

Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network (CoC)

WRITTEN STANDARDS FOR ESG/CoC SERVICE DELIVERY

Introduction

The Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network (CoC) has developed the following standards for providing assistance with Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Continuum of Care funds as required by HUD regulation [24 CFR 576.400 (e) and 24 CFR 578.7(a)(8)]. They are in accordance with the interim rule for the Emergency Solutions Grants Program released by HUD on April 1, 2017 (see [24 CFR Part 576](#)), the [final rule](#) for the definition of homelessness released on December 4, 2011, and [Notice CPD-20-08: Waivers and Alternative Requirements for the Emergency Solutions Grants ESG Program Under the CARES Act \(ESG-CV Notice\)](#), released on September 1, 2020.

In conjunction, with MSHDA's guiding principles of Housing First, Progressive Engagement, and Strength Based Case Management; these approaches assist to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements.

Each Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Continuum of Care (CoC) funded service provider shall comply with the minimum written standards established by the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network. Each provider may decide to set standards on their provision of ESG/CoC that exceed these minimum standards, but will at the very least comply with the following:

GENERAL STANDARDS PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY:

Minimum standards for evaluating individual and family eligibility for assistance under Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Continuum of Care (CoC) are:

- **Street Outreach** – People are eligible for these services if they are ‘unsheltered homeless,’ based on category (1)(i) of the “homeless” definition found at 24 CFR 576.2 are eligible for the following activities, in compliance with federal ESG rules (24 CFR 576.101): *engagement, case management, emergency health and mental health services, transportation*
- **Emergency Shelter** – People are eligible for these services if they qualify as ‘homeless,’ based on categories (1, 2, or 4) of the “homeless” definition found at 24 CFR 576.2 Eligible activities, in compliance with federal ESG rules (24 CFR 576.102) in addition to the provision of decent, safe and sanitary emergency shelter accommodations are: *case management; child care; education, employment and life skills services; legal services; health, mental health and substance abuse services; transportation*

The gender of a child under age 18 must not be used as a basis for denying any family's admission to an emergency shelter that uses ESG funding. Families with children under 18 may not be required to be separated in order to access emergency shelter.

- **Rapid Re-housing** – CoC and ESG funded rapid rehousing will follow the standards as set forth below. People who qualify as 'homeless,' based on categories (1 or 4) of the "homeless" definition found at 24 CFR 576.2 and/or 578.3 and who are moving into a housing unit that meets HUD's habitability and lead-based paint standards are eligible for the following activities, in compliance with federal ESG and CoC rules (24 CFR 576.104, 576.105, 576.106, 578.37, 578.51 and 578.77,). Persons who meet the 'category 2' homeless definition are eligible for CoC funded Rapid Rehousing provided the project was not funded under special NOFA conditions (reallocated projects) that limit eligibility to those living on the streets or in shelters.

Additionally, persons receiving rapid re-housing through the ESG program must have incomes at or below 30% of the area median income (AMI) at annual recertification:

Eligible activities for rapid rehousing include:

- **Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services:** Eligible activities include: *moving costs, rent application fees, security deposits, utility arrearages, utility deposits, utility payments, (ESG only) housing search/placement, housing stability case management, mediation and legal services, credit repair/budgeting/money management.*

- **Rental Assistance:** Eligible activities include: *short-term, medium-term rental assistance, payment of rental arrears (Homeless Prevention Only), or any combination of assistance (This includes potentially up to 9 months of rental assistance per grant year, but no more than 24 months of rental assistance during any 3-year period.*

The 24 months may include a one-time payment for up to 6 months of rent arrears on the tenant's portion of the rent (arrearages covered under ESG only). Rent amount must not exceed HUD's published Fair Market Rent (ESG funded rapid rehousing only) and the HUD standard for rent reasonableness (ESG and CoC funded rapid rehousing) (24 CFR 982.507). There must be a rental assistance agreement between the landlord and agency and a written lease between tenant and landlord. Each provider offering rapid rehousing must reevaluate the need for continued assistance every 90 days. Continued assistance will be provided for periods up to three (3) months at a time. Eligibility and income shall be reviewed no less frequently than annually. Participants in rapid rehousing are required to meet with case managers no less frequently than monthly.

- **Homelessness Prevention** – People who qualify as 'at risk of homelessness,' based on categories (2 or 4) of the "homeless" definition or based on the "At risk of homelessness" definition found at 24 CFR 576.2 and who reside in a housing unit that meets HUD's habitability and lead-based paint standards and have an annual income below 30% of Area Median Income (AMI), are eligible for the following services, in compliance with federal ESG

rules (24 CFR 576.103, 576.105, 576.106) provided that the household can document residency in Muskegon County for a minimum of 30 days prior to requesting assistance:

- **Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services:** Eligible activities may include: *moving costs, rent application fees, security deposits, last month's rent, utility deposits, utility payments, housing search/placement, housing stability case management, mediation and legal services, credit repair/budgeting/money management*
- **Rental Assistance:** Eligible activities include: *short-term (up to 3 months) and medium-term (4-24 months) rental assistance, up to 24 months total during a 3- year period in tenant-based or project-based housing* Except for a one-time payment of security deposit and/or utility deposit for ESG-eligible voucher holders, ESG rental assistance cannot be provided to a program participant who is receiving tenant-based rental assistance through other public sources.

The 24 months may include a one-time payment for up to 6 months of rent arrears on the tenant's portion of the rent. Rent amount must meet the federal requirements for Fair Market Rent (24 CFR 888) and the HUD standard for rent reasonableness (24 CFR 982.507). There must be a rental agreement between the landlord and agency and a written lease between tenant and landlord.

- **Transitional Housing.** Transitional housing facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing within 24 months of entering the housing. Eligible persons for transitional housing meet the homeless definition based on categories 1, 2 and 4. Providers of transitional housing services shall arrange for or make available services to participants to assist them in securing permanent housing within specified time periods. Transitional housing may be provided in scatter site or single site locations. Individuals and families assisted in transitional housing shall be provided housing accommodations as well as a services program intended to address issues that may hinder the household from obtaining or maintaining stable long- term housing.

- **Permanent Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities (PSH).** Eligible households include individuals with disabilities and families in which one adult or child has a disability. To be served any newly admitted household must also meet the definition of homelessness according to category 1 and 4. Participants who entered PSH before this rule was in effect can continue to be served but all new entrants must be Category 1 or 4 homeless. Supportive services designed to meet the needs of program participants must be made available to participants. Permanent supportive housing may be provided on a scatter site or single site basis using tenant based rental assistance, sponsor or project based rental assistance, leasing (scatter site individual apartment units or entire structures) or operating costs to support the operations of a supportive housing facility as well as supportive services to meet resident needs.

