

## **Balance of State Continuum of Care Program Standards for Permanent Supportive Housing Programs**

The Balance of State Continuum of Care developed the following Permanent Supportive Housing Program standards to insure:

- Program accountability to individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Program compliance with HUD rules
- Program uniformity
- Adequate program staff competence and training, specific to the target population being served

*The following program standards were developed by the WI Balance of State COC – Coordinated Assessment Committee and approved by the WI Balance of State Board of Directors. These standards go into effect immediately and programs will have until July 1, 2014 to attain compliance.*

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Permanent Supportive Housing** – Community-based housing with indefinite leasing or rental assistance paired with services to help people with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness achieve housing stability and live independently.

**Disabling Condition** – a physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury, which is expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration, substantially impedes the person's ability to live independently, and is of such a nature that such ability could be improved with more suitable housing conditions; a developmental disability (as defined in Section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act of 2000); or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) or any conditions arising from the etiologic agent for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, including infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

**Chronically Homeless** – (1) An individual who is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least one year or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years, and can be diagnosed with a disabling condition; (2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, or other similar facility for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria above before entering that facility; (3) A family with an adult head of household who meets all of the criteria above, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of the household has been homeless.

### **Personnel**

**STANDARD:** The program shall be adequately staffed by qualified personnel to ensure quality service delivery, effective program management, and the safety of program participants.

#### **CRITERIA:**

1. The agency selects, for its service personnel, only those employees and/or volunteers with appropriate knowledge, or experience, for working with individuals and families experiencing homelessness, individuals with serious and persistent mental illness, &/or individuals with substance use disorders.
2. The program has a written plan for, and provides training to, all paid and volunteer staff in both the policies and procedures employed by the program and in specific skill areas as determined by the program.
3. All paid and volunteer service personnel participate in ongoing and/or external training, supervision, and development to further enhance their knowledge and ability to work with individuals and families experiencing homelessness, individuals with serious and persistent mental illness, and individuals with substance use disorders.
4. For programs that use HMIS, all HMIS users must abide by the standard operating procedures found in the HMIS Policies and Procedures manual. Additionally, users must adhere to the privacy and confidentiality terms set forth in the User Agreement.
5. Agency personnel with responsibilities for supervision of the casework, counseling, and/or case management components have, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree in a human service-related field and/or experience working with individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
6. Personnel with supervisory responsibilities for overall program operations shall have, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree in a human service-related field and/or demonstrated ability and experience that qualifies them to assume such responsibility.
7. All personnel have a written job description that at a minimum addresses the major tasks to be performed and the qualifications required for the position.
8. The program operates under an affirmative action/civil rights compliance plans or letters of assurance.
9. Case supervisors review current cases and individual service plans on a regular basis-preferably weekly (with relevant project staff) to ensure quality/coordinated services.

### **CLIENT INTAKE PROCESS**

**STANDARD:** The program will be an active member in its regional Coordinated Assessment system. The program will have minimal entry requirements to ensure the most vulnerable of the population are being served. The program will ensure active client participation and informed consent.

#### **CRITERIA:**

1. All adult program participants must meet the following program eligibility requirements:

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- a. 18 years old or older
  - b. Literally Homeless
  - c. At least one adult in the household has a disabling condition
  - d. Adult household members are able to participate in developing and carrying out an appropriate participation plan
  - e. Chronically Homeless (for new projects)
2. Programs may require participants to meet only these additional program eligibility requirements:
    - a. Chronically homeless
    - b. Residency requirements
    - c. A period of sobriety – only if the program is not a Housing First model
    - d. Other program-specific requirements (i.e. limiting program entry to a specific subpopulation of individuals or families experiencing homelessness)
  3. The only reasons programs may have the option to disqualify an individual or family from program entry are:
    - a. Household make-up, provided it does not violate HUD’s Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity requirements (Singles Only programs can disqualify households with children, Families Only programs can disqualify single households, etc.)
    - b. Criminal record that includes violent crimes within the last three years.
    - c. Status as a registered sex offender.
  4. Additionally, programs may not disqualify an individual or family from program entry for lack of income or employment status.
  5. The program explains the services that are available and the requirements for participation and secures a commitment from each adult household member to participate in program services prior to admitting the individual or family into the program.
  6. The program maintains Releases of Information that allow sharing of information with relevant people and/or agencies. Program participants have copies of all Releases of Information that they have signed, and have the right to revoke any Release of Information without penalty.

### **PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

**STANDARD:** The program will provide safe, affordable housing that meets participants’ needs in accordance with client intake practices and within HUD guidelines for permanent supportive housing programs.

#### **CRITERIA:**

1. In providing or arranging for housing, the program considers the needs of the individual or family experiencing homelessness.
2. The program provides assistance in accessing suitable housing.
3. The program may provide assistance with moving costs.

4. The program signs occupancy agreements or leases (or subleases) with all program participants residing in housing.
5. The program enters into a lease agreement with participants for a term of at least one year, which is terminable for cause. The lease must be automatically renewable upon expiration for a minimum term of one month.
6. The program does not charge minimum rent.
7. If the program imposes occupancy charges, the charges may not exceed the highest of:
  - a. 30% of the household's monthly adjusted gross income;
  - b. 10% of the household's monthly income; or
  - c. If the household is receiving payments for welfare assistance from a public agency and a part of the payments is specifically designated by the agency to meet the household's housing costs, the portion of the payments that is designated for housing costs.
  - d. When determining rental costs, agencies cannot round up to the nearest dollar.

### **CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

**STANDARD:** The program shall provide access to case management services by trained staff to each individual or family participating in the program.

