Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care

Permanent Supportive Housing Program Standards

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I. Purpose

This document is intended to serve as a guide to service providers implementing the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program in the Fredericksburg Regional Continuum of Care (CoC). The document promotes a unified understanding of the core program elements and expectations of local PSH 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 PSH 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 PSH 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

Permanent supportive housing is a housing first, low-barrier intervention with no preconditions to enrollment other than homeless status. All referrals to the permanent supportive 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 permanent supportive 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, least likely to self-resolve, and least likely to sustain in

housing without the availability of intensive case management and supportive services, including the following:

- Prioritization score calculated for each household using multiple vulnerability criteria;
- Evaluation of intensity, frequency, and duration of case management needs; and
- Case conferencing

Details regarding CoC prioritization for permanent supportive housing beds can be found in the *CoC Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures.*

III.   Core Components

Permanent supportive housing combines non-time-limited housing subsidy with voluntary, flexible services to support households to obtain and maintain housing. Core components of permanent supportive housing 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.

Intensive and frequent case management is provided to participants within permanent supportive housing to quickly obtain and stabilize participants in housing. Participants are constantly evaluated for demonstrated independence and the level of case management intensity and frequency is adjusted accordingly. At any time, participants may have case management support increased or decreased based on progression of need. The level of assistance to be provided is assessed and determined by the providing agency with the participant. Length of tenancy should not be conditioned on provision of or participation in supportive services.

Participants should be assessed for and connected to other programs and services that better meet their situation as their needs change over time. Mainstream resources and housing subsidies, and in-home or long-term care should be considered as options for participants as available and as the participant chooses.

Grant guidelines may further determine aspects of permanent supportive housing projects at the agency level, including agency staff training requirements.

Housing Identification

Permanent supportive housing programs support participants to identify housing options and may be project-based or scattered-site. Project-based places participants in a building or part of a building dedicated to permanent supportive housing. Scattered-site supports participants to lease individual units in the community.

A participant in scattered-site style project should be supported to quickly locate 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 receiving housing identification support may conduct their own search and choose housing

they identify independently. Activities under this core component are targeted for both landlords and tenants:

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. The case manager should provide information to the landlord about how they can contact the project 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
   - Provide tenant counseling, including education on communication with landlords, understanding rental applications and leases, and understanding tenant obligations

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance in permanent supportive housing provides long-term support to households so they can sustain permanent housing. Financial assistance may include rent, utility, and security deposit assistance and other similar, indirect payments. Case managers are responsible for ensuring that both the landlord and the participant are informed of the supports that are being provided.

Case Management

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 as needed. Case management should be participant-driven and voluntary. Decisions regarding where, how, and when case management is received should be made in collaboration with participants. Case management should be flexible in intensity and frequency so that essential assistance is offered based on the tailored needs of the participant. 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
- Maintaining working relationships with landlords for future participants and to respond to landlord needs that would risk participant tenancy
- Connection to community resources that provides well rounded stability

IV.   HMIS and Data Collection

All permanent supportive housing providers are required to enter data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or a comparable data system if the agency is prohibited from using HMIS. Prompt and accurate data collection assists the homeless system to determine which services and projects participants are utilizing, evaluate the impact of services, and make system improvements. It is the responsibility of the project 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

Permanent supportive housing projects will be evaluated on their ability to meet CoC approved Project Performance Standards.