THE WAY HOME PARTNER PACKET

Hello and thank you for your interest in becoming a partner of The Way Home! The Way Home (TX-700) Continuum of Care (CoC) is the homeless response system in Houston, Pasadena, and Conroe and throughout Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties in Texas.

The CoC is designed to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness and to provide services as they move into housing, with the goal of long-term stability. More broadly, the CoC is designed to promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improve coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other efforts targeted to people experiencing homelessness; improve data collection and performance measurement; and allow each community to tailor its project(s) to the particular strengths and challenges within that community.

The Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County (CFTH) serves as the lead agency and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administrator for The Way Home. There is no fee to become a partner, and we welcome every agency that is engaged in preventing and ending homelessness in our region to be part of the impressive, nationally recognized impact that The Way Home is having in our community.

For your agency to become a Partner of The Way Home CoC, the following is required:

- If you have not already, please select a primary leader of your organization to complete our partner application at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TWH-2023-PartnerApplication.
- The CEO/ED must sign and submit the CoC Partnership Agreement to confirm organizational alignment with the goals and policies of The Way Home.
- Click here to sign up for The Way Home CoC Connection to ensure that you and your agency receive timely communications from and about The Way Home regarding meetings, initiatives, workgroups, funding opportunities, and more. Please ensure that all applicable staff also sign up for this email distribution list.
- Click here to be added to our Funding Opportunities Distribution email list to get notifications about the newest funding opportunities available in our CoC.

For more information on The Way Home specific to homeless service organizations, visit https://www.homelesshouston.org/thewayhome. For general public information on The Way Home visit: www.thewayhomehouston.org

We look forward to working with you and your agency as we work to prevent and end homelessness in our community!

Michael C. Nichols
President/CEO
Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County
PARTNERS OF THE WAY HOME

The Way Home is made up of more than 100+ partners working in collaboration to end and prevent homelessness throughout our region. Many of these partners provide resources and support to individuals currently or formerly experiencing homelessness, however, do not actively participate in the Coordinated Access System; these partners are called Community Partner agencies. The Way Home also has many partners that contribute to and participate in programmatic efforts and the Coordinated Access System to address homelessness; these partners are called Coordinated Access Program Partners.

Programs in The Way Home are based on the Housing First model. This model means that people experiencing homelessness are moved into housing as quickly as possible and then provided with supportive services to help them stabilize in housing.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ALL PARTNERS OF THE WAY HOME:

- Nonprofit organizations, state and local governments, instrumentalities of state and local governments, public housing agencies, and veteran affairs agencies.
- Must offer services within the CoC geographic area, i.e., Harris, Fort Bend, and/or Montgomery counties, Texas.
- Must serve people either at-risk, currently, or formerly experiencing homelessness.
- Must complete The Way Home Partner Application and Partnership Agreement
- Must not have any known violations of the CoC’s Partnership Agreement and/or Code of Conduct.

COMMUNITY PARTNER AGENCY DESCRIPTION:

Community Partner Agencies are organizations that serve people currently or formerly experiencing homelessness through a variety of services, community collaboration, or through financial investment into the homeless response system; however, do not actively participate in Coordinated Access System.

COMMUNITY PARTNER AGENCY REQUIREMENTS:

To become a Community Partner agency of The Way Home, the organization must meet the eligibility criteria shown above and have an updated, complete, and signed CoC Partnership Application and Agreement on file with the CFTH.
BENEFITS OF BEING A COMMUNITY PARTNER AGENCY OF THE WAY HOME:

- Be a part of a robust network of 100+ public, private, and nonprofit members, working together to make the experience of homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring; and
- Free access to CoC Training opportunities; CoC Trainings are offered and available only to official partners of The Way Home and their staff. CoC Trainings cover a broad range of topics including but not limited to certifications for housing, case management, DEI competency, organizational finance trainings, and more.; and
- Free access to Technical Assistance (TA); TA is the process of providing targeted support to an organization with the focus on building skills that will improve the organization, program, and/or the services they provide; and
- Access to funding opportunities to house and serve those experiencing homelessness; and
- Will be listed on The Way Home website as a Community Partner; and
- Can indicate on their website and in other materials that they are partners of The Way Home; and
- May be mentioned in media (blogs, social channels, etc.) about The Way Home, including occasional roundups of in-kind donation needs; and
- Can be included as a partner organization of The Way Home initiative on Volunteer Houston’s website and receive additional benefits; and
- Are part of the nationally recognized homeless response system that’s making homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring!

