



Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care

Rapid Re-Housing Program Standards

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I. Purpose

This document is intended to serve as a guide to service providers implementing the Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) program in the Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care (CoC). The document promotes a unified understanding of the core program elements and expectations of local RRH providers. As the local coordinated entry system continues to evolve and strengthen its ability to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-reoccurring, there is an increased need for system-wide alignment around common goals and outcomes, program models and activities, and performance standards. **All RRH providers within the CoC are expected to adhere to the model outlined in this document.** Fidelity to this model will help ensure that all program participants enrolled in RRH have similar experiences and opportunities to attain housing regardless of which service provider they work with.

II. Access and Prioritization

Diversion

CoC providers work through diversion conversations with both sheltered and unsheltered program participants to problem solve their current housing crisis and support participants to self-resolve. By helping individuals and families immediately identify alternative housing arrangements and connecting them with mainstream and community resources, households are able to find permanent housing options without utilizing homeless services at all. All participants seeking assistance should be diverted if possible, safe, and appropriate. If a household has not been successfully diverted or been able to quickly self-resolve within 14 days on the street or in shelter, they are considered for additional housing resources through the community prioritization process.

Eligibility & Coordinated Entry

RRH is a housing first, low-barrier intervention with no preconditions to enrollment other than homeless status. A household must be literally homeless (24 CFR 91.5) in order to be eligible for rapid re-housing resources. All referrals to the rapid re-housing program should be received through the CoC's approved coordinated entry process (Refer to the *CoC Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures* for further details on access and eligibility). Persons fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence are connected through the Domestic Violence (DV) specific coordinated entry process. Providers that receive referrals are responsible for all final eligibility determinations. Providers should follow any additional funding guidelines in determining eligibility. There is no limitation on the number of times a household may access and receive rapid re-housing services, so long as the household meets eligibility criteria outlined by funding sources and is referred and prioritized through coordinated entry.

Prioritization

In order to ensure that those most in need of assistance are prioritized for limited resources, the CoC has implemented a community process that assesses an eligible participant's level of vulnerability to target resources to those most vulnerable and least likely to self-resolve their current housing crisis, including the following:

- A prioritization score calculated for each household using multiple vulnerability criteria
- Case conferencing

Targeting resources:

- The CoC has four by-name lists for different subpopulations: households without children, households with children, veteran households, and survivor of domestic violence households
- Households that are prioritized through the by-name list based on their position on the list and case conferencing are assigned to one of the RRH providers based on provider expertise with specific subpopulations and current caseload capacity

III. Core Components

Rapid re-housing is a time-limited intervention intended to house households experiencing homelessness as quickly as possible. Core components of rapid re-housing assistance include housing identification, financial assistance, and case management. The services described below for each core component are primary types of assistance, but not an exhaustive list.

The level of case management and financial assistance is based on a progressive engagement model where the minimum amount of service is provided before increasing support to meet the household's needs. When financial assistance is provided, programs follow a graduated subsidy model where participants become increasingly responsible for their housing costs as they progress through the program. The level of assistance to be provided is assessed and determined by the referral agency with collaboration from the participant.

Participants who are unable to sustain housing without more intensive case management or longer term financial assistance should be assessed for and connected to more permanent, longer term programs like permanent housing subsidies or permanent supportive housing options. Participants should be connected and provided a warm hand off as soon as possible and assistance under the RRH program must not exceed allowable timeframes.

Grant guidelines may further determine aspects of rapid re-housing programs at the agency level, including the types of financial assistance provided by funding source and agency staff training requirements.

Housing Identification

The goal of housing identification is to quickly locate affordable housing options for the household. The *Housing Barrier Assessment* should be used to identify potential barriers to housing which should be considered when matching participants to potential vacancies in the area. Program participants may conduct their own search and choose housing they identify independently. Activities under this core component are targeted for both landlords and participants:

1. Landlord Recruitment and Support

- Engage landlords, homeowners, or renters with housing options
- Negotiate with landlords or homeowners to facilitate household access, including for households with rental barriers
- Support landlords, homeowners, or roommates in order to preserve and develop partnerships for current and future housing placements. When closing a case, the case manager should provide information to the landlord about how they can contact the RRH program again if needed and what kind of follow-up assistance may be available
- Respond to landlord needs that would risk participant tenancy. This includes:
 - Providing detailed contact information for appropriate staff
 - Responding quickly to landlord calls about serious tenancy problems
 - Seeking to resolve conflicts around lease requirements, complaints by other tenants, and timely rent payments
 - When necessary and whenever possible, negotiating move-out terms and assisting households to quickly locate and move into another unit without an eviction

2. Household Housing Search and Support

- Assess tenant needs and barriers to housing placement
- Set household expectations on location, size and/or rent
- Conduct a targeted housing search and support households with completing rental applications
- Assist participants in making informed housing choices with the goal that the participant will be able to maintain in housing after program exit
- Provide a pledge letter to the participant and the landlord prior to lease signing showing a 3-month projection of assistance, including the amount of rent that the provider will pay and the amount that the participant will pay
- Provide tenant counseling, including education on communication with landlords, understanding rental applications and leases, and understanding tenant obligations
- Support households with setting up utilities and making moving arrangements

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance in RRH provides short-term support to households so they can quickly obtain housing. Financial assistance may include rent, utility, and security deposit assistance and other similar, indirect payments. Participants should not be required to pay any portion of their rent in order to be eligible for services. Instead, provider staff should work directly with the participants to evaluate needs and determine the amount and length of financial assistance needed. Case managers are responsible for ensuring that both the landlord and the participant are informed of the supports that are being provided.

Reassessments must be completed every three months to determine the need for continued assistance, along with monthly reviews of assistance projections until the participant is able to assume the total housing costs. Transition from financial assistance is coordinated with case management efforts to assist program participants to assume and sustain their housing costs.

Case Management

Rapid re-housing case management should use a strengths-based approach to support households to obtain permanent housing, stabilize in housing, and connect to community and mainstream services and supports. RRH case management should be program participant-driven and voluntary. Though case management is required in order to receive financial assistance, decisions regarding where, how, and when case management is received should be made in collaboration with participants. Case management can continue after financial assistance has ceased to ensure that household is able to sustain in housing. RRH case management should be flexible in intensity so that only essential assistance is offered until or unless the participant demonstrates the need for or requests additional help. Case management services may include:

- Conflict resolution and mediation with landlords, family members, friends, and roommates
- Leveraging personal, family, friend, and community resources to obtain and stabilize in housing
- Preparing households to fully assume housing costs by the end of financial assistance
- Maintaining working relationships with landlords for future participants and to respond to landlord needs that would risk participant tenancy

IV. HMIS and Data Collection

All rapid re-housing providers are required to enter data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). For confidentiality reasons, DV providers are exempt from using the HMIS system but must use a comparable database to collect data. Prompt and accurate data collection assists the homeless system to determine which services and programs participants are utilizing, evaluate the impact of RRH services, and make system improvements. It is the responsibility of the program staff to have accurate and complete data. Providers should refer to the latest version of HUD's *HMIS Data Dictionary* for detailed instructions on what is required to be collected.

V. Performance Standards

Rapid re-housing programs will be evaluated on their ability to meet CoC approved Project Performance Standards.