#### **CRITERIA:**

1. Individual case management is provided to program participants on a regular and consistent basis as determined by the individual's case plan. Case management includes the following:
  - a. Assessing, planning, coordinating, implementing and evaluating the overall service delivered to the participant.
  - b. Helping participants learn to live in housing, maintain their housing in a safe manner, get along with fellow tenants and the landlord.
  - c. Helping participants create support systems and participate in the community as they desire.
2. Individualized budgeting and money management services are provided to program participants as needed.
3. Representative payee services may be provided.
4. Basic life skills information, including housekeeping, menu planning and food preparation, consumer education, leisure-time activities, transportation, and obtaining vital documents (Social Security card, birth certificate, etc.) may be provided.
5. Interpersonal skill building, such as developing positive relationships with others, parenting skills, effective communication, decision making, conflict resolution, and stress management may be provided.
6. Educational advancement, such as GED preparation and attainment, post-secondary training, and vocational education may be provided.

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7. Job preparation and attainment, such as career counseling, job preparation training, dress and grooming, job placement and job maintenance may be provided.
8. Assistance in accessing mainstream benefits, including food stamps, child care assistance, and health insurance, may be provided.
9. Mental Health services, such as relapse prevention, crisis intervention, outpatient therapy, psychiatric services, medication monitoring and/or dispensing, may be provided.
10. AODA services, such as outpatient treatment, relapse prevention and crisis intervention, may be provided.
11. Physical health care, such as routine physicals, health assessments, and family planning education may be provided.
12. Legal Services related to civil (rent arrears, family law, uncollected benefits) or criminal (warrants, minor infractions, etc.) matters may be provided.
13. Assistance with food, clothing and/or transportation may be provided.
14. The program may require program participants to take part in supportive services provided through the program as a condition of continued participation, as long as the services are not disability-related (e.g., mental health, outpatient health services).
15. Only projects whose primary purpose is to provide substance abuse treatment services may require program participants to take part in substance abuse treatment services as a condition of continued program participation.

### **SERVICE COORDINATION**

**STANDARD:** The program shall coordinate with community agencies and individuals for the provision of those services needed and requested by the individual or family, but that are not directly provided by the program.

#### **CRITERIA:**

1. Arrangements shall be made as appropriate with community agencies and individuals for the provision of medical services, mental health services, legal services, and other assistance requested by the participant, which are not provided directly by the program.

### **TERMINATION**

**STANDARD:** Termination is expected to be limited to only the most severe cases. Programs will exercise judgment and examine all extenuating circumstances when determining if violations are serious enough to warrant termination.

#### **CRITERIA:**

1. The program may terminate services when the following occurs:
  - a. A participant engages in violent or aggressive behavior toward others, including program staff.
  - b. A participant uses illegal drugs in their unit.

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- c. A participant engages in criminal activity in their unit.
2. In cases when a participant is terminated from services for other than the above stated reasons, the burden is on the Program to provide evidence that it examined all extenuating circumstances and made significant attempts to help the participant continue in the program before deciding to terminate assistance.
3. The program follows a termination process and has a process for appeals/grievance. This information is provided to participants at the beginning of the program, and if/when termination of services occurs.

### **FOLLOW-UP SERVICES**

**STANDARD:** The program shall provide a continuity of services to all participants following their exit from the program. These services can be provided directly and/or through referrals to other agencies or individuals.

#### **CRITERIA:**

1. The program develops exit plans with the participant to ensure continued housing stability and connection with community resources, as desired.
2. The program attempts to follow up at least once every 30 days for the first three months after the client exits the program to determine if there is any need for further service, to offer assistance in obtaining those services, and to evaluate the services that were provided.
3. Services may be provided to formerly homeless individuals for up to six months after their exit from homelessness.

### **CLIENT FILES**

**STANDARD:** The documentation necessary for the effective delivery and tracking of service will be kept up to date and the confidentiality of program participants will be maintained.

#### **CRITERIA:**

1. The file maintained on each participant should, at a minimum, include information required by HUD, participation agreements, service plans, case notes, information on the services provided both directly and through referrals to community agencies and individuals, and any follow-up and evaluation data that are compiled.
2. Client information must be entered into HMIS in accordance with the data quality, timeliness and additional requirements found in the HMIS Policies and Procedures manual. At a minimum, programs must record the date the client enters and exits the program, and update the client's information as changes occur.
3. The program will maintain each participant file in a secure place and shall not disclose information from the file without the written permission of the participant as appropriate except to project staff and other agencies as required by law. Participants must give informed

consent to release any client identifying data to be utilized for research, teaching and public interpretation.

4. All records pertaining to Continuum of Care funds must be retained for the greater of 5 years or the participant records must be retained for 5 years after the expenditure of all funds from the grant under which the program participant was served. Copies made by microfilming, photocopying, or similar methods may be substituted for the original records. Where Continuum of Care funds are used for the acquisition, new construction, or rehabilitation of a project site, records must be retained until 15 years after the date that the project site is first occupied, or used, by program participants. Records pertaining to other funding sources must adhere to those record retention requirements.

### **EVALUATION AND PLANNING**

**STANDARD:** Ongoing program planning and evaluation will be conducted with the involvement of relevant personnel with the resources available.

#### **CRITERIA:**

1. The program has written goals and objectives for its services that are consistent with its commitment to participants and the community.
2. The program reviews the case management, housing, and follow-up needs of participants served by the program and the existing services that are available to meet these needs, on at least an annual basis.
3. The program reviews and revises as appropriate, its goals, objectives, and activities based upon the data generated through the review of participant's needs, existing services, and the follow-up evaluations on at least an annual basis.
4. The program conducts an on-going evaluation of its services to participants.
5. The program exhibits due regard for participant privacy in conducting and reporting its evaluation.
6. The program's planning process shall be open to paid and volunteer staff, program participants, the agency's Board of Directors, and members of the Balance of State Board of Directors.