecipient participates in making rent reasonableness determinations and housing quality inspections of property that the recipient, subrecipient, or related entity owns.

Other conflicts.

For all other transactions and activities, the following restrictions apply:

No covered person, meaning a person who is an employee, agent, consultant, officer, or elected or appointed official of the recipient or its subrecipients and who exercises or has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to activities assisted under this part, or who is in a position to participate in a decision-making process or gain inside information with regard to activities assisted under this part, may obtain a financial interest or benefit from an assisted activity, have a financial interest in any contract, subcontract, or agreement with respect to an assisted activity, or have a financial interest in the proceeds derived from an assisted activity, either for him or herself or for those with whom he or she has immediate family or business ties, during his or her tenure or during the one-year period following his or her tenure.

578.97 Program income.

Defined. Program income is the income received by the recipient or subrecipient directly generated by a grant-supported activity.

Use. Program income earned during the grant term shall be retained by the recipient and added to funds committed to the project by HUD and the recipient, used for eligible activities in accordance with the requirements of this part. Costs incident to the generation of program income may be deducted from gross income to calculate program income, provided that the costs have not been charged to grant funds.

Rent and occupancy charges. Rents and occupancy charges collected from program participants are program income. In addition, rents and occupancy charges collected from residents of transitional housing may be reserved, in whole or in part, to assist the residents from whom they are collected to move to permanent housing.

578.99 Applicability of other federal requirements.

In addition to the requirements set forth above, the use of assistance must comply with the following federal requirements:

Environmental review. Activities under this part are subject to environmental review by HUD under 24 CFR part 50 as noted in § 578.31.

The Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act (42 U.S.C. 4821-4846), the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (42 U.S.C. 4851-4856), and implementing regulations at 24 CFR part 35, subparts A, B, H, J, K, M, and R apply to activities under this program.

Audit. As stated in Section 578.99(g) of the CoC regulations, recipients and subrecipients must comply with the audit requires of 2 CFR part 200, subpart F.

HUD Client Files

578.103 Recordkeeping requirements and Client Files.

In general, the recipient and its subrecipients must establish and maintain standard operating procedures for ensuring that Continuum of Care program funds are used in accordance with the requirements and must establish and maintain sufficient records to enable HUD to determine whether the recipient and its subrecipients are meeting the requirements of this part, including:

Homeless status. In general, the recipient must have policies and procedures to ensure the requirements of this part are met. The policies and procedures must be established in writing and implemented by the recipient and its subrecipients to ensure that funds are used in accordance with the requirements.

The subrecipient must maintain and follow written intake procedures to ensure compliance with the homeless definition in § 576.2. The procedures must require documentation at intake of the evidence relied upon to establish and verify homeless status. The procedures must establish the order of priority for obtaining evidence as third-party documentation first, intake worker observations second, and certification from the person seeking assistance third. *However, lack of third-party documentation must not prevent an individual or family from being immediately admitted to emergency shelter, receiving street outreach services, or being immediately admitted to shelter or receiving services provided by a victim service provider.*

Please see the Allegheny County Department of Human Services Homeless Verification Form.

Annual income. For each program participant who receives housing assistance where rent or an occupancy charge is paid by the program participant, the subrecipient must keep the following documentation of annual income:

1. Income evaluation form specified by HUD and completed by the recipient or subrecipient;
2. Source documents (e.g., most recent wage statement, unemployment compensation statement, public benefits statement, bank statement) for the assets held by the program participant and income received before the date of the evaluation;
3. To the extent that source documents are unobtainable, a written statement by the relevant third party (e.g., employer, government benefits administrator) or the written certification by the recipient's or subrecipient's intake staff of the oral verification by the relevant third party of the income the program participant received over the most recent period;
4. To the extent that source documents and third-party verification are unobtainable, the written certification by the program participant of the amount of income that the program participant is reasonably expected to receive over the 3-month period following the evaluation.

Program participant records. In addition to evidence of homeless status, the subrecipient must keep records for each program participant that document:

1. The services and assistance provided to that program participant
2. Evidence that the recipient or subrecipient has conducted an annual assessment of services for those program participants that remain in the program for more than a year
3. Adjusted the service package accordingly, and including case management services
4. Where applicable, compliance with the termination of assistance requirement in § 578.91. (8) Housing standards. The recipient or subrecipient must retain documentation of compliance with the housing standards in § 578.75(b), including inspection reports.

Housing standards. The recipient or subrecipient must retain documentation of compliance with the housing quality standards, including inspection reports.

Services provided. The subrecipient must document the types of supportive services provided under the program and the amounts spent on those services. The recipient or subrecipient must keep record that these records were reviewed at least annually and that the service package offered to program participants was adjusted as necessary.

Match. The subrecipient must keep records of the source and use of contributions made to satisfy the match requirement in § 578.73. The records must indicate the grant and fiscal year for which each matching contribution is counted. The records must show how the value placed on third party in-kind contributions was derived. To the extent feasible, volunteer services must be supported by the same methods that the organization uses to support the allocation of regular personnel costs.

Conflicts of interest. The subrecipients must keep records to show compliance with the organizational conflict-of-interest requirements, the Continuum of Care board conflict-of-interest requirements the other conflict requirements, a copy of the personal conflict-of-interest policy developed and implemented to comply with the requirements, and records supporting exceptions to the personal conflict-of-interest prohibitions.

Homeless participation. The subrecipient must document its compliance with the homeless participation requirements.

Faith-based activities. The recipient and its subrecipients must document their compliance with the faith-based activities requirements.

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. Subrecipients must maintain copies of their marketing, outreach, and other materials used to inform eligible persons of the program to document compliance with the requirements in § 578.93(c).

Other federal requirements. The subrecipients must document their compliance with the federal requirements in § 578.99, as applicable.

Subrecipients and contractors. The recipient must retain copies of all solicitations of and agreements with subrecipients, records of all payment requests by and dates of payments made to subrecipients, and documentation of all monitoring and sanctions of subrecipients, as applicable. The recipient must retain documentation of monitoring subrecipients, including any monitoring findings and corrective actions required. The recipient and its subrecipients must retain copies of all procurement contracts and documentation of compliance with the procurement requirements of 2 CFR part 200, subpart D.

Other records specified by HUD. The recipient and subrecipients must keep other records specified by HUD.