Any permanent support housing developed in the continuum of care from 2013 onwards is required to follow the Housing First model described in these standards. Projects developed prior to 2013 are strongly encouraged to adopt the Housing First model.

COORDINATED ENTRY:

Minimum standards for centralized or coordinated assessment system are:

- Once the Continuum of Care has developed and adopted a centralized or coordinated assessment system in accordance with HUD's requirements (24 CFR Part 578) all providers within the Continuum of Care's area, except for victim service providers, shall use that assessment system.
- A victim service provider may choose not to use the Continuum of Care's assessment system. However, all victim service providers are required to use a centralized or coordinated assessment system that meets HUDS's minimum requirements.
- This shall include the use of a standardized assessment tool by all providers to determine the appropriate intervention to address the episode of homelessness and the prioritization of individuals and families for assistance based on the severity of their service needs and the length of time homeless.
- The CoC has determined that the VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index – Service Priority Decision Assessment Tool) will be the standardized assessment tool used for Muskegon County. The VI-SPDAT is required to be conducted upon intake into: Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing. Outreach workers should conduct a VI-SPDAT on homeless persons engaged. Providers conducting the VI-SPDAT assessment are required to enter that information into HMIS.
- As the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network (CoC) moves forward in implementing coordinated entry, it will be implemented in stages commencing with Permanent Supportive Housing, then including Rapid Rehousing and Transitional Housing.
 - Referral and admission to Permanent Supportive Housing will be prioritized consistent with Notice CPD-14-012: "Prioritizing Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness in Permanent Supportive Housing and Recordkeeping Requirements for Documenting Chronic Homeless Status"
 - All referrals through the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care coordinated entry to permanent supportive housing will be prioritized consistent with Notice CPD-14-012.
 - CoC funded providers of permanent supportive housing must accept referrals from the Coordinated Entry System and most follow procedures and time frames for responding to referrals as specified in the CoC Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures.

- Ongoing training and support will be provided to all CoC and ESG funded providers in the assessment, prioritization, referral and placement process.
- As coordinated entry is established in the CoC:
 - All ESG and CoC funded providers must comply with requirements for coordinated entry established by the CoC. These requirements will be documented in the Coordinated Entry System Policies and Procedures. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Only admitting persons and families and accepting referrals from the coordinated entry system.
 - Designate a staff member and alternate as the agency's point-of- contact for coordinated entry.
 - Participate in trainings established by the CoC.

PROGRAM COORDINATION:

Minimum standards for program coordination consist of on-going system and program coordination and integration of ESG and CoC funded activities to the maximum extent practicable with the following:

- a. Emergency shelter providers, essential services providers, homelessness prevention, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing assistance providers;
- b. Other homeless assistance providers, including (not all of which are located in Muskegon County):
 - HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH);
 - Education for Homeless Children and Youth Grants for State and Local Activities (McKinney-Vento Homeless Act);
 - Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals;
 - Programs for Run-Away and Homeless Youth;
 - Projects for the Assistance in the Transition from Homelessness;
 - Services in Supportive Housing Grants;
 - Emergency Food and Shelter Program;
 - Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Sexual Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Stalking Program;
 - Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program;
 - Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program;
 - VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program;
 - Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program;

- Homeless Veterans Dental Program;
- Supportive Services for Veterans Families Program; and
- Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative

c. Mainstream service and housing providers:

- Public housing programs assisted under section 9 of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937;
- Housing programs receiving Section 8 tenant based or project based assistance;
- Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities;
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program;
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families;
- Health Center Program;
- Head Start;
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Block Grants;
- Services funded under the Workforce Investment Act; and
- Housing Related Assistance Program for Adults with Serious Mental Illness

HMIS:

Minimum standards for ESG and CoC data are:

- Providers, except for victim service providers shall actively utilize the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), to enter data on people served and assistance provided under ESG and the CoC Programs.
- Victim service providers shall actively utilize a comparable data system that meets HUD's standards (24 CFR 576.107 and 578.7(b))
- The Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network has designated Every Woman's Place to serve as the HMIS lead. Designation of the HMIS lead will be reviewed no less frequently than every four (4) years. The Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network Executive Committee will assess whether the HMIS lead is fully complying with all HUD requirements, is providing adequate support and training to HMIS contributing agencies, and whether the HMIS services are cost-effective.
 - In the event that the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network determines that the performance of the HMIS lead is not satisfactory or cost-effective, it will designate an alternative provider to be selected through an open and competitive process.
 - The HMIS provider will recommend to the CoC an HMIS software solution for the CoC.
 - The HMIS lead is responsible for:

- Maintaining and updating the HMIS data system
- Providing training and support to all HMIS users
- Generating regular reports based on HMIS data including counts of homeless persons and performance reports on CoC and ESG funded providers.
- Providing reports to HUD as required including the Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR).
- Ensuring that all ESG and CoC funded providers are able to access the system and have the training and support necessary to effectively use the system

INCOME DETERMINATION:

Minimum standards for determination of an individual or family's annual income consist of calculating income in compliance with 24 CFR 5.609. Annual income is defined as:

Annual income means all amounts, monetary or not, which:

- (1) Go to, or on behalf of, the family head or spouse (even if temporarily absent) or to any other family member; or
- (2) Are anticipated to be received from a source outside the family during the 12- month period following admission or annual reexamination effective date; and
- (3) Which are not specifically excluded in paragraph (c) of 24 CFR 5.609.
- (4) Annual income also means amounts derived (during the 12-month period) from assets to which any member of the family has access.

Individuals and families assisted under ESG are required to have annual incomes at or below 30% of Area Median at annual reassessment.

In verifying income, ESG and CoC funded providers are required to obtain third party verification whenever possible. Self-certification or verification is to be accepted only when all efforts have been made to obtain third party verification have not produced results.

