



# The Way Home

## Steering Committee

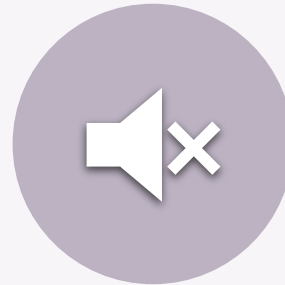
April 2025 Meeting



# Housekeeping



Partners will not be called during attendance. Partner participation is being monitored through the Zoom webinar platform.



Participants will be muted throughout the meeting. Those wishing to provide a verbal comment may do so once the Chair has opened public comment.



Participants can ask their questions through the Q&A tab found in the menu toolbar.



Participants are encouraged to use Reactions (found in the menu toolbar) throughout the meeting.

# Meeting Agenda

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## Meeting Introduction:

- Call to order
- Roll call of Steering Committee members
- **Please note that partners of The Way Home will not be called during roll call.** Registration, Attendance, and Participation are monitored through the virtual meeting platform.

## Meeting Business:

- February Meeting Minutes
- The Way Home Governance Charter Updates

## CoC Updates:

- CE Policies & Procedures Updates
- FY24 System Performance Measures (SPMs)
- Next Phase Update – Where We Are & Where We’re Going
- Advocacy Update

## Meeting Wrap-Up:

- Public Comment
- Meeting Adjourn

## Supporting Materials:

- The Way Home Charter – Clean Version
- The Way Home Charter – Redline Version
- DRAFT – CE Policies & Procedures
- Historic CE P&P’s (formerly known as “CA Operations Manual”)





# Thank You, Bob Eury!

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We appreciate Bob Eury's service on the Steering Committee! While no longer an active member, he continues to support our CoC as a CFTH Board Member.

His expertise in urban development and community planning remains invaluable in our mission to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

Thank you, Bob, for your continued dedication!





# Meeting Business

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Items Requiring Vote of the  
CoC Steering Committee



# STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

## MEETING DETAILS

Time/Date: Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 3 PM

Meeting Type: Open public meeting – Virtual

Meeting Packet: [Click here](#) to view.

Meeting Recording: [Click here](#) to view.

## MEETING INTRODUCTION

- **Barbie Brashear:** Call to order
- **Chris Laugelli:** Housekeeping & Roll call of Steering Committee members (00:00:37)
- **Barbie Brashear:** Thank you Carol Borrego (end of term) (00:01:15)

## MEETING BUSINESS

- **Barbie Brashear:** January 2025 Minutes (00:04:25)
  - Tory Gunsolley - motion to approve, seconded by Melody Barr
  - No committee discussion, comment, or questions
  - Unanimously approved, no objections / abstentions
- **Omar Martinez:** TWH Standards: Income Standards (00:05:15)
  - Provided updated on revisions made to TWH Standards Income Standards
  - Melody Barr – motion to approve, seconded by Gregory Dread
  - No committee discussion, comment, or questions
  - Unanimously approved, no objections / abstentions
- **Chris Laugelli:** TWH Charter Proposed Amendments (no vote needed) (00:16:12)
  - Provided update on proposed amendments to TWH Charter, focusing on concision and clarity. More updates to be discussed in March Steering Committee retreat and voted on in months to follow.
- **Renee Cavazos:** FY2024 NOFO Awards/Breakdown (00:23:00)
  - Provided update on CoC award and breakdown of funding/project types
  - Dr. Tran asked for comparison of per capita award in comparison to other similar CoC's. Renee will send data to SC for their review.

## COC UPDATES:

- **Caybryn Southern:** 2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Next Steps (00:31:11)

- **Chris Laugelli:** Steering Committee Portal demonstration (00:34:17)

## MEETING WRAP-UP:

- **Public comment** (00:40:20)
  - Arthi asked a question about when income standards will go into effect. Caybryn confirmed TWH Standards would be updated next week.
- **Announcements & Reminders**
  - March Steering Committee meeting will be an in-person retreat.
- **Meeting Adjourn**

## ATTENDANCE

Note: There are five (5) At-Large positions vacant.

	Name	Representation	Category	Term
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Barbie Brashear, Chair	Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council	Fixed Position	Oct. 2019 – in perpetuity Chair: Mar. 2022
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Melody Barr	City of Houston Housing & Community Development	Fixed Position	Nov. 2024 – in perpetuity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kristine Singleton	City of Pasadena Community Development	Fixed Position	June 2023 – in perpetuity
<input type="checkbox"/>	Melissa Quijano	Harris County Housing Authority	Fixed Position	Aug. 2022 – in perpetuity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tory Gunsolley	Harris County Housing & Community Development	Fixed Position	June 2024 – in perpetuity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rebecca Ansley	Montgomery County Community Development	Fixed Position	June 2021 – in perpetuity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dr. Theresa Tran	UT Health Houston	At Large Position	Term 2: Jan. 2024 – Dec. 2026
<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert “Bob” Eury	Philanthropy	At Large Position	Term 2: May 2024 – April 2026
<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert Birdow Jr.	Michael E. DeBakey Medical Center (VA)	At Large Position	Term 2: May 2024 – April 2026
<input type="checkbox"/>	Juliet Stipeche	Workforce Solutions	At Large Position	Term 1: July 2023 – June 2025
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alexis Loving	SEARCH	Provider Representative	Term 1: Mar. 2024 – Feb. 2026
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Shun Johnson	TLC Health and Wellness	Provider Representative	Term 1: Mar. 2024 – Feb. 2026
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gregory Dread	Lived Experience & Advocacy	Consumer Representative	Term 3: Feb. 2025 – Jan. 2027
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Danielle Stephen	Lived Experience & Advocacy	Youth & Young Adult Consumer Representative	Term 1: Mar. 2024 – Feb. 2026



# **The Way Home Governance Charter**



# Detailed Changes

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## General Narrative Updates

- Clarifying language, removing redundancies, and simplifying content for improved readability and consistency.

## Consumer Representation

- Adding one (1) new Consumer Representative seat for a member of the CoC's Consumer Advisory Council (CAC), a workgroup composed of individuals with lived experience who provide consultation, advocacy, and meaningful input to strengthen the homeless response system.

## Veteran's Representative Seat Adjustment

- Reclassifying the Veteran's Representative seat from an At-Large to a Fixed Representative position.

## Advisory Seats

- Establishing advisory roles to ensure representation when a designated representative has a conflict of interest and cannot participate in CoC-related decision-making. Advisory seats will be appointed at the discretion of CFTH and the Officers of the Steering Committee.

## THE WAY HOME STEERING COMMITTEE

The Way Home Steering Committee serves as the decision-making body of The Way Home Continuum of Care (CoC), the coordinated Homeless Response System throughout the Greater Houston region, including Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties of Texas.

### PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Resolution No.: 2.2025: TWH Charter Updates – April 2025

Date Proposed: Thursday, April 10, 2025

Category: The Way Home Governance Charter – Amendments

### BACKGROUND

Background: In February, proposed updates to [The Way Home Charter](#) included:

- The addition of a Domestic Violence (DV)-specific Consumer Representative seat
- The introduction of advisory seats for provider representatives during the NOFO process
- General narrative updates to enhance clarity

Following further review and discussion, the revised recommendations are as follows:

- General Narrative Updates – Clarifying language, removing redundancies, and simplifying content for improved readability and consistency.
- Consumer Representation – Adding one (1) new Consumer Representative seat for a member of the CoC's Consumer Advisory Council (CAC), a workgroup composed of individuals with lived experience who provide consultation, advocacy, and meaningful input to strengthen the homeless response system.
- Veteran's Representative Seat Adjustment – Reclassifying the Veteran's Representative seat from an At-Large to a Fixed Representative position.
- Advisory Seats – Establishing advisory roles to ensure representation when a designated representative has a conflict of interest and cannot participate in CoC-related decision-making. Advisory seats will be appointed at the discretion of CFTH and the Officers of the Steering Committee.

The board is asked to review and approve these amendments to ensure the continued effectiveness, inclusivity, and transparency of The Way Home Charter.

### RESOLVED:

Approval of Actions/Policies: The Way Home Steering Committee approves Resolution 2.2025: TWH Charter Updates – April 2025

Effective Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025

### SIGNATURES:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, The Way Home Steering Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# CoC Governance & Administration Updates

- 
- **Goal:** Restructuring Steering Committee Meetings for greater impact
  - 1-2 meetings per year focused on administrative responsibilities, including:
    - Governance revisions (charter, TWH standards, CoC policies)
    - Annual policy reviews
  - All other meetings centered on system-level updates, such as:
    - HRS Data: Housing placements, encampment decommissioning, exit outcomes
    - Population-Specific Data: Domestic violence, veterans, youth
    - Advocacy & Policy Updates
    - System Performance Measures (SPMs)
    - Five-Year Plan & Workgroup Updates
  - **Goal:** Let our system's progress speak for itself—highlighting impact, challenges, and next steps.

# Next Steps for Steering Committee Members

Complete the Board Member Information Survey to share your background, interests, and aspirations—helping us identify opportunities to strengthen our collective impact on preventing and ending homelessness

Re-engage through workgroups—you and your staff can take part in the next phase of our work and contribute to key initiatives

# Next Steps for Partners

## Site Visits/Tours – CFTH Wants to Visit You!

- We're excited to learn more about your organization's growth and current operations. To better understand where you are and how you've evolved, we'd love to schedule a visit.

Keep an eye out for our team reaching out, or feel free to invite us for a tour to get an update on your services, staff, and how you're currently serving our community!

## Workgroup Opportunities

- None of the work in our CoC would be possible without the dedication and hard work of our partners. As we move into the next phase of our work, we encourage you to stay tuned for upcoming engagement opportunities and workgroup participation.

Your involvement will be key to advancing our shared goals!






# CoC Updates


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General Updates for the CoC  
Steering Committee and  
Partners of The Way Home





# Coordinated Entry (CE) Policies & Procedures Update



Enhancing access across the  
homeless response system.



# Coordinated Entry (CE) Policies & Procedures Updates

## Document Name Change:

CE Operations Manual > CE Policies & Procedures

## Alignment with HUD Requirements:

Outlined in the 2017 [CE Notice](#).

## General Narrative Updates:

That clearly identify system policies and outline procedural processes for all four (4) components of CE.

## Annual Review & Updates:

To ensure compliance and effectiveness

# **FY24 System Performance Measures (SPMs)**



# System Performance Measures (SPM)



Annual report to HUD, generated from the HMIS data



Part of the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to the U.S. Congress



Current reporting period: FY 2024 (October 2023-September 2024)



Project types included:

Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, Transitional Housing  
Street Outreach  
Permanent Housing (PSH, OPH, RRH)



Used by HUD for the annual CoC program funding calculation



CoC partner agencies are encouraged to respond to any data quality-related requests from the HMIS Lead agency (CFTH) and continue to monitor their projects' data quality



# SPM 1 – Length of Homelessness

	FY24		Change	
	Avg	Med	Avg	Med
a1.1 Persons in ES and SH	73	36	-8	-3
a1.2 Persons in ES, SH, and TH	97	47	-5	-1
b1.1 Persons in ES, SH, and PH (prior to “housing move in”)	390	136	-39	-42
b1.2 Persons in ES, SH, TH, and PH (prior to “housing move in”)	405	154	-32	-35

- This measure is based on the time in shelters or the time since the “Approximate date this episode of homelessness started”
- The first two rows use shelter entry & exit dates; the second two rows are heavily affected by the "homeless date" from the entry assessment
- All the trends are in the right direction!

# SPM 2 – Returns to Homelessness

	FY24		Change	
	Count	%	Count	%
Exit was from SO	195	42%	-4	2%
Exit was from ES	226	19%	12	0%
Exit was from TH	64	25%	-5	2%
Exit was from SH	3	25%	0	2%
Exit was from PH	546	18%	149	3%
TOTAL Returns to Homelessness	1034	21%	152	2%

- This measure looks at the exits to permanent housing from two years ago and measures how many persons return to homeless assistance projects within two years
- The measure is affected by incorrect exit destinations, enrollment overlaps, and PH transfer gaps
- Return rates went up!

# SPM 3 – Overall Homeless Numbers

	FY24	Change
Metric 3.1 – Change in PIT Counts	Count	Count
Universe: Total PIT Count of sheltered and unsheltered persons	3280	10
Emergency Shelter Total	1615	86
Safe Haven Total	13	-1
Transitional Housing Total	545	60
Total Sheltered Count	2173	165
Unsheltered Count	1107	-135
Metric 3.2 – Change in Annual Counts	Count	Count
Universe: Unduplicated Total sheltered homeless persons	8810	348
Emergency Shelter Total	7819	427
Safe Haven Total	53	11
Transitional Housing Total	1374	-127

- This measure uses the last PIT Count and the annual HMIS data
- The measure is affected by the unsheltered PIT Count gaps and the sheltered data quality
- The 2024 PIT Count showed an unsheltered decrease and a sheltered increase; the HMIS data showed an overall sheltered increase
- The 2025 PIT Count report should be published in May

# SPM 4 – Income Growth

	FY24		Change	
Change in income for adult system stayers during the reporting period	Count	%	Count	%
Number of adults with increased earned income	155	10%	16	1%
Number of adults with increased non-employment cash income	539	33%	29	0%
Number of adults with increased total income	652	40%	33	0%
Change in income for adult system leavers during the reporting period	Count	%	Count	%
Number of adults with increased earned income	121	16%	38	3%
Number of adults with increased non-employment cash income	198	27%	19	-1%
Number of adults with increased total income	301	41%	56	2%

- This measure uses the HMIS income data from CoC-funded PH projects
- It shows employment income and non-employment income for both stayers and leavers
- The measure is affected by the income data quality associated with entry, annual, and exit assessments
- There was an overall improvement in the income rates

# SPM 5 – First Time Homeless

	FY24	Change
	Count	Count
Metric 5.1 – Change in the number of persons entering ES, SH, and TH projects with no prior enrollments in HMIS	5908	50
Metric 5.2 – Change in the number of persons entering ES, SH, TH, and PH projects with no prior enrollments in HMIS	7293	-1403

- This measure counts the persons who entered residential projects for the first time ever or after a two-year gap
- The first metric does not include PH, and the second metric includes PH
- There was a slight increase in shelter entries, and a large decrease when PH is included; this was likely caused by the spike in direct PH placements during the previous years



# SPM 7 – Exits to PH and PSH Retention

	FY24		Change	
	Count	%	Count	%
Metric 7a.1 & 7b.1 – Change in exits to permanent housing destinations				
From Street Outreach (includes temp. destinations)	1214	22%	282	0%
From E. Shelters, Trans. Housing, Safe Haven, RRH, & PSH w/o MI Date	4060	48%	325	-3%
Metric 7b.2 – Change in exit to or retention of permanent housing	Count	%	Count	%
Those who remained in applicable PH projects (PSH, OPH) and those who exited to permanent housing destinations	7385	95%	293	-1%

- The first two metrics look at the exits to PH from SO and the residential projects except PSH/OPH; the third metric looks at the retention of housing for people in PSH/OPH
- The main element that affects this measure is the exit destination
- While more people exited to PH and retained PH than in the previous FY, there was a slight rate decrease for residential projects

# The CoC's Next Phase Update

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Where We Are &  
Where We're Going!



# Houston's Bold Vision to End Homelessness

Since 2012, Houston has embarked on a mission to effectively end homelessness.

Now we are at the brink of achieving this goal.

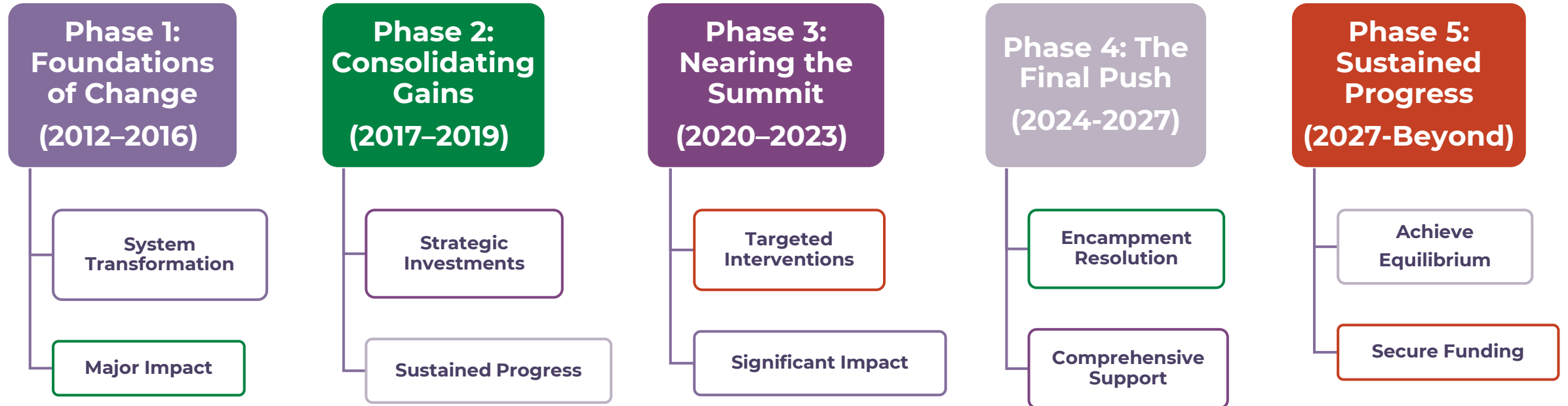
- 🕒 Ensure no one sleeps on the streets.
- 🕒 Resolve homelessness for anyone entering the system within 90 days.
- 🕒 Prevent individuals from remaining in long-term homelessness.