Confidentiality. In addition to meeting the specific confidentiality and security requirements for HMIS data, the subrecipients must develop and implement written procedures to ensure:

1. All records containing protected identifying information of any individual or family who applies for and/or receives Continuum of Care assistance will be kept secure and confidential;
2. The address or location of any family violence project assisted with Continuum of Care funds will not be made public, except with written authorization of the person responsible for the operation of the project; and
3. The address or location of any housing of a program participant will not be made public, except as provided under a preexisting privacy policy of the recipient or subrecipient and consistent with State and local laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality

Period of record retention. All records pertaining to Continuum of Care funds must be retained for the greater of 5 years or the period specified below. Copies made by microfilming, photocopying, or similar methods may be substituted for the original records.

1. Documentation of each program participant's qualification as a family or individual at risk of homelessness or as a homeless family or individual and other program participant records must be retained for 5 years after the expenditure of all funds from the grant under which the program participant was served; and
2. Where Continuum of Care funds are used for the acquisition, new construction, or rehabilitation of a project site, records must be retained until 15 years after the date that the project site is first occupied, or used, by program participants.

Access to records.

Federal Government rights. Notwithstanding the confidentiality procedures established previously, HUD, the HUD Office of the Inspector General, and the Comptroller General of the United States, or any of their authorized representatives, must have the right of access to all

books, documents, papers, or other records of the recipient and its subrecipients that are pertinent to the Continuum of Care grant, in order to make audits, examinations, excerpts, and transcripts. These rights of access are not limited to the required retention period, but last as long as the records are retained.

Public rights. The recipient must provide citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties with reasonable access to records regarding any uses of Continuum of Care funds the recipient received during the preceding 5 years, consistent with State and local laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality and confidentiality requirements in this part.

Reports. In addition to the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 200, subpart D, the recipient must collect and report data on its use of Continuum of Care funds in an Annual Performance Report (APR), as well as in any additional reports as and when required by HUD.

Coordinated Entry

Coordinated Entry provides a coordinated intake and assessment process for the CoC, enabling those experiencing homelessness within Allegheny County's geographical region to be connected to the services they need in a consumer-centered manner. Coordinated Entry facilitates a standardized prioritization of people who are in the most need of homeless assistance, providing fair and equal access to services. This centralized and coordinated process enables anyone who needs homeless services to know where to get help, be assessed in a standard and consistent way, and connect with the housing/services that best meet their needs.

The Allegheny Link

In Allegheny County, the Allegheny Link serves as the centralized and coordinated entrance and assessment point for individuals and families in need of homeless services. The mission of the Allegheny Link is to simplify and streamline access to services and supports to help individuals and families maintain their independence, dignity and quality of life. In addition to assisting residents with disabilities find needed services, those over the age of 60 remain safely in their community, and those who are parents or caregivers of children up to age six get referrals to home visiting programs, the Allegheny Link serves as the conduit for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to reach the goal of stable housing. With this role, the Allegheny Link provides information and referrals, coordination, assessment/eligibility screening, person-centered counseling, application assistance, and case management. Those in need of services can access the Allegheny Link by phone, email, or Field Outreach.

Individuals or families who are homeless or in imminent danger of being homeless can contact the Allegheny Link Monday – Friday between the hours of 8AM – 7PM, by calling 1-866-730-2368, emailing alleghenylink@alleghenycounty.us, or walking into the office located at 1 Smithfield Street, 2nd Floor Pittsburgh, PA 15222.

Allegheny Link additionally has a Field Unit to act as a bridge between those who are street homeless and unable to contact Allegheny Link by traditional means. The Field Unit consists of Field Service Coordinators who partner with Street Outreach Teams to bring coordinated entry to those who are unsheltered. Additionally, the Field Unit has regular "office hours" at many of the day drop in centers, medical clinics and libraries where people experiencing homelessness may visit. The locations and hours are communicated to the public via the Homeless E-Share, Allegheny County Department of Human Service (ACDHS) website and emails to distribution lists. Street Outreach providers can connect with the Field Unit to ensure that those who are encountered on the street are prioritized in the same manner as others who are accessing the CES.

More information, including a detailed outline of the Coordinated Entry assessment and referral procedures, can be found in the [Allegheny County Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures](#).

Housing Prioritization

The Allegheny County CoC prioritizes households experiencing homelessness within the CoC's geographic area for referral to housing and services. Priorities are consistent with CoC written standards approved by the HAB. All referrals to CoC funded programs flow through the Allegheny Link.

The Allegheny County CoC has adopted CPD-16-11, HUD's [Notice on Prioritizing Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness and Other Vulnerable Homeless Persons in Permanent Supportive Housing](#). Additionally, the CoC has expanded the prioritization practices to the Rapid Rehousing, Bridge and Transitional Housing programs. Therefore, households designated as Chronically Homeless are prioritized throughout the entire system. Additionally, the CoC has adopted the local priorities of Veterans, Youth (age 18-24) and those fleeing domestic violence. These have been implemented as "tiebreakers," when chronicity, length of time homeless and vulnerability are equal across two households.

Referrals

Referrals to housing programs funded by HUD and HAP come through the coordinated entry process except for Single Emergency Shelters and certain programs serving specific populations, such as those fleeing domestic violence, where the use of HMIS may conflict with privacy and confidentiality. The Bureau of Homeless Services can approve walk-ins on a case by case basis if appropriate.

Referrals to programs with vacancies are managed through the following process.

- When a provider has a vacancy in a program, they will contact the Homeless Resource Coordinator (HRC) via HMIS to request a referral.
- Once the HRC receives the request for a referral, the HRC will begin working down the prioritized list of potential households. Households will be attempted to be contacted a minimum of 3 times by each contact method. The HRC will attempt contact a minimum of 3 times in 72 hours.
- Once contacted the HRC will re-prescreen the household for eligibility and explain the program offering the vacancy.
- If agreeable, the household's information will be forwarded via an electronic referral in HMIS to the requesting provider.
- When the referral is given to the provider, the client must be contacted within 1 business day.
- Family shelters must attempt contact a minimum of 3 times in 24 hours. All other programs must attempt contact a minimum of 3 times in 72 hours.
- Programs must try all contact phone numbers listed in the referral and email the household if an email address is listed in the referral. Every contact attempt must be documented with the date, time and outcome.
- Thus, if there are 3 phone numbers listed for the household, each number must be contacted 3 times (a total of 9 phone calls).
- As soon as the household verbally expresses interest in the program, the referral status should be changed from Assigned to Accepted-Pending.