CONNECTION WITH OTHER RESOURCES:

Minimum standards for connection with other resources consist of assisting each participant to obtain, if applicable:

- Appropriate support services including:
 - Permanent housing;
 - Medical health treatment;
 - Behavioral health services;
 - Counseling;
 - Supervision; and
 - Other services needed for independent living.
 - Other governmental and private assistance available to help with housing stability including:
 - Medicaid;
 - Medicare;
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program;
 - Women, Infants and Children (WIC);
 - Federal-State Unemployment Insurance Program;
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
 - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI); and
 - Other Available Assistance

TERMINATION OF ASSISTANCE:

Minimum standards for termination of assistance are:

- **In general** – If a program violation occurs and the provider terminates assistance as a result, the termination shall follow an established process that recognizes the rights of the individuals affected. Termination shall only occur in the most severe cases after other remedies have been attempted. Termination of individuals and families in projects funded through the CoC program must be consistent with 578.91 and 576.402 for those projects funded through the ESG program.
- **Due process rights for individuals and families facing program termination** – When an ESG or CoC funded homeless assistance program seeks to terminate participation for any household, the required formal process shall minimally consist of:
 - Written notice clearly stating the reasons for termination;
 - Review of the decision that gives the participant opportunity to present objections to the decision and to have representation. Any appeal of a decision shall be heard by an individual different from and not subordinate to the initial decision-maker; and
 - Prompt written notice of the final decision on the appeal.
- **Ability to provide further assistance** – Termination will not bar the provider from providing later additional assistance to the same family or individual.

LEAD-BASED PAINT:

Minimum standards for all shelters and program participant-occupied housing (transitional and permanent housing) consist of compliance with the lead-based paint remediation and disclosure requirements identified in 24 CFR 576.403 and 578.99(f), including the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act (42 USC 4821-4846), the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (42 USC 4851-4856) and implementing regulations in 24 CFR part 35, subparts A, B, H, J, K, M and R.

SAFETY, SANITATION & PRIVACY:

Minimum standards for all shelters and program participant-occupied housing consist of compliance with the safety, sanitation & privacy requirements identified in 24 CFR 576.403 and 578.75, including:

Minimum standards for emergency shelters:

Any building for which ESG funds were used for conversion, major rehabilitation or other renovation or that receives ESG assistance for shelter operations shall meet state/local government safety and sanitation standards, as well as the following:

- Structure and materials–The building must be structurally sound, protect participants from the elements and not pose any threats to their health or safety.
- Products and appliances–Any ESG funded renovation, including major rehabilitation and conversion, must use Energy Star and Water Sense products/appliances.
- Access–The shelter must comply with the applicable Rehabilitation, Fair Housing and Americans with Disabilities Acts and implementing regulations.
- Space and security–Unless it is a day shelter, it must provide appropriate places to sleep, adequate space, and security for residents and their belongings.
- Interior air quality–Each shelter room/space must have proper ventilation and be pollutant free.
- Water supply –Must be free of contamination.
- Sanitary facilities–Each participant must have access to sufficient, sanitary facilities that are in proper operating condition, private and adequate for personal cleanliness and disposal of human waste.
- Thermal environment–The shelter must have the necessary, properly operating heating/cooling facilities.

- Illumination and electricity–The shelter must have adequate and appropriate lighting and safe electrical sources.
- Food preparation–Any food preparation areas must be able to store, prepare, and serve safe and sanitary food.
- Sanitary conditions–The shelter must be in sanitary condition.
- Fire safety–Each occupied unit of the shelter must have at least one working smoke detector and when possible, they should be near sleeping areas. The fire alarm system must be designed for hearing-impaired residents. All public areas must have at least one working detector and there must be a second means of exiting the building in the event of an emergency.

Minimum standards for permanent and transitional housing

Providers shall not use ESG or CoC funding to help someone remain or move into housing if the housing does not meet the following minimum habitability standards.

- Structure and materials–The building must be structurally sound, protect participants from the elements and not pose any threats to their health or safety.
- Space and security–Each resident must have adequate space and security for themselves and their belongings and an acceptable place to sleep.
- Interior air quality–Each room or space must have proper ventilation and be pollutant free.
- Water supply–Must be free of contamination.
- Sanitary facilities–Residents must have access to sufficient, sanitary facilities that are in proper operating condition, private and adequate for personal cleanliness and disposal of human waste.
- Thermal environment–The housing must have the necessary, properly operating heating/cooling facilities.
- Illumination and electricity–The structure must have adequate and appropriate lighting and safe electrical sources.
- Food preparation–All food preparation areas contain suitable space and equipment to store, prepare, and serve safe and sanitary food.
- Sanitary conditions–The housing must be in sanitary condition.

- Fire safety:
 - There must be a second means of exiting the building in the event of an emergency.
 - Each unit must include at least one properly working smoke detector on each occupied level of the unit, located when possible in a hallway adjacent to a bedroom.
 - If the unit is occupied by a hearing-impaired person, smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for hearing-impaired persons in each bedroom he or she occupies.
 - The public areas of the housing must be equipped with a sufficient number of detectors, but not less than one for each area.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

Minimum standards for conflicts of interest are:

Organizational conflicts of interest:

- An organizational conflict of interest arises when, because of activities or relationships with other persons or organizations, the recipient or subrecipient is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance in the provision of any type or amount of assistance.
- Such an organizational conflict would arise when a board member of an applicant participates in decision concerning the award of a grant, or provision of other financial benefits, to the organization that such member represents. It would also arise when an employee of a recipient or subrecipient participates in making rent reasonableness determinations under § 578.49(b)(2) and § 578.51(g) and housing quality inspections of property under § 578.75(b) that the recipient, subrecipient, or related entity owns.
- ESG and CoC assistance will not be contingent on the individual's or family's acceptance or occupancy of emergency shelter or housing owned by the provider or a provider's subsidiary or parent.
- No provider, with respect to individuals or families occupying housing owned by the provider or a provider's subsidiary or parent, will carry out the initial evaluation under 24 CFR 576.401 or 578.75(b) or administer homelessness prevention assistance under 24 CFR 576.103.

Individual conflicts of interest:

- When procuring goods and services, the provider will comply with codes of conduct and conflict of interest requirements under 24 CFR 84.42 (private non-profit) or 24 CFR 85.36 (government).

All transactions/activities:

- No CoC board member may participate in or influence discussions or resulting decisions concerning the award of a grant or other financial benefits to the organization that the member represents. [578.95]

- **Conflicts prohibited** – No person involved with the ESG or CoC programs or who is in a position to participate in a decision-making process or gain inside information regarding the program’s activities, shall obtain a financial interest or benefit from an assisted activity; have a financial interest in any related contract, subcontract, or assisted activity; or have a financial interest in the activity’s proceeds (either himself or herself or those with whom he or she has family or business ties) during his or her tenure or for one year following tenure.

- **Persons covered** – These conflict of interest provisions apply to any employee, agent, consultant, officer or elected or appointed official of the provider’s agency.

