



# **MD-514**

## **Written Standards for Service Delivery**

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**MARYLAND**  
BALANCE OF STATE  
CONTINUUM OF CARE

**VERSION 1.0**  
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# PROJECT GUIDANCE

## OVERVIEW

HUD requires that Continuums of Care develop written guidance to develop consistent implementation of eligibility and prioritization for assistance by project types. These guidelines are to be implemented by CoC, ESG and HSP funded projects across the MD Bos CoC.

Project Guidance is divided into three main sections: Engagement Projects/ Services, Temporary Housing and Permanent Housing. Each section contains guidance for project types that fit within each category. For each project type, the following topics are addressed:

### ESSENTIAL PROJECT ELEMENTS

This section details the essential services and characteristics that define each project type.

### PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

This section indicates which households are eligible to participate in the project.

### PRIORITIZATION

Acknowledging that there often are not enough resources to serve every eligible household that approaches a service provider, this section defines characteristics of households and provides an order of priority for which households should receive services first, based on those characteristics.

**NOTE:** For purposes of this document, prioritization applies only to permanent housing projects, including Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing.

### AMOUNT/DURATION OF ASSISTANCE

This section defines limits on the amount and duration of financial assistance and other services. This section appears only in the Rapid Rehousing (RRH) project type.

### PERFORMANCE METRICS

This section defines the expected outcomes for the project.

## TEMPORARY HOUSING

Temporary Housing refers to a time-limited housing project where households experiencing homelessness or fleeing domestic violence may receive shelter and supportive services intended to enable individuals to move into permanent housing. Temporary Housing may be site-based or scattered-site. There are three types of Temporary Housing recognized by the MD BoS CoC at this time:

- Emergency Shelter (ES)
- Inclement Weather Emergency Shelter (IWES)
- Transitional Housing (TH)

Emergency Shelter (ES) provides short-term shelter and support to individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis. ES may be site-based, e.g., a standard shelter building, or scattered-site, e.g., hotel vouchers or master-leased apartment units, and must serve only those households that are literally homeless (Category 1 of the HEARTH Act definition of “homeless”) or those fleeing domestic violence (Category 4 of the HEARTH Act definition of “homeless”). A household’s stay in an emergency shelter meets the federal definition of literal homelessness and therefore qualifies them under Category 1 status. Households should not be denied access to ES due to lack of identification/proof of residency, unless required to produce this documentation by a supplemental funding source.

Inclement Weather Emergency Shelter (IWES) is a temporary shelter designed to assist with an individual’s or family’s immediate housing crisis, typically during inclement weather, e.g., extreme cold, extreme heat, or a severe weather event. Because IWES is typically only available during severe weather events, the location/type of shelter may not be consistent each time it is made available.

Transitional Housing (TH) refers to a time-limited temporary housing project where households experiencing homelessness or fleeing domestic violence may stay and receive supportive services that are designed to enable individuals to move into permanent housing.

The MD BoS CoC embraces a Housing First approach that prioritizes permanent housing without preconditions. While permanent housing is the preferred and ultimate goal, Temporary Housing remains a critical intervention, particularly for households who need a safe and stable environment while seeking long-term housing solutions.

## **EMERGENCY SHELTER (ES)**

An emergency shelter is any facility with overnight sleeping accommodations, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter for households experiencing homelessness.

## **ESSENTIAL PROJECT ELEMENTS**

### **LOW-BARRIER**

ES should maintain as few barriers to entry as possible, e.g., the ES does not require participants to have income, maintain sobriety, provide identification, have a clean criminal record, participate in mental health treatment, including taking medication, etc. ES should not require participant households to pay to access shelter. ES reserved for families shall not require that families separate to enter shelter and shall not deny admission to families based upon the composition of the family. Single-gender ES must not require proof of gender for an individual to enter shelter.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

Emergency shelter serves as a potentially life saving intervention for those experiencing the greatest levels of vulnerability. Termination of shelter services may lead to life-or-death consequences, therefore programs should only consider program removal in the most extreme circumstances that impact the health and safety of others.

A client MAY be terminated at the discretion of project staff for violence, threats of violence, harassment, stalking, destruction of property, or repeated theft that occurs on the program's premises and targets the staff, and other clients, as well as their friends, family, or associates.

## **SHELTER TIME-LIMITS**

Shelters shall not impose arbitrary time limits on the length of a participant's stay. A shelter time-limit includes shelters which have policies requiring all clients to exit after 90 days regardless of whether or not they still need emergency shelter. These policies can create needless strain on the system as clients, intake staff, and outreach workers scramble to create new emergency plans and shuffle clients between shelters. This may increase chronic homelessness, interrupt clients' housing plans, and lead to further trauma.

While all shelters are encouraged to work with clients to exit them as quickly as possible, rapid exits from shelter is only an indicator of good performance if clients are regularly exiting to housing, not returning to street homelessness. When evaluating program performance, the Balance of State will not give programs with low lengths-of-stay any credit if clients are forced out of shelter after an arbitrary time limit.