Participants' rights to reject a referral

Participants have the right to reject a referral and decline programs based upon client preference. Providers should refer the participant back to CE if an updated assessment is needed. At the time of assessment, the Allegheny Link informs clients that they cannot guarantee a timeline as to when a vacancy may become available. As part of a Crisis Response system, clients are encouraged to work with first availability to quickly resolve their housing crisis unless there are imminent safety concerns.

Provider expectations for document collection for eligibility

During the regular intake and enrollment process, a provider must verify proof of homelessness documentation. Once a participant is enrolled, the program has **up to 45 days** to collect all remaining documentation. [The only exception is documentation of Chronic status. Participants can have up to 180 days for verification of their homeless timeline only.] If documentation cannot be produced within 45 days of enrollment, then the client may be removed from the program.

Documents Needed to Verify Priority Populations

DHS requires that clients identified as part of certain priority populations have the required documentation to receive this priority. These priority populations and priority circumstances include:

- *Chronic homeless status:* Clients will need disability verification as well as documentation of homeless status continuously for 12 months (1 year) or 4 episodes of homelessness in three years. Programs must document according to the Recordkeeping Requirements established in HUD's Notice CPD-16-11, with third party verification preferred.
- *Length of homelessness:* Clients will need documentation of homeless status continuously for 12 months (1 year) or 4 episodes within the last three years adding up to 12 months or longer. Third party verification is preferred.
- *Unaccompanied youth status:* Single clients who are ages 18 to 24 with no minor children or other household members.
- *Domestic violence status:* Clients who are actively fleeing domestic violence can self-certify upon entrance into the program.
- *Veteran status:* Clients will need to provide proof of military service and documentation of their military discharge status.

Program Denials

If a program has completed the necessary steps to determine client eligibility (for example, contacting client, scheduling appointment, conducting interview, verifying required documentation) and the client is ineligible for any reason, their status on the bulletin board should be changed to "denied-pending" with a reason from the dropdown. This will be sent to the Bureau of Homeless Services (BHS) administrators who have 48 business hours to review the denial and provide a decision to the program. BHS reserves the right to approve or reject denials based on due-diligence and fact-gathering of the circumstances.

In all program types, except Emergency Shelters, Rental Assistance and Prevention programs, the vacant unit will electronically be held for the client until the denial is accepted by BHS or the

client has been enrolled. If this is the only vacancy in the program, the program will not be able to request any subsequent referrals until a decision is made by BHS regarding the denial. If there are multiple vacancies, the program will be able to continue to work with the next assigned client(s) while the denied client's status is reviewed.

Reasons in HMIS for a program to deny a client

- Could not document homelessness
- Could not document Chronic Homelessness
- Could not document veteran status
- Missing documentation
- Income is over the income threshold
- No contact after 3 attempts
- No show
- No longer interested in program
- No longer homeless
- Does not meet selection criteria (e.g. over income threshold for program eligibility; change in household circumstance; is an imminent risk to the other clients or program staff; etc.)

If BHS approves a denial: BHS will review current program enrollment and recent contact with the Allegheny Link to determine if further follow up with the household is needed. Depending on the household's situation, BHS will reach out to households to determine if they are still in need of homeless services. BHS then either removes or maintains the household's other referrals. BHS may coordinate with the Allegheny Link for the household to update assessment as needed.

If BHS rejects a denial: The referral status will change back to "assigned" on the program's bulletin board and the program should continue to work with the household to reduce barriers to program enrollment.

Reasons for BHS to Reject a Denial

- The program could not adequately document the reason for the denial.
- The program cannot demonstrate client is an imminent risk to the other households or program staff.
- There were less than the 3 minimum required attempts to contact the referred household within 24 hours for emergency shelter programs, and 72 hours for all other programs.
- Provider's program requirements are unreasonable and have no predictive value to possible success in the program.
- Denial may violate DHS policies or existing local, state or federal law.

If the program disagrees with BHS' final decision: The program has the right to appeal the decision. The following steps outline the procedure for appealing BHS denial rejections:

1. Programs that disagree with BHS' decision to reject a denial must submit a request for appeal. Initially, it can be submitted electronically via email and then followed up with a letter on formal provider letterhead in the mail. The appeal request must include the following:
 - a) Name and Referral ID of the applicant;
 - b) Short summary of the denial process to date including date of original denial and BHS decision; and
 - c) Short explanation of the reasons the program believes the BHS decision to reject the denial should be over turned.

All appeals should be submitted to the DHS Homeless Program Appeal Panel (hereafter referred to as the "panel") by emailing the Assistant Executive Deputy Director, Integrated Program Services (IPS) at Robert.Eamigh@Alleghenycounty.us within 1 business day from the time of BHS rejection of denial, and then followed by a letter to:

Allegheny County Department of Human Services
DHS Homeless Program Appeal Panel
Attn: Robert Eamigh, HUD program administrator
One Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

2. The DHS Homeless Appeal Panel consists of the following staff: Executive Deputy Director, Integrated Program Services (IPS); Deputy Director Office of Community Relations; Deputy Director, Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation; and Assistant Executive Deputy Director, IPS. After an appeal is requested, the panel will convene a meeting with the program staff who made the appeal (and others they choose to invite) and the BHS staff who were involved in the initial denial decision. The meeting must be scheduled within 7 business days from the appeal.

3. At the appeal meeting, the program and the BHS staff will each have an opportunity to present their reasons for denial/rejection of denial. The panel will also have the opportunity to ask questions. If consensus on a decision can be reached at this meeting, the process may end at this step and the decision of the group will be documented in writing by the panel and sent to all parties involved.

4. If consensus cannot be reached during the appeal review meeting, the panel will have 72 hours to make a final decision. This decision will be documented in writing and submitted to all parties involved.

5. If the program does not agree with the final decision made by the panel, the program may file an administrative appeal through the Court of Common Pleas.

Client Terminations

Termination of assistance.

The recipient or subrecipient may terminate assistance to a program participant who violates program requirements or conditions of occupancy. Termination under this section does not bar the recipient or subrecipient from providing further assistance at a later date to the same individual or family.

Due process.

In terminating assistance to a program participant, the recipient or subrecipient must provide a formal process that recognizes the rights of individuals receiving assistance under the due process of law.

