

Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care (TX-503)

Written Standards for Program Delivery



Approved and Adopted: 07/01/2020

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INTRODUCTION

This document establishes baseline standards for homeless service delivery adopted by the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care (CoC). This document is designed to aid homeless service providers and funders by providing standard practices regarding compliance with the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act and clearly identifying best and promising practices which programs will implement. These standards align strategic community goals needed to end homelessness and guides the operation of all programs that address homeless in Austin. By promoting common goals and best practices, the Austin / Travis County CoC builds a robust homeless response system that can end homelessness for everyone in our community.

This document includes standards relating to:

- The CoC fulfilling its responsibilities to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and explicitly operationalizes local values and a common philosophy of care.
- The community utilizing a common reference for key requirements and tools that support monitoring and technical assistance activities.
- Establishing common expectations for homeless service providers, with minimal variations between contracts, allowing for greater ease of reference and compliance.
- Operationalizing local values and a common philosophy of care, ensuring that people with lived experience of homelessness can expect similar approaches in services across all community programs.
- Making these standards publicly available and can empower individuals by promoting greater transparency and knowledge of consumer rights and responsibilities.
- Program participants have a more common experience across programs and can expect similar approaches in services.

These written standards for program delivery are meant to assist the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care by offering best practices that can be used by homeless service providers and funders. The written standards in this document are designed to comply with the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act and should guide the operation of

programs that address homelessness in Austin. Providers must review and update their individual program written standards annually to ensure they are aligned with local system-wide standards.

These standards also benefit the community by ensuring that contractual requirements are aligned across common best practices and racial equity.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Austin / Travis County CoC is an open stakeholder organization that works to prevent and end homelessness in the city of Austin and surrounding Travis County area. To achieve this goal, the CoC fosters shared responsibility and collaborative planning among service providers and stakeholders. Working with our community partners, the CoC coordinates the resources needed to implement the strategic priorities enumerated in [Austin's Action Plan to End Homelessness](#).

The [Austin / Travis County CoC's Governance Charter](#) specifies the governance structure of the CoC, as well as outlining the core duties, which include:

- Promoting a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness.
- Providing funding for efforts to rapidly re-house households experiencing homelessness.
- Promoting access to and effective use of mainstream assistance programs.
- Optimizing self-sufficiency among households experiencing homelessness.

The work of the Austin / Travis County CoC, partner funders, and local providers serving people experiencing homelessness is grounded in the following guiding principles.

Housing First

The Austin / Travis County CoC has adopted the Housing First approach throughout our system. Services are targeted and prioritized for the most vulnerable people in our community and are offered without conditions. Within the Housing First model, barriers to accessing and maintaining housing and services are reduced or eliminated to ensure those who need the resources most have access to them. Housing First principles should be integrated into all homeless housing and service interventions, including outreach, prevention, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing. In practice, Housing First also includes coordinating access and entry into homeless housing programs across the system. At all levels of Austin's homeless response system, providers and staff believe everyone is housing ready and that housing is a human right.

Person-Centered Services

Person-centered services are operationalized by ensuring programs are flexible and able to address the unique needs and strengths of all people with whom they work.

These principles inform all the policy and procedural standards in this document. By centering the experiences of the people being served, programs ensure maximum impact and reduction of harm. It is the expectation of the CoC that these values are integrated in program operations and are intentionally part of the operational design of services and interventions.

The Austin / Travis County CoC is responsible for coordinating and implementing a system-wide approach that meets the needs of the populations and sub-populations experiencing homelessness within the city of Austin and Travis County. Both the Emergency Solution Grant (ESG) Rules and Regulations and the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) CoC Program Interim Rules state that CoCs, in consultation with recipients of ESG program funds within the geographic area, must:

- Establish and consistently follow community standards for providing CoC assistance;
- Establish performance targets appropriate for population and program type; and
- Monitor recipient and sub-recipient performance.

In accordance with Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations (24 CFR) Part 578, the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care has developed the following written standards. These standards apply to all projects that receive HUD CoC funds. The goal of this document is to synthesize key elements of the HUD regulations with the processes and priorities of the Austin / Travis County CoC to ensure that the CoC programs are administered fairly and deliberately.

This document aims to:

- Assist with the coordination of service delivery across the geographic area.
- Establish guidelines for accurately and precisely assessing individuals and families to determine program eligibility via the coordinated entry system.
- Provide the basis for the monitoring of all CoC and ESG funded projects.

These written standards for program service delivery include policies and procedures for evaluating households' eligibility for assistance and shared community definition and activities for:

- Homelessness Prevention
- Diversion
- Street Outreach (*to be added at a later date*)
- Emergency Shelter
- Safe Haven (*to be added at a later date*)
- Transitional Housing (*to be added at a later date*)
- Joint Rapid Re-Housing and Transitional Housing
- Rapid Re-Housing
- Permanent Supportive Housing (*to be added at a later date*)

All programs that receive CoC funding are required to abide by the written standards outlined in this document for service delivery. Programs that receive ESG funds should follow the approved written standards of their funder, which may or may not differ from the written standards in this document. Programs should reflect our CoC's values, as well as comply with HUD requirements, in their design and practices. Additional [Local Policies and Procedures](#) adopted by the Austin / Travis County CoC can be accessed on the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition website and are listed in Appendix C.

The Austin / Travis County CoC strongly encourages programs that do not receive funding from either HUD CoC or ESG sources to utilize the standards described in this document.

GENERAL PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

System Collaboration and Coordination

In the Austin / Travis County CoC, system-level collaboration and coordination is led by Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), in partnership with the CoC's governing board, Membership Council. ECHO has been designated the Lead Agency for HUD's CoC Program, and the City of Austin Public Health department is the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) recipient.

The Austin / Travis County CoC promotes civic engagement and systems advocacy by both agencies and persons with lived expertise of homelessness to support accountability in the CoC. CoC programs should understand and communicate their impact within the larger community. This includes informing partners of programmatic changes (e.g. closures, elimination of units) that may affect other providers. Open communication and collaboration across the CoC aids in identifying and addressing potential issues like the displacement of households experiencing homelessness or underutilization of resources. Agencies within the CoC are accountable to the continuum, both fiscally and organizationally.

Coordinated Entry

Coordinated Entry is a shared, community-wide intake process intended to match all households experiencing homelessness with the community resources that are best able to resolve their housing crisis.