Exceptions – A provider may request an exception to these provisions from HUD, only if he or she meets the threshold requirements identified in 24 CFR 576.404 and/or 578.95(d)(2)

HOMELESS PARTICIPATION:

Minimum standards for homeless participation are:

- Each funded provider of CoC or ESG assistance must provide for the participation of not less than one homeless individual or formerly homeless individual on the board of directors or equivalent policymaking entity of the provider. (24 CFR 578.75(g) and 576.405(a))

- To the maximum extent possible, the provider shall involve homeless individuals and families in paid or volunteer work on the ESG or CoC funded facilities, in providing services under ESG or CoC and in providing services for occupants of ESG or CoC funded facilities (24 CFR 576.405 and 578.75).

FAITH-BASED ACTIVITIES:

Minimum standards for faith-based activities (24 CFR 576.406 and 578.87) are:

- Providers receiving ESG/CoC funding shall not engage in inherently religious activities as part of the ESG/CoC-funded programs or services. Such activities must be offered separately from ESG/CoC-funded programs and services and participation must be voluntary.

- A religious organization receiving ESG/CoC funding retains independence from government and may continue with its mission provided that ESG/CoC funds are not used to support inherently religious activities. An ESG/CoC-funded organization retains its authority over its internal governance.

- An organization receiving ESG/CoC funding shall not discriminate against a participant or prospective participant based on religion or religious beliefs.
- ESG/CoC funding shall not be used for the rehabilitation of structures used specifically for religious activities, but may be used for rehabilitating structures that are used for ESG/CoC-eligible activities.

PROHIBITION AGAINST INVOLUNTARY FAMILY SEPARATION.

The age and gender of a child under age 18 must not be used as a basis for denying any family's admission to any housing or shelter receiving funding from either ESG or CoC (24 CFR 576.102(b) and 578.93(e))

PROGRAM INCOME:

Minimum standards for private non-profit organizations for program income earned during the project period are that the program income shall be retained and used to finance the non-Federal share of the project or program. Records of the receipt and use of program income shall be retained. Program income may not be used to meet matching funding requirement.

NONDISCRIMINATION/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE OUTREACH:

Minimum standards shall comply with the requirements for nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative outreach identified in §576.407 and 578.93(a-b).

RECOVERED MATERIALS:

Minimum standards for the procurement of recovered materials shall comply with the requirements identified in §576.407(f) and 578.99(b), including that the recipient and its contractors must comply with Section 6002 of the Solid Waste Disposal Act, as amended by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The requirements of Section 6002 include procuring only items designated in guidelines of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at 40 CFR part 247 that contain the highest percentage of recovered materials practicable, consistent with maintaining a satisfactory level of competition, where the purchase price of the item exceeds \$10,000 or the value of the quantity acquired by the preceding fiscal year exceeded \$10,000; procuring solid waste management services in a manner that maximizes energy and resource recovery; and establishing an affirmative procurement program for procurement of recovered materials identified in the EPA guidelines.

DISPLACEMENT:

Minimum standards for minimizing the displacement of persons (families, individuals, businesses, nonprofit organizations and farms) as a result of a project assisted under ESG and/or CoC shall comply with §576.408 and/or 578.83 and consist of:

Minimizing displacement – Consistent with ESG/CoC goals and objectives, the providers shall minimize displacing people as a result of ESG/CoC-funded projects. No provider may implement any project or activity funded with either ESG or CoC funds without specific approval of the CoC Board. Homeless assistance funding is limited and projects involving displacement will only be approved if there is a significant disproportionate benefit provided.

Temporary relocation not permitted - No temporary relocation shall be required for an ESG/CoC-funded project. When a tenant has to move for an ESG/CoC-funded project, the tenant shall be treated as permanently displaced and offered relocation assistance and payments.

Relocation assistance for displaced persons -

In general – A displaced person shall be provided relocation assistance and advised of his or her Fair Housing Rights.

Displaced Person - A “displaced person” is defined as any person that moves from a permanent home as a result of ESG/CoC-funded acquisition, rehabilitation, or demolition of a project.

- Was evicted based on a violation of the lease or occupancy agreement; violation of the law; and the recipient determines that the eviction was not undertaken to evade the obligation to provide relocation assistance.
- Moved into the property after the application was submitted but was provided with written notice that he or she would not qualify as a “displaced person.”

A person does not qualify as a “displaced person” if the person:

- The person is ineligible under 49 CFR 24.2.
- HUD determines that the person was not displaced as a result of the project. The State or the provider may request that HUD determine whether or not a displacement would be covered by this rule.

Real property acquisition requirements – The acquisition of real property for an ESG/CoC funded project is subject to the URA and Federal government wide regulations.

Appeals - A person who disagrees with the recipient's determination concerning whether the person qualifies as a displaced person, or the amount of relocation assistance may file a written appeal. A low-income person who disagrees with the recipient's determination may submit a written request for review of that determination by HUD.

RECORDS & RECORDKEEPING:

Minimum standards shall ensure sufficient written records are established and maintained to enable the CoC and HUD to determine whether ESG/CoC requirements are being met and comply with §576.500 and 578.103, including the following:

- CoC records shall include the following documentation related to establishing and operating the Continuum of Care:
 - Evidence that the Board selected meets the requirements of 578.5(b);
 - Evidence that the CoC has been established and operated as set forth in subpart B of 24 CFR part 578 including published agendas and meeting minutes, an approved Governance Charter that is reviewed and updated annually, a written process for selecting a board that is reviewed and updated at least every five years, evidence required for designating a single HMIS for the CoC, and monitoring reports of recipients and sub-recipients.
 - Evidence that the CoC has prepared the HUD application for funds in accordance with 578.9
- Program participant records shall include written:
 - Determination and verification/certification that the program participant met the criteria for being Homeless or At Risk of Homelessness and that an effort was made to obtain written third-party verification, when possible and applicable.
 - For CoC funded projects, acceptable evidence of homeless status as set forth in 578.3.
 - Determination and verification/certification that the program participant was eligible or ineligible for the particular services and/or financial assistance
 - Determination and verification/certification that the program participant lacked sufficient resources and support networks to obtain the assistance from other sources.
 - Determination and verification/certification that the program participant met income requirements and that an effort was made to obtain written third-party verification, when possible and applicable. This includes annual documentation of income for each program participant who receives housing assistance where rent or an occupancy charge is paid by the program participant.