This process, at a minimum, must consist of:

- Providing the program participant with a written copy of the program rules and the termination process before the participant begins to receive assistance;
- Written notice to the program participant containing a clear statement of the reasons for termination;
- A review of the decision, in which the program participant is given the opportunity to present written or oral objections before a person other than the person (or a subordinate of that person) who made or approved the termination decision; and
- Prompt written notice of the final decision to the program participant.

Hard-to-house populations.

Recipients and subrecipients that are providing permanent supportive housing for hard-to-house populations of homeless persons must exercise judgment and examine all extenuating circumstances in determining when violations are serious enough to warrant termination so that a program participant's assistance is terminated only in the most severe cases.

More information on the Termination and Appeal Hearing process please review the [Allegheny County CoC Termination Appeal Hearing Process](#).

HMIS

The Allegheny County HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) exists, as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to record and store client-level information about the characteristics and needs of persons who use homeless housing and supportive services; to produce an unduplicated count of homeless persons and achieve other reporting needs; to understand the extent and nature of homelessness within Allegheny County; and to understand patterns of service usage and measure the effectiveness of projects and systems of care.

All programs (HUD/HAP/Penn Free) must adhere to the following data entry parameters: For Emergency Shelters, data entry must be current within one (1) business day. For all other program types, data entry must be current within three (3) business days from the actual date of intake, exit, and/or service provision. Reassessments must be completed within the provided window of 30 days before to 30 days after due date. All Allegheny County agencies are responsible for maintaining their own compliance with federal regulations as well as any outside applicable regulations such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) standards.

Further information about using HMIS and related job aids can be found in the [Allegheny County HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual](#) or by contacting the HMIS Specialist.

Monitoring

Throughout each program office in Allegheny County's Department of Human Service there is a program monitoring unit. DHS monitors and reviews all aspects of each service provider's program to ensure accountability for the expenditure of funds, to promote program effectiveness and efficiency and to ensure safety of clients through quality service delivery.

The CoC has a detailed plan for programmatic and fiscal monitoring of all recipient and sub-recipients. DHS monitors review for programmatic compliance using an evaluation tool based on HUD, HAP and CoC standards. Regulatory compliance, performance benchmarks, client files, data and unit/facility inspections are reviewed at least annually. Fiscal compliance is reviewed monthly through the invoice process and annually of graduated billing programs. Meeting or exceeding the standards outlined in the tools indicates successful performance. The results of the reviews are shared with the CoC Homeless Advisory Board and analyzed overall to evaluate compliance and outcomes across the CoC. If a recipient or sub-recipient is not in compliance with the standards a corrective action plan is required and technical assistance is provided. If the sub-recipient continues to be noncompliant a process is in place for determining probation or reallocating funds.

Programmatic Monitoring Plan

Program monitors, who are specialized staff members from DHS's Bureau of Homeless Services that are trained in HUD, Pennsylvania Homeless Assistant Program (HAP) and CoC requirements, conduct monitoring visits at each sub-recipient's site at least annually, and more often as needed. During the visits, monitors conduct their review in accordance with the Program Monitoring Tool. Sub-recipients may see the evaluation tool template upon their request at any time. Using the tool, monitors ensure that sub-recipients are compliant with HUD, HAP and Allegheny County contracting requirements.

Through the tool, monitors ensure that sub-recipients are:

- Complying with policy and administrative requirements
 - Employee and Client records
 - All staff positions have written job descriptions
 - Staff have appropriate clearances
 - Client records are secure and stored properly
- Maintaining client files to meet requirements
 - Verification of Homelessness upon entrance into program
 - Verification of Chronic Homeless Status
 - Verification of Disability (if applicable)
 - Date of client acceptance, enrollment and residential move-in to program
 - Income Verification
 - Non-Cash Benefits and Medical Insurance
 - Statement of confidentiality
 - Program agreement in compliance with Housing First Policies, HUD regulations and signed by consumer

- Client driven service plans with action steps, measurable short/long term goals, and goals that incorporate a holistic approach to serving families that support child development and parent-child relationships
- Referring clients to supportive services
 - Permanent Housing options
 - Job training
 - Employment Assistance
 - Education
 - Family Support
 - Healthcare
 - Other specialized services
- Housing clients in facilities that comply with HUD Housing Quality Standards:
 - Room standards (i.e. foundation is not cracked, door locks are in proper working order)
 - Health and Safety (i.e. smoke detectors are present on every floor, exits marked are non-obstructed)
 - Windows (i.e. all bedrooms have at least 1 fully functional window)
 - Kitchen (i.e. kitchen sink has running hot and cold water)
 - Bathroom (i.e. bathroom toilet is in working condition)
 - Compliance with Lead-Based Paint Requirements

Programmatic performance is based on the sub-recipient's compliance with the items detailed in the monitoring tool and with the performance standards. Sub-recipients are engaged throughout the monitoring process, and results are provided in writing at the completion of the visit. The results are additionally shared with the HAB, who take it under consideration when determining rankings for renewals.

Data Monitoring Plan

Data that is entered into the Homeless Management Information System for all DHS, CoC and Homeless Assistance Programs (HAP) are monitored on a rolling basis. The rolling monitoring schedule is determined by grant cycles, technical assistance needed, and clients served annually. Programs are routinely checked on the standards set by federal, state and local initiatives. Benchmarks and standards align with federal, state and local requirements as well as the Standards of Practice put forth by the local Homeless Services Community of Practices. To comply with data monitoring, all sub-recipients receive an overview of their program data in comparison to the benchmarks, highlights, lowlights, actions to be completed and a copy of their data and data quality reports. This is then recorded and tracked per program. Included in rolling monitoring is ongoing technical assistance to increase program performance and data quality.

The rolling monitoring schedule is as follows:

- Emergency Shelters (single and family)
 - Monthly
- Rapid Rehousing Programs

- Bi-monthly
- Permanent Supportive Housing Programs
 - Quarterly
- Bridge Housing Programs
 - Quarterly
- Rental Assistance and Prevention Programs
 - Quarterly

In addition to rolling monitoring, the data monitor meets with sub-recipients annually to ensure that they are meeting, and are making a good faith effort to meet, performance standards. During the annual monitoring site visit, an overview of the year's progress, overall performance and data trends are reviewed. The annual data review includes a comparison to the benchmarks as well as yearly highlights and lowlights for each program. This information is reviewed with each sub-recipient to collaborate on a goal plan for the upcoming year and to determine the action steps needed to boost benchmarks and program performance. If there are outstanding data issues they will be addressed during the annual monitoring visit. At the completion of the annual data monitoring season, the data monitor collaborates with the 5-member homeless analytics team to review system performance, system goals, data trends and provide any additional updates to the team.