HUD requires each Continuum of Care (CoC) to establish and operate a coordinated entry process with the goal of increasing the efficiency of the local homelessness crisis response systems and improving fairness and ease of access to resources, including mainstream resources, for all persons experiencing homelessness. A coordinated entry system should provide information to CoC members and stakeholders about needs and gaps in the community to help strategically allocate housing and stabilization resources using focused interventions that are proven to end homelessness.

The policies and procedures that govern the Austin / Travis County CoC's Coordinated Entry system are located within the [Coordinated Entry Written Standards](#). Projects receiving CoC and/or ESG funding must ensure compliance with the Coordinated Entry Written Standards.

Diversion System Response

Diversion is required as a system intervention. It is a necessary component in the homeless response system to ensure that due diligence is met in examining all problem solving strategies that may reduce the number of households that enter into the homeless system and also ensure that households quickly exit independent system services. As a result, it is vital that all homeless system access points including Emergency Shelters, Coordinated Entry, Street Outreach and Engagement, Jail Outreach, and Drop-In / Day Resource Centers utilize creative problem solving conversations with households accessing the homeless response system to explore realistic, time-specific, and actionable plan to quickly exit homelessness before entering emergency shelter or the Coordinated Entry System. This is required whether or not projects receive explicit Diversion funding.

A robust diversion system assists households in identifying existing resources and supports that can be used to self-resolve their homelessness as an alternative to entering into the larger homelessness response system. Properly implemented, diversion strategies can mitigate trauma by reducing the length of time a household experiences homelessness. Diversion strategies can bolster the entire homeless response system by conserving limited housing resources when minimal diversion assistance is sufficient for a household to self-resolve their homelessness. Diversion efforts aim to redirect entry into a shelter or the streets by diverting households to other safe, appropriate options or resources provided by their own social support network and/or community resources.

Diversion strategies engage households early in their crisis of experiencing homelessness. Staff members at system entry points (e.g. Emergency Shelter, Coordinated Entry, Street Outreach) trained in diversion should initiate exploratory conversations to brainstorm practical solutions for households to resolve their homeless episode quickly and safely. Diversion conversations focus on assisting people to identify the barriers they face in obtaining safe, stable housing. Using a client-centered approach in combination with problem-solving and solution-oriented conversations, service providers help elicit realistic and creative housing options for individuals to choose from. The options identified during these conversations should exploit a household's existing resources rather than utilizing more intensive resources within the homeless response system.

To help ease their transition out of homelessness, households may receive a flexible combination of short-term services and one-time financial assistance. Diversion interventions should endeavor to assist households in becoming housed as soon as possible — ideally within 30 days.

It is critical programs understand the differences between Homelessness Prevention, Diversion, and Rapid Exit. Similar service strategies are often utilized within these interventions (e.g. conflict resolution, motivational interviewing, and trauma-informed care), however, *when* these strategies are employed differs based on the intervention. Identifying and utilizing the most appropriate intervention is important for the purposes of measuring the success of each intervention type.

- **Prevention** resources target households who have a safe place to stay for the night but are requesting support to prevent the loss of their housing or to identify alternative housing options so they can avoid experiencing homelessness.
- **Diversion** interventions target households when they initially request shelter or housing and focus on helping them identify resources/options to quickly end their episode of homelessness.
- **Rapid Exit** occurs when households who recently entered into the homelessness response system, usually at emergency shelter, utilize available resources to quickly resolve their homelessness.

Homelessness Management Information System

Participation in the Austin / Travis County's Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) is strongly encouraged for any project providing assistance to households experiencing homelessness. Projects that are funded through CoC and ESG funds, except domestic violence service providers, are required to participate in the CoC's HMIS.

With the passage of the HEARTH Act and its subsequent implementation regulations, CoCs are expanding beyond evaluating program performance to evaluations of the performance of the entire homeless system. HUD requires that each metropolitan area use an HMIS of their choosing. HMIS is a central, system-wide platform for collecting information about households who apply for and receive services from programs serving at-risk and homeless households.

The purpose of HMIS is to track and improve the services that support households experiencing homelessness to get housing, and to have better access to those services, while meeting requirements of funders, such as HUD. HMIS terms of use and compliance guidelines are described in the [Memorandum of Understanding Austin / Travis County Homeless Management Information System \(HMIS\)](#).

Programs Shall:

- Actively participate in HMIS and follow the policies and procedures in the [ECHO HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual \(HMIS P&P\)](#);
- Notify HMIS administrators when a program is closed or has ended, or when new programs need to be added to the system;
- Obtain households consent before inputting personally identifying information (PII) (e.g. name, date of birth, last known permanent address or other contact information, or social security number) according to procedures outlined in the HMIS P&P and in compliance with state law. The [Austin Travis County HMIS Release of Information](#) is available on ECHO's website in English and Spanish. The Program must enter all required data according to the client's consent status, and as outlined in the data entry instructions within the HMIS P&P;
- Agencies are expected to collect information required for eligibility screening or other internal agency requirements. However, if a participant refuses to provide PII for HMIS, then the program should follow the HMIS P&P;
- Protect the safety of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, by not entering PII into HMIS. Furthermore, potentially identifying demographic information (i.e. information that could be used to identify a person in combination with other non-personally identifying information) may be excluded from entry into HMIS.

Active participation in HMIS includes programs entering a complete data set for all households served. This encompasses all the universal, program specific, and local continuum data elements required for reporting. Local continuum data elements are outlined in the [HMIS Data Standards Data Dictionary](#) and program specific data elements are defined by HUD in the HMIS Data Standards. This complete data set should be entered within the timeframe established in the HMIS P&P.

BEST PRACTICES

Housing First

The Austin / Travis County CoC follows the Housing First (HF) approach. Housing First is a homeless services approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach aims to eliminate the system barriers that prevent people from accessing their right to housing. Housing First can be contrasted with older models, like Housing Ready, that focus on addressing other issues (e.g. substance abuse, increasing income) prior to placing a person in housing.

Additionally, Housing First is based on the idea that participant choice is valuable in housing selection and supportive service participation, and that exercising the right to choose will likely make a client more successful in remaining housed and improving their quality of life. Services should be culturally appropriate. Personal barriers, such as non-adherence to a medication regimen or substance abuse, are addressed using collaborative approaches, like motivational interviewing.

The following Housing First best practices are mandatory for all programs that receive HUD CoC funding. They are meant to promote harm reduction at each step of service.