## How?

**Achieve Equilibrium** - Calibrate our homeless response system to slow and respond to all demand.

# An Everest-Like Journey to End Homelessness

## Timeline Overview

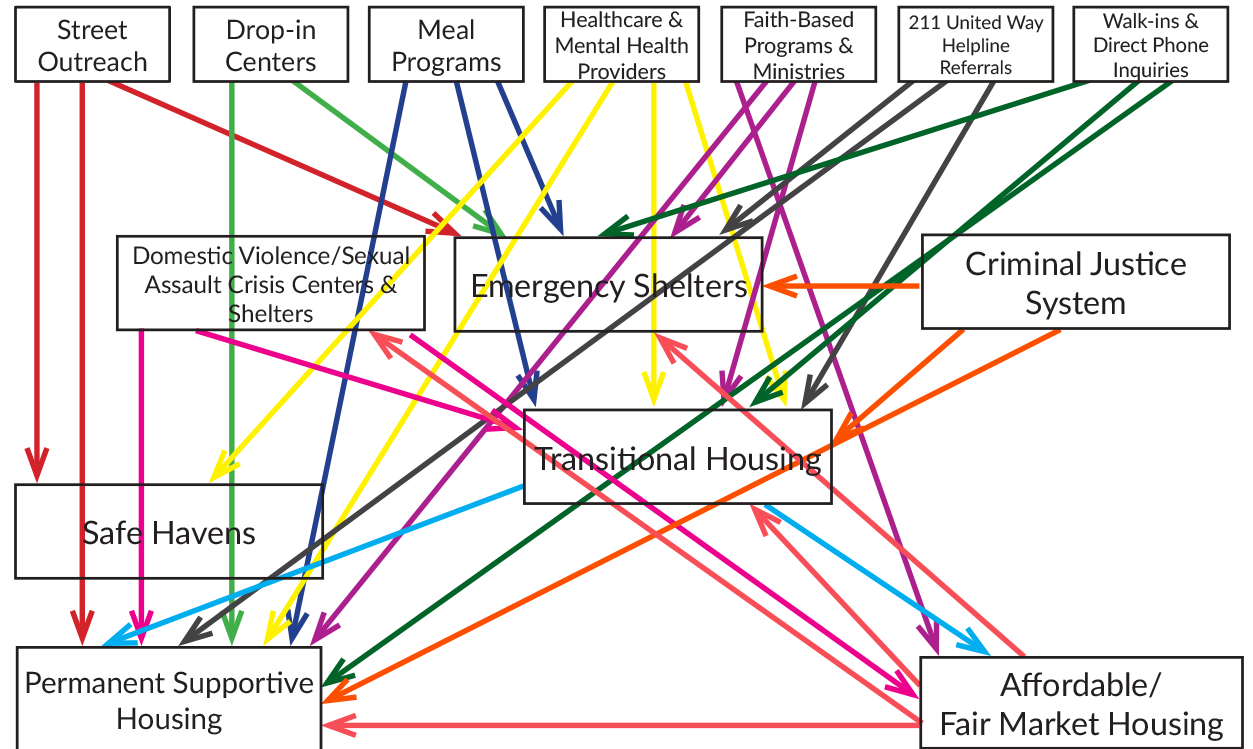


# We have come a long way

## In 2011:

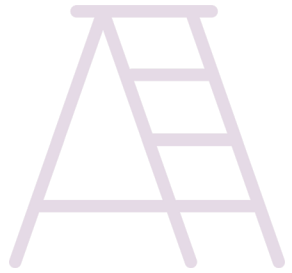
- We had the 6th largest homeless population in the country, almost 9K
- Homeless service providers were spending millions but leaving federal funds unused
- Homeless service providers were also operating in silos, with no collaboration
- Recidivism (repeated instances of homelessness) was high

The way a homeless individual could access services previously:



The Way Home





# Phase 1: Foundations of Change (2012–2016)

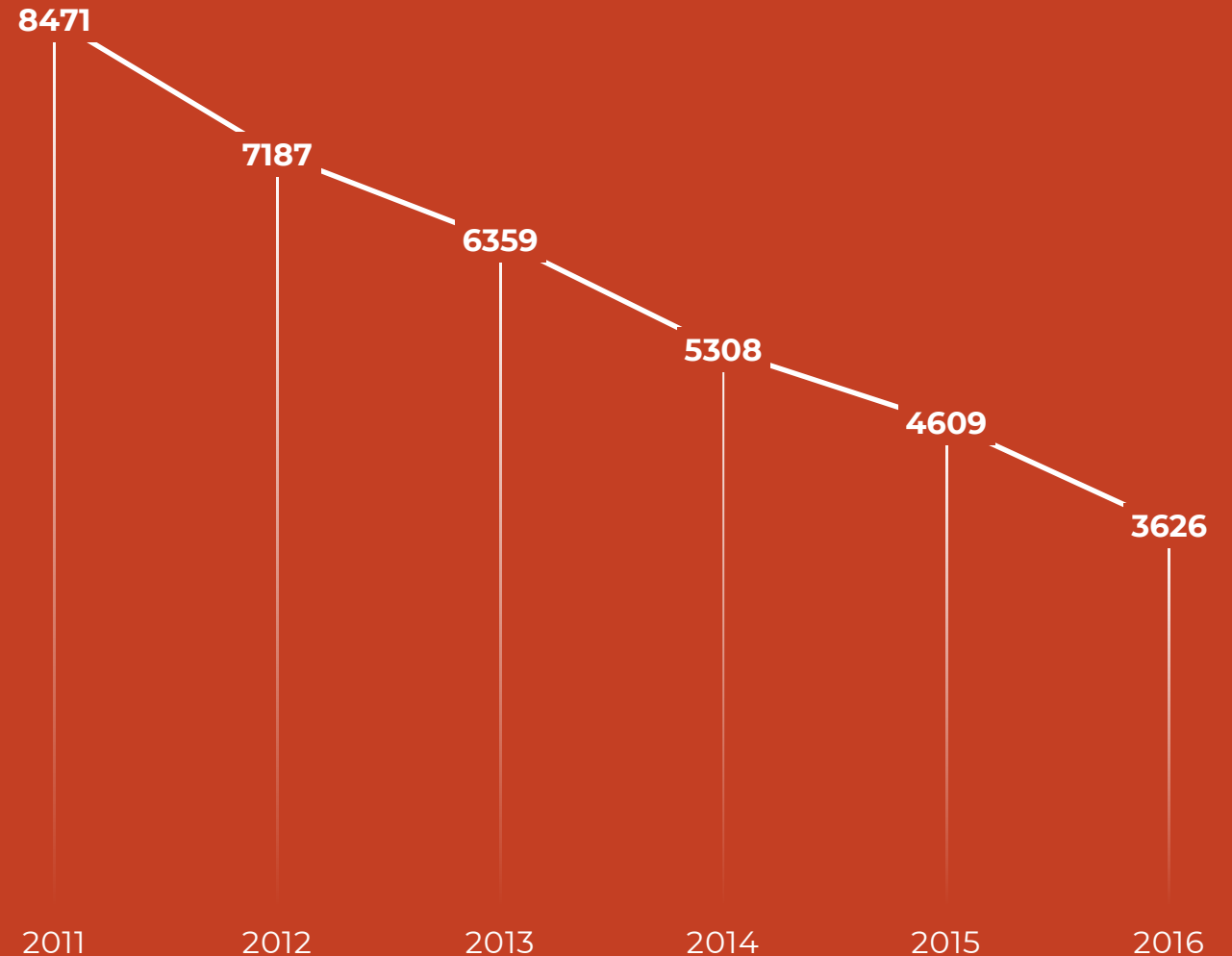
## System Transformation:

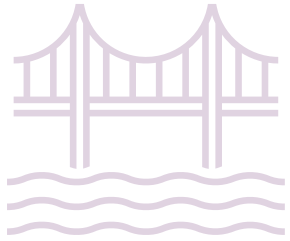
- Maximized federal funds
- Strengthened governance
- Integrated real-time data
- Accelerated Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs.

## Major Impact:

- 70% reduction in unsheltered homelessness
- 60% reduction in overall homelessness
- Functional end to veteran homelessness.

## PIT COUNTS 2011-2016





## Phase 2: Consolidating Gains (2017–2019)

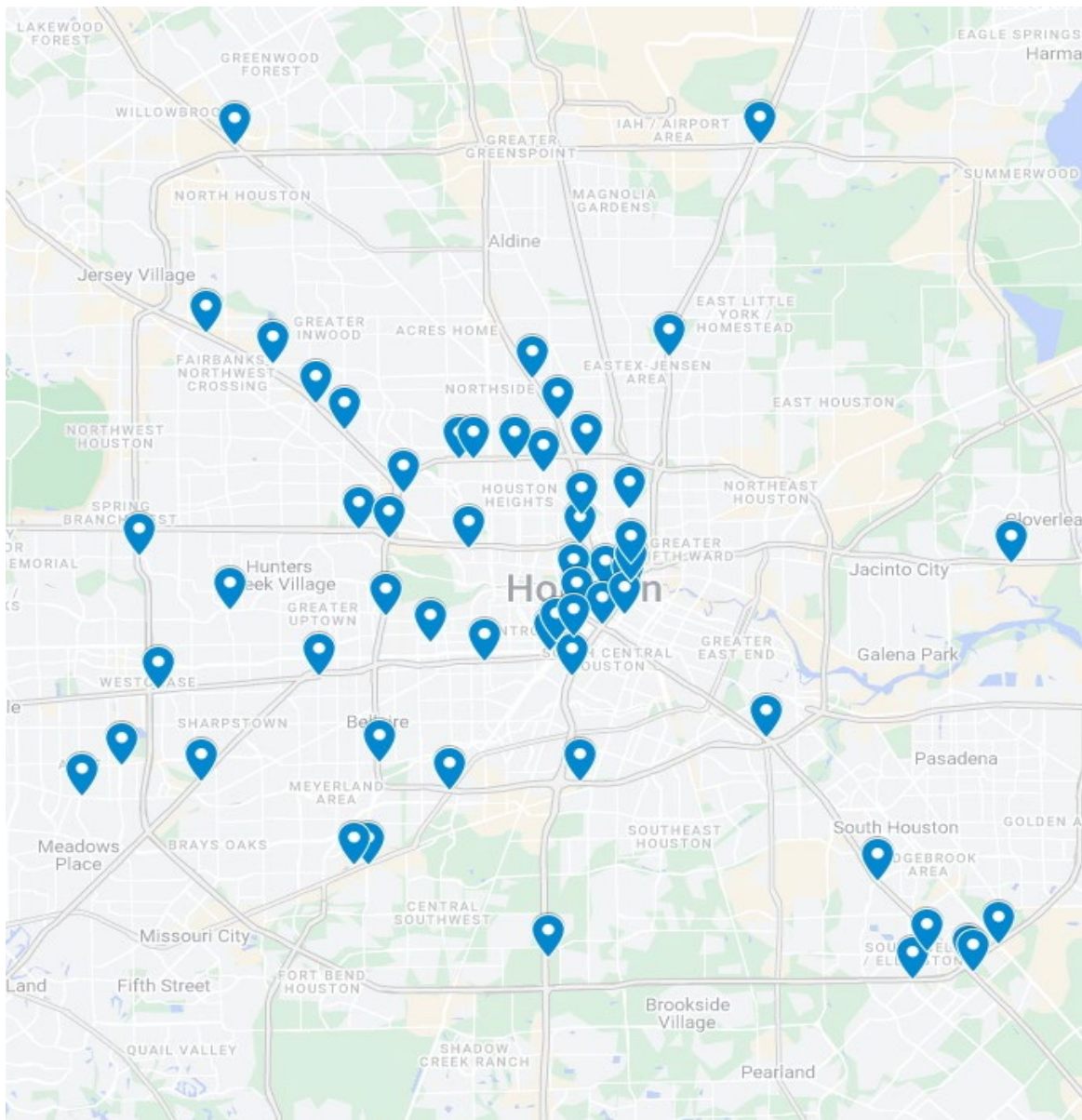
**Strategic Investments:** Used FEMA disaster funds to prevent backslide and developed innovative bridge housing for chronically homeless individuals.

**Sustained Progress:** Private funding supported landlord engagement and flexible rehousing, maintaining reductions in homelessness.



Partners of The Way Home meet after Hurricane Harvey





## Phase 3: Nearing the Summit (2020–2023)

**Targeted Interventions:** Used COVID funds to prevent homelessness, expand rehousing with behavioral health support and permanently close 120+ encampments.

**Significant Impact:** Achieved another 30% reduction in unsheltered homelessness, with only 600 long-stayers remaining.



## Phase 4: The Final Push (2024-2027)

### Encampment Resolution:

Focus on targeted closures and ongoing maintenance to eliminate street homelessness. Not Sweeps.

### Comprehensive Support:

Activating diversion and rehousing hubs with integrated basic needs services and behavioral health care.

# Phase 5: Sustained Success (2027-Beyond)

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## Key Actions:

- Finalize a scaled system that ensures every individual receives support within **90 days**.
- Secure **\$70M annually** through a local homeless authority funded by tax revenue.



# The Plan

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**What happens in  
2025 and beyond?**

# Expanding the Scope of the Homeless Response System

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**Housing interventions**  
matched to individual  
needs.



**Specialized outreach**  
to address mental  
health, physical health,  
and substance use  
needs.



**Diversion**, to prevent  
an inflow into  
homelessness.





## 1 People Flowing in, Must Flow Out

- Exits must outpace inflow
- Every front door must have a back door
- Majority exit on their own
- Remaining flow through pathways that must be calibrated to achieve continuous exits

Example



Avg Stay 90 Days



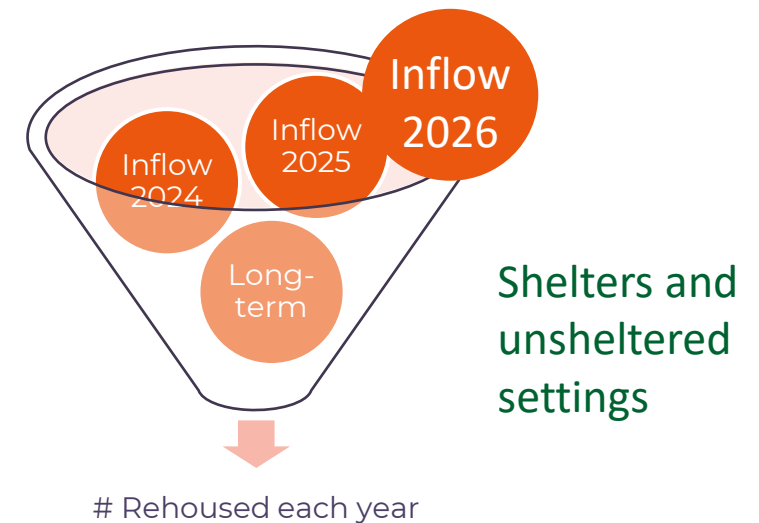
4 people served annually



4 rehousing exits required / bed/year

## 2 Requires Rehousing Solutions for Two Groups

1. **Annual Inflow:** People becoming homeless each year (prevent long term homelessness)
2. **Long-Term Homeless:** People stuck in homelessness from prior years (shelter beds stay full, higher needs & cost)



# Mayor's Focus: Ending Street Homelessness

1

## Immediately Reduce the Number Sleeping on the Streets

- By the end of 2026, move all remaining individuals from encampments and the Navigation Center (~1,000) into housing with supportive services.
- Intense collaboration with **The Harris Center, Probate Court, and State Adult Protective Services** for individuals needing higher levels of care (institutional settings).

2

## Establish Diversion and Rehousing Hubs Across the Region

- Adapt the Haven for Hope model to Greater Houston's unique geography
- Create easier access front doors to homeless response services for walk-up and drop-off

3

## Empower Outreach and Law Enforcement

- Connect new individuals entering homelessness to diversion and rehousing hubs for immediate remedy, avoiding the need to sleep outside.
- Restore public spaces for community enjoyment and use.



# From the streets to services

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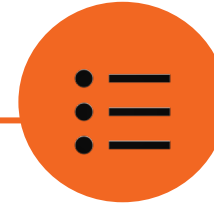
Law Enforcement or  
Outreach encounter  
someone in need on  
streets



Transport to Diversion  
& Rehousing Hub or  
individuals walk-in



Instant Access  
to Meals, Basic  
Needs, Shelter,  
and Services



Intake assessment for  
quick resolution of  
homelessness or  
connection and transport  
to more intensive support  
services (mental health &  
rehousing process)




# Ultimate Outcome

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## Houston is the First Major City That Hits Equilibrium

- Consistent and sustainable funding
- Collaboration – using everyone's strengths
- Right intervention → Right time → Right outcomes





# **Advocacy Update**

# Advocacy Update

SB 2487  
(Parker) and SB  
1164 (Zaffirini)

- Crisis Centers and Emergency Detention

HB 3205  
(Campos)

- Provides optional mechanism to create local funding for Housing First initiatives

SB 241 (Lopez)

- Expands prohibited camping and ensures an endless cycle of encampment sweeps

SB 2623 & 2624  
(Creighton)

- Prohibits all homeless services within a 1.5 mi radius of schools, universities, and playgrounds

# Public Comment



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Speakers will be called upon in the order in which they signed up. Others will be offered an opportunity to speak following.

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Please use the “Raise Hand” function and wait to be called upon if you did not sign up to speak prior to the meeting.

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When called upon, please introduce yourself and your organization (if applicable).

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**Duration of comment: 1 minute.** This time limit will be identified with a visible timer shared on the screen, followed by the speaker being muted when the time is complete.







# Next The Way Home Steering Committee Meeting

May 2025



# **Supportive Materials**

# **The Way Home Charter – Clean Version**

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# THE WAY HOME'S GOVERNANCE CHARTER

LAST UPDATED: APRIL 2025

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## PURPOSE OF THE CHARTER

The purpose of this charter is to provide a structured framework for the governance, decision-making, and compliance of The Way Home Continuum of Care (CoC) - TX-700 - with the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD) requirements. This charter outlines the roles, responsibilities, and processes necessary to ensure the effective operation and strategic oversight of the CoC, ensuring that all activities and decisions are aligned with HUD regulations and the mission of ending homelessness in our community.

## CONTINUUM OF CARE GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW

The purpose of The Way Home is 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. This work is specified in the HUD, 24 CFR Part 578, Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act: Continuum of Care Program.

The [HEARTH Act](#), enacted into law on May 20, 2009, consolidated the homeless assistance programs administered by HUD under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act into a single grant program and revises the Emergency Shelter Grants program and renames it the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program. The [HEARTH Act](#) also codifies into law the development of the CoC and the CoC planning process, a longstanding part of HUD's application process to assist homeless persons by providing greater community-wide coordination, decision-making, and leadership.

For more information about the ESG and CoC Program, visit HUD's [ESG Program Page](#) and/or the [CoC Program Page](#).

The CoC Steering Committee is the group organized to carry out the responsibilities prescribed in the [CoC Program Interim Rule](#). CoC governance responsibilities include:

- Planning for and operating the CoC; and
- Ensuring compliance with HUD requirements and regulations; and
- Coordinating the implementation of a housing and service system that meets the needs of the individuals and families who experience homelessness, including:
  - prevention and diversion strategies,
  - outreach and engagement,
  - coordinated assessment, entry, and exit,
  - crisis and emergency shelter and temporary housing, and
  - permanent housing and supportive services; and
- Designing and implementing the process associated with applying for HUD CoC Program funds.

This Governance Charter outlines the roles and responsibilities of The Way Home CoC Steering Committee, the Lead Agency, the Collaborative Applicant, and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead.

## THE WAY HOME SHARED VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Way Home is committed to the following values and principles, as laid out in the [2021-2026 Community Plan](#):

### Ending Homelessness

- The Way Home CoC is committed to ending homelessness in Houston and throughout Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties, Texas.
- “Ending homelessness” means preventing it when possible and ensuring homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time when not preventable.
- Ending homelessness requires coordination across public and private sectors and for systems, organizations, and programs to align their goals and strategic actions.
- Ending homelessness must include the following:
  - preventing entries into homelessness; and
  - providing adequate outreach and crisis services; and
  - ensuring that low-barrier emergency shelter or bridge housing options are accessible by all people; and
  - connecting people to permanent housing with appropriate financial supports and services to ensure their success.