More information, including an up to date copy of the Program Monitoring Tool, can be found in the [Monitoring Guide for Sub-recipients](#). Technical Assistance is always available by contacting the Bureau's Administrators and Monitors.

Fiscal Monitoring Plan

A full description of the fiscal oversight provided across CoC Program sub-recipients can be found in the [Financial Management Systems Policies and Procedures](#) document. Regarding monitoring specifically, DHS requires detailed monthly expense documentation. A fiscal monitor, a staff member of DHS' Bureau of Homeless Services trained in HUD fiscal regulations, reviews and approves each invoice for accuracy prior to submission for reimbursement and monitors sub-recipients for compliance with HUD fiscal regulations. Each month, all sub-recipients submit detailed invoices to the fiscal monitor for review of compliance with HUD eligibility rules as detailed in the HEARTH Act along with back-up documentation to support the invoices. Any issues with invoices must be resolved before an invoice is approved for payment.

If sub-recipients have completed one year of billing without deficiency or issue and demonstrate a firm understanding of HUD fiscal regulations, as evidenced by past performance, then they may be moved to graduated status. Only those organizations with exemplary billing accuracy selected for graduated status, which means they submit a monthly detailed invoice, but are not required to submit backup documentation to support the request. They must maintain the back-up documentation internally and make it available for review by the fiscal monitor at any time. At least annually, the fiscal monitor will visit graduate sites and select a random sample of expenses, with a minimum of 3 expenses per month per program, to review along with the back-up. If a

sub-recipient does not provide sufficient documentation of expenses during this annual review, graduate status is revoked.

Any fiscal monitoring by the Bureau of Homeless Services within DHS is in addition to regularly scheduled audits conducted by DHS's Office of Administrative and Information Management Services (AIMS)—the Department's designated authority for financial management, budgets, contracts and compliance, human resources, and information systems.

DHS determines performance based on the sub-recipient's fiscal compliance with the items detailed in the monitoring tool. DHS shares the results of reviews with the HAB who take it under consideration when determining rankings for renewals.

Please note that technical assistance from DHS can be requested at any time.

Reporting Requirements and Ranking

Reports are required to be submitted to the appropriate funders for annual review. The following reports are required:

APR: All HUD funded project must submit an Annual Performance Report (APR) 90 days after the close of the contracted fiscal year. APR addresses all clients served during the contracted fiscal year. The report compares the grant application submission to the actual outcome performance of the program. The reports are generated from HMIS data recorded on entry, annual and/or exit assessments. The report is uploaded in a CSV file into HUD reporting system. In addition to the HMIS generated report, the project must submit a Budget and Comment form which provides DHS with a summary of their expenditures during the fiscal year and a detailed comments and explanations on any abnormalities contained in the report.

Housing Inventory Count Report (HIC) provides a snapshot of a CoC's housing units and beds available during a federal fiscal year. HUD requires a CoCs to annually conduct a survey of programs during the last ten days in January. DHS requests all programs to submit their counts and then tallies and submits the number of beds and units available on the night designated for the count by program type, and include beds dedicated to serve persons who are homeless as well as persons in Permanent Supportive Housing to HUD.

Point In Time: (PIT) provides a one night count of homeless who are unsheltered and sheltered in an emergency shelter, safe haven and transitional housing program for the homeless. The count is conducted annually during the last 10 days in January.

Longitudinal System Analysis (LSA) is a report to the U.S. Congress on the extent and nature of homelessness in America. This report is prepared by each CoC and submitted to HUD for their report to congress on the state of homelessness in America. The report includes information about the demographic characteristics of homeless persons in the CoC, service use patterns, and the capacity to house homeless persons. Data is generated from Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) data about persons who experience homelessness during a 12-month period and were served in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs. (This report replaced the AHAR if HUD FY 17-18.)

Systems Performance Measures: (SPM) is an annual report to HUD on systems level data in HMIS for the federal fiscal year. Performance-Based Criteria includes: length of time individuals and families remain homeless, overall reduction in the number of homeless individuals and families e, jobs and income growth for homeless individuals and families, success at reducing the number of individuals and families who become homeless, successful placement from street outreach, and successful housing placement to or retention in a permanent housing destination. This data is utilized by HUD in evaluating and scoring CoC applications annually.

Quarterly HAP Report: a program report is generated quarterly for providers from HMIS (or a comparable data basis for Domestic Violence) who receive PA Department of Human Services, Homeless Assistance Program funding. HAP providers are expected to review and submit their report by the middle of the month following the quarter. (Example: Report period July 1 to September 30 should be submitted electronically by October 22) DV providers are required to submit an electronic report by the end of the month following the quarter end date. This report should be reviewed and approved by each provider quarterly in the HMIS system.

Annual HAP Report: is state required report prepared by ACDHS at the end of the state fiscal year. Data is generated from HMIS for all projects reporting in HMIS and receiving state HAP funding. All Domestic Violence programs are required to submit data on the required DHS form and return to DHS by July 15. DHS prepares a final report to the state compiling and combing data from HMIS and the DV generated reports. (DV projects are required to have in place a comparable data base.)

Penn Free Bridge Housing Client and Service Report: is required to be completed on a quarterly basis to DHS. Each project will report a service summary, client demographics, discharge outcomes and follow up on a quarterly basis to ACDHS. The report will be forwarded to the PA Department of Human Services.

Annual Work Summary form: All homeless and homeless prevention projects that receive non-HUD DHS funding (e.g., HAP, HSDF, CYF, etc.) must complete an Annual Work Summary form. This information is factored into reallocation decisions each Spring.

HUD NOFA Ranking process: Funding for CoC funding through HUD is a competitive process, and funding must be applied and or reapplied for each year. The CoC Analysis and Planning Committee regularly reviews available data, proposes data collection needs and performance metrics to the HAB, and identifies trends, gaps and needs presenting from the data. The Committee reviews and develops ranking tools, and recommends housing priorities for our homeless continuum of care. The Homeless Advisory Board (HAB) establishes the Evaluation Subcommittee for the review and ranking of all applications submitted to HUD and utilizes the tool developed by the CoCAP Committee. The Evaluation Subcommittee then submits their recommended ranking to the HAB for final review and approval.

