

**12 GUILFORD COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE WRITTEN STANDARDS FOR
NC- 504 – GUILFORD COUNTY COC
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INTRODUCTION

The Continuum of Care (CoC) is responsible for coordinating and implementing a system to meet the needs of the population and subpopulations experiencing homelessness within a given geographic area, which for the NC-504 CoC includes the following geographic areas: Guilford County, including the Cities of Greensboro and High Point. Both the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program Interim Rule and the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program Interim Rule state that the CoC, in consultation with recipients and subrecipients of Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program funds within the geographic area, are responsible to (1) establish and consistently follow written standards for providing Continuum of Care assistance, (2) establish performance targets appropriate for population and program type, and (3) monitor recipient and sub-recipient performance.

These written standards have been established to ensure that persons experiencing homelessness who enter programs throughout the CoC will be given similar information and support to access and maintain permanent housing. All programs that receive ESG, City of Greensboro or CoC funding are required to abide by these written standards. Agency program procedure should reflect the policies and procedures described in this document. The CoC strongly encourages homeless programs that do not receive these funding sources to accept and utilize these written standards.

Many of these standards are based on the ESG and/or the CoC Program Interim Rules. There are additional standards that have been established by the CoC to assist programs in meeting and exceeding performance outcomes that will help to reach the goal of ending homelessness.

The Guilford County Continuum of Care Written Standards will include policies and procedures for:

- Evaluating individuals' and families' eligibility for assistance
- Standards for determining what percentage and amount of rent each household must pay while receiving rapid re-housing (RRH) assistance
- Performance measurements and benchmarks.

These standards are in place to:

- Establish community-wide expectations on the operations of projects within the community
- Ensure that the system is transparent to users and operators
- Establish a minimum set of standards and expectations in terms of the quality expected of projects
- Ensure the local priorities are transparent to recipients and sub-recipients of funds
- Create consistency and coordination between recipients' and sub-recipients' projects

These written standards have been developed in conjunction with COC and ESG recipients and sub-recipients and with service providers. Thus, the implementation reflects the perspectives of those

organizations that are directly providing homeless housing and services, including Emergency Shelter (ES), Transitional Housing (TH), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Rapid Re-Housing (RRH).

The CoC Written Standards have been approved by the Guilford County CoC Board and CoC Members. The Written Standards will be reviewed and revised as needed at a minimum of once per year by the Coordinated Entry Committee. All revisions must be approved by the CoC Board. Agreement to abide by the Written Standards will be required to participate in the process for acquiring and maintaining CoC, City of Greensboro CDBG, Nussbaum, ESG Entitlement, and ESG funding.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL PROGRAMS

1. HOUSING FIRST & LOW BARRIERS

All CoC funded programs must adopt the Housing First and Low Barriers approach. The Housing First approach has several key features: few programmatic prerequisites, admission policies that support low barriers to access, rapid and streamlined entry into permanent housing, voluntary and engaging supportive services, and a focus on housing stability. As such, CoC funded projects should allow entry to program participants regardless of their lack of income, current or past substance use, criminal records, or history of domestic violence. The CoC will authorize limited exceptions for projects in the adoption of a housing first model where it conflicts with funder requirements or local/state law (e.g., restrictions on serving people who are listed on sex offender registries).

2. NON-DISCRIMINATION, FAIR HOUSING, EQUAL ACCESS AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

The Guilford County COC affirmatively markets housing and supportive services to eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, handicap or who are least likely to apply in the absence of special outreach. As such, providers must comply with non-discrimination, fair housing, equal access and reasonable accommodations laws including the Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Each provider must have policies that speak to how the agency and specific programs will comply with these laws.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

A determination of eligibility for housing that is assisted by HUD or subject to a mortgage insured by HUD shall be made in accordance with the eligibility requirements provided for such program by HUD, and such housing shall be made available without regard to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status. The people who present together for assistance, regardless of age or relationship, are considered a household and are eligible for assistance as a household. Projects that serve families with children must serve all types of families with children; if a project targets a specific population (e.g., women with children), these projects must serve all families with children that are otherwise eligible for assistance, including families with children that are headed by a single adult or

consist of multiple adults that reside together. The age and gender of a child under 18 must not be used as a basis for denying any family's admission to a project.

FAIR HOUSING

The Fair Housing Act promotes housing that is accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. Guilford County's Coordinated Entry partners will comply with the non-discrimination requirements of the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in all housing transactions based on race, national origin, sex, color, religion, disability status and familial status.