- Determination and verification/certification that the only households served through permanent supportive housing meet HUD's requirements of having a family member be a person with disabilities.
- Determination and verification/certification that the only households served through permanent supportive housing dedicated for chronically homeless individuals and families meet the definition of chronic homelessness. Units that are prioritized for the chronically homeless must maintain documentation that: the participant met the definition of chronic homeless on program entry or that there were not eligible chronically homeless participants at the time of project vacancy and this can be documented by the Coordinated Entry System.
- Identification of the specific services and financial assistance amounts that were provided to the program participant
- When applicable, verification that the services were terminated in compliance with 576.402 and/or 578.91.
- A copy of the CoC-approved centralized or coordinated assessment of the program participant using the VI-SPDAT and recording that information in HMIS. This assessment must be periodically updated for all homeless participants.
- Copies of written leases and rental agreements, documentation of payments made, including dates of occupancy, and compliance with fair market rent, rent reasonableness and utility allowance requirements
- Determination and verification that the housing unit met HUD's habitability and lead-based paint standards
- Copy of individualized housing stability plan
- Notes verifying case management services were provided at least monthly, unless exempt from this requirement
- Notes verifying program participant's eligibility was re-evaluated at least every 3 months for homelessness prevention services or at least annually for rapid rehousing services
- Notes verifying program participant was assisted to obtain necessary mainstream and other resources
- Notes documenting reported changes in participant income and/or household composition and assistance adjusted based on verified information.
- Program policies and procedures for all providers funded through ESG or CoC shall indicate:

- Services are coordinated with Continuum(s) of Care, other homeless assistance/prevention programs and mainstream service and assistance programs for compliance with HUD's ESG and CoC (24 CFR 576 and 578) requirements:
 - Shelter and housing standards
 - Conflict of interest
 - Homeless participation
 - Faith-based activity
 - Nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative outreach
 - Uniform administrative rules (24 CFR part 84)
 - Environmental review
 - Lobbying and disclosure (24 CFR part 87)
 - Displacement, relocation and acquisition
 - Procurement (24 CFR 84.40-84.48)
- Program participant records are kept secure and confidential
- Participation in HMIS or comparable database
 - Financial records shall include:
 - Supporting documentation for all costs charged to ESG or CoC grant
 - Documentation showing ESG or CoC funds were spent on allowable costs in accordance with the requirements for eligible activities and costs principles (2 CFR Part 200)
 - Time sheets and time allocation for all personnel paid for with CoC and/or ESG funding
 - Documentation of the receipt and use of program income
 - Documentation of the receipt and use of matching funds
 - Copies of procurement contracts

STREET OUTREACH STANDARDS

MINIMUM STANDARDS:

Targeting/Engagement:

Providers of Street Outreach services shall target unsheltered homeless individuals and families, meaning those with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station airport or camping ground.

Assessment/Service Provision/Referral/Prioritization:

- Individuals and families shall be offered an initial need and eligibility assessment. Whenever possible families and individuals engaged through Street Outreach should complete an assessment using the VI-SPDAT and entering that information into HMIS as soon as is practicable. Qualifying program participants, including those meeting special population criteria, will be offered the following Street Outreach services, as needed and appropriate: engagement, case management, emergency health and mental health, and transportation services.
- When appropriate based on the individual's needs and wishes, the provision of or referral to rapid rehousing services that can quickly assist individuals to obtain safe, permanent housing shall be prioritized over the provision of or referral to emergency shelter or transitional housing services.

EMERGENCY SHELTER STANDARDS

MINIMUM STANDARDS:

- **Admission:**

Providers of Emergency Shelter services shall admit individuals and families who meet the HUD definition of "homeless," as specified in 24 CFR 576.2 (1, 2, & 4) and agencies' eligibility criteria. No provider funded under ESG or the CoC program may serve homeless persons in Category 3 until it has been notified by SARA that a request has been made to serve this population and the request has been approved by HUD.

- **Assessment:**

Individuals and families shall be assessed using the VI-SPDAT assessment with the assessment entered into HMIS. The CoC's coordinated entry system will specify when the VI-

SPDAT assessment is to occur – upon application for shelter after the family or individual has been sheltered for a specified period of time and has not been able to resolve the episode of homelessness without additional support. Families and individuals remaining in shelter for longer than thirty (30) days shall be reassessed with the VI-SPDAT no less frequently than every thirty (30) days.

- **Prioritization/Diversion/Referral:**

When appropriate based on the individual’s needs and wishes, the provision of or referral to Homeless Prevention or Rapid Rehousing services that can quickly assist individuals to maintain or obtain safe, permanent housing shall be prioritized over the provision of Emergency Shelter or Transitional Housing services.

- **Reassessment:**

Program participants will be reassessed as case management progresses, based on the individual service provider’s policies but no less frequently than every thirty (30) days.

- **Discharge/Length of Stay:**

Program participants shall be discharged from Emergency Shelter services when they choose to leave or when they have successfully obtained safe, permanent housing. Any Length of Stay limitations shall be determined by the individual service provider’s policies and clearly communicated to program participants. Providers of shelter services are strongly encouraged not to discharge individuals and families who have not secured permanent housing and maintain those households in shelter until they can be placed in appropriate permanent housing.

- **Safety and Shelter Safeguards for Special Populations:**

Safety and Shelter Safeguards shall be determined by the individual Special Population service provider’s policies and clearly communicated to program participants.

Prioritization for Shelter Services

- Emergency shelters will prioritize shelter services for those:

- That cannot be diverted – individuals and families lacking other resources in the community even if limited assistance could be provided to end their homelessness.
- Individuals and families that are vulnerable to injury or illness if not sheltered.
- Not in need of emergency medical or psychiatric services or who present a danger to themselves or others.

- Are literally homeless and in the absence of shelter are likely to be living in an unsheltered setting.

Additional Requirements for Shelter Services:

- There can be no requirements related to ID, legal residency, income or employment in order to access and receive emergency shelter services; and
- Transgender placement will be based on gender self-identification.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND RAPID RE-HOUSING STANDARDS

ELIGIBILITY/PRIORITIZATION:

Minimum standards for determining and prioritizing which eligible families and individuals shall receive homelessness prevention assistance and which eligible families and individuals shall receive rapid rehousing assistance are:

- **Rapid Re-housing (RR)** – To be eligible for RR Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services and Short-term and Medium-term Rental Assistance, people must:
 - Meet the federal criteria under category (1) of the “homeless” definition in 24 CFR 576.2 [ESG funded programs]. CoC funded RR projects may assist participants in Category 2 or Category 4 homeless except that CoC RR projects funded through reallocation may only serve Category 1 homeless people.
 - Meet the criteria under category (4) of the “homeless” definition in 24 CFR 576.2 and live in an emergency shelter or other place described in category (1) of the “homeless” definition. [ESG funded programs]
 - Program participant’s annual income, at annual review must be less than or equal to 30% of the Area Median Income [ESG Funded programs only]
 - All participants must lack sufficient resources or support networks to retain housing without ESG or CoC assistance.
- **Homelessness Prevention (HP) ESG** – To be eligible for HP Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services and Short-term and Medium-term Rental Assistance, people must require HP services to prevent moving into an emergency shelter or another place described in category (1) of the “homeless” definition in 24 CFR 576.2, have an annual income below 30% of the median income for the area and:

○ Meet the federal criteria under the “at risk of homelessness” definition in 24 CFR 576.2
OR

○ Meet the criteria in category (2), or (4) of the “homeless” definition in 24 CFR 576.2.