### A Person-Centered Approach

- We must rebuild the homeless response system to be anti-racist. Racist policies impact those who experience homelessness, and these policies must be dismantled as we work to address homelessness.
- Ending homelessness must include active engagement of people with lived experience.
- Crisis services and housing supports must be delivered in a human-centered, trauma-informed manner that respects the inherent value and honors the dignity of every individual regardless of race, ethnicity, age, disability status, gender identity, familial status, or citizenship status, or if they are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, sexual assault, or human trafficking.

### Accountability

- The voices of people with lived experience of homelessness are critical and included in every aspect of planning, decision-making, and activities undertaken by the Continuum of Care. We as a system must be accountable for this input because it is a key to our success.
- The Way Home CoC's Action Plan will align with existing plans created by other regional partners.
- The Way Home CoC's Action Plan will be adjusted as necessary to reflect changing needs and resources.

## THE WAY HOME 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.

## STEERING COMMITTEE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Way Home Steering Committee has specific responsibilities as outlined by HUD in the [CoC Interim Rule](#). The responsibilities required by the CoC by HUD in the Interim Rule and assigned to The CoC Steering Committee are outlined below:

Responsibility Category	Responsibility	Responsible Party
Establishing CoC	Define membership of Continuum of Care	CoC Steering Committee
Establishing CoC	Invite new members annually	Continuum of Care/Lead Agency
Operating CoC	Hold meetings of full membership, with published agenda, at least quarterly	CoC Steering Committee/Lead Agency
CoC Governance and Management	Establish a CoC Steering Committee and designate its responsibilities	CoC Steering Committee
CoC Governance and Management	Reviewing the Written Selection Process for the Board	CoC Steering Committee
CoC Governance and Management	Develop the CoC Governance Charter	CoC Steering Committee
CoC Governance and Management	Review Governance Charter Annually	CoC Steering Committee
CoC Governance and Management	Review lead agency MOU and select lead agency	CoC Steering Committee
Coordinated Assessment System	Develop a policy for how Coordinated System and Housing and Service System will address needs of Domestic Violence	CoC Steering Committee/ Coordinated Assessment (Centralized Intake) Committee



Designate an HMIS	Ensure consistent participation of recipients and sub-recipients in HMIS	CoC Steering Committee/HMIS Lead Agency
Plan for the CoC	Participate in the Consolidated Plan	CoC Steering Committee
Plan for the CoC	Consult with ESG Recipients	Lead Agency/CoC Steering Committee
Plan for the CoC	Monitor data quality and system performance through the creation and evaluation of standardized dashboards	Lead Agency/CoC Steering Committee

Additional responsibilities of CoC Steering Committee include:

- Receiving and responding to community and public policy updates relevant to homelessness issues;
- Receiving updates on and responding to the Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness; and
- Providing input on strategic priorities for the Continuum of Care; and
- Reviewing and acting on the annual funding allocations; and
- Reviewing and acting on additional HUD required activities; and
- Reviewing and acting on any proposed funding reallocations, as required; and
- Creating an appeal process for providers; and
- Reviewing and making final determinations on provider appeals as recommended by CoC Steering Committee; and
- Designating HMIS Lead, CoC Lead, and Collaborative Applicant for CoC through a MOU, with roles to be reviewed annually; and
- Holding CoC committees accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities, and review the work of the committees; and
- Providing overall direction and leadership of the process; and
- Making all formal decisions of the CoC; and
- Leading strategic planning and goal setting; and
- Aligning and coordinating CoC and other homeless assistance and mainstream resources; and
- Ensuring the availability of data for planning; and
- Establishing priorities for and making recommendations to HUD about the allocation of CoC resources;
- Establishing system and program outcomes for evaluation purposes; and

- Monitoring and evaluating both system wide and individual program performance on established goals;
- Receiving reports and recommendations from sub-committees, workgroups and task groups; and
- Establishing sub-committees and task groups as needed to perform CoC functions; and
- Selecting the lead support agency and HMIS administrator; and
- Entering into contracts and MOUs on behalf of the CoC; and
- Monitoring performance under these contracts; and
- Distributing official communications from the CoC

## MEMBERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Membership in the CoC ensures community wide commitment to preventing and ending homelessness and must represent a diverse body of stakeholders throughout the entire geographic area of the CoC. The intent is that the CoC be as inclusive as possible, to include the opinions and insights of various parties.

The membership of the Steering Committee consists of up to 22 designated seats as outlined below. Each Steering Committee member must have the fiscal and program authority of the organization they represent.

- Nine (9) Fixed Representative Seats – Fixed Position Representatives are members who represent a government department or organization:
  - City of Houston Housing and Community Development
  - Fort Bend Community Development Department
  - Harris County Community Services Department
  - Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
  - Harris County Public Housing Authority
  - Houston Housing Authority
  - Montgomery County Community Development Department
  - Pasadena Community Development Department
  - Veteran Affairs (VA)
- Two (2) Provider Representative Seats – Provider representatives are people who work for organizations that provide services for people experiencing homelessness; they represent two types of direct services, and either representative can represent either type (i.e., we do not necessarily need one of each):
  - Crisis Response System (includes emergency and transitional shelter, homelessness prevention, outreach, navigation, coordinated access, day services and crisis response services).
  - Permanent Housing (includes permanent housing provision (PSH/RRH) and/or services for people in permanent housing).

- Seven (7) At-large Representative Seats – At-Large representatives are professionals who work in systems that interact with the homeless response system (e.g., health, mental health, school districts, child welfare, workforce development, university, criminal justice, business, faith community, victims service providers, local non-governmental funders, etc.). The role of At-Large Representatives is to assist the Continuum of Care in leveraging mainstream funding from — and making positive changes within — those systems for the benefit of people experiencing homelessness in our region.
- Four (4) At-Large Consumer Representative Seats – At-Large Consumer representatives are people with lived experience with homelessness, and the role of the At-Large Consumer representative is to help ensure that Steering Committee decisions include the perspective of people that have experienced homelessness firsthand.

At-Large Consumer representatives provide The Way Home CoC the opportunity to work towards solutions collaboratively and collectively to end homelessness by operationalizing equity through the unique strategy of involving experts with lived expertise of homelessness. To align with HUD, federal administration goals, and the composition of our community, the four (4) Consumer Representative should include:

- One (1) member who has experienced homelessness within the last seven (7) years or who is currently a CoC program participant.
  - One (1) member who has experienced unsheltered homelessness.
  - One (1) member of the Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP) Youth Action Board (YAB).
  - One (1) member of the CoC's Consumer Advisory Council (CAC).
- Advisory Seats – During the NOFO, some members are not able to participate in the decision-making process due a conflict of interest, however, this then can lead to a decision made without suitable representation from a key system (e.g., providers). In the event that a provider representative is unable to participate in relevant processes and/or discussions for the annual NOFO, another provider without a COI may participate via an Advisory seat to ensure proper CoC representation.

## SELECTION OF STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Steering Committee members are selected based on criteria that include relevant experience, community involvement, and expertise in areas pertinent to the CoC's mission. Members are invited to join based on system needs, through an open call process, or selected based on their role within their organization. Additional information on eligibility and the application process for the Steering Committee will be provided during the open call process.

- At-large, Local Non-governmental Funder, and At-Large Consumer representatives are recommended by the Lead Agency and Nominating Committee and then selected by a vote of the members of the entire Steering Committee.

All recommendations, nominations, and letters of interest for At-Large, Local Non-governmental Funder, and At-Large Consumer representatives will be reviewed by the Nominations Committee and Lead Agency during an open call period.

An open call announcement is provided by the Chair of the Steering Committee and serves to inform the community of an upcoming vacancy on the committee. The open call

provides members of The Way Home CoC, community stakeholders, and cross-system partners, the opportunity to submit a letter of interest & resume and/or nomination to join The Way Home Steering Committee. Current members who are holding a seat that is up for term will be encouraged to participate in the Open Call procedure to be considered for their next term.

Strong applicants will be selected for interviews with members of the Nominating Committee and the Lead Agency, and recommendations for representatives will be made to the full Steering Committee for approval at an upcoming Steering Committee meeting or via email vote.

- The YYA At-Large Consumer Representative is appointed by their peers of the YHDP YAB. Read the YHDP YAB Governance Structure to learn more about the composition, roles & responsibilities, and committee structure of the YHDP YAB.
- Provider Representatives are elected through a popular vote by CoC partner agencies. To be eligible, candidates and their agencies must be in good standing with the CoC, as determined by the Lead Agency, and must meet all CoC partnership requirements.
- The Steering Committee can add new members by a majority vote of the existing members.

## TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP

- Fixed Representatives: May serve as long as they continue to hold that job/position.
- At-Large and Provider Representatives: At-Large and Provider Representatives serve a term of two years, with the possibility of reappointment. These members may serve no more than three consecutive terms (i.e., six consecutive years).
- The YYA At-Large Consumer Representative term is two years. This representative may serve up to three consecutive terms if re-elected by the YHDP YAB and meets all other requirements listed in this document
- A year is considered 12 months from the month the member becomes active (voted or elected in March, they begin April and will end in March two years later).
- A representative may be re-elected to the Steering Committee after a period of twelve (12) months of non-service on the committee.
- If a YYA At-Large Consumer Representative is no longer eligible to participate in the YHDP YAB due to age requirements (making them ineligible to participate as the YYA At-Large Consumer representative following the completion of their current term), they may submit a letter of interest and their application to become an At-Large (Consumer) Representative during an open call period, and if they did not serve three consecutive terms as the YYA At-Large Consumer Representative.

If they completed three consecutive terms as the YYA At-Large Consumer Representative, they first must wait a twelve (12) month period of non-service on the committee, prior to participating in an open call and possibly being re-elected to the Steering Committee.

- Representatives that fail to attend less than 75% of regularly scheduled meetings may be subject to removal from the Steering Committee by vote of the Committee. The Steering Committee will require the organizations/jurisdictions that hold a Fixed representative seat

to appoint a substitute in the event of the removal of a representative of the Steering Committee.

- Representatives agree to adhere to the guidelines set forth in the code of conduct, values and principles and the conflict-of-interest section.
- Representatives agree to act in a professional manner at all times and act as good stewards of The Way Home.
- Former lead agency employees are not eligible to serve as an At-Large, Provider, or At-Large Consumer Steering Committee representative until at least one year (12 months) after separation from the lead agency and upon meeting all other eligibility requirements.

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS, QUORUM, AND VOTING

### QUORUM AND VOTING:

A quorum is defined as a majority of Steering Committee members. Decisions are made by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair casts the deciding vote. All decisions and votes are documented in the meeting minutes, which are made available to the public to ensure transparency. For purposes of time-sensitive and/or critical votes, an email vote may be used. On the direction of The Way Home Steering Committee, e-votes may be initiated by the Lead Agency. More than 51% of the voting membership must respond to the e-vote for the vote to be accepted. The Lead Agency is permitted to draft the meeting agenda and add New Business items.

### FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS:

- Occurrence: Meetings generally occur monthly (unless noted otherwise on The Way Home Partner Portal)
- Materials: Meeting packets will be posted one week in advance. However, during high-work volume periods (e.g., PIT Count, NOFO, disaster response, etc.), the materials may be shared late/amended.
- Meeting Minutes: Proceedings of all Steering Committee meetings are documented in minutes. Minutes of all meetings are circulated and approved at the subsequent meeting. Once approved, minutes are made available electronically to the public.

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- Open to all partner agency staff and members of the public
- Required for CoC-funded agencies (including YHDP-funded agencies) & those wishing to compete for CoC/YHDP funding
- CoC/YHDP-funded agencies must have one staff member attend 75% of meetings held in a year

## STEERING COMMITTEE CODE OF CONDUCT

All CoC members are required to adhere to a code of conduct that promotes ethical behavior, transparency, and respect. The code of conduct includes guidelines for professional behavior,

confidentiality, and the prohibition of discriminatory practices. Violations of the code of conduct are subject to review and may result in disciplinary action, including removal from the CoC.

#### Obligations:

1. Steering Committee representatives should strive to represent their individual organization and the people and families experiencing homelessness they serve in a fair, honest, and respectful manner.
2. Steering Committee representatives should be informed about the purpose of The Way Home CoC and its role in the CoC process.
3. Steering Committee representatives should strive to stay up to date on CoC strategies and planning by participating in CoC meetings, forums, and workgroups.
4. Steering Committee representatives are expected to uphold professional standards of conduct, exhibiting respectfulness, fairness, and honesty.
5. Steering Committee representatives should clearly define their professional roles and obligations, exercise reasonable judgment, and take precautions to prevent potential biases or conflicts of interest from unduly influencing the CoC process or its members.
6. When conflicts arise among partners or Steering Committee representatives, they should seek to resolve them in a responsible and constructive manner.
7. Steering Committee representatives have the extra responsibility of setting an example by their personal performance and attitude that convey honest, respectful, and ethical values.
8. Steering Committee representatives should consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interests of The Way Home, their respective organizations, and people experiencing homelessness whom we serve.
9. As a representative of The Way Home and/or affiliated committee, we agree to represent ourselves, our organization, our county, our region, and/or our state in a professional manner by adhering to the guidelines laid out in the Code of Conduct of The Way Home.

### STEERING COMMITTEE CONFLICT OF INTEREST/RECUSAL PROCESS

Steering Committee representatives with actual or perceived conflicts of interest must identify them as they arise. Individuals with a conflict of interest may participate in all discussions but should abstain from voting on any issue in which they may have a conflict. No representative of the Steering Committee shall vote upon any matter which shall have a direct financial bearing on the organization that the member represents. This includes all decisions with respect to funding, awarding contracts, and implementing corrective actions.

In accordance with HUD regulations, no representative 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. Therefore, any individual participating in or influencing decision making must identify actual or perceived conflicts of interest as they arise and comply with the letter and spirit of this policy.

Individuals with a conflict of interest should abstain from discussion and voting on any issue in which they may have a conflict. An individual with a conflict of interest, who is the committee chair, shall yield that position during discussion and abstain from voting on the item.

Annual written conflict of interest disclosure statements will be provided by each member at the annual meeting. This form must be updated on a yearly basis. All Members will not be permitted to participate in a discussion or if a voting member, not be able to vote until the statement is on file. All voting members shall have the right to recuse themselves from voting on a matter without providing excuse.

Steering Committee representatives are prohibited from using their position to receive actual or perceived personal benefits. This includes using one's position and influence on the Steering Committee to influence decisions or direct funds in a way that could result in a private benefit and/or using one's position as a Steering Committee representative to elicit a private benefit in relation to the work of the CoC or elsewhere. Examples of prohibited private benefits include "kickbacks", inappropriate gifts, or seeking favorable treatment when seeking contracts or receiving services. All representatives of the Steering Committee must be wary of any organizational transaction, arrangement, practice, or policy that may potentially or actually serve private rather than public interests. This does not prohibit a member of the Steering Committee from accessing genuine public benefits or services that often provide an incidental benefit to private individuals such as accessing services available through the homeless response system if eligible.

### COMPENSATION OF STEERING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Steering Committee representatives will receive no compensation for their duties. They may receive direct expense reimbursement for any expenses incurred for activities directed by the Steering Committee. At-Large Consumer Representatives may be reimbursed for travel and meeting time.

### OFFICERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

There will be three officers of the Steering Committee – Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. These positions will be recommended by the Nominations Committee and Lead Agency and approved by the Steering Committee. Each officer will have a one-year term that will roll over to an optional one-year renewal.

Renewal options will be recommended by the Nominations Committee and Lead Agency. Officers will remain in their positions until a subsequent replacement is elected.

- Chair – The Chair will preside at all meetings of the Steering Committee. Subject to the direction of the Steering Committee, the Chair shall give oversight to the development of policies and execution of the policies and programs of the Continuum of Care. The Chair will ensure meaningful participation and adequate time for representatives to process information, ask questions, and ask for clarity. The Chair will perform other duties prescribed by the Steering Committee and all duties incident to the office of Chair of the Steering Committee.
- Vice Chair – The Vice Chair will preside over meetings of the Steering Committee in the absence of the Chair and assist the Chair and Steering Committee representatives on matters as may be requested from time to time.



- Secretary – The Secretary will (or delegate to another) give all notices of meeting dates, times and locations, take minutes of the meetings and keep the minutes as part of the corporate records. The Secretary will perform duties incident to the office of the Secretary and such other duties as may be assigned by the Chair or Steering Committee.

## STEERING COMMITTEE STANDING SUBCOMMITTEES

The Chair may establish standing committees as may be necessary to conduct the business of the Steering Committee. The Chair shall appoint the members of each committee established. The Chair will set the scope and duties of every standing committee for approval by Steering Committee vote. The Lead Agency shall work with the Chair to support the work of these standing committees.

No standing committee has the authority to act on behalf of the Steering Committee beyond duties described in the following sections. The current standing committee is the Nominations Committee.

- Nominations Committee Duties:
  - With assistance of the Lead Agency, bring forth recommended candidates to fill the positionsof:
    - At-Large representatives
    - At-Large Consumer representatives
  - All recommendations, nominations, and letters of interest for At-Large and At-Large Consumer representatives will be reviewed by the Nominations Committee and Lead Agency. Strong applicants will be selected for interviews with members of the Nominating Committee and the Lead Agency, and recommendations for representatives will be made to the full Steering Committee for approval at an upcoming Steering Committee meeting or via emailvote.
  - With assistance of the Lead Agency, bring forth a recommend a slate of officers annually
  - A representative actively seeking selection to an officer position must recuse themselves from the Nominating Committee until after the position has been filled.

## STEERING COMMITTEE RESIGNATION POLICY

Unless otherwise provided by written agreement, any representative of The Way Home Steering Committee may resign at any time by giving thirty days (30 days) written notice to the officers of the Steering Committee and Lead Agency. Any such resignations shall take effect at the time specified within the written notice or if the time be not specified, therein upon its acceptance by the Steering Committee.

## CoC COMMITTEES & WORKGROUPS

Homelessness is a complex issue and effective efforts to solve it require broad community participation. Planning and implementation activities are driven by a series of leadership, planning, and process work groups that operate in tandem to achieve shared relationships, shared thinking, shared action/testing, shared evaluation, and finally shared policy proposals. Work groups are

where the work happens and only meet when there is work to be done. They also serve as Lead Agency driven, peer-supported performance management meetings for nearly every aspect of system performance.

The Lead Agency is responsible for supporting each work group, identifying a facilitative lead and project manager, managing communications, and accessibility for interested members. The implementation and performance management work groups are only accessible to the agencies delivering the services as client-level information is discussed within these meetings. Leadership and planning meetings are more accessible to a larger audience and interested parties can contact the Coalition for the Homeless for more information on how to participate. For more information about workgroups, visit [The Way Home Partner Portal](#).

Committees and Workgroups will be established to conduct the functions necessary to support the CoC mission and meet funding obligations. The Way Home Steering Committee may establish Committees, Subcommittees, or Work Groups that are made up of the CoC members to act on behalf of the CoC on an ad hoc basis as needed.