Screening & Admission

Admission to programs is not contingent on prerequisites such as abstinence from substances, minimum income requirements, health or mental health history, medication adherence, age, criminal justice history, financial history, completion of treatment, participation in services, “housing readiness,” or history or occurrence of victimization, unless required by law or funding source. Housing priority is given to people with the most severe service needs and highest level of vulnerability. Providers try to expedite the admission and documentation process as much as possible; participants may be admitted to programs pending completion of documentation. In order to ensure accessibility, programs do not require specific appointment times but have flexible intake schedules that ensure access to all households.

Participant Choice

To the extent that it is possible and practical, program staff should support participants with multiple options regarding the location of housing, type of housing, and type of unit. Options will be provided in all settings, including project-based settings. Participants will also be provided with a choice of roommates, as applicable. Participant rejection of a housing program's option should not exclude them from housing. If a program is unable to continue serving enrolled participants due to unsuccessful attempts of permanent housing placements, the program may exit following the [Termination Policy](#).

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

Supportive Services

Programs provide a variety of goal-driven services that are flexible and appealing and that are appropriate for participants in various stages of change. Services include support for basic needs, but also educational support, case management, systems advocacy, housing assistance, legal assistance, healthcare support, life-skills programming, mental health and substance-use services, self-care, employment, benefit screening and application, and children's services. Services should be offered to program participants, but they are optional. Supportive services are offered for the maximum length of time allowed by the program model, agency resources, and participant choice. Projects may set expectations for service participation but should not deny or terminate housing if participants do not meet these expectations. Programs cannot require disability-related services such as substance abuse treatment or therapy as a condition of maintaining housing. Programs work with households to ensure services are appropriate and responsive to needs. Programs use evidence-based tools, such as motivational interviewing, which empowers clients to move through a stages of change model, from homelessness to housing.

Persistent Engagement

Program staff are to provide continuous engagement opportunities to participants in programs. This includes those who may decline supportive services in the moment but should still be regularly offered service options. Programs should actively seek to engage households to ensure that they are made aware

of all services offered. Participants should be provided with a range of treatment and supportive services that are voluntary, individualized, and culturally appropriate.

Leasing & Tenancy

Program participants are to receive ongoing education about the Housing First model, the provider's housing process, and their rights and responsibilities as tenants. Participants are encouraged to exercise their rights and should be given legal assistance and/or advocacy, if desired. Leases for program participants should be the same as the leases used for other tenants on the market. Participants should be given special payment arrangements for rent arrears, assistance with financial management, and help with obtaining a representative payee, if they wish for one.

Discharge & Transfer

Program participants are not terminated from programs for substance use or refusal to participate in services. Programs will allow participants to remain in the program even if they must leave for a temporary absence of 90 days or less for hospitalization, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or incarceration. Though rental assistance may be temporary, housing assignment is considered permanent for PSH and RRH; leases renew automatically unless the landlord or tenant gives notice. All measures are used to prevent eviction, except in cases where the participant is a threat to themselves or others. Participants may transfer to another project if they feel that they are in imminent danger from another participant. The transfer will be done as quickly as possible to prevent an exit to homelessness.

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is an evidence-based approach that utilizes a collaborative, person-centered approach for eliciting and strengthening motivation for change. It offers providers a useful framework for assessing which level someone is according to the Stages of Change and focusing on what is needed for successful behavior changes. Service providers utilize a variety of methods to increase a client's motivation to achieve their self-identified goals, which improves the providers' ability to support changes. MI is an ongoing process, where the service provider seeks to assist the participant in achieving their goals (i.e., reason for seeking help, which could include hopes, fears, etc.) by addressing participant values and stages of change. Although MI skills and competency require time to develop, [*MI Spirit*](#) can be used at every stage within the housing intake and enrollment process and by every service provider. MI

Spirit can be tied into forms and questionnaires to help develop rapport built on self-efficacy during initial interviews while also collecting necessary information to determine eligibility. Although MI skills and competency require time to develop, MI Spirit can be used at every stage within the housing intake and enrollment process and by every service provider. MI Spirit can be tied into forms and questionnaires to help develop rapport built on self-efficacy during initial interviews while also collecting necessary information to determine eligibility. It's important to note that motivation is not all or nothing. Stage of change should never be used to identify a program participant's willingness or readiness to enroll in program services. Instead, *stages of change* should be used to deepen understanding of the client and tailor conversations to enhance readiness/confidence/commitment toward behavior changes.

Motivational Interviewing Resources:

- [TIP 35: Enhancing Motivation for Change in Substance Use Disorder Treatment](#)
- <https://motivationalinterviewing.org/>

Harm Reduction

Harm Reduction is an important element during the Housing First implementation process and an approach aimed at reducing the risks and harmful effects associated with substance use and/or other behaviors that may result in negative consequences. As an intervention, it focuses on helping people who use substances to better manage their use and reduce the harmful consequences to themselves and others, including actively working to prevent evictions. In conjunction with housing first and supportive housing, using the harm reduction philosophy means that individuals do not have to be sober to be eligible to enter housing and are not evicted solely for a failure to maintain sobriety.

The [Midwest Harm Reduction Institute](#) defines Harm Reduction as:

The philosophy of harm reduction promotes and supports the right of people who use substances and engage in other risky behaviors to be treated with dignity and respect; their right to exercise self-determination related to use; and their right to a collaborative approach in therapeutic relationships.

Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) is an evidence-based practice that teaches services providers and their organizations about the triggers and vulnerabilities of trauma survivors. TIC helps providers to provide care to trauma survivors more

effectively, while avoiding re-traumatization. [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) has described four aspects of Trauma Informed Practice: realize trauma, recognize trauma, respond to trauma, and resist re-traumatization (the 4 R's):

In a trauma-informed approach, all people at all levels of the organization or system have a basic realization about trauma and understand how trauma can affect families, groups, organizations, and communities as well as individuals ... People in the organization or system are also able to recognize the signs of trauma ... The program, organization, or system responds by applying the principles of a trauma-informed approach to all areas of functioning ... A trauma-informed approach seeks to resist re-traumatization of clients as well as staff ... Organizations often inadvertently create stressful or toxic environments that interfere with the recovery of clients, the well-being of staff and the fulfillment of the organizational mission. Staff who work within a trauma-informed environment are taught to recognize how organizational practices may trigger painful memories and retraumatize clients with trauma histories.

Implementing TIC as a best practice to promote recovery and prevent re-traumatization includes training staff on trauma and its impact, developing programming that supports client choice and control, and creating physical and emotional safety throughout housing programs.