○ Be a resident of Muskegon County for at least 30 days prior to requesting assistance.

• **Priority populations for Rapid Rehousing.**

In providing rapid rehousing assistance, providers shall prioritize the following sub-populations:

• Families with children with priority given to the newly homeless and homeless households not headed by persons with disabilities;

- Homeless youth with priority for young households with children;
- Domestic violence survivors;
- Single persons without long term disabilities; and

• Veterans, especially those persons who have served in the US military but are not eligible for services from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or who are unable to access services from the VA.

• Homeless persons in need of permanent supportive housing but who are on a waiting list through coordinated entry for that housing. Rapid rehousing will be used as a bridge to permanent supportive housing in these instances.

PARTICIPANT CONTRIBUTION:

Minimum standards for determining what percentage or amount of rent and utilities costs each program participant shall pay while receiving homelessness prevention or rapid rehousing assistance are:

• Participant’s income shall be verified prior to approval for initial and additional financial assistance. Documentation of the participant’s income and expenses, including how the participant is contributing to housing costs, if at all, shall be maintained in participant’s file. This file shall also contain a plan to sustain housing following the assistance, including either a plan to increase income or decrease expenses or both.

• Providers funded under ESG or CoC may pay up to 100 percent of the reasonable rent and utility costs for program participants. Providers may, at their discretion, choose to impose rental charges on participants. In the event that providers elect to charge rent or occupancy charges, these charges may not exceed those established in 24 CFR 576.106 or 578.77 and as limited, below.

- The MCHCN policy is that sufficient financial assistance should be provided to ensure the likelihood of positive housing outcomes after assistance and that every effort should be made to limit assistance to that which is necessary for housing stability.
- Any additional requirements regarding the percentage or amount of rent and utilities costs each program participant shall pay shall be determined by the individual service provider's policies and clearly communicated to program participants.
- The calculation of participant's income, the level of financial assistance provided, whether a hardship exemption is granted are all decisions that must be appealable to the provider and, if the participant is not satisfied with the response, to the CoC.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE DURATION AND ADJUSTMENT:

Minimum standards for determining how long a particular program participant shall be provided with rental assistance and whether and how the amount of that assistance shall be adjusted over time are:

- Participants shall receive approval for the minimum amount of financial assistance necessary to prevent homelessness. Documentation of financial need shall be kept in the participant's file for each quarterly assessment. Participants shall not be approved for more rental assistance than can be justified given their income and expenses at a given time.
- Approval for rental assistance shall be granted for renewable periods not to exceed three months. Providers must re-assess the continuing need for rental assistance before approving an additional increment. In no event will assistance under rapid rehousing exceed 24 months in any 36- month period.
- Any additional requirements regarding how long a program participant shall be provided with rental assistance and whether and how the amount of that assistance shall be adjusted over time shall be determined by the individual service provider's policies and clearly communicated to program participants.

Financial assistance provided to participants under ESG and CoC funded prevention and rapid rehousing services may not exceed the limitations set forth below:

LIMITATIONS ON FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- **Use with other subsidies** – Payment for Financial Assistance costs shall not be provided to a participant who is receiving the same type of financial assistance through other public sources or to a participant who has been provided with replacement housing payments under the URA, during the period of time covered by the URA payments.
- **Rental application fees**–Payment shall only be made for fees charged by the owner to all applicants.

- **Security deposits** – Payment shall not exceed two (2) month’s rent.
- **Utility deposits [ESG/CoC]** – Payment shall only be made for gas, electric, water and sewage deposits.
- **Utility payments [ESG only]:**
 - Payment shall not exceed 24 months per participant, including no more than 6 months of utility payments in arrears, per service.
 - A partial payment counts as 1 month.
 - Payment shall only be made if the utility account is in the name of the participant or a member of the same household.
 - Payment shall only be made for gas, electric, water and sewage costs.
 - Participants shall not receive more than 24 months of utility assistance within any 3-year period.
- **Moving costs [ESG/CoC]** – reasonable one-time moving expenses are eligible.
- **Rental Assistance:**
 - Payment for short-term rental assistance shall not exceed 3 months.
 - Payment for medium-term rental assistance shall be for more than 3 months, but shall not exceed 24 months.
 - Payment for rent arrears shall not exceed 6 months and shall be a one-time payment, including any late fees; Homeless Prevention [ESG funded projects only – CoC not eligible]
 - Except for a one-time payment of rental arrears on the participant’s portion [ESG only], payment shall not be provided to a participant who is receiving tenant- based rental assistance or living in a unit receiving project-based assistance or to a participant who has been provided with replacement housing payments under the URA, during the period of time covered by the URA payments.
 - Payment shall comply with HUD’s standard of rent reasonableness (24 CFR 982.507).
 - Calculation of the rental payment amount shall only include monthly rent for the unit, any occupancy fees under the lease (except for pet and late fees) and if the participant pays separately for utilities, the monthly utility allowance established by the public housing authority for the area in which the housing is located.

- Payment for rental assistance shall only be made when there is a rental assistance agreement between the provider and the owner, which sets forth the terms under which rental assistance will be provided, including the prior requirements; a requirement that the owner provide the subrecipient with a copy of any notice to vacate given to the participant or any complaint used to commence an eviction action; and the same payment due date, grace period and late payment penalty requirement as the participant's lease.
- Payment of any late payment penalties incurred by the agency shall not be claimed for reimbursement.
- Payment shall only be made when there is a legally binding, written lease for the rental unit between the participant and the owner, except for payment of rental arrears (ESG only).
- Payment shall only be made for units that have been inspected for HUD Housing Quality Standards and re-inspected no less frequently than annually. Rental assistance shall not be paid on behalf of any unit that does not meet Housing Quality Standards.

- **Limitations on Tenant-Based Rental Assistance**

The rental assistance agreement with the unit owner shall be terminated without further payment if:

- The participant moves out of the unit
- The lease terminates and is not renewed
- The participant becomes ineligible to receive ESG/CoC rental assistance

- **Limitations on Project-Based Rental Assistance [ESG only]**

Payment shall only be made under the following conditions: ○ The lease has an initial term of one year

- The rental assistance agreement covers one or more permanent housing units in the same building
- Each unit covered by the agreement is only occupied by participants
- Payment will only be made for up to 100% of the first month's rent, if the participant signs a lease and moves into the unit before the end of the month.