EQUAL ACCESS

The Guilford County Continuum of Care non-discriminatory policy, regarding the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) final rule regarding equal access to Community Planning and Development (CPD) funded programs regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, and marital status, will ensure that individuals are aware of their rights to equal access to CPD funded programs.

Thus, all CPD funded programs, including Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grant funded programs, must comply with the following requirements:

- Determine client eligibility for housing regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status, and must not discriminate against clients who do not conform to gender or sex stereotypes (i.e., because of gender identity);
- Grant equal access to CPD funded programs or facilities consistent with client gender identity, and provide client's family with equal access;
- MUST NOT ask clients to provide anatomical information or documentation (i.e. ID), physical, or medical evidence of gender identity; and
- Take non-discriminatory steps when necessary and appropriate to address privacy concerns raised by any residents or occupants.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

The Fair Housing Act requires housing providers to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices or services to allow a handicapped person equal opportunity to use and enjoy the dwelling unit, including public and common use spaces. An accommodation must be made unless it would impose undue financial or administrative burden on a housing program or requires a fundamental alteration in the nature of the program. The owner/manager can request verification that the applicant is disabled and needs the accommodation, but cannot request information about the nature, extent or severity of a person's disability.

3. COORDINATED ENTRY PARTICIPATION

All CoC-funded and ESG-funded projects are required to participate in the CoC's Coordinated Entry (CE) System. Participation requires following all established policies and procedures as set forth in the *Coordinated Entry Policy and Procedures*.

4. HMIS PARTICIPATION

All CoC-funded and ESG-funded projects are required to participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) except for victim services providers (defined by Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013). Instead, victim services provider must use a comparable database to collect required client level data and be able to present this data to the System Performance and Evaluation Committee as needed. The CoC actively encourages non-CoC/ESG providers to participate in HMIS. All HMIS participating agencies should meet the minimum data quality standards and follow the *HMIS Policies and Procedural Manual*.

5. ACCESS TO MAINSTREAM RESOURCES

The CoC expects that every agency that is funded through the CoC or ESG will coordinate with and access mainstream and other targeted homeless resources. Providers should assess and assist participants with obtaining any mainstream resources for which they may be eligible, including: TANF, Public Assistance, Veterans Health Care, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Medicare, SSI/SSDI, or Access-VR. Where possible, providers should streamline processes that include applying for mainstream benefits such as the use of a singular form to apply for benefits or collecting all necessary information in one step. The SSI/SSDI Outreach Access and Recovery (SOAR) process is encouraged to speed up the SSI/SSDI process.

6. EDUCATIONAL LIAISON & EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

For projects that serve households with children, a staff person must be designated as the educational liaison that will ensure children are enrolled in school and connected to appropriate services in the community, including early childhood projects such as Head Start.

7. EMERGENCY TRANSFERS

Projects should provide, when possible, emergency transfers for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking to ensure their safety.

ELIGIBILITY

A tenant who is a victim of a domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking, as provided in HUD's regulations at 24 CFR part 5, subpart L is eligible for emergency transfer, if; the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant remains within the same unit. If the tenant is a victim of sexual assault, the tenant may also be eligible to transfer if the sexual assault occurred on the premises within the 90-calendar-day period preceding the request for an emergency transfer.

A tenant requesting an emergency transfer must expressly request the transfer in accordance with the procedures described below. Tenants who are not in good standing may still request an emergency transfer if they meet the eligibility requirements in this section.

TRANSFER PROCEDURES

The tenant shall notify the agency's management office and submit a written request for a transfer. The agency will provide reasonable accommodations to this policy for individuals with disabilities. The tenant's written request for an emergency transfer should include either:

- A statement expressing that the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant were to remain in the same dwelling unit assisted under the agency's housing program; OR
- A statement that the tenant was a sexual assault victim and that the sexual assault occurred on the premises during the 90-calendar-day period preceding the tenant's request for emergency transfer.
- The agency cannot guarantee that a transfer request will be approved or how long it will take to process a transfer request. The agency will, however, act as quickly as possible to move a tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to another unit, subject to availability and safety of a unit. If a tenant reasonably believes a proposed transfer would not be safe, the tenant may request a transfer to a different unit. If a unit is available, the transferred tenant must agree to abide by the terms and conditions that govern occupancy in the unit to which the tenant has been transferred. The agency may be unable to transfer a tenant to a particular unit if the tenant has not or cannot establish eligibility.
- If the agency has no safe and available units for a tenant who needs an emergency transfer, the agency will contact Family Service of the Piedmont (our local DV provider) to assist the agency and tenant in identifying other housing providers who may have safe and available units for the tenant.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The housing agency will keep confidential any information that the tenant submits in requesting an emergency transfer, and information about the emergency transfer, unless the tenant gives the agency written permission to release the information on a time-limited basis, or disclosure of the information if required by law or required for use in an eviction proceeding or hearing regarding termination of assistance from the program. This includes keeping confidential the new location of the dwelling unit of the tenant, if one is provided, from the person(s) that committed an act(s) of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking against the tenant.