Positive Youth Development

[Runaway and Homeless Youth Program](#), Family and Youth Services Bureau has described Positive Youth Development as the following:

Positive youth development is a comprehensive framework outlining the support all young people need to be successful. Runaway and homeless youth programs that embrace this developmental model provide ongoing and intentional opportunities for young people to participate in meaningful activities. A variety of opportunities, that have real-life implications are available for youth to design, implement, and evaluate the types of services they receive to best meet their needs. The program environment is caring and supportive, has high expectations, and offers youth the chance to develop positive relationships and connection with adults, peers, and the larger community. Positive youth development views young people as 'resources' who have much to offer rather than as 'problems' that need to be treated or fixed. Given that not all young people have the same needs, some youth may require additional, complementary support and services to fully

benefit from common elements of positive youth development processes. For example, trauma-informed approaches and evidence-based interventions can strengthen the role of positive youth development settings in the lives of especially vulnerable young people.

Positive Youth Development offers youth the following benefits:

- Increased protective factors; reduction in risky behaviors.
- Higher grades and expectation to go to college.
- Higher rates of successful transitions into adulthood.
- Improved social and emotional outcomes.
- Greater likelihood of contributing to their communities.
- Lower rates of depression.

Participant Termination & Grievance

Per HUD's Interim Rule (24 CFR Part 578, Subpart F), CoC programs must provide a formal process for the termination of assistance to participants who violate program requirements or conditions of occupancy. Agency processes must recognize the inclusion of due process protections and make legal services resources available to housing participants. Programs may resume assistance to a participant whose assistance has been terminated. Programs that are providing permanent supportive housing for hard-to-house populations of homeless persons must exercise judgment and examine all circumstances in determining whether termination is appropriate. HUD has determined that a participant's assistance should be terminated only in the most severe cases such as when a participant is violent towards themselves or others.

It is the policy of the Austin / Travis County CoC to provide participants with a fair and efficient process to present and resolve complaints and grievances. Each program shall have a grievance policy and shall implement standards for addressing grievances when applicable. Filing a grievance or complaint regarding a program, staff, or service delivery is a right of all program participants. Programs have a responsibility to respond to these complaints in a fair and efficient process. Addressing grievances provide another way to improve upon program service delivery and further gives voice and power to program participants. Participants shall be made aware of the grievance policy upon intake or entry into the program.

All projects must adhere to the [Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care Termination Policy](#).

PROGRAM MODEL INTERVENTIONS

The following program models have been determined by the community to be effective in preventing and ending homelessness in the Austin / Travis County CoC:

- Homelessness Prevention (HP)
- Diversion (DI)
- Street Outreach (SO) (*to be added at a later date*)
- Emergency Shelter (ES)
- Safe Haven (SH) (*to be added at a later date*)
- Transitional Housing (TH) (*to be added/integrated later*)
- Joint Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-Housing (Joint TH-RRH)
- Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)
- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) (*to be added/integrated later*)

Note: *Population specific models may refer to the non-specific model for certain aspects. For example, Youth Rapid Re-housing to Rapid Re-Housing.*

Intervention Components

Population

Primary population to be served in the program model and will include HUD homeless definition categories as appropriate and by funding source.

Population Specialization

The Austin / Travis County CoC has determined that some projects may be dedicated to a specific population based on the local needs and gaps related to underrepresentation of groups. Some projects may be required to only serve specific target populations based on the funding competition under which they were originally awarded. All staff should receive specialized training to serve special populations.

Minimum Standards

These are the minimum requirements for each model. They are necessary for the project to meet the base compliance standards required by HUD regulations.

Time Frame

All models are defined as short, medium, or long-term. Some models also indicate an average length of time that assistance/services are provided to program participants. The maximum time of program participation may be determined by funding source.

Essential Elements

The CoC has laid out the essential elements that define each project type. These elements are needed to successfully implement the program design to achieve the purpose and intervention outcomes.

Outcome

This is the primary, anticipated result of a household's participation in the program model and the larger system impact the project provides as a housing intervention.

Homelessness Prevention (HP)

Homelessness Prevention (HP) interventions are designed to prevent individuals and families who are at-risk of homelessness from entering into a housing crisis.

The use of HP under the CoC Program is disallowed until such time as the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care is designated as a High Performing Community (at this time, no CoC in the country has obtained this designation). Thus, these standards currently apply only to ESG-funded HP projects. When the Austin / Travis County CoC obtains the High Performing Community designation, these Written Standards will be revised to include CoC funded HP.

The Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care does not currently prioritize households for HP within the Coordinated Entry system.

Population

Persons who meet category 2 or 4 of HUD's homeless definition (established in 24 CFR § 576.2) or persons who meet HUD's definition of At-Risk of Homelessness.

HP projects should screen people applying for prevention assistance to identify those with greater vulnerabilities and/or urgency (i.e. closer to becoming literally homeless) to prioritize applicants for assistance when demand exceeds resources.

Minimum Standards

Homelessness Prevention's primary goal is to prevent literal homelessness as quickly as possible. To that end, not only are supportive services voluntary, they are tailored to the household's needs as they pertain to maintaining or obtaining permanent housing. Funds may be used to provide housing relocation and stabilization services and short- to medium-term rental assistance necessary to prevent an individual or family from moving into an emergency shelter or other crisis housing.

- Housing stability assessment
- Case management
- Legal services for tenants facing eviction
- Landlord mediation services
- Financial assistance
- Housing Location and Rehousing Support

Time Frame

Short to medium-term assistance.

Essential Elements

- Dedicated staff to facilitate individualized assessment that assesses household needs, financial needs (including job training and placement), eligibility for mainstream resources, and referral to resources.
- Provides needed housing stabilization services including both financial and supportive services.
- Provides linkages to mainstream resources based on eligibility and need.
- Services include mediation, legal services, relocation assistance, and utility financial assistance.

Outcome

Stabilization in permanent housing.

Diversion (DI)

Diversion is a short-term intervention focused on identifying immediate and safe housing arrangements and reconnecting households to existing support systems. Diversion offers flexible services that may be coupled with minimal financial assistance when needed. Diversion is an effective and efficient approach for resolving, not just preventing, households from entering into the homeless system and/or ensuring that if a household enters into the homeless system, it is brief and non-recurring.

Diversion programs share the responsibility of diverting households experiencing homelessness from the housing crisis response system and can occasionally provide additional resources or support at a greater capacity than systemic diversion effort. Diversion programs funded with federal funds must follow these written standards. Diversion programs otherwise funded should strongly consider following this program model to increase system cohesion and efficiently support individuals experiencing homelessness.