Policies

DHS Wide:

DHS Inclusion Statement

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services values inclusion, and will take affirmative steps to recognize and respect all individuals and encourages full participation in all areas of agency work and practice without exclusion. DHS believes that each person should have the opportunity for an empowering, impactful and positive experience. DHS embraces the diversity of life experiences, cultures and identities in the completion of its mission.

DHS Anti-Discrimination Policy

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of a protected class including: race; color; religion; national origin; ancestry or place of birth; sex; gender identity or expression; sexual orientation; disability; marital status; familial status; age (40 and older); use of guide or support animal because of blindness, deafness or physical disability.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning (LGBTQ) Standards of Practice

DHS has created [LGBTQ Standards of Practice](#) intended to provide guidance for contracted provider staff to enhance their interactions and service delivery with individuals who identify as LGBTQ. The City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County have Human Relations Acts that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE). This means that programs cannot discriminate against individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, including those who are transgender. Homeless shelters, transitional, bridge, and permanent housing programs that have private/separate bathroom and sleeping facilities with locking doors on the units are expected to make accommodations for clients to meet this obligation. DHS offers SOGIE training to support best practices.

Language Access for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

DHS is committed to providing services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, consistent with its organizational values, the needs of an increasingly diverse population, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects individuals from discrimination based on race, color or national origin. Contracted providers are required to offer [language assistance](#). Service Providers with DHS contracts may now access the same rates offered to DHS by [three language assistance companies](#).

National Voter Registration Act

This federal civil rights law requires providers to offer voter registration services to clients who are applying for benefits, recertifying their eligibility or whenever a client changes an address.

Continuum of Care:

Housing First and Entry Requirements

DHS has adopted a Housing First approach to housing programs. Housing First is a proven approach in which all people experiencing homelessness are believed to be housing ready and are provided with permanent housing immediately and with few to no preconditions, behavioral contingencies, or barriers. A Housing First policy means that programs **cannot** mandate any of the following for entry:

- Employment
- Income
- Job training or education
- Religious affiliation
- Participation in faith-based activities
- Case Management
- Clean time

Housing First and Recovery

DHS also recognizes the importance of having a continuum of services to allow those in active addiction and those in recovery to do so in a residential setting that best suits their needs. However, DHS also recognizes that individuals in earlier stages of recovery, without substantial clean time, often need housing that supports their continuing recovery. Therefore, DHS will work with providers on the provision of appropriate supports to address the variable needs of people at various stages of recovery.

Mental Health Disabilities

Providers cannot refuse to serve homeless individuals who have significant mental health disabilities unless that disability is causing the individual to be a direct threat to the staff, other program occupants, or him/herself. If a person is a threat to him/herself or others, the program should consult with DHS Information, Referral and Emergency Services (IRES) at 412-350-4457 to determine whether the individual meets criteria for evaluation and/or to offer the person options for treatment. Otherwise, DHS expects that all providers will admit otherwise qualified individuals with mental health disabilities into its programs.

Methadone/Suboxone

People with addictive disorders, including those on methadone maintenance or suboxone treatment for drug addiction are considered disabled under the Fair Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other local fair housing statutes and, as such, cannot be discriminated against based on this treatment. The use of methadone/suboxone, when prescribed by a qualified practitioner, is both legal, and for many people, essential to recovery. All providers must comply with all federal, state, and local ordinances in their policies, practices, and activities and cannot discriminate against any person with a disability with regard to their

housing rights. Programs may not deny otherwise qualified individuals based on their use of methadone or suboxone in their treatment of addiction.

Medical Marijuana

The Pennsylvania Department of Health began the process of implementing the state's Medical Marijuana Program when Governor Tom Wolf signed Senate Bill 3 into law on April 17, 2016. The program will offer medical marijuana to patients who are under a physician's care for the treatment of a serious medical condition. Identification cards will be able to be obtained with certification from a registered physician and a completed, approved application submitted to the Department of Health. Only a patient or caregiver with an identification card issued by the department can purchase medical marijuana at an authorized dispensary. The use of medical marijuana, when prescribed by a qualified physician, is both legal, and for many people, essential to the treatment of serious medical conditions. All providers must comply with all federal, state, and local ordinances in their policies, practices, and activities and cannot discriminate against any person with a disability with regard to their housing rights. Programs may not deny otherwise qualified individuals based on their use of medical marijuana in their treatment of a serious medical condition.

Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals

The Fair Housing Act and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) implementing regulations prohibit discrimination because of disability and apply regardless of the presence of Federal Financial assistance. Section 504 and HUD's Section 504 regulations apply a similar prohibition on disability discrimination to all recipients of financial assistance from HUD. The reasonable accommodation provisions of both laws must be considered in situations where persons with disabilities use (or seek to use) assistance animals in housing where the provider forbids residents from having pets or otherwise imposes restrictions or conditions relating to pets and other animals.

An assistance animal is not a pet. It is an animal that works, provides assistance, or performs tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. Assistance animals perform many disability-related functions, including but not limited to, guiding individuals who are blind or have low vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to sounds, providing protection or rescue assistance, pulling a wheelchair, fetching items, alerting persons to impending seizures, or providing emotional support to persons with disabilities who have a disability-related need for such support. For purposes of reasonable accommodation requests, neither the FHAct nor Section 504 requires an assistance animal to be individually trained or certified. While dogs are the most common type of assistance animal, other animals can also be assistance animals.

Housing providers are to evaluate a request for a reasonable accommodation to possess an assistance animal in a dwelling using the general principles applicable to all reasonable accommodation requests. After receiving such a request, the housing provider must consider the following:

(I) Does the person seeking to use and live with the animal have a disability — i.e., a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities?

(2) Does the person making the request have a disability-related need for an assistance animal? In other words, does the animal work, provide assistance, perform tasks or services for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provide emotional support that alleviates one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of a person's existing disability?

If the answer to question (1) or (2) is "no," then the FHAct and Section 504 do not require a modification to a provider's "no pets" policy, and the reasonable accommodation request may be denied.

Where the answers to questions (1) and (2) are "yes," the FHAct and Section 504 require the housing provider to modify or provide an exception to a "no pets" rule or policy to permit a person with a disability to live with and use an assistance animal(s) in all areas of the premises where persons are normally allowed to go, unless doing so would impose an undue financial and administrative burden or would fundamentally alter the nature of the housing provider's services.