COORDINATED ACCESS PROGRAM PARTNERS DESCRIPTION:

Coordinated Access (CA) Program Partners are defined as providers who either have or contribute to an active housing program/project/service (e.g., street outreach, CA assessors, CA hubs, etc.) in The Way Home, and are actively participating in the Coordinated Access System.

The Coordinated Access System is designed to coordinate and strengthen access to housing for families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Coordinated Access System institutes a consistent and uniform assessment and referral processes to determine and secure the most appropriate response to each individual or family’s immediate and long-term housing needs. Learn more here.
COORDINATED ACCESS PROGRAM PARTNER REQUIREMENTS (IN ADDITION TO COMMUNITY PARTNER AGENCY REQUIREMENTS):

- Have or contribute to an active program and a completed MOU with The Way Home; and
- Must participate in the Coordinated Access System; and
- Must be trained in HMIS and Coordinated Access and agree to follow the Coordinated Access Operations Manual; and
- Must be trained and agree to the practices outlined in the CoC System Practice Standards; and
- Agree to accept referrals based upon the CoC Vulnerability criteria and waitlist; and
- Agree to follow Housing First principles; and
- Agree to enter all data into HMIS following HUD/HMIS data standards; and
- Must participate in relevant workgroups and check-ins as applicable.

COORDINATED ACCESS PROGRAM PARTNER BENEFITS (IN ADDITION TO COMMUNITY PARTNER AGENCY BENEFITS):

- Ability to gain free access to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which is a local information technology system used to collect data from service providers serving individuals or households experiencing or at risk of homelessness; and
- Ability to participate in The Way Home workgroups, and foster greater collaboration, improve policies and practices, and make homeless services more efficient; and
- Can nominate, vote for, or possibly run as a Provider Representative for The Way Home Steering Committee; and
- May receive letters of support from the CFTH for funding opportunities; and
- May be called upon for expertise/advice in CoC planning efforts; and
- May be asked to speak to media or assist in media opportunities; and
- Identified as Coordinated Access Program Partner on The Way Home website.

Not sure if your organization qualifies as a Coordinated Access Program Partner? Please visit The Way Home website or email Caybryn Southern at c南方southern@homelesshouston.org.
EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COALITION AND PARTNER AGENCIES

The Way Home CoC is designed to promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; to provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, States, and local governments to quickly re-house individuals and families experiencing homelessness while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to them and their communities by homelessness; to promote access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs by those experiencing homelessness; and to optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

THE CFTH WILL:

- Serve as the CoC lead agency responsible for the coordination and oversight of the CoC planning efforts, with the authority to certify and submit CoC homeless assistance funding applications.
- Coordinate and leverage HMIS as a data collection and coordinated intake tool, to capture client-level, system-wide information over time on the characteristics of and services provided to persons experiencing homelessness and persons at risk of becoming homeless.
- Provide technical assistance and training to provider agencies to ensure compliance with The Way Home CoC and other applicable regulations, standards, and guidelines.
- Monitor CoC-funded provider agencies’ programmatic and financial management to ensure compliance with The Way Home CoC and other applicable regulations, standards, and guidelines.
- Coordinate, integrate, and leverage resources to maximize the impact of services for individuals who are experiencing homelessness.
- Convene, provide project management, and facilitate The Way Home workgroups and the CoC Steering Committee, as well as lead activities in accordance with the 5-year Community Plan and The Way Home Charter.
- Coordinate the regional Point-In-Time Homeless Count and Survey.
- Provide training and networking events for The Way Home partners including:
  - Host HMIS and Provider forums
  - HMIS user training and support
  - Provide evidence-based trainings
- Support the Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) and Youth Action Boards to empower those with lived experience in decision-making.
- Act as a media spokesperson on behalf of the CoC, e.g., to educate the media and the general public about the real causes of, and solutions to, homelessness.
- Advocate for service providers and those experiencing homelessness locally and nationally.
- Manage the Coordinated Access System.
COC PARTICIPATION – TO REMAIN IN GOOD STANDING, ALL PARTNERS WILL:

- Sign and submit both the CoC Partnership Application and Agreement with the CFTH; and
- Participate in the Annual Point-In-Time Count by:
  - Dedicating agency staff to perform the unsheltered count (at least two (2) agency representatives per day for agencies with more than 20 employees. Agencies with 20 staff or below, (1) agency representative per day is required)
  - Completing the Housing Inventory Chart for the shelter count as applicable
  - Participating in Gaps Analysis and Needs Assessment; and
- Attend 75% of The Way Home Steering Committee meetings held in the CoC performance year. (Click here for more information.) Attendance and participation is verified by sign-in no later than 10 minutes after the start of each meeting (or attendee report if virtual); and
- Meet user requirements of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database, including data quality and correction plans (if applicable):
  - All HMIS participating agencies are required to first complete a series of trainings prior to gaining access as well as to remain active users
  - Note: Agencies interested in participating in HMIS should send an email to hmis@homelesshouston.org for more information.
- Participate in CoC planning, policy, and strategy activities including but not limited to Provider and HMIS Forums; and
- Actively participate in The Way Home workgroups as appropriate and applicable; and
- Send relevant staff to CoC trainings sponsored by the CoC; and
- Follow all requirements and guidelines of The Way Home Partnership Agreement(s) and CoC Code of Conduct; and
- Follow all requirements related to funding received; and
- Follow the regulatory, statutory and CoC guidelines of The Way Home and programs in which they participate; and
- As applicable, adhere to CA, case management and best practice standards as adopted by The Way Home CoC. This includes but is not limited to: Housing First principles, Harm Reduction, DEI values and guiding principles, CA to housing, etc.; and
- Promote The Way Home consistent with the communication guidelines in the partnership agreement.
MEETINGS & FORUMS

The CFTH hosts regular meetings for CoC member agencies, HMIS participating agencies, and people with lived experience to share information, receive system updates, and provide input to the lead agency. Below is a description of current meetings.

For more information about CoC meetings, visit The Way Home Partner Portal or see the 2023 CoC Meeting Packet.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Way Home Steering Committee is the lead decision making body responsible for managing community planning, coordination, and evaluation to ensure that the homeless response system rapidly ends people’s homelessness permanently, while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to people and their communities by homelessness. This includes planning for the use of HUD’s CoC resources and coordinating these funds with other relevant resources in the jurisdiction.

Participation in Steering Committee meetings is required for all CoC funded agencies; CA Program Partners and Community Partner Agencies are highly encouraged to attend. Read The Way Home Partnership agreement and the official memo to partner agencies for more information.

PROVIDER INPUT FORUM (PIF)

The Way Home Provider Input Forum (PIF) is a quarterly meeting in which provider agencies of The Way Home come together to network and discuss what's happening in the CoC provider community. Members of the PIF include all Community and CA partners agencies. Meetings are led by the CFTH and the Steering Committee Provider Representatives.

HMIS FORUM

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a computerized data collection tool specifically designed to capture client-level and system-wide information over time, on the characteristics and services needs of people experiencing homelessness.

HMIS trainings/forums are available only for HMIS participating agencies. If your agency is not currently participating in HMIS, and you would like to learn more please send an inquiry to hmis@homelesshouston.org.
MEET YOUR TEAM

CFTH STAFF CONTACTS

- For questions related to CoC membership, Steering Committee matters, and general partnership information:
  - Caybryn Southern, Manager of Strategic Planning (CoC): csouthern@homelesshouston.org

- For questions relating to CoC Programs:
  - Renee Cavazos, Director of Programs (CoC): rcavazos@homelesshouston.org

- For questions relating to communications and media inquiries:
  - Catherine B. Villarreal, Director of Communications: cvillarreal@homelesshouston.org

- For questions about the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), including how to apply to become a user:
  - Kelita Beechum, Data Systems Manager: kbeechum@homelesshouston.org

- Learn more about the leadership of the Coalition here.

PROVIDER REPRESENTATIVES TO THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE WAY HOME COC

- Preston Witt, Harmony House: preston_witt@harmonyhouse.org (Term end Dec. 2023)

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

- From the National Alliance to End Homelessness: What is a Continuum of Care? https://endhomelessness.org/resource/what-is-a-continuum-of-care/

- Information about TX-700 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees/tx-700/

- FY23 CoC Meeting & Training Packet: Learn about the different CoC meeting and training opportunities offered throughout the year. Please note that the information provided may be subject to change.