Diversion programs within the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care provide both diversion and rapid exit services.

Population

Persons who meet category 1 or 4 of HUD's homeless definition (established in 24 CFR § 576.2). A Diversion Program can serve any household experiencing homelessness which has identified a realistic, time-specific, and actionable plan to quickly exit homelessness.

Diversion activities should be targeted to households who will be experiencing literal homelessness because they do not have a place to stay that night and/or who can quickly exit to a permanent housing destination with minimal financial assistance without ongoing supportive services.

Population Specialization

Diversion is explored with all households without pre-screening or pre-determination of whether they are likely to succeed. Exceptions are made for households identifying upfront that they are fleeing domestic violence or facing another imminent threat to their safety. In those instances, households are referred immediately to appropriate services, including shelter and/or directly connecting the household to a local Victim Service Provider such as [SAFE Alliance](#) by calling the SAFELine.

Minimum Standards

- Provide housing-focused, person-centered, and strengths-based intervention to help households identify the choices and solutions to end their homelessness independent of a housing intervention.
- Ability to provide flexible short-term financial assistance.
- Supportive services are available to households who require low intensity referral services to mainstream benefits.
- Provide the minimum assistance necessary for the shortest time possible to support households in solving their housing crisis.
- Establish procedures to market diversion resources to community supported agencies not dedicated to homelessness.
- Establish procedures to quickly connect with crisis response and emergency shelter options, and receive referrals for Diversion support.
- Staff must be trained in Problem Solving Interventions (e.g., Problem Solving Therapy, Solutions-Focused Therapy), Motivational Interviewing, Trauma Informed Care, and De-escalation.

Time Frame

Households should be enrolled in Diversion services for no more than 30 days. As households pursue their plan for obtaining safe housing, Diversion-trained staff may offer a flexible combination of **short-term services** and **one-time financial assistance** to help ease the transition out of homelessness. This time-limited support can take several forms. Diversion programs should consist of flexible funding sources.

SHORT-TERM SERVICES	ONE-TIME FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
<p>Direct services from Diversion-trained staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing search • Creative problem solving • Mediation or conflict resolution (e.g., landlords, relatives, friends). 	<p>Housing-related costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent • Landlord fees • Moving expenses • Security Deposits • Utility bills • Background check
<p>Connections to community resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job search and referral • Credit repair • Legal aid 	<p>Non-housing related costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment certifications and licenses • Interpreter services • Transportation • Work supplies

One-time financial assistance funding should be as versatile and flexible as possible, in order to provide assistance quickly, to support creative housing solutions, and to minimize complex cost documentation requirements. Funds should have the capacity to capitalize on verified plans to assist households with attaining housing as quickly as possible.

Essential Elements

- Diversion is fast-paced. The goal is to move households from homeless to housed within 30 days.
- Diversion is strengths-based. Staff trained in Diversion help households create a plan of their own for resolving their homelessness.
- Diversion aims to reduce trauma experienced through homelessness. By pursuing realistic options for becoming housed quickly, households can avoid prolonged periods of homelessness and shelter stays.
- Diversion matches households with the right level of assistance. Households get appropriate services right away instead of waiting for programs they may ultimately never get to access.
- Diversion is cost-effective. Costlier interventions—Emergency Shelter, Rapid Re-Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing—are conserved for households unable to resolve their homelessness simply and quickly.
- Diversion builds system capacity. The homeless response system can serve more households in need because those able to resolve their homeless crisis through Diversion move through the system quickly and at less expense.

Samples of Assistance

- Flexible funding to assist with items such as car repairs, childcare, bus tickets, etc.
- Moving into a new rental place of their own.
- Re-establishing their lease with a prior landlord.
- Entering into a permanent shared-living arrangement- usually with a relative or friend.
- Relocation assistance:
 - Clients may be provided with funds to move outside of Austin/Travis County on a case-by-case basis.

- Landlord/Tenant mediation.
- Other creative methods deemed appropriate and effective for keeping a particular individual or family housed.

Outcome

To connect households with permanent housing solutions without shelter stays or shelter stays below 60 days.

Households are able to obtain safe housing successfully about half the time and at a lower cost when compared to other interventions.

Street Outreach (SO)

(Written Standards for the Street Outreach Intervention Type will be added at a later date).

Emergency Shelter (ES)

Emergency Shelter interventions provide immediate, low-barrier shelter options for people experiencing homelessness who are unable to immediately access permanent housing. Emergency Shelters must support a flow from housing crisis to housing stability by identifying and assisting households facing crises with rapid and effective permanent housing connections. Shelter programs are expected to support households experiencing homelessness through rigorous, day-to-day assistance from all shelter staff in moving participants towards and into appropriate, safe, stable, permanent housing as soon as possible. Emergency Shelter programs connect homeless households with appropriate housing options, as well as other services and community resources that will help them obtain or maintain housing. This should include building income and addressing a variety of physical, mental, emotional, and other needs.

Note: *The Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care provides these written standards as reference for providers operating Emergency Shelter programs. These written standards support but do not supersede the written standards, policies, and procedures maintained or stipulated by program funders unless otherwise stated by those funders. Funders of emergency shelter programs are welcome to stipulate that providers follow these Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care written standards for emergency shelter.*

Population

Persons who meet HUD's definition of literal homelessness (established in 24 CFR § 576.2).

Population Specialization

Emergency Shelters may have specific target populations to address the unique needs and concerns of those populations. If an emergency shelter designates a specific target population, they must serve all households who identify as included in that population.

Youth: Refers to unaccompanied youth aged 14 - 24 years old. Programs serving youth under the age of 18 must comply with all applicable state licensing and regulatory guidelines.

Domestic Violence: Refers to any household fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions. This includes survivors of human trafficking, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's

primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence.