HOUSING RELOCATION AND STABILIZATION SERVICES: SERVICE TYPE, AMOUNT & DURATION:

Minimum standards for determining the type, amount, and duration of housing stabilization and/or relocation services to provide to a program participant, including the limits, if any, on the homelessness prevention or rapid rehousing assistance that each program participant shall receive, such as the maximum amount of assistance, maximum number of months the program participant may receive assistance; or the maximum number of times the program participant may receive assistance are:

• **Housing search and placement services** – Payment shall only be made for assisting participants to locate, obtain and retain suitable permanent housing through provision of the following services:

- Assessment of housing barriers, needs and preferences]
- Development of an action plan for locating housing
- Housing search
- Outreach to and negotiation with owners
- Assistance with submitting rental applications and understanding leases
- Assessment of housing for compliance with ESG requirements for habitability, lead-based paint and rent reasonableness
- Assistance with obtaining utilities and making moving arrangements
- Tenant counseling
 - Payment for housing search and placement services shall not exceed 24 months during any 3-year period.
- **Housing stability case management** – Payment shall only be made for assessing, arranging, coordinating and monitoring the delivery of individualized services to facilitate housing stability for a participant who resides in permanent housing or to assist a participant in overcoming immediate barriers to obtaining housing through provision of the following services:
 - Using the coordinated entry system
 - Conducting the initial evaluation, including verifying and documenting participant eligibility
 - Counseling
 - Developing, securing and coordinating services and obtaining Federal, State and local benefits

- Monitoring and evaluating participant progress
- Providing information and referral to other providers
- Developing an individualized housing and service plan and supporting the participant in accomplishing the plan.
- Conducting re-evaluations

Payment for housing stability case management services provided while the participant is seeking permanent housing shall not exceed 30 days for ESG funded services.

Payment for housing stability case management services provided while the participant is living in permanent housing shall not exceed 24 months.

Housing stability case managers are expected to meet with participants in their homes and must have a minimum of one contact per month with participants. All contact between case managers and program participants shall be documented in case notes.

- **Mediation [ESG only]**

Payment shall only be made for the cost of mediation between the participant and the owner or person with whom the participant is living, if it is necessary to prevent the participant from losing the permanent housing where he/she resides. Payment for mediation services shall not exceed 24 months during any 3-year period.

- **Legal services – [Not an allowable use of funds in the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network (CoC)]**

- **Credit repair [Not an allowable use of funds in the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network (CoC)]**

Any additional requirements regarding the type, amount, and duration of housing stabilization and/or relocation services that will be provided to a program participant, including any limitations shall be determined by the individual service provider’s policies and clearly communicated to program participants.

RE-EVALUATIONS:

Minimum standards for completing eligibility re-evaluations of individuals and families are:

- Homelessness Prevention – participants shall be re-evaluated not less than once every three months

Timing:

- Rapid Rehousing – participants shall be re-evaluated not less than once annually
- The participant shall have an annual income that is 30 percent of median family income for the area or less, as determined by HUD at the time of annual re-evaluation [ESG only]; and

Eligibility:

- The participant shall lack sufficient resources and support networks necessary to retain housing without ESG/CoC assistance.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING STANDARDS

ELIGIBILITY/PRIORITIZATION:

Minimum standards for determining and prioritizing which eligible families and individuals shall receive transitional housing are:

- To be eligible for transitional housing people must: Meet the federal criteria under category (1), (2) or (4) of the “homeless” definition in 24 CFR 576.2

Transitional housing shall be prioritized to serve the following populations of eligible homeless people:

- Youth
- Persons seeking to continue recovery in recovery-focused housing
- Institutional re-entry (may not be eligible for CoC funding but needed from people leaving criminal justice and mental health facilities)
- Persons fleeing domestic abuse or violence where it is not possible to find units for rapid rehousing

No individual or family may be assisted in transitional housing for a period in excess of 24 months. No person shall be discharged from transitional housing into homelessness as a result of this limitation. Transitional housing programs are expected to place individuals and families into permanent housing as quickly as possible.

PROGRAM FEES

Individuals and families residing in transitional housing are not required to pay rent. Providers of transitional housing may impose occupancy charges. If the provider elects to charge rent or occupancy charges, the charges may not exceed those specified in 578.77.

No fee other than rent or occupancy charges as specified above may be charged to program participants. This includes meals, copayments for services, transportation and all other services that may be provided to program participants

LIMITATION ON OCCUPANCY

All individuals and families served in transitional housing must be provided an occupancy agreement for a minimum of a monthly term and which can be renewed provided that the household does not remain in transitional housing for longer than 24 months.

OCCUPANCY AGREEMENTS AND PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

The agreement must specify the requirements for program participation. With the exception of programs providing recovery focused services for persons with substance use disorders, residents in transitional housing may not be required to participate in disability related services. Participants may be required to participate in services that are not disability related and may discharge participants for failure to participate in these services. No person may be terminated from transitional housing without first being provided the right to appeal that decision in accordance with the due process provisions at 24 CFR 578.91(b)

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING STANDARDS

ELIGIBILITY/PRIORITIZATION:

Minimum standards for determining and prioritizing which eligible families and individuals shall receive permanent supportive housing are:

- To be eligible for permanent supportive housing people must: Meet the federal criteria under category (1) or (4) of the “homeless” definition in 24 CFR 576.2. Eligible households include individuals with disabilities and families in which one adult or child has a disability.

In addition to meeting basic eligibility requirements, individuals and families to be served through permanent supportive housing in the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network (CoC) must:

- Be assessed using the VI-SPDAT assessment with that information entered into HMIS.
- All applications and referrals of households for permanent supportive housing must come through the coordinated entry system operated by the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network. No individual or family may be admitted to permanent supportive housing in the CoC without a referral from coordinated entry.

- Providers are required to verify and maintain documentation for all households referred for permanent supportive housing including documentation of homeless status, disabling condition of a family member, and chronic homeless status, if applicable.

Referrals to permanent supportive housing will be made by the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network through the coordinated entry process and will be prioritized for assistance according to the standards set forth below:

- **Priority populations for Permanent Supportive Housing.**

The Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network (CoC) will follow CPD Notice 14-012 “Prioritizing Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness in Permanent Supportive Housing.” The order of priority for admission to permanent supportive housing will follow the priorities established in Notice 14-012.