The Way Home Steering Committee gives authority to the CoC Committees for specific responsibilities. The responsibilities required by the CoC Interim Rule, and designated to each committee, are outlined below:

Responsibility Category	Responsibility	Responsible Party
Overall and Project-Level Performance	Establish performance targets in consultation with recipients/sub-recipients	Lead Agency
Overall and Project-Level Performance	Monitor recipient/sub-recipient performance	Lead Agency
Overall and Project-Level Performance	Evaluate outcomes for ESG and CoC Projects and report to HUD	Lead Agency
Overall and Project-Level Performance	Measure and communicate system performance	Lead Agency
Coordinated Access System	Ensure operation of a Coordinated Access System in consultation with ESG	Lead Agency
Coordinated Access System	Develop a policy for how Coordinated System and Housing and Service System will address needs of Domestic Violence	Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
Plan for the CoC	Plan and Conduct a Point-in-Time Study	Lead Agency
Plan for the CoC	Conduct an annual gaps analysis of homeless needs and services	Lead Agency

Additional responsibilities are listed below:

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#### POINT IN TIME COMMITTEE

- In collaboration with the CoC Lead agency, organize and implement the annual Point in TimeCount
- Must include representation from HMIS Lead Agency
- Should include a person who is homeless or formerly homeless

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#### SYSTEM PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES

- In collaboration with the HMIS lead, ensure the completion of the Annual Gaps Analysis
- In collaboration with the CoC Lead Agency, evaluate how well the homeless system is meeting HUD's system-wide performance measures
- Provide recommendations to the full CoC Governing Body membership and CoC Board on how system wide performance can be improved
- Work with CoC Lead Agency to complete project performance evaluation and monitoring
- Must include representation from the CoC Lead Agency

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#### SYSTEM FUNDING

- Research strategic funding opportunities to support the homeless system
- Outreach to non-traditional funders (business community, etc.) to procure funding for the homeless system
- Provide recommendations to CoC Steering Committee and full CoC membership on potential opportunities for increased funding
- Analyze current federal, state, and local funding dedicated to the homeless system and provide recommendations to CoC Steering Committee and full CoC membership on potential reallocation of resources based on CoC strategic priorities, gaps, and system performance

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#### COORDINATED ASSESSMENT (CENTRALIZED INTAKE)

- Provide macro-level CoC oversight of the Coordinated Assessment System
- In coordination with the Coordinated Assessment (Centralized Intake) administering agency, troubleshoot any issues
- Make recommendations to CoC Steering Committee and the full CoC membership on any macro-level changes for system improvement
- Must include representation from the CoC Lead Agency

- Should include a person who is homeless or formerly homeless

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## **COC PROJECT RATING AND RANKING**

- Score and rank projects and provide the ranking recommendation to CoC Steering Committee
- Homeless Services agencies that receive CoC funding are prohibited from participating on this committee
- Members are appointed by CoC Steering Committee

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## **NOMINATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP**

- Engage in recruitment activities to engage as many and diverse stakeholders in the CoC as possible, including recruitment for participating and membership on CoC Steering Committee and the CoC committees
- Work in collaboration with CoC Steering Committee to develop any qualifications for membership in CoC entities as deemed necessary.

## **CURRENT CoC COMMITTEES & WORKGROUPS**

The Way Home is comprised of standing committees, workgroups and task workgroups which have various roles and responsibilities. Several workgroups are designated by this charter. Ad hoc working groups and task workgroups may be formed by the Steering Committee and given specific responsibilities as needed by the Continuum of Care. The Steering Committee will have oversight of the CoC workgroup system including setting the scope and duties of workgroups. The Steering Committee will approve or retire a workgroup as needed in accordance with the strategic plan to end homelessness.

Workgroups are the action planning and implementation components of the system. Workgroup activities may be facilitated by the lead agency or other key stakeholder(s) as appointed by the Steering Committee. Workgroups may make recommendations for Resolutions to the Steering Committee regarding CoC policies and procedures, report outcomes and data analytics, and recommend performance measures and suggestions for system improvements. The lead agency shall be responsible for reporting workgroup activities to the Steering Committee. The lead agency will maintain an overview of active system workgroups on the CoC section of its website. These CoC workgroups include but are not limited to the following:

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## **THE WAY HOME PROVIDER INPUT FORUM**

The Way Home Provider Input Forum (PIF) is a quarterly meeting in which provider agencies of The Way Home come together to address and discuss what's happening in the CoC provider community.

Members of the PIF include all homeless service provider agencies (official partners), and meetings are led by the Lead Agency and Steering Committee Provider Representatives. Participation in The Way Home PIF is vital to the CoC planning process.

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### CONSUMER ADVISORY COUNCIL (CAC) – LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKGROUP

The CAC is a group of individuals who are receiving or have received services from The Way Home CoC. The group was formed to ensure an organized voice for those with lived expertise of homelessness are working in partnership with The Way Home to evaluate and make recommendations for improvement on all levels of the homeless response system.

We believe it is critical that people with lived expertise are included in all aspects of planning and activities undertaken by the CoC and that we work in partnership to improve the quality and effectiveness of our system.

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### YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD (YAB)

Through the Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP), The Way Home has partnered with youth & young adults with lived experience of homelessness to create a Youth Action Board (YAB). The YAB provides strategic direction and oversight to the activities connected to the YHDP and is the primary vehicle through which the CoC gathers input from the youth consumer population.

The YAB is an authentic and equitable partner in every step of the community's youth homeless response efforts, from planning to implementation of new projects to continuous quality improvement of the youth homeless response system. Learn more about the YHDP and YAB on YHDP webpage.

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### HMIS FORUM

The HMIS Lead Agency will conduct quarterly HMIS Forums specifically for partner HMIS participating agency users. The purpose of the forum is to inform the HMIS community about recent data trends, ongoing system-wide activities, and important developments regarding the HMIS and our software. The Forum will offer community reports on performance measures and provide user training opportunities when necessary. Notice of the Forum will be sent in advance to the HMIS e-mail distribution list and by public notice through the CoC Connection newsletter and placement on the Lead Agency's website, and the HMIS Bulletin Board.

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### PROVIDER AFFINITY GROUPS

Provider Affinity Groups include existing and to be formed work groups focused on planning around specific program types or system components such as prevention/diversion, permanent supportive housing rapid rehousing, outreach, etc. These groups include staff from provider and government organizations, consumers, funders, etc.

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### POPULATION SPECIFIC WORK GROUPS

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Population Specific Work Groups include both existing and to be formed groups focused on planning for the needs of specific sub-populations such as Veterans, Victim Services Providers and Youth/Young Adults. These groups include staff from provider and government organizations, consumers, funders, etc.

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### TASK SPECIFIC WORK GROUPS

- Task Specific Work Groups include both existing and to be formed groups focused on planning for a task specific activity or function under the guidance of the CoC strategic plan such as the Homeless Count, Coordinated Access, Income Now, Housing Navigation, Supportive Housing Development Workgroup, etc. These groups include staff from provider and government organizations, consumers, funders, etc.
- The lead agency will maintain an active list of CoC workgroups on the CoC section of its website.
- The lead agency will report progress of Task Specific Work Groups regularly to the Steering Committee through the lead agency report. The lead agency will submit referendums to the Steering Committee regarding policy and procedures that affect the operations of the CoC.

### CoC LEAD AGENCY

The Way Home Steering Committee will appoint a Lead Agency that will provide meeting support for the Steering Committee, and all other committees. The Lead Agency is responsible for scheduling meetings, developing agendas, issuing meeting materials and posting all relevant documents to The Way Home Partner Portal (CoC website). All responsibilities are documented in the *Continuum of Care Lead Agency Memorandum of Understanding*.

The designation of the Lead Agency is valid for a maximum of five (5) years before the designation must be reviewed and approved by a vote of The Way Home Steering Committee. There will be no requirement for a Request for Proposal (RFP). In response to negligence or poor performance of the CoC Lead Agency, The Way Home Steering Committee reserves the right to open an RFP process at any time and designate a new CoC Lead Agency.

At the time of creation and adoption of this charter, the designated Lead Agency is the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County.

Specific responsibilities include:

- Provide leadership to CoC stakeholders regarding best practices, system planning and direction
- Coordinate, facilitate, and inform The Way Home Steering Committee
- Facilitate workgroups
- Produce planning materials
- Coordinate Needs/Gaps Assessments

- Collect and report CoC and program performance data and use data gathered to encourage performance improvement
- Evaluate and incentivize performance with oversight from the Steering Committee
- Coordinate resources, maximize multiple existing and new funding sources both, integrate activities and facilitate collaboration
- Prepare collaborative application for CoC funds
- Act as collaborative applicant for other funds as deemed necessary and appropriate to meet CoC goals
- Provide technical assistance and training to CoC members
- Represent progress and learnings of the CoC in state and national forums
- Build awareness and build support by leading advocacy efforts
- Build strategic partnerships with key stakeholders and mainstream resources in order to increase and build system capacity
- Analyze and report on CoC expansion opportunities to the CoC Steering Committee

### CoC COLLABORATIVE APPLICANT

The Continuum of Care must designate a legal entity who is also a Continuum of Care Program eligible applicant to serve as the Collaborative Applicant. The Collaborative Applicant is responsible for collecting and combining the required application information from all Continuum of Care Program funded projects within the geographic area. The Collaborative Applicant is also responsible for submitting the annual application to HUD for Continuum of Care Program funding and to apply for Continuum of Care Planning dollars. These and any additional responsibilities are documented in the Continuum of Care *Collaborative Applicant Memorandum of Understanding*. The designation of the Collaborative Applicant is valid for a maximum of five

(5) years before the designation must be reviewed and approved by a vote of The Way Home Steering Committee. In response to negligence, poor performance, or loss of eligibility, The Way Home Steering Committee reserves the right to open an RFP process at any time and designate a new Collaborative Applicant.

Before the submission of the annual application to HUD for Continuum of Care Program funding, the Collaborative Applicant must submit a final draft of the application to The Way Home Steering Committee for approval. Depending on the timing of the submission to HUD, The Way Home Steering Committee and Collaborative Applicant will create a timeline for submission to the Continuum of Care.

At the time of creation and adoption of this charter, the designated Collaborative Applicant is the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County.



## HMIS ADMINISTRATOR

The Continuum of Care must designate a legal entity who is also a Continuum of Care Program eligible applicant to serve as the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead. The HMIS Lead will maintain the community's HMIS in compliance with HUD standards and coordinate all related activities including training, maintenance, and the provision of technical assistance to contributing organizations. Responsibilities required by the Continuum of Care Interim Rule are outlined in this Governance Charter. These and any additional responsibilities are documented in the Continuum of Care *Homeless Management Information System Lead Memorandum of Understanding*.

The designation of the HMIS Lead is valid for a maximum of five years before the designation must be reviewed and approved by a vote of The Way Home Steering Committee. There will be no requirement for a Request for Proposal (RFP). In response to negligence or poor performance of the HMIS Lead, the CoC reserves the right to open an RFP process at any time and designate a new HMIS Lead.

At the time of creation and adoption of this charter, the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County has been designated as the HMIS administrator for The Way Home Continuum of Care.

## GOVERNANCE CHARTER AMENDMENTS

The Charter shall be reviewed and updated annually by the end of the 4th quarter and may be updated throughout the year as needed. Members of The Way Home Steering Committee, Collaborative Applicant, Lead Agency, or HMIS Lead Agency may propose updates. It is the Lead Agency's responsibility to review HUD rules, regulations, and guidance and suggest updates to the Charter as required by HUD.

Proposed updates must be presented to the full CoC Steering Committee for a vote. Approval requires a simple majority of The Way Home Steering Committee present with a quorum established.

## AMENDMENT HISTORY

The TX-700 Continuum of Care (CoC), known as The Way Home, has developed this Governance Charter ("Charter") to define the CoC's composition, roles, responsibilities, policies, procedures, and committee structure. The record below documents the history of adoption, revisions, and approvals since the Charter's inception, ensuring transparency and accountability for all updates. Please note that this record does not include updates to every CoC policy, procedure, or standard, many of which are accessible via The Way Home Partner Portal.

Action	Summary of Changes	Date of Approval
Charter Adoption	Initial publication	12/12/2013
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates and the addition of new entitlement jurisdictions.	8/11/2016
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	10/12/2017
Charter Revision	Revision to Steering Committee Structure	5/9/2019
Charter Revision	Revision to Steering Committee Structure	6/13/2019
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	3/12/2020
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	4/14/2022
Charter Amendment	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	8/11/2022
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	1/12/2023
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	1/11/2024
Charter Amendment	Revision to meet compliance requirements regarding the documentation of Charter edits	11/14/2024
Charter Amendment	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	4/10/2025

*The Charter shall be reviewed and updated annually by the end of the 4th quarter and may be updated throughout the year as needed. This record shall be updated with each new revision and approval to accurately reflect the current version of The Way Home's Governance Charter.*

## DEFINITIONS

- Centralized Intake: Refers to the Continuum of Care's Coordinated Assessment system.
- The Way Home Steering Committee/Board: The primary decision-making group for the continuum of care.
- CoC Committees: Groups of volunteers or appointed members who work throughout the year to accomplish specified tasks for the Continuum of Care. The Way Home Steering Committee and Lead Agency can create ad-hoc committees as needed to support the CoC.

- **CoC Lead Agency:** The agency that is designated to carry out the activities of the CoC including fiscal and compliance activities and CoC administrative duties.
- **Collaborative Applicant:** Agency or organization designated by CoC Steering Committee to be the entity that submits the CoC funding application to HUD.
- **Continuum of Care (CoC):** A collaborative and strategic funding source from HUD that helps communities make progress towards preventing and ending homelessness in their communities. HUD also refers to the group of community stakeholders involved in homelessness as the “Continuum of Care.”
- **Continuum of Care Interim Rule:** Published by HUD in 2012, the CoC Interim Rule focuses on regulatory implementation of the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program, including the Continuum of Care planning process.
- **Coordinated Assessment:** A centralized or coordinated process designed to coordinate program participant intake, assessment, and provision of referrals. A centralized or coordinated assessment system covers the geographic area, is easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing or services, is well advertised, and includes a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool. This definition establishes basic minimum HUD requirements for the Continuum’s centralized or coordinated assessment system.
- **Governance Charter:** A document that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the CoC Steering Committee, the CoC Steering Committee, Continuum of Care Committee(s), the Lead Agency, the Collaborative Applicant and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead with the intent to creating an inclusive, transparent process by which makes strategic decisions in order to meet the goals of preventing and ending homelessness.
- **The HEARTH (Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing) Act:** The HEARTH Act of 2009 was signed into law on May 20, 2009. The HEARTH Act amends and reauthorizes the McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes, including a change in HUD’s definition of homelessness and chronic homelessness.
- **HMIS:** A computerized data collection application designed to capture client-level information over time on the characteristics of service needs of men, women, and children experiencing homelessness, while also protecting client confidentiality. It is designed to aggregate client-level data to generate an unduplicated count of clients served within a community’s system of homeless services.
- **HMIS Lead Agency:** Agency, organization or government department designated by CoC to administer and manage the HMIS.
- **HUD:** Acronym used to refer to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development that administers the Continuum of Care funding and program.
- **NOFA/NOFO: Notice of Funding Availability/Opportunity.** As it relates to The Way Home, the NOFA refers to the annual Continuum of Care collaborative application for McKinney-Vento

Homeless Assistance funds as amended by the HEARTH (Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing) Act. The competition is facilitated by the Lead Agency with direction by the CoC Steering Committee. The collaborative application is submitted by the Lead Agency on behalf of The Way Home.

- PSH: Permanent Supportive Housing is a Housing First Intervention that combines indefinite leasing or rental assistance with supportive services to help people and families experiencing chronic homelessness achieve housing stability.
- RRH: Rapid Re-housing is a housing first intervention that emphasizes housing search and location services and short to medium-term rental assistance to move individuals and families experiencing homelessness (with or without a disability) as rapidly as possible into permanent housing. Intense but short-term case management is provided to help families stabilize and prepare to live independently.
- RFP or RFQ: Request for Proposals or Request for Qualifications are used in procurement bidding for vendors and provides specific scope of work and requirements.
- Workgroups: Workgroups are the action planning components of the CoC. Workgroup activities may be facilitated by the Lead Agency or other key stakeholder(s) as appointed by the Steering Committee. Workgroups may make recommendations for Resolutions to the Steering Committee regarding CoC policies and procedures, and/or report outcomes and data analytics, performance measures, and activities to the Steering Committee. The Lead Agency shall be responsible for reporting Workgroup activities to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee may retire a task workgroup no longer required by majority vote.
- YHDP: The Youth Homeless Demonstration Program is a new initiative designed to prevent and end youth homelessness. The goal of the YHDP is to support The Way Home in the development and implementation of a Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- YAB: The Youth Action Board provides strategic direction and oversight to the activities connected to the YHDP. As a formal component of The Way Home, the YAB provides direct input on all issues related to youth homelessness with a near-term focus on the development of the Coordinated Community Plan. The YAB is an authentic and equitable partner in every step of the community's youth homeless response efforts, from planning to implementation of new projects to continuous quality improvement of the youth homeless response system.

# **The Way Home Charter – Redline Version**

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THE WAY HOME CHARTER  
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# The Way Home

## A. PURPOSE OF THE CHARTER

~~The purpose of this charter is to provide a structured framework for the governance, decision-making, and compliance of The Way Home Continuum of Care (CoC) - TX-700 - with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirements. This charter outlines the roles, responsibilities, and processes necessary to ensure the effective operation and strategic oversight of the CoC, ensuring that all activities and decisions are aligned with HUD regulations and the mission of ending homelessness in our community. This Charter sets out the composition, roles, responsibilities and committee structure for our local Continuum of Care (CoC), which we call The Way Home (also referred to as TX-700 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)). The Way Home is the organizing principle and the collaborative effort underway to prevent and end homelessness in Houston, and throughout Harris County, Fort Bend County, and Montgomery County, Texas.~~

## B. CONTINUUM OF CARE GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW

The purpose of The Way Home is 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. This work is specified in the HUD, 24 CFR Part 578, Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act: Continuum of Care Program.

The [HEARTH Act](#), enacted into law on May 20, 2009, consolidated the homeless assistance programs administered by HUD under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act into a single grant program and revises the Emergency Shelter Grants program and renames it the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program. The [HEARTH Act](#) also codifies into law the development of the CoC and the CoC planning process, a longstanding part of HUD's application process to assist homeless persons by providing greater community-wide coordination, decision-making, and leadership.

For more information about the ESG and CoC Program, visit HUD's [ESG Program Page](#) and/or the [CoC Program Page](#).

The CoC Steering Committee is the group organized to carry out the responsibilities prescribed in the [CoC Program Interim Rule](#). CoC governance responsibilities include:

- Planning for and operating the CoC; and
- Ensuring compliance with HUD requirements and regulations; and
- Coordinating the implementation of a housing and service system that meets the needs of the individuals and families who experience homelessness, including:
  - prevention and diversion strategies,
  - outreach and engagement,
  - coordinated assessment, entry, and exit,
  - crisis and emergency shelter and temporary housing, and
  - permanent housing and supportive services; and



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- Designing and implementing the process associated with applying for HUD CoC Program funds.

This Governance Charter outlines the roles and responsibilities of The Way Home CoC Steering Committee, the Lead Agency, the Collaborative Applicant, and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead.