Minimum Standards

- Must enter data into HMIS or a comparable database for Victim Service Provider agencies.
- Follow HUD requirements under 24 CFR § 576.400(e) related to emergency shelters and essential services.
- Emergency Shelters should follow **LOW BARRIER** guidelines and practices for households to access and enter shelter. Specific to shelter, this includes:
 - Emergency Shelters must ensure access and enrollment to shelter and services follow local and federal nondiscrimination policies such as the Equal Access Rule.
 - Emergency Shelters must allow access and place all persons based on self-identification of gender. Single-gender shelters must not require proof of gender for an individual to enter shelter.
 - Emergency Shelters must be free of charge. Shelters must not require participants to pay a fee to enter the shelter or utilize its services.
 - Emergency Shelters must not create barriers to shelter such as requiring drug testing and/or sobriety, require income, criminal history restrictions, require medication adherence, or mandate participation in mental health treatment.
 - Emergency Shelters reserved for families must not require that families separate to enter shelter and must not deny admission to families based upon the composition of the family in accordance with Section 404 of the McKinney-Vento Act as amended by the Hearth Act.
- Emergency Shelter programs must provide services and or access to the following services:
 - Crisis Intervention and Safety Planning.
 - Housing referrals and linkages to Permanent Housing location placement services.
- Emergency Shelters must have appropriate and up-to-date Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) established and in place for their agency, as well as clear and up-to-date written policies and proce-

dures formalized and established for each unit, program, and division operating as part of or in conjunction with the shelter. Emergency Shelters must review their agency's SOP and all policies and procedures at least once per year to ensure services and practices are relevant.

- Emergency Shelter programs must inform participants of all their rights, responsibilities, and expectations prior to intake AND these rights, responsibilities, and expectations, and other site-specific rules and policies impacting clients.
 - Information must be provided in accordance with [Limited English Proficiency](#) (LEP) guidance and
 - Must be visibly and publicly posted for all persons to reference at any time.
- Emergency Shelter programs must hold in-depth reviews of their shelter rules at least once per year to maintain and ensure client-focused goals and outcomes. Participation by individuals with lived expertise of homelessness should be required at each review and established in agency policy and procedures (See “Further Guidance” below).
- Emergency Shelter programs must offer on-site services and resources to meet basic needs (e.g., meals and/or access to food, personal care and hygiene supplies, reasonable storage, mail services, and restrooms and showers).

Time Frame

Emergency Shelter is intended for short-term (days or months) stays. Time limits are left to the discretion of the individual shelters but must be clearly communicated to all clients upon entry into the shelter.

Essential Elements

- In line with [guidance from USICH](#), Emergency Shelters are expected to strive for continuous improvement in the following identified specific areas of focus to strengthen the implementation and impact of emergency shelter programs:
 - Promote dignity and respect for every person seeking or needing shelter,
 - Divert people from the homelessness service system when possible,

- Adopt a Housing First approach and create low-barrier access to shelter, and
- Equip emergency shelters to serve as a platform for housing access.
- All shelter staff must receive training in problem-solving interventions (e.g. Problem-Solving Therapy and Solutions-Focused Therapy), Motivational Interviewing, Trauma Informed Care, Harm Reduction, and de-escalation techniques.
 - Ongoing training should be made available on a regular basis (See “Further Guidance” below).
 - Trainings must be offered to all shelter staff and volunteers (including contracted security personnel).
- ES programs must provide housing-focused, person-centered, strengths-based interventions to help households identify choices and solutions to end their homelessness as quickly as possible.
- ES programs must provide linkage to community supports and mainstream benefits.
- Problem Solving Strategies (e.g., diversion, rapid exit) must be a core component within the Emergency Shelter design and service provisions.
 - Staff must be able to have robust diversion conversations and engage households entering the homeless system in a diversion assessment/screening at shelter entry.
- Participants should have onsite access to or be provided direct access to evaluation for eligibility for services through the local Coordinated Entry System.
- Emergency Shelters must establish a Language Access Plan in order to ensure that participants with limited English proficiency have meaningful and equitable access to all programs, services, and resources that the shelter provides.

Outcome

Connection to Permanent Housing.

Further Guidance

Guidelines for Periodic Reviews of Shelter Rules: The Austin / Travis County CoC strongly recommends using the best practices from the [*National Alliance to End Homelessness \(NAEH\)’s 10 Steps to Evaluation Shelter Rules*](#).

Transitional Housing (TH)

(Current Transitional Housing written standards will be updated to conform with the format of these at a later date.)

Current Transitional Housing written standards can be found here:

<https://www.austinecho.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/TH-Written-Standards.pdf>

Joint Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-Housing (Joint TH-RRH)

Joint Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-Housing (Joint TH-RRH) provides short-term crisis housing with housing-focused supportive services that is designed to quickly connect households experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through a tailored package of assistance that may include the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services. Programs must have the capacity to offer both project components (Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-Housing) at project entry. Participants do not need to utilize RRH if they choose not to, but must be enrolled in the RRH component of the project. Participants may have direct access to Rapid Re-Housing.

The Joint TH-RRH model incorporates participant-choice, in both finding permanent housing and in determining when to exit crisis housing. Meaning the participant decides when they are ready to move on to the RRH part of the model, not the program. This includes participants deciding to skip the TH part of the model all together and go directly into RRH.

As with RRH programs, Joint TH-RRH programs in Austin / Travis County CoC are also committed to including and expanding practices that emphasize a person-centered and strengths-based approach toward assistance and services. Joint TH-RRH programs should incorporate progressive engagement. These approaches should be incorporated into every Joint TH-RRH project.

Population

Persons who meet category 1, 2, or 4 of HUD's homeless definition (established in 24 CFR § 576.2).

Population Specialization

Youth: Target and prioritize young people age 18-24 with the highest needs, including youth who are unsheltered, have been homeless for a long time or repeatedly, are most vulnerable to violence or harm; and have the highest barriers to access and maintaining permanent housing. In addition, programs should include strategies to provide a safe and supportive environment for young people who are disproportionately impacted in Austin including youth who are African American, LGBTQ (specifically transgender women of color), justice involved, child welfare involved, pregnant, and/or parenting.

Domestic Violence: Any household fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life-

threatening conditions including victims of human trafficking that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence.

Minimum Standards

- Serve participants/households meeting the definition of homelessness by their funder. Most programs utilize the HUD definition of homelessness.
- Align with the Austin / Travis County CoC's Rapid Re-housing Written Standards for RRH component.
- Joint TH-RRH is a time-limited intervention. Participants/households may only receive services for a total of 24 months in the combined TH-RRH components. Funders may determine limits on enrollment above this amount.
- Participants are not required to reside in the TH portion of the project before they receive RRH assistance. It is based on participant choice to enroll in either TH or RRH upon entry. While the Joint TH-RRH must make both types of assistance available to all participants (i.e., the units supported by the TH component and also the tenant based rental assistance and services provided through the PH-RRH component), a participating individual or family may choose to receive only one type of assistance provided through the Joint TH-RRH.
- The Transitional Housing component of the program must utilize an *Occupancy Agreement* (See Joint Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-Housing Resources in Appendix B) with participants.
- Participants in RRH component must enter into a lease agreement in the participant's name for an initial term of at least one year that is renewable and is terminable only for cause. Leases must be renewable for a minimum term of one month. Participants in RRH component must pay their portion of the rent directly to their landlord.
- Rental assistance should utilize a progressive engagement strategy and declining subsidy overtime, rather than an abrupt ending of all rental subsidies.
- Supportive services designed to meet the needs of the participants must be made available to the participants throughout the duration

of enrollment in both components. Programs should ensure a participant-centered and directed approach.