SECURITY AND SAFETY OF TENANTS

Pending processing of the transfer and the actual transfer, if it is approved and occurs, the tenant should be urged to take all reasonable precautions to be safe. Tenants who are or have been victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking are encouraged to contact Family Service of the Piedmont's Crisis Line:

Greensboro (336) 273-7273

High Point (336) 889-7273

8. TERMINATION & GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Projects should not terminate clients regardless of whether they participate in supportive services, make progress on a service plan, lose their income or based on other activities not covered in a lease agreement typically found for an unassisted person in the project's geographic area.

Services should be terminated for only the most egregious behaviors such as matters of violence or serious threats (including sexual violence), major theft, major property damage, and/or possessing illegal substances. Domestic Violence shelters have legal obligations that allow for additional rules for termination of services. Providers must have a written termination policy outlining program rules and termination processes including a formal grievance process. This process, at minimum, must consist of: (1) Providing the program participant with a written copy of the program rules and the termination process before the participant begins to receive assistance; (2) Written notice to the program participant containing a clear statement of the reasons for termination; (3) 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 (4) Prompt written notice of the final decision to the program participant.

RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL PROJECTS

Participant Recordkeeping Requirements include:

- All records containing personally identifying information must be kept secure and confidential
- Programs must have a written confidentiality/privacy notice, provided to the participant if requested
- Documentation of homelessness and chronic homelessness, if applicable (following HUD guidelines)
- A record of services and assistance provided to each participant
- Documentation of any applicable requirements for providing services/assistance
- Documentation of use of the coordinated entry system
- Documentation of use of HMIS
- Records must be retained for the appropriate amount of time as prescribed by HUD

Financial Recordkeeping Requirements include:

- Documentation for all costs charged to the grant
- Documentation that funds were spent on allowable costs
- Documentation of the receipt and use of program income
- Documentation of compliance with expenditure limits and deadlines
- Retain copies of all procurement contracts as applicable
- Documentation of amount, source and use of resources for each match contribution

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (PSH)

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for persons with disabilities is permanent housing with indefinite leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist persons experiencing homelessness to achieve housing stability.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Households must meet the HUD definition of homelessness, with a priority for those who are chronically homeless.
- One adult or child member of the household must have a disability
- CoC funded programs must follow any additional eligibility criteria set forth in the NOFA through which a project was funded and the grant agreement.
- Programs may not establish additional eligibility requirements beyond those specified here and those required by funders.

MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ASSISTANCE

- There can be no predetermined length of stay for a PSH project
- Project participants in PSH must enter into a lease (or sublease) agreement for an initial term of at least one year that is renewable and is terminable only for cause. Leases (or subleases) must be renewable for a minimum term of one month.
- Supportive services designed to meet the needs of the project participants must be made available to the project participants throughout the duration of stay in PSH. Supportive services are voluntary, but can and should be used to persistently engage tenants to ensure housing stability.
- Two individuals in shared housing situation must have their own lease and their own bedroom unless the two individuals present together as a household
- Program income generated from rent and occupancy charges may be collected from program participants and added to funds committed to the project by HUD and used for eligible program activities.
- If occupancy charges are imposed, they may not exceed the highest of:
 - 30% of family's monthly adjusted income
 - 10% of the family's income
 - Portion of welfare payments designated for housing (if applicable)
- A program participant's income must be re-examined annually to determine rent payment. A program participant's contribution toward the rental payment must be made as changes in income are identified. A participant can request an interim re-examination at any time based on change in income and/or family composition. Each program participant must agree to supply the information or documentation necessary to verify the participant's income.
- Assistance may be terminated to a participant who violates their lease by providing a formal process that recognizes due process of law.

All PSH programs will prioritize referrals provided at the weekly Coordinated Workgroup meetings. PSH is targeted for the most acute individuals and families and will always be prioritized for those who are chronically homeless. If there is not a chronically homeless individual or family on the list at the weekly

Coordinated Workgroup meetings, the next most acute individual or family will be targeted for PSH if appropriate.