## A. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE 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.

The Way Home Steering Committee has specific responsibilities as outlined by HUD in the [CoC Interim Rule](#). The responsibilities required by the CoC by HUD in the Interim Rule and assigned to The CoC Steering Committee are outlined below:

Responsibility Category	Responsibility	Responsible Party
<b>Establishing CoC</b>	Define membership of Continuum of Care	CoC Steering Committee
<b>Establishing CoC</b>	Invite new members annually	Continuum of Care/Lead Agency
<b>Operating CoC</b>	Hold meetings of full membership, with published agenda, at least quarterly	CoC Steering Committee/Lead Agency
<b>CoC Governance and Management</b>	Establish a CoC Steering Committee and designate its responsibilities	CoC Steering Committee
<b>CoC Governance and Management</b>	Reviewing the Written Selection Process for the Board	CoC Steering Committee
<b>CoC Governance and Management</b>	Develop the CoC Governance Charter	CoC Steering Committee
<b>CoC Governance and Management</b>	Review Governance Charter Annually	CoC Steering Committee
<b>CoC Governance and Management</b>	Review lead agency MOU and select lead agency	CoC Steering Committee
<b>Coordinated Assessment System</b>	Develop a policy for how Coordinated System and Housing and Service System will address needs of Domestic Violence	CoC Steering Committee/ Coordinated Assessment (Centralized Intake) Committee
<b>Designate an HMIS</b>	Ensure consistent participation of recipients and sub-recipients in HMIS	CoC Steering Committee/HMIS Lead Agency
<b>Plan for the CoC</b>	Participate in the Consolidated Plan	CoC Steering Committee
<b>Plan for the CoC</b>	Consult with ESG Recipients	Lead Agency/CoC Steering Committee

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<b>Plan for the CoC</b>	Monitor data quality and system performance through the creation and evaluation of standardized dashboards	Lead Agency/CoC Steering Committee
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Additional responsibilities of CoC Steering Committee include:

- Receiving and responding to community and public policy updates relevant to homelessness issues;
- Receiving updates on and responding to the Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness; and
- Providing input on strategic priorities for the Continuum of Care; and
- Reviewing and acting on the annual funding allocations; and
- Reviewing and acting on additional HUD required activities; and
- Reviewing and acting on any proposed funding reallocations, as required; and
- Creating an appeal process for providers; and
- Reviewing and making final determinations on provider appeals as recommended by CoC Steering Committee; and
- Designating HMIS Lead, CoC Lead, and Collaborative Applicant for CoC through a MOU, with roles to be reviewed annually; and
- Holding CoC committees accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities, and review the work of the committees; and
- Providing overall direction and leadership of the process; and
- Making all formal decisions of the CoC; and
- Leading strategic planning and goal setting; and
- Aligning and coordinating CoC and other homeless assistance and mainstream resources; and
- Ensuring the availability of data for planning; and
- Establishing priorities for and making recommendations to HUD about the allocation of CoC resources;
- Establishing system and program outcomes for evaluation purposes; and
- Monitoring and evaluating both system wide and individual program performance on established goals;
- Receiving reports and recommendations from sub-committees, workgroups and task groups; and

# The Way Home

- Establishing sub-committees and task groups as needed to perform CoC functions; and
- Selecting the lead support agency and HMIS administrator; and
- Entering into contracts and MOUs on behalf of the CoC; and
- Monitoring performance under these contracts; and
- Distributing official communications from the CoC

## B. MEMBERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Membership in the CoC ensures community wide commitment to preventing and ending homelessness and must represent a diverse body of stakeholders throughout the entire geographic area of the CoC. The intent is that the CoC be as inclusive as possible, to include the opinions and insights of various parties.

The membership of the Steering Committee consists of up to 22 designated seats as outlined below. Each Steering Committee member must have the fiscal and program authority of the organization they represent.

- ~~Eight~~ Nine (89) Fixed Representative Seats – Fixed Position Representatives are members who represent a government department or organization:
  - City of Houston Housing and Community Development
  - Fort Bend Community Development Department
  - Harris County Community Services Department
  - Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
  - Harris County Public Housing Authority
  - Houston Housing Authority
  - Montgomery County Community Development Department
  - Pasadena Community Development Department
  - Veteran Affairs/Administration (VA)
- Two (2) Provider Representative Seats – Provider representatives are people who work for organizations that provide services for people experiencing homelessness; they represent two types of direct services, and either representative can represent either type (i.e., we do not necessarily need one of each):
  - Crisis Response System (includes emergency and transitional shelter, homelessness prevention, outreach, navigation, coordinated access, day services and crisis response services).

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- Permanent Housing (includes permanent housing provision (PSH/RRH) and/or services for people in permanent housing).
- ~~Nine-Seven (97)~~ At-large Representative Seats – At-Large representatives are professionals who work in systems that interact with the homeless response system (e.g., health, mental health, ~~Veterans Administration~~, school districts, child welfare, workforce development, university, criminal justice, business, faith community, victims service providers, local non-governmental funders, etc.). The role of At-Large Representatives is to assist the Continuum of Care in leveraging mainstream funding from — and making positive changes within — those systems for the benefit of people experiencing homelessness in our region.
- ~~Three (3)~~~~Four (4)~~ At-Large Consumer Representative Seats – At-Large Consumer representatives are people with lived experience with homelessness, and the role of the At-Large Consumer representative is to help ensure that Steering Committee decisions include the perspective of people that have experienced homelessness firsthand.

At-Large Consumer representatives provide The Way Home CoC the opportunity to work towards solutions collaboratively and collectively to end homelessness by operationalizing equity through the unique strategy of involving experts with lived expertise of homelessness. [To align with HUD, federal administration goals, and the composition of our community, the four \(4\) Consumer Representative should include:](#)

- o [One \(1\) member who has experienced homelessness within the last seven \(7\) years or who is currently a CoC program participant.](#)
- o [One \(1\) member who has experienced unsheltered homelessness.](#)
- o [One \(1\) member of the Youth Homeless Demonstration Program \(YHDP\) Youth Action Board \(YAB\).](#)
- o ~~One (1) of the At-Large Consumer Representative seats should be filled by a representative with lived experience with DV.~~[One \(1\) member of the CoC's Consumer Advisory Council \(CAC\).](#)

~~One (1) of the At-Large Consumer representative seats will be dedicated to a Chair from the Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP) Youth Action Board (YAB). The YHDP is an exciting new initiative designed to prevent and end youth homelessness, and the YAB is a committee of youth and young adults (YYA) who provide strategic direction and oversight to the activities connected to the YHDP.~~

~~This YYA At-Large Consumer Representative must have an Alternate Representative ('Alternate') on file with the Lead Agency. This Alternate member must be kept up to date on CoC business and be able to represent and speak on behalf of the primary YYA At-Large Consumer Representative, the entity they represent (i.e., the YHDP YAB), and its constituents. It is expected that the primary YYA At-Large Consumer Representative attends all required meetings, but the Alternate shall fulfill the expectations and requirements of the elected member in their absence. This Alternate must also be a Core Member of the YHDP YAB. Read more about the YHDP Governance Structure here.~~

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- Advisory Seats – During the NOFO, some members are not able to participate in the decision-making process due a conflict of interest, however, this then can lead to a decision made without suitable representation from a key system (e.g., providers). In the event that a provider representative is unable to participate in relevant processes and/or discussions for the annual NOFO, another provider without a COI may participate via an Advisory seat to ensure proper CoC representation.

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## C. SELECTION OF STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Each Steering Committee member that is a Fixed representative (named organization or jurisdiction) is selected or appointed to the committee.

- Steering Committee members are selected based on criteria that include relevant experience, community involvement, and expertise in areas pertinent to the CoC's mission. Members are invited to join based on system needs, through an open call process, or selected based on their role within their organization. Additional information on eligibility and the application process for the Steering Committee will be provided during the open call process.

- At-large, Local Non-governmental Funder, and At-Large Consumer representatives are recommended by the Lead Agency and Nominating Committee and then selected by a vote of the members of the entire Steering Committee.

All recommendations, nominations, and letters of interest for At-Large, Local Non-governmental Funder, and At-Large Consumer representatives will be reviewed by the Nominations Committee and Lead Agency during an open call period.

An open call announcement is provided by the Chair of the Steering Committee and serves to inform the community of an upcoming vacancy on the committee. The open call provides members of The Way Home CoC, community stakeholders, and cross-system partners, the opportunity to submit a letter of interest & resume and/or nomination to join The Way Home Steering Committee. Current members who are holding a seat that is up for term will be encouraged to participate in the Open Call procedure to be considered for their next term.

Strong applicants will be selected for interviews with members of the Nominating Committee and the Lead Agency, and recommendations for representatives will be made to the full Steering Committee for approval at an upcoming Steering Committee meeting or via email vote.

- To ensure compliance with the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for FY 2022 Continuum of Care Competition, At-Large Consumer Representatives will be persons who have experienced homelessness within the last 7 years or who are currently CoC program participants, and at least one person with lived experience should have experience from an unsheltered situation.
- The YYA At-Large Consumer Representative is appointed by their peers of the YHDP YAB. The Alternate YYA At-Large Consumer Representative must be a Core Member of the YHDP YAB and is also appointed by their peers. Members of the YHDP YAB are YYAs with lived expertise. Read the YHDP YAB Governance Structure to learn more about the composition, roles & responsibilities, and

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committee structure of the YHDP YAB.

~~Provider Representatives are elected via popular vote by the CoC partner agencies. Candidates and their agencies must be in good standing with the CoC, as determined at the discretion of the Lead Agency, and meet all CoC partnership requirements.~~

- ~~Provider Representatives are elected through a popular vote by CoC partner agencies. To be eligible, candidates and their agencies must be in good standing with the CoC, as determined by the Lead Agency, and must meet all CoC partnership requirements.~~

~~A packet of all the candidates' submitted material(s) will be made available for agencies to determine their top five (5) choices. Those top five (5) candidates need to be ranked starting with the most desired candidate. Only one (1) vote will be counted per agency.~~

~~Agencies MUST be official (updated) partners of The Way Home and in good standing for their vote to be counted.~~

- The Steering Committee can add new members by a majority vote of the existing members.

## D. TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP

- ~~Fixed Representatives: who hold a Fixed representative seat m~~ May serve as long as they continue to hold that job/position.
- ~~At-Large and Provider Representatives: At-Large and Provider Representatives serve a term of two years, with the possibility of reappointment. These members may serve no more than three consecutive terms (i.e., six consecutive years). The term for an At-Large, At-Large Consumer, and Provider representative is two years. These representatives may serve up to three consecutive terms if re-elected by the Nominating Committee and Lead Agency and approved by vote of the Steering Committee.~~
- ~~The YYA At-Large Consumer Representative must be Chair of the YHDP YAB and is appointed by their peers. The Alternate YYA At-Large Consumer Representative must be a Core Member of the YHDP YAB and is also appointed by their peers. Members of the YHDP YAB are YYAs with lived expertise. Read the YHDP YAB Governance Structure to learn more about the composition, roles & responsibilities, and committee structure of the YHDP YAB.~~

The YYA At-Large Consumer Representative term is two years. This representative may serve up to three consecutive terms if re-elected by the YHDP YAB and meets all other requirements listed in this document

- A year is considered 12 months from the month the member becomes active (voted or elected in March, they begin April and will end in March two years later).
- A representative may be re-elected to the Steering Committee after a period of twelve (12) months of non-service on the committee.

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- If a YYA At-Large Consumer Representative is no longer eligible to participate in the YHDP YAB due to age requirements (making them ineligible to participate as the YYA At-Large Consumer representative following the completion of their current term), they may submit a letter of interest and their application to become an At-Large (Consumer) Representative during an open call period, and if they did not serve three consecutive terms as the YYA At-Large Consumer Representative.

If they completed three consecutive terms as the YYA At-Large Consumer Representative, they first must wait a twelve (12) month period of non-service on the committee, prior to participating in an open call and possibly being re-elected to the Steering Committee.

- Representatives that fail to attend less than 75% of regularly scheduled meetings may be subject to removal from the Steering Committee by vote of the Committee. The Steering Committee will require the organizations/jurisdictions that hold a Fixed representative seat to appoint a substitute in the event of the removal of a representative of the Steering Committee.
- Representatives agree to adhere to the guidelines set forth in the code of conduct, values and principles and the conflict-of-interest section.
- Representatives agree to act in a professional manner at all times and act as good stewards of The Way Home.
- Former lead agency employees are not eligible to serve as an At-Large, Provider, or At-Large Consumer Steering Committee representative until at least one year (12 months) after separation from the lead agency and upon meeting all other eligibility requirements.

## E. STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS, QUORUM AND VOTING

### Quorum and Voting:

A quorum is defined as a majority of Steering Committee members. Decisions are made by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair casts the deciding vote. All decisions and votes are documented in the meeting minutes, which are made available to the public to ensure transparency. For purposes of time-sensitive and/or critical votes, an email vote may be used. On the direction of The Way Home Steering Committee, e-votes may be initiated by the Lead Agency. More than 51% of the voting membership must respond to the e-vote for the vote to be accepted. The Lead Agency is permitted to draft the meeting agenda and add New Business items.

### Frequency of Meetings:

•Occurrence: Meetings generally occur monthly (unless noted otherwise on The Way Home Partner Portal)

•Materials: Meeting packets will be posted one week in advance. However, during high-work volume periods (e.g., PIT Count, NOFO, disaster response, etc.), the materials may be shared late/amended.

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Meeting-Minutes: Proceedings of all Steering Committee meetings are documented in minutes. Minutes of all meetings are circulated and approved at the subsequent meeting. Once approved, minutes are made available electronically to the public.

## Who Should Attend?

- Open to all partner agency staff and members of the public
- Required for CoC-funded agencies (including YHDP-funded agencies) & those wishing to compete for CoC/YHDP funding
- CoC/YHDP-funded agencies must have one staff member attend 75% of meetings held in a year

The Way Home Steering Committee will hold no less frequently than quarterly meetings of the full CoC Governing Body membership. The agendas must be published in advance of the meeting date. The meetings are open to the public, and non-members can attend. The CoC may open a time for public comment during each meeting.

- ~~The Steering Committee shall meet no less frequently than quarterly.~~
- ~~Steering Committee members agree to meaningful participation. The Chair shall ensure members have time to process information, ask questions, and ask for clarity.~~
- ~~Steering Committee Agendas and supporting materials shall be distributed to members of the Steering Committee at least seven days before a scheduled meeting unless special circumstances dictate otherwise. If new items are made known that require Steering Committee attention inside the seven-day period, they may be presented for consideration if necessary.~~
- ~~Attendance may be via virtual meeting technology or in person. In-person meetings are highly encouraged when available.~~
- ~~A simple majority of the members present is necessary for any resolution or vote to pass.~~
- ~~For purposes of time sensitive and/or critical votes, an email vote may be used. On the direction of The Way Home Steering Committee, e-votes may be initiated by the Lead Agency. More than 51% of the voting membership must respond to the e-vote for the vote to be accepted.~~
- ~~Steering Committee meetings shall be open to the public unless sensitive information requires closed session. A sign-in sheet or virtual registration will be made available for time limited public comment.~~
- ~~Steering Committee meetings date, place and time will be published and distributed by the Lead Agency in e-newsletters and on the website in advance of each meeting.~~

## ~~F. — DECISION MAKING~~

~~Robert's Rules of Order will be followed, with the exception of the Lead Agency being permitted to draft the meeting agenda and add New Business items. The Steering Committee values diversity, equity, and inclusion and thus encourages participation from all committee members. A simple majority of the~~

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# The Way Home

members present is necessary for any resolution or vote to pass. For purposes of time sensitive and/or critical votes an email vote may be used. On the direction of CoC Steering Committee, e-votes may be initiated by the Lead Agency. More than 51% of the voting membership must respond to the e-vote for the vote to be accepted.

## G. CODE OF CONDUCT

In addition to required attendance, Steering committee members are expected to engage in conversation, provide meaningful insights/input, and provide meaningful participation in various working groups.

Commitment and professionalism are vital to creating and maintaining an effective and efficient CoC process that will benefit each member of The Way Home and the people experiencing homelessness they serve. Both are integral to creating and sustaining a strong continuum in which collaboration and services can grow.

All CoC members are required to adhere to a code of conduct that promotes ethical behavior, transparency, and respect. The code of conduct includes guidelines for professional behavior, confidentiality, and the prohibition of discriminatory practices. Violations of the code of conduct are subject to review and may result in disciplinary action, including removal from the CoC.

### Obligations:

- ~~1. Steering Committee representatives should strive to represent in a fair, honest and respectful manner their individual organization and the people and families experiencing homelessness that they serve or represent.~~
1. Steering Committee representatives should strive to represent their individual organization and the people and families experiencing homelessness they serve in a fair, honest, and respectful manner.
2. Steering Committee representatives should be informed about the purpose of The Way Home CoC and its role in the CoC process.
3. Steering Committee representatives should strive to stay up to date on CoC strategies and planning by participating in CoC meetings, forums, and workgroups.
4. Steering Committee representatives are expected to uphold professional standards of conduct, exhibiting respectfulness, fairness, and honesty.
- ~~5. Steering Committee representatives should clarify their professional roles and obligations, exercise reasonable judgment, and take precautions to ensure that any potential biases or conflicts of interest do not unjustly affect the CoC process or other members of the CoC.~~
5. Steering Committee representatives should clearly define their professional roles and obligations, exercise reasonable judgment, and take precautions to prevent potential biases or conflicts of interest from unduly influencing the CoC process or its members.

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# The Way Home

~~6. When conflicts occur among partners or Steering Committee representatives, they should attempt to resolve these conflicts in a responsible fashion.~~

~~6. When conflicts arise among partners or Steering Committee representatives, they should seek to resolve them in a responsible and constructive manner.~~

7. Steering Committee representatives have the extra responsibility of setting an example by their personal performance and attitude that convey honest, respectful, and ethical values.
8. Steering Committee representatives should consult with, refer to, or cooperate with other professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interests of The Way Home, their respective organizations, and people experiencing homelessness whom we serve.

As a representative of The Way Home and/or affiliated committee, we agree to represent ourselves, our organization, our county, our region, and/or our state in a professional manner by adhering to the guidelines laid out in the Code of Conduct of The Way Home.

## H. THE WAY HOME SHARED VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Way Home is committed to the following values and principles, as laid out in the [2021-2026 Community Plan](#):

### Ending Homelessness

- The Way Home CoC is committed to ending homelessness in Houston and throughout Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties, Texas.
- “Ending homelessness” means preventing it when possible and ensuring homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time when not preventable.
- Ending homelessness requires coordination across public and private sectors and for systems, organizations, and programs to align their goals and strategic actions.
- Ending homelessness must include the following:
  - preventing entries into homelessness; and
  - providing adequate outreach and crisis services; and
  - ensuring that low-barrier emergency shelter or bridge housing options are accessible by all people; and
  - connecting people to permanent housing with appropriate financial supports and services to ensure their success.