The definition of "service animal" contained in ADA regulations does not limit housing providers' obligations to grant reasonable accommodation requests for assistance animals in housing under either the FHAct or Section 504. Under these laws, rules, policies, or practices must be modified to permit the use of an assistance animal as a reasonable accommodation in housing when its use may be necessary to afford a person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling and/or the common areas of a dwelling, or may be necessary to allow a qualified individual with a disability to participate in, or benefit from, any housing program or activity receiving financial assistance from HUD.

[Criminal Histories](#)

The safety of provider staff and clients is very important to DHS, including those in our residential settings. At the same time, all relevant laws and regulations must be adhered to. Therefore, DHS is requiring programs to assure that their admission criteria regarding criminal histories are reflective of facts. According to US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), "overly restrictive housing admissions policies not only deny individuals a second chance at becoming productive citizens, but they may actually be increasing costs to communities as these individuals continue to cycle through emergency services and correctional facilities." Moreover, recent studies have shown that there is not a correlation between the success in housing and one's criminal history at entrance. DHS is committed to serving any consumer who approaches us for assistance and, as a result, needs to have resources available to serve those with significant barriers like extensive criminal histories.

Providers should avoid blanket criteria such as felonies, violent crimes, etc., and review criminal histories on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration imminent risk factors such as the nature of the crime, and any rehabilitation or treatment that the applicant may have participated in since the conviction. DHS also asks that each CoC provider review the duration of time that has passed since conviction.

The following provide further guidance in specific areas of this topic.

Criminal Background Checks

For programs that serve children, DHS encourages providers to run criminal background checks on their clients and potential clients. In any such child serving program, those with histories of sexual abuse or crimes against children must not be admitted.

Arson and Megan’s Law Convictions

Under the Coordinated Entry process and Housing First policies, referrals from those with Megan’s Law and arson convictions are made to providers.

Please keep in mind that there are no restrictions in federal, state or local Megan’s Law requirements on where a resident may reside, other than those that are a condition of probation or parole. Besides individual parole or probation requirements, there is one restriction that could affect whether an individual can reside in a particular shelter – a Pennsylvania statute requires that no more than five “Sexually Violent Predators” may live in a group based home at any one time. It should also be noted that if the program is a night by night shelter, the individual does not reside there. Finally, not all Megan’s Law registrants are Sexually Violent Predators – some registrants are simply labeled “sexual offenders”.

[Shelter Hold Procedures for Single and Family Emergency Shelters](#)

For clients utilizing the emergency shelter system, a bed can be held, for 1 night for individuals or 2 nights for families, without notice or the client(s) returning to the shelter. If a client does not contact or return to the emergency shelter after the night(s) unexcused, the bed will not be held and will be made available to another client.

Beds can be held for up to three nights for individuals or 5 nights for families with an excused absence. Any absence lasting longer than those listed above must be approved by the Bureau of Homeless Services. The Bureau of Homeless Services will provide an email with confirmation or rejection of the dates excused.

[Single Shelter Hold Procedure](#)

[Family Shelter Hold Procedure](#)

[Reassessment for a Higher Level of Service Need](#)

Rapid Re-Housing programs that have identified clients that may not be able to successfully exit to self-sufficiency should submit a [“Level of Service Need Assessment”](#) to the BHS for review. It provides the process by which clients are reassessed for a higher level of service, such as Permanent Supportive Housing.

Specific Policies for Programs that Serve Children:

Involuntary Separation of Family Members

Under the HEARTH Act, “any project sponsor receiving funds under this title to provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing to families with children under age 18 shall not deny admission to any family based on the age of any child under age 18.” DHS has adopted this standard of care for all DHS funded homeless programs. Providers cannot deny admission to any male child of a household or deny admission of a household with a male child under 18. Providers must also accept dependent children who are 18 and still completing secondary education to preserve intact families.

Mandated Reporting Requirements:

The PA Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) was signed into law in 1975. It was enacted to protect children from abuse, allow the opportunity for healthy growth and development and, whenever possible, preserve and stabilize the family.

The following adults are considered mandated reporters and are required to report suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse:

- A person licensed or certified to practice in any health-related field under the jurisdiction of the Department of State.
- A medical examiner, coroner, or funeral director.
- An employee of a health care facility or provider licensed by the Department of Health who is engaged in the admission, examination, care, or treatment of individuals.
- A school employee.
- An employee of a child care service who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.
- A clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer, or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization.
- An individual — paid or unpaid — who, on the basis of the individual’s role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity, or service, is a person responsible for the child’s welfare or has direct contact with children.
- An employee of a social services agency who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.
- A peace officer or law enforcement official.
- An emergency medical services provider certified by the Department of Health.
- An employee of a public library who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.
- An individual supervised or managed by a person listed above, who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.
- An independent contractor who has direct contact with children.

- An attorney affiliated with an agency, institution, organization or other entity, including a school or regularly established religious organization that is responsible for the care, supervision, guidance, or control of children.
- A foster parent.
- An adult family member who is a person responsible for the child's welfare and provides services to a child in a family living home, community home for individuals with an intellectual disability or host home for children which are subject to supervision or licensure by the department under Articles IX and X of the Human Services Code.

Mandated reporters must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313.

Education Liaison:

Each Family Program must designate a staff person – the Education Liaison - to ensure children being served in the program are enrolled in school and connected to early childhood programs and other appropriate services.

Early Intervention:

Homeless programs must offer all families with children ages 0 to 5 the opportunity to be evaluated for early intervention services by the Alliance for Infant and Toddlers or the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Early intervention services are a valuable resource to many homeless families.

Services such as parent education, support services, developmental therapies and other family-centered services that assist in child development may be included in a family's early intervention program. Services may be provided in the child's home, child care center, nursery school, play group, Head Start program, early childhood special education classroom or other settings familiar to the family. Early intervention supports and services are embedded in typical routines and activities, within the family, community and/or early care and education settings. Early intervention services are provided at no cost to families.

Parents who have questions about their child's development may also contact the CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288. The CONNECT Helpline assists families in locating resources and providing information regarding child development for children ages birth to age 5. In addition, CONNECT can assist parents by making a direct link to their county early intervention program or local preschool early intervention program.

School:

Under the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, all homeless children and youths must have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as is provided to other children and youths. Schools may not separate homeless students from the mainstream school environment on the basis of their homelessness. Homeless students must also have access to the education and

other services that they need to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held. (Section 721 of the McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by the ESSA). Homeless programs are responsible to ensure all school-age children are enrolled in and attending school. As mandated by the McKinney Vento Act, parents may opt to send their children to their school district of origin and they have a right to transportation to school.