RAPID RE-HOUSING (RRH)

Rapid Re-Housing is an intervention designed to help individuals and families exit homelessness quickly by returning to permanent housing without preconditions (including, but not limited to, sobriety, employment, absence of a criminal record, or income). Additionally, the resources and services provided are tailored to the unique needs of the household receiving assistance.

CORE COMPONENTS

There are three core components that constitute a rapid re-housing program, all of which must be available to qualify as a rapid re-housing program. Although RRH programs must have each of the three components available, it is not required that a single entity provides all three services. Similarly, it is also not required that any one household utilize all three to be considered a recipient of rapid re-housing.

Rapid Re-housing core components include the following: Housing Identification, Rent/Move-In Assistance (Financial) and Rapid Re-housing Case Management and Services.

Housing Identification

- Recruit landlords to provide housing opportunities for individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Address potential barriers to landlord participation such as a concern about the short-term nature of rental assistance and tenant qualifications
- Assist household to find and secure appropriate housing

Rent/Move-In Assistance

- Provide financial assistance (typically 6 months or less) necessary to allow individuals and families to move immediately out of homelessness and to stabilize in permanent housing.
 - Eligible costs for financial assistance for ESG funded programs include:
 - rental application fees
 - security deposits (up to 2 months)
 - last month's rent
 - utility deposits and payments (up to 24 months, including up to 6 months for payments in arrears)
 - moving costs
 - Eligible costs for financial assistance for CoC funded programs include:
 - security deposits (up to 2 months)
 - first and last month's rent
 - property damage
 - rental application fees
 - utility deposits
 - moving costs

Case Management and Wrap Around Services

- Help individuals and families experiencing homelessness identify and select among various permanent housing options based on their unique needs, preferences, and financial resources.
- Help individuals and families experiencing homelessness address issues that may impede access to housing (such as credit history, arrears, and legal issues).
- Help individuals and families negotiate manageable and appropriate lease agreements with landlords.
- Make appropriate and time-limited services and supports available to families and individuals to allow them to stabilize quickly in permanent housing.
- Monitor participants' housing stability and be available to resolve crises, at a minimum during the time rapid re- housing assistance is provided.
- Ensure that services provided are client-directed, respectful of individuals' right to self-determination, and voluntary. Unless basic, program-related case management is required by statute or regulation, participation in services should not be required to receive rapid re-housing assistance.
- Utilize an Individual Service Plan (ISP) to outline the steps, goals, activities, actions, anticipated outcomes and timelines of the case management supports. An ISP should:
 - Be client driven. A Case Manager should not include any activities, directives or requirements that the client has not consented to in the ISP.
 - Be quickly expedited after program admission. An ISP should be written within two weeks of admission and should be focused on Housing Stability; Relationships; Basic Needs; Supports and Safety. ISPs shall include outcomes that measure changes in skill, knowledge, behavior, stability, sustainability, quality of life, etc.
 - Be updated as the needs and/or goals of the clients change or become better defined and/or as outcomes are achieved.
 - Be updated at least every 45 days or more frequently as appropriate.
 - Be client approved. Clients must sign the ISP and be provided a copy of the final document.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Participants in ESG funded RRH programs must meet HUD's Category 1 definition of homelessness; and CoC funded RRH programs must meet the HUD Category 1 or 4 definition of homelessness.
- CoC funded programs must follow any additional eligibility criteria set forth in the NOFA through which a project was funded and the grant agreement.
- Programs may not establish additional eligibility requirements beyond those specified here and those required by funders.
- For ESG funded programs, program participant household's annual income should be at or below 30% Area Median Income (AMI) at annual re-evaluation.

All RRH programs will prioritize referrals provided at the weekly Coordinated Workgroup meetings. RRH will be targeted toward those who cannot get out of homelessness without the assistance. RRH will prioritize those with more challenges.