### A Person-Centered Approach

- We must rebuild the homeless response system to be anti-racist. Racist policies impact those who experience homelessness, and these policies must be dismantled as we work to address

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homelessness.

- Ending homelessness must include active engagement of people with lived experience.
- Crisis services and housing supports must be delivered in a human-centered, trauma-informed manner that respects the inherent value and honors the dignity of every individual regardless of race, ethnicity, age, disability status, gender identity, familial status, or citizenship status, or if they are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, sexual assault, or human trafficking.

#### Accountability

- The voices of people with lived experience of homelessness are critical and included in every aspect of planning, decision-making, and activities undertaken by the Continuum of Care. We as a system must be accountable for this input because it is a key to our success.
- The Way Home CoC's Action Plan will align with existing plans created by other regional partners.
- The Way Home CoC's Action Plan will be adjusted as necessary to reflect changing needs and resources.

#### **I. CONFLICT OF INTEREST / RECUSAL PROCESS**

Steering Committee representatives with actual or perceived conflicts of interest must identify them as they arise. Individuals with a conflict of interest may participate in all discussions but should abstain from voting on any issue in which they may have a conflict. No representative of the Steering Committee shall vote upon any matter which shall have a direct financial bearing on the organization that the member represents. This includes all decisions with respect to funding, awarding contracts, and implementing corrective actions.

In accordance with HUD regulations, no representative 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. Therefore, any individual participating in or influencing decision making must identify actual or perceived conflicts of interest as they arise and comply with the letter and spirit of this policy. Individuals with a conflict of interest should abstain from discussion and voting on any issue in which they may have a conflict. An individual with a conflict of interest, who is the committee chair, shall yield that position during discussion and abstain from voting on the item.

Annual written conflict of interest disclosure statements will be provided by each member at the annual meeting. This form must be updated on a yearly basis. All Members will not be permitted to participate in a discussion or if a voting member, not be able to vote until the statement is on file. All voting members shall have the right to recuse themselves from voting on a matter without providing excuse.

Steering Committee representatives are prohibited from using their position to receive actual or perceived personal benefits. This includes using one's position and influence on the Steering Committee to influence decisions or direct funds in a way that could result in a private benefit and/or using one's position as a Steering Committee representative to elicit a private benefit in relation to the work of the CoC or elsewhere. Examples of prohibited private benefits include "kickbacks", inappropriate gifts, or seeking favorable treatment when seeking contracts or receiving services. All representatives of the

# The Way Home

Steering Committee must be wary of any organizational transaction, arrangement, practice, or policy that may potentially or actually serve private rather than public interests. This does not prohibit a member of the Steering Committee from accessing genuine public benefits or services that often provide an incidental benefit to private individuals such as accessing services available through the homeless response system if eligible.

## J. COMPENSATION OF REPRESENTATIVES

Steering Committee representatives will receive no compensation for their duties. They may receive direct expense reimbursement for any expenses incurred for activities directed by the Steering Committee. At-Large Consumer Representatives may be reimbursed for travel and meeting time.

## K. OFFICERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

There will be three officers of the Steering Committee – Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. These positions will be recommended by the Nominations Committee and Lead Agency and approved by the Steering Committee. Each officer will have a one-year term that will roll over to an optional one-year renewal. Renewal options will be recommended by the Nominations Committee and Lead Agency. Officers will remain in their positions until a subsequent replacement is elected.

- **Chair** – The Chair will preside at all meetings of the Steering Committee. Subject to the direction of the Steering Committee, the Chair shall give oversight to the development of policies and execution of the policies and programs of the Continuum of Care. The Chair will ensure meaningful participation and adequate time for representatives to process information, ask questions, and ask for clarity. The Chair will perform other duties prescribed by the Steering Committee and all duties incident to the office of Chair of the Steering Committee.
- **Vice Chair** – The Vice Chair will preside over meetings of the Steering Committee in the absence of the Chair and assist the Chair and Steering Committee representatives on matters as may be requested from time to time.
- **Secretary** – The Secretary will (or delegate to another) give all notices of meeting dates, times and locations, take minutes of the meetings and keep the minutes as part of the corporate records. The Secretary will perform duties incident to the office of the Secretary and such other duties as may be assigned by the Chair or Steering Committee.

## L. STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE WAY HOME STEERING COMMITTEE

The Chair may establish standing committees as may be necessary to conduct the business of the Steering Committee. The Chair shall appoint the members of each committee established. The Chair will set the scope and duties of every standing committee for approval by Steering Committee vote. The Lead Agency shall work with the Chair to support the work of these standing committees.

No standing committee has the authority to act on behalf of the Steering Committee beyond duties described in the following sections. The current standing committee is the Nominations Committee.

- **Nominations Committee Duties:**

# The Way Home

- With assistance of the Lead Agency, bring forth recommended candidates to fill the position of:
  - At-Large representatives
  - At-Large Consumer representatives
- All recommendations, nominations, and letters of interest for At-Large and At-Large Consumer representatives will be reviewed by the Nominations Committee and Lead Agency. Strong applicants will be selected for interviews with members of the Nominating Committee and the Lead Agency, and recommendations for representatives will be made to the full Steering Committee for approval at an upcoming Steering Committee meeting or via email vote.
- With assistance of the Lead Agency, bring forth a recommended slate of officers annually
- A representative actively seeking selection to an officer position must recuse themselves from the Nominating Committee until after the position has been filled.

## M. RESIGNATION:

Unless otherwise provided by written agreement, any representative of The Way Home Steering Committee may resign at any time by giving thirty days (30 days) written notice to the officers of the Steering Committee and Lead Agency. Any such resignations shall take effect at the time specified within the written notice or if the time be not specified, therein upon its acceptance by the Steering Committee.

## N. ADVISORY SEATS:

~~In addition to the above roles, committee representatives may designate nonvoting representatives to attend and participate in meetings to provide advice and expertise on particular issues.~~

## C. COMMITTEES AND WORKGROUPS

Homelessness is a complex issue and effective efforts to solve it require broad community participation. Planning and implementation activities are driven by a series of leadership, planning, and process work groups that operate in tandem to achieve shared relationships, shared thinking, shared action/testing, shared evaluation, and finally shared policy proposals. Work groups are where the work happens and only meet when there is work to be done. They also serve as Lead Agency driven, peer-supported performance management meetings for nearly every aspect of system performance.

The Lead Agency is responsible for supporting each work group, identifying a facilitative lead and project manager, managing communications, and accessibility for interested members. The implementation and performance management work groups are only accessible to the agencies delivering the services as client-level information is discussed within these meetings. Leadership and planning meetings are more accessible to a larger audience and interested parties can contact the Coalition for the Homeless for more information on how to participate. For more information about workgroups, visit [The Way Home Partner Portal](#).

Committees and Workgroups will be established to conduct the functions necessary to support the CoC mission and meet funding obligations. The Way Home Steering Committee may establish Committees,





Subcommittees, or Work Groups that are made up of the CoC members to act on behalf of the CoC on an ad hoc basis as needed.

The Way Home Steering Committee gives authority to the CoC Committees for specific responsibilities. The responsibilities required by the CoC Interim Rule, and designated to each committee, are outlined below:

Responsibility Category	Responsibility	Responsible Party
Overall and Project-Level Performance	Establish performance targets in consultation with recipients/sub-recipients	Lead Agency
Overall and Project-Level Performance	Monitor recipient/sub-recipient performance	Lead Agency
Overall and Project-Level Performance	Evaluate outcomes for ESG and CoC Projects and report to HUD	Lead Agency
Overall and Project-Level Performance	Measure and communicate system performance	Lead Agency
Coordinated Access System	Ensure operation of a Coordinated Access System in consultation with ESG	Lead Agency
Coordinated Access System	Develop a policy for how Coordinated System and Housing and Service System will address needs of Domestic Violence	Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
Plan for the CoC	Plan and Conduct a Point-in-Time Study	Lead Agency
Plan for the CoC	Conduct an annual gaps analysis of homeless needs and services	Lead Agency



#### ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES ARE ALSO LISTED BELOW :

##### **Point in Time Committee**

- In collaboration with the CoC Lead agency, organize and implement the annual Point in Time Count
- Must include representation from HMIS Lead Agency
- Should include a person who is homeless or formerly homeless

##### **System Performance and Outcomes**

- In collaboration with the HMIS lead, ensure the completion of the Annual Gaps Analysis
- In collaboration with the CoC Lead Agency, evaluate how well the homeless system is meeting HUD's system-wide performance measures
- Provide recommendations to the full CoC Governing Body membership and CoC Board on how system wide performance can be improved
- Work with CoC Lead Agency to complete project performance evaluation and monitoring
- Must include representation from the CoC Lead Agency

##### **System Funding**

- Research strategic funding opportunities to support the homeless system
- Outreach to non-traditional funders (business community, etc.) to procure funding for the homeless system
- Provide recommendations to CoC Steering Committee and full CoC membership on potential opportunities for increased funding
- Analyze current federal, state, and local funding dedicated to the homeless system and provide recommendations to CoC Steering Committee and full CoC membership on potential reallocation of resources based on CoC strategic priorities, gaps, and system performance

##### **Coordinated Assessment (Centralized Intake)**

- Provide macro-level CoC oversight of the Coordinated Assessment System
- In coordination with the Coordinated Assessment (Centralized Intake) administering agency, troubleshoot any issues
- Make recommendations to CoC Steering Committee and the full CoC membership on any macro-level changes for system improvement
- Must include representation from the CoC Lead Agency
- Should include a person who is homeless or formerly homeless



### CoC Project Rating and Ranking

- Score and rank projects and provide the ranking recommendation to CoC Steering Committee
- Homeless Services agencies that receive CoC funding are prohibited from participating on this committee
- Members are appointed by CoC Steering Committee

### Nominations and Membership

- Engage in recruitment activities to engage as many and diverse stakeholders in the CoC as possible, including recruitment for participating and membership on CoC Steering Committee and the CoC committees
- Work in collaboration with CoC Steering Committee to develop any qualifications for membership in CoC entities as deemed necessary.

### A. CURRENT COMMITTEES AND WORKGROUPS

The Way Home is comprised of standing committees, workgroups and task workgroups which have various roles and responsibilities. Several workgroups are designated by this charter. Ad hoc working groups and task workgroups may be formed by the Steering Committee and given specific responsibilities as needed by the Continuum of Care. The Steering Committee will have oversight of the CoC workgroup system including setting the scope and duties of workgroups. The Steering Committee will approve or retire a workgroup as needed in accordance with the strategic plan to end homelessness.

Workgroups are the action planning and implementation components of the system. Workgroup activities may be facilitated by the lead agency or other key stakeholder(s) as appointed by the Steering Committee. Workgroups may make recommendations for Resolutions to the Steering Committee regarding CoC policies and procedures, report outcomes and data analytics, and recommend performance measures and suggestions for system improvements. The lead agency shall be responsible for reporting workgroup activities to the Steering Committee. The lead agency will maintain an overview of active system workgroups on the CoC section of its website. These CoC workgroups include but are not limited to the following:

- The Way Home Provider Input Forum
    - The Way Home Provider Input Forum (PIF) is a quarterly meeting in which provider agencies of The Way Home come together to address and discuss what's happening in the CoC provider community.
    - Members of the PIF include all homeless service provider agencies (official partners), and meetings are led by the Lead Agency and Steering Committee Provider Representatives. Participation in The Way Home PIF is vital to the CoC planning process.
- ~~• The Way Home PIF will convene no less than quarterly and may convene for special meetings when needed.~~



~~The Way Home PIF will review the membership process and code of conduct annually.~~

- Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) – Lived Experience Workgroup
  - The CAC is a group of individuals who are receiving or have received services from The Way Home CoC. The group was formed to ensure an organized voice for those with lived expertise of homelessness are working in partnership with The Way Home to evaluate and make recommendations for improvement on all levels of the homeless response system.

We believe it is critical that people with lived expertise are included in all aspects of planning and activities undertaken by the CoC and that we work in partnership to improve the quality and effectiveness of our system.

- Youth Advisory Board (YAB)
  - Through the Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP), The Way Home has partnered with youth & young adults with lived experience of homelessness to create a Youth Action Board (YAB). The YAB provides strategic direction and oversight to the activities connected to the YHDP and is the primary vehicle through which the CoC gathers input from the youth consumer population.

The YAB is an authentic and equitable partner in every step of the community's youth homeless response efforts, from planning to implementation of new projects to continuous quality improvement of the youth homeless response system. Learn more about the YHDP and YAB on YHDP webpage.

- HMIS Forum
  - The HMIS Lead Agency will conduct quarterly HMIS Forums specifically for partner HMIS participating agency users ~~and managers~~. The purpose of the forum is to inform the HMIS community about recent data trends, ongoing system-wide activities, and important developments regarding the HMIS and our software. The Forum will offer community reports on performance measures and provide user training opportunities when necessary. Notice of the Forum will be sent in advance to the HMIS e-mail distribution list and by public notice through the CoC Connection newsletter and placement on the Lead Agency's website, and the HMIS Bulletin Board.

- Provider Affinity Groups
  - Provider Affinity Groups include existing and to be formed work groups focused on planning around specific program types or system components such as prevention/diversion, permanent supportive housing rapid rehousing, outreach, etc. These groups include staff from provider and government organizations, consumers, funders, etc.
- Population Specific Work Groups
  - Population Specific Work Groups include both existing and to be formed groups focused on planning for the needs of specific sub-populations such as Veterans, Victim Services Providers and Youth/Young Adults. These groups include staff from provider and government organizations, consumers, funders, etc.
- Task Specific Work Groups

## The Way Home

- Task Specific Work Groups include both existing and to be formed groups focused on planning for a task specific activity or function under the guidance of the CoC strategic plan such as the Homeless Count, Coordinated Access, Income Now, Housing Navigation, Supportive Housing Development Workgroup, etc. These groups include staff from provider and government organizations, consumers, funders, etc.
- The lead agency will maintain an active list of CoC workgroups on the CoC section of its website.
- The lead agency will report progress of Task Specific Work Groups regularly to the Steering Committee through the lead agency report. The lead agency will submit referendums to the Steering Committee regarding policy and procedures that affect the operations of the CoC.

### LEAD AGENCY

The Way Home Steering Committee will appoint a Lead Agency that will provide meeting support for the Steering Committee, and all other committees. The Lead Agency is responsible for scheduling meetings, developing agendas, issuing meeting materials and posting all relevant documents to The Way Home Partner Portal (CoC website). All responsibilities are documented in the *Continuum of Care Lead Agency Memorandum of Understanding*.

The designation of the Lead Agency is valid for a maximum of five (5) years before the designation must be reviewed and approved by a vote of The Way Home Steering Committee. There will be no requirement for a Request for Proposal (RFP). In response to negligence or poor performance of the CoC Lead Agency, The Way Home Steering Committee reserves the right to open an RFP process at any time and designate a new CoC Lead Agency.

At the time of creation and adoption of this charter, the designated Lead Agency is the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County.

Specific responsibilities include:

- Provide leadership to CoC stakeholders regarding best practices, system planning and direction
- Coordinate, facilitate, and inform The Way Home Steering Committee
- Facilitate workgroups
- Produce planning materials
- Coordinate Needs/Gaps Assessments
- Collect and report CoC and program performance data and use data gathered to encourage performance improvement
- Evaluate and incentivize performance with oversight from the Steering Committee
- Coordinate resources, maximize multiple existing and new funding sources both, integrate activities and facilitate collaboration



- Prepare collaborative application for CoC funds
- Act as collaborative applicant for other funds as deemed necessary and appropriate to meet CoC goals
- Provide technical assistance and training to CoC members
- Represent progress and learnings of the CoC in state and national forums
- Build awareness and build support by leading advocacy efforts
- Build strategic partnerships with key stakeholders and mainstream resources in order to increase and build system capacity
- Analyze and report on CoC expansion opportunities to the CoC Steering Committee

#### COLLABORATIVE APPLICANT

The Continuum of Care must designate a legal entity who is also a Continuum of Care Program eligible applicant to serve as the Collaborative Applicant. The Collaborative Applicant is responsible for collecting and combining the required application information from all Continuum of Care Program funded projects within the geographic area. The Collaborative Applicant is also responsible for submitting the annual application to HUD for Continuum of Care Program funding and to apply for Continuum of Care Planning dollars. These and any additional responsibilities are documented in the Continuum of Care *Collaborative Applicant Memorandum of Understanding*. The designation of the Collaborative Applicant is valid for a maximum of five (5) years before the designation must be reviewed and approved by a vote of The Way Home Steering Committee. In response to negligence, poor performance, or loss of eligibility, The Way Home Steering Committee reserves the right to open an RFP process at any time and designate a new Collaborative Applicant.

Before the submission of the annual application to HUD for Continuum of Care Program funding, the Collaborative Applicant must submit a final draft of the application to The Way Home Steering Committee for approval. Depending on the timing of the submission to HUD, The Way Home Steering Committee and Collaborative Applicant will create a timeline for submission to the Continuum of Care.

At the time of creation and adoption of this charter, the designated Collaborative Applicant is the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County.

#### HMIS ADMINISTRATOR

The Continuum of Care must designate a legal entity who is also a Continuum of Care Program eligible applicant to serve as the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead. The HMIS Lead will maintain the community's HMIS in compliance with HUD standards and coordinate all related activities including training, maintenance, and the provision of technical assistance to contributing organizations. Responsibilities required by the Continuum of Care Interim Rule are outlined in this Governance Charter. These and any additional responsibilities are documented in the Continuum of Care *Homeless Management Information System Lead Memorandum of Understanding*.

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The designation of the HMIS Lead is valid for a maximum of five years before the designation must be reviewed and approved by a vote of The Way Home Steering Committee. There will be no requirement for a Request for Proposal (RFP). In response to negligence or poor performance of the HMIS Lead, the CoC reserves the right to open an RFP process at any time and designate a new HMIS Lead.

At the time of creation and adoption of this charter, the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County has been designated as the HMIS administrator for The Way Home Continuum of Care.

## REPORTING

~~Proceedings of all Steering Committee meetings are documented in minutes. Minutes of all meetings are circulated and approved at the subsequent meeting. Once approved, minutes are made available electronically to the public.~~

## CHARTER AMENDMENTS

The Charter shall be reviewed and updated annually by the end of the 4th quarter and may be updated throughout the year as needed. Members of The Way Home Steering Committee, Collaborative Applicant, Lead Agency, or HMIS Lead Agency may propose updates. It is the Lead Agency's responsibility to review HUD rules, regulations, and guidance and suggest updates to the Charter as required by HUD.

Proposed updates must be presented to the full CoC Steering Committee for a vote. Approval requires a simple majority of The Way Home Steering Committee present with a quorum established.

## CHARTER AMENDMENT HISTORY

The TX-700 Continuum of Care (CoC), known as The Way Home, has developed this Governance Charter ("Charter") to define the CoC's composition, roles, responsibilities, policies, procedures, and committee structure. The record below documents the history of adoption, revisions, and approvals since the Charter's inception, ensuring transparency and accountability for all updates. Please note that this record does not include updates to every CoC policy, procedure, or standard, many of which are accessible via The Way Home Partner Portal.