Time Frame

Joint TH-RRH program participants may receive a maximum of 24 months of total assistance between the TH and PH-RRH portions of the project combined. HUD has not set a specific time limit for program participants to reside in either component of the Joint TH-RRH. For example, if a participant resides in the TH portion for 4 months, they can receive up to 20 additional months of RRH assistance.

Programs cannot dictate minimum stays in either portion of the project (e.g., the program cannot require a program participant to reside in the transitional housing portion of the project for one-year). Participants should receive only the assistance they need to safely and stably exit homelessness; therefore, not all program participants should automatically receive 24 months of assistance.

Essential Elements

The Joint Component project should follow all essential elements with the Transitional Housing standards and the Rapid Re-Housing standards. Additional Joint TH-RRH essential elements include:

- Use a Housing First approach with client-driven service models and a focus on helping people move to permanent housing as quickly as possible. Participants cannot be required to participate in treatment or services to receive assistance.
- Have low barriers to entry and accommodate people with possessions, partners, pets, or other needs.
- Incorporate client-choice by helping participants find permanent housing based on their unique strengths, needs, preferences, and financial resources. Participants will choose when they are ready to exit the crisis housing portion of the project and move to permanent housing, with providers assisting participants with moving.

Outcomes

Obtain and maintain permanent housing.

Further Guidance

- Joint TH-RRH Component Data Entry Workflow Guide: <https://www.austinecho.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Joint-TH-RRH-Workflow-1.30.20.pdf>
- <https://www.hudexchange.info/sites/onecpd/assets/File/SNAPS-In-Focus-The-New-Joint-Transitional-Housing-and-Rapid-Re-Housing-Component.pdf>

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) projects are designed to provide flexible programming that will expedite a household's ability to become self-sufficient through time-limited rental assistance programs. Rapid Re-Housing has been recognized by all federal funders as one of the most critical and cost-effective strategies to end homelessness.

The following section provides guidelines for operating local RRH programs. Although RRH programs are funded under various federal programs with different regulations, these guidelines have been developed with general best practices in mind that can be applied to different programs regardless of their funding source. The overall goal is to ensure consistent program delivery to strengthen our local efforts to reduce the number of people who experience literal homelessness in Austin / Travis County by incorporating best practices.

Per 24 CFR part 578.37(a)(1)(ii), CoCs must establish policies and procedures for determining and prioritizing which eligible individuals and families will receive rapid re-housing assistance. All Rapid Re-Housing programs in Austin / Travis County must utilize the Coordinated Entry Process (CEP) for program referrals.

Population

Persons who meet category 1 or 4 of HUD's homeless definition (established in 24 CFR § 576.2). Specifically, participants meeting Category 1 and 4 of the HUD Homeless Definition will be prioritized.

Minimum Standards

- Rapid Re-housing is a time-limited intervention. Most participants/households should be enrolled in RRH between 6 and 18 months. Funders may determine limits on enrollment above this amount.
- Follow the designated Coordinated Entry process for program referrals.
- Supportive services designed to meet the needs of the participants must be made available to the participants throughout the duration of enrollment in RRH. Programs should implement progressive engagement to ensure a participant-centered and directed approach.
- Participants in CoC and ESG funded RRH must enter into a lease agreement in the participant's name for an initial term of at least one year that is renewable and is terminable only for cause.

- Leases must be renewable for a minimum term of one month.
- Participants in RRH must pay their portion of the rent directly to their landlord.
- Rental assistance should utilize a progressive engagement strategy and declining subsidy overtime, rather than an abrupt ending of all rental subsidies.

Determining Amount and Duration of Rental Assistance

Per 24 CFR part 578.37(a)(1)(ii), CoCs must establish standards for determining:

- The percentage or amount of rent each program participant must pay while receiving rapid re-housing assistance;
- The maximum amount or percentage of rental assistance that a program participant may receive;
- The maximum number of months that a program participant may receive rental assistance; and
- The maximum number of times that a program participant may receive rental assistance.

Projects are required to maintain their rental determination policies. These policies must align with [HUD CPD Notice 17-11](#). Participants without income cannot be required to pay rent.

Austin / Travis County RRH programs and the duration of rental assistance may be categorized under the following types of RRH program designs:

Local RRH Program Definitions	Duration of Rental Assistance
<p>Short-Term RRH <i>Up to 3 months of rental assistance</i></p>	<p>Programs may offer the amount needed for the household to stabilize. In order to be considered a short-term RRH program, the project’s budget must allow for every program participant to be offered at least 3 months of rental assistance.</p>
<p>Medium-Term RRH <i>4-12 months of rental assistance</i></p>	<p>Medium-Term RRH programs are designed to provide Rental Assistance up to 12 months using progressive engagement.</p>
<p>Medium-Long-Term RRH <i>4-24 months of rental assistance</i></p>	<p>HUD reserves Long-term Rental Assistance for PSH programs. In order to accommodate local needs, the Austin / Travis County CoC is defining Medium-Long Term RRH as programs that provide rental assistance up to 24 months which is the maximum amount allowed under CoC and ESG requirements.</p>
<p>Housing Stability Case Management may not exceed 6 months after rental assistance has ended and should not exceed 24 months without funder authorization.</p> <p>Federally funded programs must receive approval from HUD either through an exemption or waiver. Programs approved through a waiver must verify in writing with the local HUD Field Office the approval of the waived activity annually.</p> <p>Resource: Rapid Re-Housing ESG vs. CoC</p>	

Essential Elements

- Rental Subsidy
 - Coordination between property manager / landlord
 - Housing Location
- Case Management
 - Pre-tenancy and tenancy
 - Referrals to services: education, income, benefits, legal aid, medical services (physical, mental, addiction, etc.), etc.