- In providing permanent supportive housing, providers shall prioritize the following populations:

- Persons who are chronically homeless and highly vulnerable with severe service needs;
- Those who have been homeless for the longest period of time or who have had repeated episodes of homelessness over an extended period.
- Veterans.

- **Order of priority in CoC program funded permanent supportive housing beds dedicated to persons experiencing chronic homelessness, and PSH beds prioritized for occupancy by persons experiencing chronic homelessness.**

- First priority: chronically homeless individuals and families with the longest history of homelessness and with the most severe service needs.
- Second priority: chronically homeless families and individuals with the longest history of homelessness.
- Third priority: chronically homeless individuals and families with the most severe service needs.

- **Order of priority in permanent supportive housing beds not dedicated or prioritized for persons experiencing chronic homelessness:**

- First priority: homeless individuals and families with a disability and the most severe service needs;

- Second priority: homeless individuals and families with a disability with a long period of continuous or episodic homelessness.
- Third priority: homeless individuals and families with a disability with a long period of continuous or episodic homelessness.
- Fourth priority: homeless individuals and families with a disability coming from transitional housing.

- **Single, Prioritized Wait List for Permanent Supportive Housing**

- The Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network (CoC) will establish a single, prioritized wait list for permanent supportive housing. The wait list will be prioritized according to the order of priority identified above. The single priority waitlist and referral process will allow CoC participants to exercise freedom of choice. The prioritized waitlist will be administered by the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network as part of the Coordinated Entry System.

- The waitlist will be periodically updated by the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network so new referrals are prioritized according to the factors listed above and not prioritized based on length of time on the waiting list.

- When fully implemented, providers of permanent supportive housing in the CoC will be required to accept ALL admissions from the priority waitlist and may not establish their own waitlists or prioritizations.

- Providers will have limited authority to decline referrals from the coordinated entry system. However, even if a provider declines a referral, it will have to obtain an alternative referral from coordinated entry. Providers may not substitute an otherwise eligible participant for those referred through coordinated entry.

- **Housing First.**

Providers of permanent supportive housing shall use the Housing First model as outlined below. Any new projects funded by the CoC must use the Housing First model. Any existing permanent supportive housing project that has indicated in application to HUD (starting in the FY 2013 NOFA competition) that it employs the Housing First model must follow the standards as set forth below. Existing permanent supportive housing projects that have not indicated Housing First are 'grandfathered' from this policy.

- **Housing First Projects:**

- Housing is not contingent on compliance with services – participants are provided with a standard one- year lease agreement. The lease agreement can only be terminated in accordance with State of Michigan statutes.
- Participants are provided with services and supports to help maintain housing and prevent eviction.
- There is no requirement for sobriety prior to being offered housing and admission shall not be conditioned on credit or background checks. Criminal backgrounds will be considered only to the extent necessary to protect safety and well-being.
- Participants shall be given choice in their housing subject to program limitations.
- Participants are not required to participate in services, but providers are required to persistently and consistently seek to engage participants.
- Providers are encouraged to support staff in implementing Evidence Based Practices that support Housing First (Critical Time Intervention, Motivational Interviewing, Stages of Change)
- Projects that are designated as Housing First shall be contractually obligated to follow these principles and will be subject to monitoring.

• Additional Requirements for Permanent Supportive Housing Projects with Rental Assistance

- Calculation of the rental payment amount shall only include monthly rent for the unit, any occupancy fees under the lease (except for pet and late fees) and if the participant pays separately for utilities, the monthly utility allowance established by the public housing authority for the area in which the housing is located.
- Payment for rental assistance shall only be made when there is a rental assistance agreement between the provider and the owner, which sets forth the terms under which rental assistance will be provided, including the prior requirements; a requirement that the owner provide the subrecipient with a copy of any notice to vacate given to the participant or any complaint used to commence an eviction action; and the same payment due date, grace period and late payment penalty requirement as the participant’s lease.
- Payment of any late payment penalties incurred by the agency shall not be claimed for reimbursement.
- Payment shall only be made when there is a legally binding, written lease for the rental unit between the participant and the owner.

PARTICIPANT CONTRIBUTION

Individuals and families residing in permanent supportive housing are required to pay rent. Rent charges may not exceed those specified in 578.77.

PROGRAM FEES

No fee other than rent or occupancy charges as specified above may be charged to program participants. This includes meals, copayments for services, transportation and all other services that may be provided to program participants

Decisions made by providers funded under ESG or CoC program funds including: the decision of whether to admit a participant to the program, the amount of the participant's income and/or required rent payment, or whether to admit additional family members to the assisted household, or whether to terminate the participation of any participant are all subject to appeal. The initial appeal of any decision shall be made to the ESG or CoC funded provider pursuant to the process described below. Should the participant not be satisfied with the appeal decision, he/she has the right to appeal that decision to the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Executive Committee. The Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network shall follow the process for appeals specified below.

APPEALS PROCESS

All CoC and ESG funded providers must provide a written copy of their program's rules and the termination process, and the right to appeal, before the participant begins to receive assistance.

- Appeals of decisions other than to terminate the participant from the program.
 - These appeals are initiated by the participant. The participant must notify the CoC or ESG funded provider that he/she wishes to appeal a decision or determination of the provider.
- Appeals may be made of:
 - The decision whether to admit the participant into the program
 - The determination of the household's income or the households calculated rent payment/occupancy charge
 - Denial of a request to add a member to the assisted household
 - Participants may request an appeal verbally or in writing.
 - The provider will respond to the appeal request as soon as practicable but no later than one month following the request.

- As part of the appeal, the participant may present written or oral objections before a person other than the person (or a subordinate of that person) who made the decision that is subject to appeal.
 - The participant may be represented in the appeal but neither the CoC nor the provider is responsible for providing or funding someone to represent the participant.
 - A written response must be promptly provided to the participant.
- Appeals of decisions to terminate. These decisions must be made in compliance with 24 CFR 576.402 or 578.91.
 - Participants who are to be terminated must be provided written notice containing a clear statement of the reasons for termination.
 - The appeal process must follow the procedures specified above.
 - Appeal to the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network Executive Committee
 - If the participant is not satisfied with the response to his/her appeal from the CoC or ESG funded provider, the appeal may be made to the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network Executive Committee.
 - The appeal may be in writing, orally or both.
 - The participant may be represented but the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network is not responsible for providing representation.
 - The Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network Executive Committee may designate a subcommittee to hear appeals.
 - If the appeal has been designated to a subcommittee, the participant shall have the right to appeal to the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network Executive Committee
 - Appeals shall be addressed within sixty(days)of receipt of the appeal by the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network Executive Committee.
 - Participants will receive prompt written notification of the outcome of the appeal.