Action	Summary of Changes	Date of Approval
Charter Adoption	Initial publication	12/12/2013
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates and the addition of new entitlement jurisdictions.	8/11/2016
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	10/12/2017
Charter Revision	Revision to Steering Committee Structure	5/9/2019
Charter Revision	Revision to Steering Committee Structure	6/13/2019
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	3/12/2020
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	4/14/2022
Charter Amendment	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	8/11/2022
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	1/12/2023
Charter Revision	Revision to reflect CoC system updates	1/11/2024
Charter Amendment	Revision to meet compliance requirements regarding the documentation of Charter edits	11/14/2024

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*The Charter shall be reviewed and updated annually by the end of the 4th quarter and may be updated throughout the year as needed. This record shall be updated with each new revision and approval to accurately reflect the current version of The Way Home's Governance Charter.*

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## DEFINITIONS

1. **Centralized Intake:** Refers to the Continuum of Care's Coordinated Assessment system.
2. **The Way Home Steering Committee/Board:** The primary decision-making group for the continuum of care.
3. **CoC Committees:** Groups of volunteers or appointed members who work throughout the year to accomplish specified tasks for the Continuum of Care. The Way Home Steering Committee and Lead Agency can create ad-hoc committees as needed to support the CoC.
4. **CoC Lead Agency:** Agency that is designated to carry out the activities of the CoC including fiscal and compliance activities and CoC administrative duties.
5. **Collaborative Applicant:** Agency or organization designated by CoC Steering Committee to be the entity that submits the CoC funding application to HUD.
6. **Continuum of Care (CoC):** A collaborative and strategic funding source from HUD that helps communities make progress towards preventing and ending homelessness in their communities. HUD also refers to the group of community stakeholders involved in homelessness as the "Continuum of Care."
7. **Continuum of Care Interim Rule:** Published by HUD in 2012, the CoC Interim Rule focuses on regulatory implementation of the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program, including the Continuum of Care planning process.
8. **Coordinated Assessment:** A centralized or coordinated process designed to coordinate program participant intake, assessment, and provision of referrals. A centralized or coordinated assessment system covers the geographic area, is easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing or services, is well advertised, and includes a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool. This definition establishes basic minimum HUD requirements for the Continuum's centralized or coordinated assessment system.
9. **Governance Charter:** A document that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the CoC Steering Committee, the CoC Steering Committee, Continuum of Care Committee(s), the Lead Agency, the Collaborative Applicant and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead with the intent to creating an inclusive, transparent process by which makes strategic decisions in order to meet the goals of preventing and ending homelessness.
10. **The HEARTH (Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing) Act:** The HEARTH Act of 2009 was signed into law on May 20, 2009. The HEARTH Act amends and reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes, including a change in HUD's definition of homelessness and chronic homelessness.
11. **HMIS:** A computerized data collection application designed to capture client-level information over time

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on the characteristics of service needs of men, women, and children experiencing homelessness, while also protecting client confidentiality. It is designed to aggregate client-level data to generate an unduplicated count of clients served within a community's system of homeless services.

12. HMIS Lead Agency: Agency, organization or government department designated by CoC to administer and manage the HMIS.
13. **HUD**: Acronym used to refer to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development that administers the Continuum of Care funding and program.
14. **NOFA/NOFO: Notice of Funding Availability/Opportunity**. As it relates to The Way Home, the NOFA refers to the annual Continuum of Care collaborative application for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funds as amended by the HEARTH (Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing) Act. The competition is facilitated by the Lead Agency with direction by the CoC Steering Committee. The collaborative application is submitted by the Lead Agency on behalf of The Way Home.
15. PSH: Permanent Supportive Housing is a Housing First Intervention that combines indefinite leasing or rental assistance with supportive services to help people and families experiencing chronic homelessness achieve housing stability.
16. RRH: Rapid Re-housing is a housing first intervention that emphasizes housing search and location services and short to medium-term rental assistance to move individuals and families experiencing homelessness (with or without a disability) as rapidly as possible into permanent housing. Intense but short-term case management is provided to help families stabilize and prepare to live independently.
17. RFP or RFQ: Request for Proposals or Request for Qualifications are used in procurement bidding for vendors and provides specific scope of work and requirements.
18. Workgroups: Workgroups are the action planning components of the CoC. Workgroup activities may be facilitated by the Lead Agency or other key stakeholder(s) as appointed by the Steering Committee. Workgroups may make recommendations for Resolutions to the Steering Committee regarding CoC policies and procedures, and/or report outcomes and data analytics, performance measures, and activities to the Steering Committee. The Lead Agency shall be responsible for reporting Workgroup activities to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee may retire a task workgroup no longer required by majority vote.
19. YHDP: The Youth Homeless Demonstration Program is a new initiative designed to prevent and end youth homelessness. The goal of the YHDP is to support The Way Home in the development and implementation of a Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) to prevent and end youth homelessness.
20. YAB: The Youth Action Board provides strategic direction and oversight to the activities connected to the YHDP. As a formal component of The Way Home, the YAB provides direct input on all issues related to youth homelessness with a near-term focus on the development of the Coordinated Community Plan. The YAB is an authentic and equitable partner in every step of the community's youth homeless response efforts, from planning to implementation of new projects to continuous quality improvement of the youth homeless response system.

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# **Coordinated Entry Policies & Procedures – Draft**

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# COORDINATED ENTRY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Version	Date Released	Key Changes
1.0	4/10/2025	Publication of Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures, formerly Coordinated Entry Operations Manual, to align with HUD's 2017 <a href="#">CE Notice</a>
1.1	5/8/2025	Insertion of Prioritization Policy and Record Keeping Requirements

The Way Home Continuum of Care CoC (TX-700)  
The Homeless Response System of Harris, Fort  
Bend, and Montgomery Counties of Texas

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## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Coalition for the Homeless (CFTH), as the lead agency for The Way Home (TX-700) Continuum of Care, works in partnership with direct service providers to coordinate the local homeless response system. The Way Home's Coordinated Entry System (CES), outlined in this document, is designed to streamline and strengthen access to housing for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness across Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery Counties.

As the lead agency for Coordinated Entry, CFTH is responsible for overseeing the effective and equitable prioritization of housing resources throughout the community. These system operations and services are made possible through funding that is contingent on awards from HUD's annual Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Way Home Coordinated Entry (CE) system is a standardized process designed to provide streamlined access to resources for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The CE system operates within the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), ensuring data is securely managed and used to coordinate services effectively. CE is comprised of four key components: access, assessment, prioritization, and referral & placement. The primary goals of CE are to ensure that the highest-need, most vulnerable households in the community are prioritized for services, improve fairness and ease of access to resources, and maximize use of available housing and supportive services across Harris, Fort Bend and Montgomery County.

## VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The CE system is built on several core guiding principles. The Guiding Principles for these Policies and Procedures represent the values established by The Way Home CoC as a standard for shaping and directing the work environment for employees administering Coordinated Entry within the CoC.

1. **Person-Centered and Trauma-Informed:** The system respects participant choice, ensuring services are delivered in a manner that is safe, dignified, and responsive to trauma.
2. **Fairness and Accessibility:** Every individual or family, regardless of background or circumstances, is entitled to equitable access to CE resources.
3. **Prioritization:** Assistance is prioritized based on vulnerability and severity of service needs to ensure that those who are least likely to end their homelessness in the absence of CoC support as identified by the Coordinate Entry Process, are prioritized for housing.
4. **Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Consistent data collection supports informed decisions, enabling the CoC to adjust priorities and strategies based on community needs and system performance.
5. **HMIS Utilization:** The CE will utilize HMIS for the purposes of managing participant information and facilitating quick access to available CoC resources.

6. Streamlined Assessment: The CE will reduce the stress of the experience of being homeless by limiting assessments and interviews to only the most pertinent information necessary to resolve the participant's immediate housing crisis.
7. Housing Models: All clients can be housed with the right housing model and service support when other system barriers are addressed.
8. Engagement: Intensive and persistent client engagement is key to building trust among persons experiencing homelessness.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In The Way Home Coordinated Entry System (CES), clearly defined roles and responsibilities promote accountability, transparency, and efficiency across the homeless response system. The CoC Steering Committee provides governance and establishes system-wide policies, while the Coalition for the Homeless (CFTH) Coordinated Entry department manages day-to-day operations, monitors system performance, ensures compliance with HUD standards, and drives continuous improvement. The HMIS department supports the system through data management and reporting.

Participating partners and referral projects are responsible for adhering to CE policies and procedures to deliver participant-centered services and ensure meaningful access for all.

Additionally, various stakeholder groups, including provider workgroups, the HMIS Support Committee, the Consumer Advisory Committee, and Youth Action Boards, play a vital role in shaping strategy, offering consultation, and ensuring diverse perspectives inform system planning and decision-making.

Together, these partners foster a coordinated and responsive approach to ending homelessness across our region.

## CE PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS

All Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)-funded projects within The Way Home region are required to participate in the Coordinated Entry System (CES) as part of the community's unified response to homelessness. This participation helps ensure that resources are used effectively and that individuals and families with the greatest needs are prioritized for housing and services. Additionally, agencies that choose to participate by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CFTH are also required to use the CE system for referrals and service coordination, aligning their practices with the broader community framework.

Required activities generally include, but are not limited to, adhering to The Way Home System Standards, promoting accessibility, following the CE's standardized assessment, prioritization, and referral protocols, as well as maintaining accurate and timely data in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). These represent core components of CE participation, though additional responsibilities may apply based on project type, role in the system, or evolving community standards.



Regardless of the funding stream, all agencies that provide homeless assistance are strongly encouraged to participate voluntarily to help build a more comprehensive and coordinated system of care.

## SAFETY PLANNING

Households fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions related to violence against themselves, or a family member can access the CES at any of the CoC's physical or remote access points. To ensure these households receive appropriate support, the CES assessment tool includes a built-in workflow that prompts assessors to provide information on domestic violence-specific resources, including the regional domestic violence hotline operated by the Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC).

Access to a comparable database for Coordinated Entry, ensuring confidentiality and compliance with HUD standards, is facilitated through the HAWC hotline. In accordance with HUD guidance, survivors may also choose to access the general CES for housing and services, and they will not be required to engage with the DV system unless they prefer to do so. The processes and procedures described in this manual apply specifically to the general Coordinated Entry system.

## NONDISCRIMINATION

The Way Home is dedicated to ensuring equal access and opportunity in the Coordinated Entry System (CES) for all individuals, in full compliance with federal civil rights and fair housing laws, including the Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The CES prohibits discrimination or prioritization based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, familial status, or any other protected characteristic. Agencies may not preference any protected class unless explicitly permitted by statute, regulation, or a written waiver from their funding or regulatory body, such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

All authorized user agencies entering into a Participation Agreement for the CES accept full responsibility for complying with Fair Housing laws and all related funding and program requirements. The agreement obligates agencies to use the CES in alignment with the statutes and regulations governing their housing programs.

**See Appendix 1 for Coordinated Entry Agency Participation Agreement**

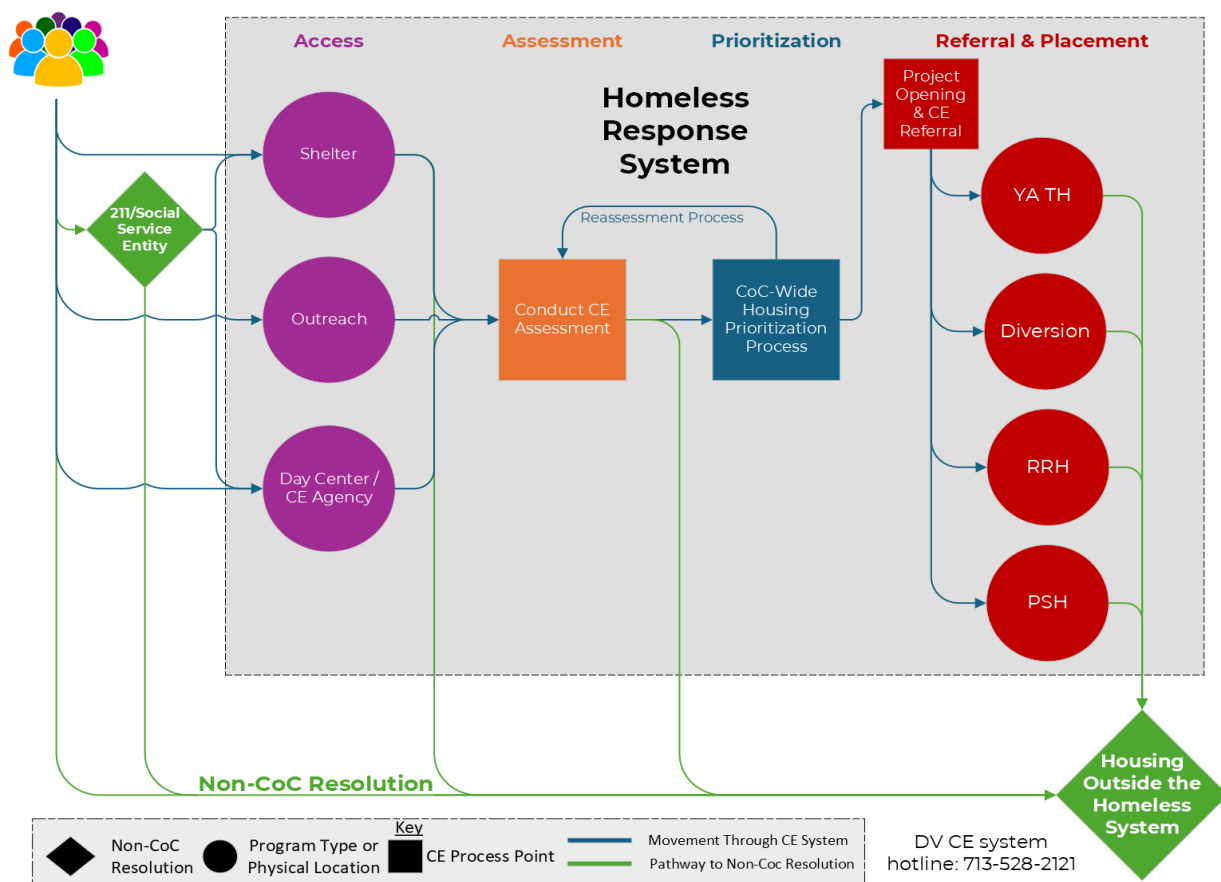
To ensure compliance, the Coalition for the Homeless (CFTH) will request tenant selection plans and any funding contracts from Authorized User Agencies that specify or permit service to a particular subpopulation. For example, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs must provide their funding contract, while single-gender programs must present a HUD waiver. The Fair Housing Act also allows housing providers to narrow their focus to a specific subpopulation within the homeless population to meet a "business necessity." Accordingly, the CES may facilitate filtered searches for subpopulation while ensuring no discrimination against protected classes.

Participants are encouraged to report any incidences of discrimination by completing the [TX-700 THE WAY HOME COC-GRIEVANCE POLICY-COORDINATED ACCESS/ENTRY](#).

## ACCESS

### ACCESS MODEL

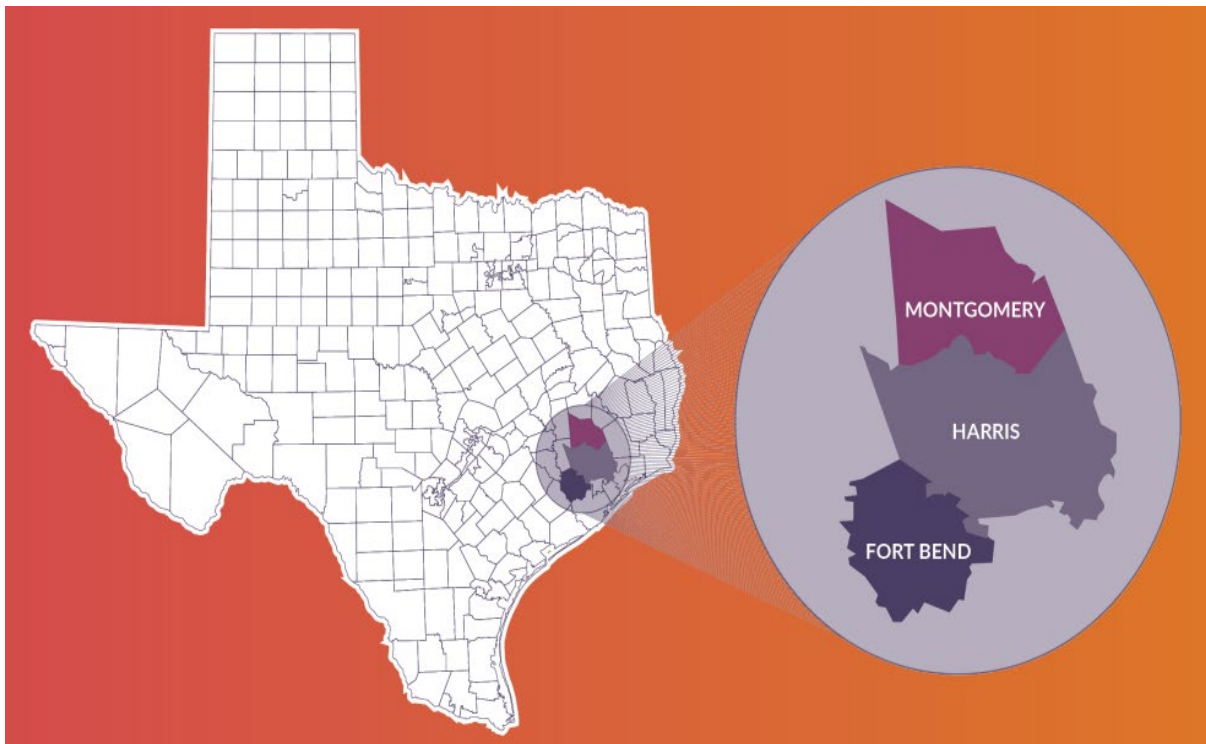
The Way Home (TWH) employs a 'no wrong door' approach to Coordinated Entry (CE) to ensure comprehensive geographic coverage across Harris, Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties of Texas. Individuals and families residing within the CoC geographic area seeking assistance can access information and services through multiple pathways: by calling the Coordinated Entry support line, visiting a regional Coordinated Entry agency for in-person assessment, or through direct contact with an outreach team. TWH's CE system operates through a network of over 100 partners, offering services at physical locations as well as online and by phone. Additionally, robust outreach teams actively canvass the region, ensuring that even the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach unsheltered populations are connected to essential services. Access points are designed to be inclusive and accessible, accommodating individuals with disabilities and providing language support to meet the needs of diverse communities. Organizations interested in becoming an access point can do so by meeting CE participation requirements and coordinating with The Way Home lead agency to ensure alignment with system goals and accessibility standards.