- Emphasis on employment supports and benefits
- Progressive Engagement

Local RRH programs should follow the following principles when deciding their standards either at the program level:

- ***Housing Stability Plan with Exit Strategy:*** Program staff should develop a housing plan with the amount and duration of rental assistance each client will receive and a program exit strategy with plans to reduce the client’s financial assistance over time. Program staff should consider the participant’s current and expected income and expenses; other public or private assistance for which the program participant will be eligible and likely to receive; and the relative affordability of available housing in the area.
- ***Progressive Engagement:*** Program staff should provide the minimal amount of assistance necessary to stabilize in housing, and assistance is most impactful when assessed regularly. Depending upon funder flexibility, programs should be designed to allow households to return for additional financial assistance if needed, within a reasonable amount of time.

Housing Search & Placement

Once participants are determined to be eligible, RRH projects must provide housing search and placement assistance, which includes the services and activities needed to assist participants in locating and obtaining suitable permanent housing. The Austin / Travis County CoC’s best practice is to separate housing identification from case management. The skills and experience for effective housing identification are different and specific from those of case management.

At a minimum, housing search and placement assistance must include the following activities:

- Assessment of needs, preferences, and barriers to housing placement (including tenant screening/credit screening).
- Development of a housing plan for matching participants to desirable and sustainable housing.
- Assistance conducting a targeted housing search, if needed (participants must be permitted to locate housing of their choice within the Austin / Travis County area).
- Outreach and negotiation with owners/landlords of housing, if needed.

- Assistance with completing rental applications, if needed.
- Tenant counseling (including education on how to talk to landlords, understanding rental applications and leases, securing utilities, and understanding tenant obligations).
- Assistance obtaining utilities and making moving arrangements.

Housing Stability Case Management

Whereas housing search and placement assistance is intended to assist participants in locating and obtaining housing, housing stability case management is intended to assist participants in maintaining that housing for the long-term through increased housing stability.

Because household needs must be met with the appropriate type and level of services, agencies must provide housing stability case management that includes the following services, at minimum:

- An assessment of strengths, needs, and barriers to stable housing.
- Assistance connecting to mainstream resources.
- Development of a consumer-driven housing stability plan.
- Program staff must meet with participants at least once each month.

Agencies must use a Housing First model when providing Housing Stability Case Management. This means that Participants may not be required to participate in additional services. However, it is the role of the case manager to work with the participant to identify services that the participant wants/needs and make appropriate referrals. Although these services are not required, the role of the case manager is to continue engaging the participant to achieve and maintain housing stability.

Housing Requirements

- All housing must meet housing habitability and quality standards, rental reasonableness, and suitable dwelling size in accordance with Texas Property Code § 92.010 (based on funder requirements), if applicable, before any rental assistance is paid. CoC funded projects may enter into a rental assistance if an agreement is made with the landlord to correct deficiencies within 30 days (24 CFR § 578.75(b)(1)). (See Rent Reasonability and Fair Market Rent Under the Continuum of Care Program in Appendix B.)

- All housing must pass lead-based paint inspection in accordance with 24 CFR § 35 (A)(B)(H)(J)(K)(M)(R) before rental assistance is paid.
- Lease or Rental Agreements between the Participant and the Landlord/Owner
 - Participants must have a written lease or rental agreement with the landlord/owner of the housing unit. For CoC-funded RRH, the lease must be for a term of at least one (1) year that is renewable (for a minimum term of one (1) month) and terminable only for cause.
- Letter of Agreement between the Agency and the Landlord/Owner (Rental Assistance Agreement).

Agencies may make rental assistance payments only to landlords/owners with whom the Agency has a letter of agreement. The letter of agreement must include the terms under which rental assistance will be provided, the term of the agreement, that the landlord/owner will provide the Agency with a copy of all written notices to the participant (e.g., notices to vacate, notices of noncompliance).

Outcomes

- Reducing the length of time program participants spend homeless;
- Percent of households exit to permanent housing destinations; and
- Limiting returns to homelessness within a year of program exit.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

(Current Permanent Supportive Housing written standards will be updated to conform with the format of these at a later date.)

Current Permanent Supportive Housing written standards can be found here:

<https://www.austinecho.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/PSH-Written-Standards.pdf>

APPENDIX A: HUD Homeless Definition

CRITERIA FOR DEFINING HOMELESSNESS	Category 1	Literally Homeless	<p>(1) Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); <u>or</u> (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less <u>and</u> who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution
	Category 2	Imminent Risk of Homelessness	<p>(2) Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified: <u>and</u> (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing
	Category 3	Homeless under other Federal statutes	<p>(3) Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes; (ii) Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application; (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the preceding 60 days; <u>and</u> (iv) Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers
	Category 4	Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV	<p>(4) Any individual or family who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Is fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence; (ii) Has no other residence; <u>and</u> (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

APPENDIX B: Resources

Homelessness Prevention

- <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/homelessness-prevention-creating-programs-that-work/>
- <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=1b2aa57d8a6c42e5e846a3bc08e6a1b4&mc=true&node=pt24.3.576&rgn=div5>

Diversion

- <http://allhomekc.org/diversion/>
- <http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/creating-a-successful-diversion-program.pdf>
- <https://endhomelessness.org/the-three-cs-of-diversion/>

Emergency Shelter

- <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=1b2aa57d8a6c42e5e846a3bc08e6a1b4&mc=true&node=pt24.3.576&rgn=div5>
- <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/emergency-shelter/>

Rapid Re-Housing

- <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/rapid-re-housing-toolkit/>
- <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CoC-Rent-Reasonableness-and-FMR.pdf>

Joint Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-Housing

- <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CoCProgramLeasingandRentalAssistanceSummariesofLeaseExamples.pdf>
- <https://files.hudexchange.info/course-content/coc-program-start-up-training-webinars-for-fy-2013-funds/CoC-Program-Startup-Training-FY2013-Recipients-Lease-Sublease-Occupancy-Agreement.pdf>

Permanent Supportive Housing

- <https://www.csh.org/supportive-housing-101/>

APPENDIX C: Adopted Local Policies & Procedures

The following are policies and procedures which have been adopted and approved by the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care. The most current list of adopted policies and procedures will be located on the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition website at: <https://www.austinecho.org/leading-system-change/coalition-leadership/>

- [*The Membership Council Governance Charter*](#)
- [*Anti-Discrimination Policy*](#)
- [*Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Policy*](#)
- [*VAWA Policy and Procedures*](#)
- [*Education Services Policy*](#)
- [*Termination Policy*](#)