Time-limits shall not be used as a way to motivate clients to participate in services, to identify housing faster, or seek employment. Clients shall not be discriminated against for their choice not to participate in services while in shelter. Clients who have been in shelter for a long time should receive targeted case management to encourage their exit, not punishment or arbitrary deadlines.

The above policy does not apply to night-by-night shelters which exit all clients every night and require them to re-enroll the next day. Likewise, this policy does not apply to *Inclement Weather Emergency Shelters* (see IWES below) once the weather emergency has ended. Finally this policy should not be construed to imply that shelters may not exit clients who vacate their beds. Clients who abandon their shelter beds, even for a single night, may be exited from the shelter so that the bed does not remain unoccupied.

## **SAFETY**

ES provides a safe physical environment for participant households, including a secure place to store personal belongings, sleeping space and adequate hygiene facilities. ES provides at least one meal per person per day to participant households, free of cost.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Designated staff must complete the CES assessment with all participants.

## **SERVICES**

Participation in services by participant households in ES must be voluntary, housing focused, and participant centered. ES projects should not require that participants engage in services or make progress on service plans to maintain their housing assistance. ES staff should create housing stabilization plans with participant households and provide housing case management. Staff should also provide linkages to mainstream resources and services including TANF, SNAP, SSI/SSDI, Medicaid/Medicare, etc.

Clients should not be discriminated against for choosing not to participate in services and may not be exited from a shelter program for the sole reason of their nonparticipation.

## **COORDINATION**

ES staff should work cooperatively with service providers in the community to provide needed services to participant households and quickly move them to permanent housing.

## **PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY**

Individuals and families who qualify as homeless under paragraphs (1) and (4) of the “homeless” definition under 24 CFR § 576.2, i.e. households who meet Category 1 or 4 of the HEARTH Act definition of “homeless”

Diversion should be attempted with all potential participant households before enrollment into ES.

## **PRIORITIZATION**

Not applicable at this time, however, shelter beds should be prioritized for people who are living in unsheltered situations.

## **PERFORMANCE METRICS**

- Successful exits from ES to permanent housing destinations
- Percent participants age 18 or older with earned income at exit
- Percent participants age 18 or older who have non-cash benefits at exit
- Percent participants with 1+ source of non-cash benefits at exit
- Percent participants age 18 or older who maintained or increased their total income (from all sources) as of the end of the operating year or program exit

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER EMERGENCY SHELTER (IWES)**

IWES may be site-based (e.g., additional beds in a standard shelter building, in a church, or in a community center) or scattered-site (e.g., hotel vouchers or a network of churches), and may serve only those households that are experiencing literal homelessness or fleeing domestic violence. Because of the more dangerous nature of sleeping outside in bad weather, IWES is expected to have few, if any, barriers to entry. Households should not be denied access to IWES due to lack of identification/proof of residency, unless required to produce this documentation by a supplemental funding source. IWES must also be well-advertised and outline specific criteria under which the shelter will activate. Each community may decide independently the weather conditions under which IWES will be activated, but these conditions must be formally outlined in writing and distributed at least once annually among homeless service providers.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

Because of the more dangerous nature of sleeping outside in bad weather, IWES is expected to have few, if any, barriers to entry. Households should not be denied access to IWES due to lack of identification/proof of residency, unless required to produce this documentation by a supplemental funding source.

## **ESSENTIAL PROJECT ELEMENTS**

### **LOW-BARRIER**

IWES should maintain as few barriers to entry as possible, e.g., the shelter does not require participants to have income, maintain sobriety, provide identification, have a clean criminal record, participate in mental health treatment, including taking medication, etc., given the additional danger of sleeping outdoors during a severe weather event. There shall be no requirement for households to pay to access shelter. IWES reserved for families shall not require that families separate to enter shelter and shall not deny admission to families based upon the composition of the family. Single-gender IWES must not require proof of gender for an individual to enter shelter.

### **SAFE, ADEQUATE SHELTER**

IWES provides a safe physical environment, and access to sleeping space, hygiene amenities, and food.

### **SERVICES**

To the extent that funding and staffing capacity allows, IWES may provide case management and/or housing navigation.

### **PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY**

Individuals and families who qualify as homeless under paragraphs (1) and (4) of the “homeless” definition under 24 CFR § 576.2, i.e. households who meet Category 1 or 4 of the HEARTH Act definition of “homeless”.

### **PRIORITIZATION**

Not applicable.

### **PERFORMANCE METRICS**

Percent of participant households served are entered into HMIS, in accordance with the HMIS Policies and Procedures.

### **TRANSITIONAL HOUSING (TH)**

Transitional Housing is designed to provide homeless individuals and families with the interim stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing. Transitional housing may be used to cover the costs of up to 24 months of housing with accompanying supportive services.

TH is typically site-based but can also be scattered-site. The MD BoS CoC embraces the Housing First approach, where households are offered permanent housing before any other type of assistance. The MD BoS CoC understands that TH provides a valuable option for households seeking to pursue therapeutic goals before entering permanent housing. TH can also provide appropriate intervention services for special populations, such as youth, people in recovery from substance abuse, and people fleeing domestic violence.