RENT LIMITS

- Financial assistance is available for maximum 24 months. However, it is expected that program participants will only receive the level of assistance necessary to be stably housed for the long term.
- Participants must begin paying 30% of their income (as defined by 24 CFR 5.609) toward rent within 60 days of program enrollment.
- The maximum amount of rent that a participant can pay will be 100% of the rental amount.
- Typically, at the beginning of assistance, RRH program will be paying 100% of the rent or utility. Participant's responsibility of rent/utility should be reviewed, determined, and explained to the participants by the RRH program and will gradually be increased to 100% within a determined timeframe.
- A household can only be eligible for RRH programs within the CoC geographic area no more than 2 times in 3 years and the total amount of assistance must not exceed \$10,000.
- The rent charged for a unit must be reasonable in relation to rents currently being charged for comparable units in the private unassisted market and must not be in excess of rents currently being charged by the owner for comparable unassisted units.
- Rental assistance cannot be provided to a program participant who is already receiving rental assistance, or living in a housing unit receiving rental assistance or operating assistance through other federal, State, or local sources.

MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ASSISTANCE

- Program participants are required to meet with a case manager not less than once per month.
- For ESG funded RRH programs, supportive services are limited to housing relocation and stabilization services (24 CFR 576.10). ESG RRH programs may provide housing stability case management assistance not more than 30 days during the period in which the program participant is seeking permanent housing and may not exceed 24 months during the period in which the program participant is living in permanent housing.
- For CoC-RRH funded programs, supportive services include a wide range of services outlined in 24 CFR 578.53. CoC-RRH programs may provide supportive services until 6 months after rental assistance stops.
- CoC funded RRH programs: participants must enter into a lease agreement for a term of at least one year, which is terminable only for cause. The lease must be automatically renewable upon expiration for a minimum term of one month. (24 CFR 578.37)
- ESG funded RRH programs: participants must enter into a lease for an initial term of one year for project-based rental assistance, there is no minimum lease period for tenant based rental assistance. The only exception is for rental assistance provided solely for arrears. (24 CFR 576.104) To continue to receive ESG and CoC RRH assistance, a program participant's reevaluation must demonstrate eligibility based on: 1) Lack of sufficient resources and support networks to retain housing without the program assistance. 2) The ESG or CoC funded program must determine the amount and type of assistance that the individual or family will need to (re)gain stability in permanent housing at minimum every 3 months, preferably monthly.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING (TH)

Transitional Housing (TH) is designed to provide homeless individuals and families with interim stability and support to successfully move into and maintain permanent housing.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Households must meet the HUD definition of homelessness under categories 1, 2 and 4
- CoC funded programs must follow any additional eligibility criteria set forth in the NOFA through which a project was funded and the grant agreement
- Programs may not establish additional eligibility requirements beyond those specified here and those required by funders

MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ASSISTANCE

- Maximum length of stay cannot exceed 24 months.
- Assistance in transitioning to permanent housing must be made available/provided.
- Support services must be provided throughout the duration of stay in transitional housing.
- Program participants in transitional housing must enter into a lease, sublease or occupancy agreement for a term of at least one month and that ends in 24 months and cannot be extended. The lease with program participant must be automatically renewable upon expiration, except on prior notice by either party, up to a maximum term of 24 months.

All CoC funded Transitional Housing programs will prioritize referrals from the weekly Coordinated Workgroup meeting, and will follow the *Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures*. If beds are not filled at the weekly Coordinated Entry Workgroup meeting, the transitional program can fill those beds outside of the Coordinated Entry System.

EMERGENCY SHELTER (ES)

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Households must meet the HUD definition of homelessness
- CoC funded programs must follow any additional eligibility criteria set forth in the NOFA through which a project was funded and the grant agreement
- Programs may not establish additional eligibility requirements beyond those specified here and those required by funders

MINIMUM STANDARDS OF ASSISTANCE

- Shelter staff must attempt to divert and prevent homelessness
- Provide immediate (same day) admission to shelter
- ES should prioritize beds based on (1) length of time homeless; (2) chronic status; and (3) unsheltered to the best of their ability.

MONITORING PERFORMANCE

CoC is responsible to monitor project level and system level performance annually or biennially. CoC System Performance and Evaluation Committee will consult with recipients and sub-recipients annually to establish performance targets appropriate for population and program type, monitor recipient and sub-recipient performance, evaluate outcomes, and take action to improve performance to the Guilford County CoC Board of Directors and Guilford County CoC Membership.

However, the CoC has established some minimum threshold criteria by program type:

- < 20% of those who exit to permanent housing will return to homelessness within 2 years of exit (all programs)
- 23% or less of negative exits
- 75% utilization rate (all programs)
- 95% HMIS data quality and completeness
- Maintain or Exit to permanent housing
 - 80% - RRH and PSH
 - 75% - Transitional Housing
 - 30% - Emergency Shelter
- Maintain or exit with cash income (earned or benefits)
 - 75% - PSH
 - 60% - RRH
 - 70% - TH