Privacy & Confidentiality

As specified in CoC contracts with DHS and the privacy and security rules of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), each agency in the Continuum of Care (CoC) must uphold relevant federal and state confidentiality regulations and laws that protect client records, including those of HIPAA, those governing substance abuse records (42 CFR Part 2, 4 Pa. Code § 255.5), the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s regulations governing Mental Health Records (55 Pa. Code Chapter 5100), and all other applicable regulations governing the sharing of sensitive or protected client/patient information.

As covered entities under HIPAA and as contractors of DHS, CoC agencies are required to develop and maintain privacy policies and procedures as directed in the Privacy and Security Rules. In the event that these agencies do not have their own policies governing these areas, the below Allegheny County policies will apply. Please see Table 1 below for a summary of the DHS privacy policies and their purpose. Copies of DHS privacy policies can be requested from the DHS Policy Coordinator.

Privacy Policy	Purpose
Anti-Retaliation	The purpose of this policy is to establish that an Allegheny County HIPAA Covered Component (ACHCC) will not take retaliatory action against individuals for exercising rights under HIPAA.
Business Associates	The purpose of this policy is to establish that an ACHCC will obtain satisfactory assurances from business associates before disclosing PII to a business associate.
Client Authorization	The purpose of this policy is to establish that an ACHCC will obtain client authorization before using or disclosing PII for purposes outside of treatment, payment, and operations.
Client Information Disclosure	The purpose of this policy is to address appropriate disclosures of client information for ACHCCs, excepting offices and programs providing Drug and Alcohol Treatment, which are addressed in a separate policy [Drug and Alcohol Disclosures Policy].
Confidential Communications	The purpose of this policy is to establish that a client of an ACHCC may request to receive communications of protected client information by alternative means
De-Identified Client Information	The purpose of this policy is to establish that, when appropriate, an ACHCC may remove identifying elements from PII so that the information may be used and disclosed in aggregate for research and/or analysis.

Disclosure Accounting	The purpose of this policy is to establish that clients of ACHCCs have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PII made by the ACHCC.
Disclosure for Drug and Alcohol	This policy addresses the confidentiality of records and information of clients receiving drug and alcohol treatment services. It reflects the preemption of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act by the federal regulations 42 U.S.C. 290ee-3 and 42 U.S.C. 290dd-3.
Disclosure for Research	The purpose of this policy is to establish the circumstances under which the ACHCC will release client information for research.
Facility Directory	The purpose of this policy is to establish that an ACHCC may maintain a directory of individuals in a given facility.
HIPAA Governance	The purpose of this policy is to establish that the roles of Allegheny County and the ACHCCs in HIPAA Privacy and Security Policy development and governance.
Individuals Involved in Care	The purpose of this policy is to establish that in certain circumstances an ACHCC may disclose protected client information to individuals involved in the client's care.
Minimum Necessary Disclosure	The purpose of this policy is to establish that an ACHCC will comply with the minimum necessary standard for disclosures of personally identifiable information (PII).
Parent Personal Rep Disclosure	The purpose of this policy is to address appropriate disclosures of client information to parents/personal representatives of the client for ACHCCs, excepting offices and programs providing Drug and Alcohol Treatment, which are addressed in a separate policy [Drug and Alcohol Disclosures Policy].
Personnel Designations	The purpose of this policy is to establish that Allegheny County must designate personnel for privacy and security related tasks.

<p>Privacy Notice</p>	<p>The purpose of this policy is to outline the requirement that any individual who receives healthcare services directly from a County entity receives a Notice of Privacy Practices. In accordance with §164.520 of HIPAA, clients of ACHCCs and indirectly contracted providers of ACHCCs have a right to adequate notice of the uses and disclosures of their protected health information (PHI), their rights as clients, and the County’s legal duties with respect to protected health information.</p>
<p>Privacy Training</p>	<p>The purpose of this policy is to establish that an ACHCC must provide training for its employees on privacy and security.</p>
<p>Record Request</p>	<p>The purpose of this policy is to establish that clients of an ACHCC have the right to access, inspect and obtain a copy of their own records, with limited exceptions.</p>
<p>Right to Amend</p>	<p>The purpose of this policy is to establish that a client of an ACHCC has the right to request amendments to his or her own records.</p>
<p>Right to Restrict</p>	<p>The purpose of this policy is to establish that clients of an ACHCC have the right to restrict the ways in which the ACHCC may use their personally identifiable information (PII).</p>

Resources and Technical Assistance

Communities of Practice:

The Bureau of Homeless Services in collaboration with the provider agencies has created three Communities of Practice (CoP). The CoPs – Shelter, Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing meet bi-monthly and quarterly as a group. These Community of Practices regularly review and update current Standards of Practice, provide peer support to its members, discuss local and national best practices, and examine performance metrics and share challenges and ideas with the CoC community.

Technical Assistance:

The Bureau of Homeless Services offers as needed and ongoing technical assistance (TA) for all recipients and sub-recipients. TA can be required as a follow-up from annual monitoring or requested by the provider agency at any time. TA can be requested by contacting BHS Administrators by phone or email.

Example of technical assistance:

- Program Agreement Review
- Consultation on Business Practices
- Housing First Training
- Rapid Re-Housing 101
- HMIS Support
- Data Assistance

Other Useful Resources:

[Housing First Assessment Tool](#)

[Housing First Toolkit](#)

[HUD Exchange](#)

[Mental Health First Aid](#)

[NAEH Emergency Shelter Learning Series](#)

[HUD Exchange](#)

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Appendix

Linked documents:

[-Coordinated Entry Manual](#)

[-Allegheny County PA 600 HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual \(2-6-2017\)](#)

-Monitoring [Guide](#) for Sub-recipients

[-Written Standards for Providing RRH \(RRH Standards of Care\)](#)

[-Single Shelter Hold Procedure](#)

[-Family Shelter Hold Procedure](#)

[-Language Assistance](#)

[-LGBTQ Standards of Practice](#)

[-Allegheny County CoC Termination Appeal Hearing Process](#)

[-ACDHS HUD Fiscal Guidebook](#)

[-Homeless Assistance Program Instructions and Requirements](#)

[-Financial Management Systems Policies and Procedures](#)