When working with a household experiencing Chronic Homelessness, providers should attempt to connect them with Rapid Rehousing over Transitional Housing when possible if Permanent Supportive Housing is not immediately available. Residing in RRH will allow a household to retain its Chronic



Homeless status, while residing in TH will not. If the household loses its Chronically Homeless status, they will not be eligible for CoC Program-funded Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), with the exception of limited scenarios.

## **ESSENTIAL PROJECT ELEMENTS**

### **LOW-BARRIER**

TH should maintain as few barriers to entry as possible, e.g., it does not require participants to have income, maintain sobriety, provide identification, have a clean criminal record, participate in mental health treatment, including taking medication, etc. Further, TH projects shall not require that participants engage in services or make progress on service plans to maintain their housing assistance.

TH reserved for families shall not require that families separate to enter the project and shall not deny admission to families based upon the composition of the family. Single-gender TH must not require proof of gender for an individual to enter the project.

### **LEASE/OCCUPANCY AGREEMENT**

The participant household must hold a signed lease/occupancy agreement with the TH provider or landlord. The lease/occupancy agreement should be a standard agreement, similar to one signed by a tenant leasing a unit on the private market. The lease and/or occupancy agreement must comply with state and federal property law. Participants should be held to the terms of the standard lease agreement.

Participant households in TH must enter into a lease agreement for a term of at least one month. The lease must be automatically renewable upon expiration, except on prior notice by either party, up to a maximum term of 24 months.

### **RENTAL ASSISTANCE/OCCUPANCY CHARGES**

TH provides participant households with rental assistance in a scattered-site unit or provides free or low-cost housing if the unit is site-based. TH providers may require that participant households make monthly rental contributions, in compliance with § 578.77 of the CoC Interim Rule.

### **SAFETY**

If site-based: TH provides a secure physical environment for participant households. The site provides a 24-hour residential environment, including access to cooking space, hygiene amenities, showers, laundry, storage, privacy, etc. The units in which households reside must meet the applicable housing quality standards (HQS) under 24 CFR 982.401.

If scattered-site: TH provider ensures that all assisted units meet the applicable housing quality standards (HQS) under 24 CFR 982.401. Before any assistance is provided on behalf of a participant household, the TH provider must physically inspect each unit to assure that the unit meets HQS. Assistance will not be provided for units that fail to meet HQS, unless the owner corrects any deficiencies within 30 days from the date of the initial inspection, and the TH provider verifies that all deficiencies have been corrected.

Each participant household should be provided with a unit of suitable dwelling size for the number of family members comprising the household. Suitable dwelling size means the dwelling unit must have at least one bedroom or living/sleeping room for each two persons. Children of opposite sex, other than very young children, must not be required to occupy the same bedroom or living/sleeping room.

## **SERVICES**

TH providers must not require that a participant household engage in disability-related services including substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or medical adherence.

Participant households should be supported to establish and implement a housing stabilization plan and a plan to secure permanent housing upon exit from the TH project. While participation in all services must be voluntary, TH providers must ensure that services are available to participant households for the duration of their enrollment in the project. Recommended services/referrals include:

- Housing search assistance
- Employment assessment and connection to employment services and/or education programs, such as GED classes, vocational school, community college, etc.
- Financial counseling to help resolve rental arrears and/or debt, to enhance budgeting skills, to establish a savings plan and/or other money management skills
- Connections to mainstream benefits and services, including TANF, SNAP, SSI/SSDI, Medicaid/Medicare, etc.
- Assistance building or re-building family and community support networks

## **PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY**

Individuals and families who qualify as homeless under paragraphs (1) and (4) of the “homeless” definition under 24 CFR § 576.2, i.e. households who meet Category 1 or 4 of the HEARTH Act definition of “homeless”.

A TH project may require additional eligibility criteria to effectively serve a priority population, such as youth, people in recovery from substance abuse, or people fleeing domestic violence.

Note: While an individual/family may maintain their “homeless” eligibility status while residing in TH, an individual/family loses their “chronically homeless” designation after residing in TH for 7 days or more. Additionally, individuals/families residing in TH do not maintain eligibility for CoC- or ESG-funded Rapid Rehousing services, though they are still considered Category 1 “homeless” under the HEARTH Act definition.

## **PRIORITIZATION**

As of the writing of this version of the Written Standards, transitional housing projects may be subject to Coordinated Entry referrals and prioritization, however, specifics have not yet been established.

## **PERFORMANCE METRICS**

- Number of persons served, compared to the number proposed in the application
- Percentage of participants who exited to permanent housing



- Average length of stay in TH prior to exit
- Percentage of participants with increased income at program exit
- Percentage of participants with increased non-cash benefits (e.g., SNAP, TANF) at program exit
- Percentage of participants with health insurance coverage at program exit
- Percentage of chronically homeless households served
- Percentage of adults with no cash income at program entry
- Percentage of participants with more than one physical/mental health condition at entry
- Percentage of participants fleeing domestic violence
- Percentage of households entering from a place not meant for human habitation
- Quarterly occupancy rate (household utilization rate demonstrating full inventory use)

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