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## GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

The CoC's entire geographic area is fully covered and accessible to Coordinated Entry (CE) processes through designated location-specific access points, such as emergency shelters or day centers, as well as through the ongoing outreach efforts of partner agencies. Only households physically located within the CoC's geographic boundaries can access the CE system. In rare instances when a household residing outside the CoC's boundaries requests assistance, every effort will be made to connect them to the Coordinated Entry system serving their location. If a household accesses the CE system but later leaves the CoC's geographic area for temporary reasons, such as entering an emergency shelter or treatment program, they may remain active in the CE process. However, if a household leaves the area for reasons unrelated to emergency shelter or treatment, their CE case will be closed, and they will be referred to the Coordinated Entry system for the community in which they now reside.



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## EMERGENCY SHELTER

The Way Home CoC Coordinated Entry System does not facilitate access to emergency shelters. Shelters located within the CoC are encouraged to collaborate to align with local practices and promote low-barrier access to crisis services. Emergency shelters play a crucial role in facilitating access to Coordinated Entry for residents and serve as access points within the system.

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## OUTREACH

Robust outreach teams proactively canvass the CoC region to ensure that even the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach unsheltered populations are connected to essential services..

These street outreach teams receive comprehensive Coordinated Entry (CE) training, but they also undergo continuous specialized training tailored to outreach work, equipping them to effectively engage and support individuals in unhoused settings. To further enhance service accessibility, our system employs a user-friendly outreach request platform. This platform enables community stakeholders and help seekers alike to conveniently request outreach support, strengthening our ability to swiftly connect individuals in need with vital resources.

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## ACCESSIBILITY

The CoC will ensure that Coordinated Entry (CE) services are physically accessible to individuals with mobility barriers. CE participating agencies will, to the greatest extent practicable, provide physical accessibility and communication accommodations to households seeking assistance. Translation and interpretation services, including accommodations for individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired, will be provided via LanguageLine Solutions to the homeless response system by CFTH, ensuring CE assessors can effectively communicate with persons who have limited English proficiency or require alternative communication methods.

Additionally, all CE communications and documentation will be accessible to persons with limited ability to read and understand English. All CE materials are available in English, Spanish, or other languages upon request to CFTH.

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## SPECIALIZED ACCESS POINTS FOR SUBPOPULATIONS

While any provider trained in administering coordinated entry assessments is expected to provide access regardless of the household's specific population status, it is recognized that certain specialized partners, such as those serving veterans, the domestic violence community, young adults, families with children, person's at risk of homelessness, etc., may predominantly encounter and thus primarily assess specific groups. This approach ensures that all individuals and families receive timely and appropriate assessments, while leveraging the specialized knowledge and resources of partners to provide the most effective service to populations with unique needs.

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## AFFIRMATIVE MARKETING AND OUTREACH AND ACCESS FOR AT-RISK POPULATIONS

The Coordinated Entry (CE) process shall ensure that all individuals participating in any aspect of CE—whether it be access, assessment, prioritization, or referral—are provided with equal access to services and resources, regardless of their actual or perceived membership in any federally protected class, including race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, or disability. Furthermore, all individuals across different populations and subpopulations within the CoC's geographic area, such as those experiencing chronic homelessness, veterans, families with children, young adult, and survivors of domestic violence, etc., shall be guaranteed fair and equal access to the coordinated entry process at any access point. The Way Home CoC is committed to ensuring that no person is denied services or support based on their identity, history, or background.

To promote accessibility, The Way Home CoC is committed to proactive outreach and ensuring that CE is accessible to individuals and families with the highest barriers to assistance. To facilitate this, The Way Home will employ the following strategies:

- **Public Awareness & Accessibility:** CE information will be posted and publicly available in congregate or high-service utilization areas at partnering agencies.
- **Training & Capacity Building:** Quarterly training will be provided to all staff at partnering agencies to ensure they can accurately explain the CE process and direct individuals to access points.
- **Targeted Marketing & Outreach:** CE will conduct focused outreach to organizations serving special populations, including individuals with disabilities, those with limited English proficiency, and historically marginalized communities.
- **User-Friendly Resources:** The Way Home will maintain accessible and easy-to-understand websites and resource documents to help individuals navigate the system.
- **211 System Integration:** CE will ensure 211 operators are trained on how to connect callers in need of homeless assistance to the Coordinated Entry system.
- **Coordinated Outreach Efforts:** All outreach teams will include staff trained in conducting CE assessments to engage and assess individuals in the field.
- **Mobile Outreach Requests:** A mobile outreach request app is available, allowing constituents and stakeholders to request outreach services in real time, further enhancing the system's responsiveness to at-risk individuals.

## ASSESSMENT

### LOCALLY DEVELOPED COORDINATED ENTRY ASSESSMENT TOOL

The Coordinated Entry (CE) assessment is a locally developed, standardized tool used by all populations presenting to The Way Home homeless response system, regardless of access point. The assessment is administered by trained assessors and must be conducted in real-time within the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Informed consent must be obtained before beginning, and participants should be informed that participation does not guarantee housing placement.

The assessment is designed to be completed in one setting. Those at imminent risk of homelessness are immediately diverted to the appropriate assistance once identified by the workflow. The Housing Prioritization Tool phase of the assessment is administered to those experiencing literal homelessness, it documents barriers participants face, risk factors that may increase their vulnerability, as well as any potential strengths. This information helps assess program eligibility and determine prioritization for housing and services.

It's important to note, the CE process may collect and document participants' membership in Civil Rights protected classes but will not consider membership in a protected class as justification for restricting, limiting, or steering participants to particular referral options.

Participants have the right to decline any questions, or referrals, and doing so will not affect their prioritization within the system. However, assessors should inform participants that some funders require documentation of specific characteristics, such as specific disabilities, to determine eligibility for certain resources. Declining to answer such questions may limit access to these resources.

Participants may request updates to their assessment at any time. Assessors are encouraged to recommend a re-assessment when a participant's circumstances change or when new information arises that was not included in the original assessment. Re-assessments are required in certain instances, such as when a participant has been removed from the by name list for any reason and their most recent assessment is over 90 days old, or when a participant's circumstances change significantly, potentially affecting their eligibility. Examples include meeting the definition of chronically homelessness, being incarcerated or in an institution for 90 plus days or transitioning from literal homelessness to precarious housing.

See Appendix 2 for the Locally Developed Assessment Tool.

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## PARTICIPANT CONSENT PROCESS

As part of the assessment process, participants will be read or shown the Coordinated Entry Information Release and Consent which identifies what data will be collected, what data will be shared, which agencies data will be shared with, and what the purpose of the data sharing is. Participants will have the option to electronically sign or verbally consent. Participants will have the option to decline sharing data; doing so does not make them ineligible for CE but may limit their ability to be referred to appropriate resources. Data must not be collected without the consent of participants.

See appendix 3 for the Coordinated Entry Information Release and Consent.

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## ASSESSOR TRAINING

Assessor training is offered to approved partnering agencies of the CoC twice monthly. The curriculum is accompanied by a minimum of four hours of assessment shadowing. Trainees will be given access to a practice HMIS platform to refine their comfortability with the CE assessment process. System assessors are required to attend monthly workgroups where information relevant to the CE process is shared and discussed.

In addition to initial training and routine workgroups, Coordinated Entry Users are expected to complete Coordinated Entry Annual Refresher Training. This ensures that assessors maintain their qualifications and consistently apply correct assessment procedures. The refresher is self-paced and must be completed within the first quarter of each calendar year.

The Way Home CoC places a high importance on the responsibility of conducting assessments. To maintain fidelity and the integrity of the CE system, the lead agency implements pre-requisites for access to CE. An agency must go through the partnership agreement process for TWH and CE, they must operate a facility or serve in a role whose primary purpose exposes them to situations or circumstances where they are interacting

with households experiencing literal homelessness. They must agree to participate in the HMIS, set up a project or program in the HMIS for the purposes of tracking services and demonstrate the capacity to meet data quality standards prior to being approved for CE participation. Exceptions can be made for government or medical entities such as law enforcement or hospitals.

See appendix 4 for the Prerequisites for Coordinated Entry Access.

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## ASSESSOR KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

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### INITIAL CONTACT PRACTICES

- Introduce The Way Home and CE system. When assessors identify clients who need a Coordinated Entry Assessment they should provide an overview of The Way Home and offer their services. Assessors then explain that the first step in the process is to determine what type of housing intervention they may be eligible for through a Coordinated Entry assessment.
- Conducting Coordinated Entry Assessments. Once clients have been oriented to the function of Coordinated Entry, assessors use HMIS to conduct the Assessment. Detailed guidance around the components of the assessment can be found in the Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures.
- Notifying Client of Eligibility Determination. For clients who have received an assessment, assessors inform clients about the housing intervention that they are eligible for and educate them on the components of those program types.
- Communicate ongoing expectations for engagement. Assessors should clearly outline the expectations for ongoing client engagement. This includes informing clients about the need for regular follow-up communications, prompt updates to any changes in contact or living situation, and active participation in scheduled case management appointments. This ensures that clients remain connected to the process and can access support as they progress toward securing housing and services. Additionally, it is important for assessors to communicate that Coordinated Entry is one way to resolve a housing crisis, it is not the only way. Assistance should never be guaranteed to participants, as it is contingent on available resources and capacity.

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### SERVICE COORDINATION

- Centralized by name list maintenance. Once an Assessor completes the Coordinated Entry Assessment, and a participant has been deemed eligible, they determine if the participant should be placed on the centralized by name list in accordance with their training and lead agency guidance. Furthermore, assessors are encouraged to add “comments” to placements with information that may be useful for referral. They may also remove participants under certain circumstances.
- Service Entry. Assessors must document all services provided in HMIS within 72 hours of their occurrence to ensure timely and accurate record-keeping. Informing clients that active



participation in homeless services—including regular follow-ups, timely updates of contact information, and attendance at scheduled appointments—is essential for keeping their case active.

- **Documentation & Client Case Preparation.** Assessors should complete detailed case notes capturing all activities performed and any additional observations not recorded during the assessment. They are also responsible for assisting clients in preparing their case by collecting and uploading all relevant documentation—such as identification, homeless history, and other eligibility materials. In doing so, assessors take a proactive approach to ensure clients fully understand the eligibility requirements and options available to them, while also documenting any additional needs observed during the process.
- **Contact & Living Situation in HMIS.** The Contact & Living Situation is the mechanism for recording interactions with clients as well as the location where they reside. Assessors enter this for every interaction with a participant, creating a comprehensive history for future verification. It also serves as a valuable resource for locating clients, ensuring opportunities for housing and services are not missed.

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## WARM HAND OFFS & CARE COORDINATION

- **Ongoing Client Engagement.** Assessors engage continuously with clients using active listening, motivational interviewing, harm reduction, and trauma-informed care techniques. They identify emerging needs and provide referrals to additional mainstream services as appropriate.
- **Facilitate Warm Hand-offs to Housing Navigators.** Assessors play a key role in connecting clients with their assigned housing navigators. When possible, they facilitate a warm hand-off—meeting with the client and navigator together—to ensure a smooth transition. Housing navigators/case managers then support clients through lease signing and move-in, while assessors continue to assist in maintaining the connection.
- **Ongoing Training & Development.** Assessors must participate in continued education, workgroups, and trainings to stay informed on best practices in coordinated entry, housing services, and case management.

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## NONDISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT AND APPEAL PROCESSES

The CoC is committed to ensuring that no information is used to discriminate or prioritize households for housing and services on a protected basis such as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, familial status, disability, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identify, or marital status. Participants are encouraged to report any incidences of discrimination by completing the [TX-700 THE WAY HOME COC-GRIEVANCE POLICY-COORDINATED ACCESS/ENTRY](#), which can be found on the lead agency, CFTH, website.

## PRIORITIZATION

### SECTION PENDING

See Appendix 5 for the CoC's Prioritization Policy.

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## BY- NAME LIST

The Continuum of Care (CoC) maintains a centralized prioritization list, known as the "by name list," which includes all known individuals and households seeking assistance through Coordinated Entry. This list, housed within the HMIS, ensures that individuals and families experiencing homelessness are prioritized for housing and services based on their specific needs, vulnerabilities, and eligibility. By moving away from a "first come, first served" model, this approach focuses on urgency and severity, promoting more equitable resource distribution.

The prioritization process described in this manual does not include resources specifically allocated for households fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence. The DV community utilizes a separate and distinct by-name list and resource allocation process managed through a HUD-compliant comparable database, overseen by the DV lead CE agency, HCDVCC, to maintain confidentiality and safety. As previously stated, survivors may choose to exclusively, or in addition to, access the general CES for housing and services.

The by-name list is dynamically sorted based on The Way Home CoC's prioritization criteria, vulnerability scores, length of homelessness, and service utilization. The list is then cross-referenced with specific project eligibility criteria needed for a project vacancy, such as chronic homelessness status or veteran status. The by-name list undergoes this dynamic sorting process each time project referrals are being prepared. This ensures that the most vulnerable household, as defined by the prioritization policy, is prioritized for referral at any given time. Additionally, it is important to note that referrals are not guaranteed and are contingent upon the availability of resources. The by-name list is the definitive reference for all referral decisions, ensuring transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in resource allocation.

The CoC lead agency, CFTH, is responsible for maintaining the by-name list, ensuring its accuracy and integrity. This includes regularly reviewing and updating the list to reflect the most current information. Households that have not engaged in services within 90 days, or for whom contact attempts have been unsuccessful, may be considered inactive. Prior to removal, an automated email will be sent to participants with an email address on file at least 10 days in advance encouraging participants to re-engage with homeless services, should they still be in housing crisis. Re-engagement efforts will be made 10 days prior to removal via email to participants. Additionally, any households that no longer meet the eligibility criteria for available assistance are also removed when identified. By managing these updates, the CoC lead agency ensures that the by name list remains a relevant and effective tool for prioritizing and allocating resources to those in greatest need.

## REFERRALS AND PLACEMENT

All housing providers participating in the CoC must accept referrals exclusively through the Coordinated Entry (CE) system. CE is the designated referral mechanism for CoC- and ESG-funded programs, including Diversion, Transitional Housing (TH), Rapid Re-Housing (RRH), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), and Other Permanent Housing (OPH) programs. Providers that choose to participate in CE voluntarily must also utilize it as their sole referral source.

CE does not facilitate referrals for immediate crisis interventions, such as emergency shelter placements or hotel/motel vouchers, which remain accessible through direct service providers and emergency response systems.

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## VACANCY NOTIFICATION

When a project vacancy occurs or is anticipated, project leads must promptly notify the CoC lead agency by emailing [TWHReferral@cfthhouston.org](mailto:TWHReferral@cfthhouston.org). The notification must include key details such as:

- The number of vacancies,
- Any funder-defined eligibility criteria, and
- Unit size, if applicable.

To ensure that vacancies are filled efficiently, the CoC lead agency monitors project enrollments and vacancy trends through routine oversight. This proactive approach helps identify and address unreported vacancies, ensuring that housing resources are maximized.

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## REFERRAL PROCESS

On the next regularly scheduled referral distribution day, the CoC lead agency will identify a household from the by name list—following the CoC’s prioritization policy—and send a referral electronically through HMIS to the project. Projects are expected to make contact immediately. Staff will make 3 attempts over 7 days to contact the client. Alternative ways to contact the client include emailing the assessor, reviewing the dashboard for recent enrollments, adding a flag in HMIS, and using any emergency contact info. Referrals cannot be “closed out” until all methods have been tried.

Referral Outcome Options in the HMIS:

- Accepted
- Self-Resolved
- Reject, Justification of rejection
- No Show
- Unable to Contact
- Client Refused

Projects are expected to update referral outcomes in HMIS promptly, within no more than 72 hours after the outcome is determined. “Rejected” referrals are rare, and projects are penalized for inappropriate use of the rejected referral option.

If a participant marked as “unable to contact” is reached by any HMIS user within 30 days of the referral, the user must immediately notify the project to which the participant was referred. If direct communication with the project is not possible, the user should contact the CoC lead agency for further follow-up. This ensures that participants do not miss the opportunity to connect with housing and/or services. If the referral’s associated vacancy has not yet been filled, the project is expected to accept the participant and update the referral outcome accordingly.

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## PARTICIPANT CHOICE

Individuals and families will receive information about available programs and will be provided with options whenever feasible. Choices are informed by assessment results, vulnerability scores, preliminary eligibility determinations, and available resources. Of the available options, participants may select the project to which they wish to be referred. If a referral is declined, the individual or household remains on the By-Name List until the next opportunity arises.

Due to limited capacity, not all households will receive an immediate referral, and some may not receive a referral at all if suitable housing opportunities do not become available. The Coordinated Entry system will continue to assess and prioritize households as needs and resources evolve.

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## PARTICIPANT-DECLINED REFERRAL

Participants in CE may decline any service strategies or housing options offered to them, without repercussion. If a participant declines a referral to a housing program, they are returned to the by name list until the next suitable housing opportunity becomes available. It is recommended that staff add a 'comment' to participants by-name-list placement regarding their preference to avoid repeated offers to the same option. Their place on the prioritization list is not adversely affected by declining a referral. However, participants should be informed that declining a project type may limit their available options.

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## ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION

Before a participant can be placed into housing, the receiving project must collect and verify all required eligibility documentation. Most notably:

- Verification of Homelessness: Acceptable forms of documentation include data already recorded in HMIS, third-party documentation such as shelter residency letters or outreach worker verification, or, when available, a written self-certification by the participant in alignment with HUD guidelines.
- Verification of Disability (if required by the project): For programs serving individuals with disabilities, documentation must include written verification from a licensed professional, records from a medical institution, or other HUD-acceptable forms.
  - Some projects—such as those funded under HOPWA—may require additional or more specific verification related to qualifying disabilities or conditions. It is the responsibility of the housing provider to ensure all eligibility documentation meets the specific program's standards.

Housing providers are responsible for ensuring that all required documentation is collected, verified, and uploaded into HMIS or retained in accordance with agency protocols and HUD guidelines. Delays in providing eligibility documentation may result in postponed housing placement.

The CoC encourages projects to begin gathering documentation as early as possible in the referral process to avoid gaps in service delivery. Incomplete documentation may prevent a household from being enrolled into the housing program, even if a referral has been made.

For more information on eligibility requirements for housing programs and interventions, please reference [The Way Home System Practice Standards](#).

See Appendix 6 for the Coordinated Entry Record Keeping Requirements for verification documentation.

See Appendix 7 for Verification of Homeless.

See Appendix 8 for Self-Certification of Homelessness.

See Appendix 9 for Verification of Disability.

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## HOUSING PLACEMENT

The Way Home housing programs are designed to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness secure permanent housing with supportive services, aiming for long-term stability. A key goal of these programs is to prevent homelessness and provide creative solutions to divert those at imminent risk. Additionally, the programs focus on promoting self-sufficiency, ensuring that individuals can maintain stable housing even after exiting The Way Home housing services.

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## HOUSING FIRST PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The RRH/PSH provider agrees to operate the project under the “Housing First” model and adhere to the following Housing First tenets:

- Client participation in mental health, substance use, or employment services is not required prior to entering the project. Projects must continually offer services even when clients decline participation. Projects may need to adjust their case management and service engagement strategies when clients decline to participate.
- Client choice is valuable in housing selection and supportive service participation.
- Housing First projects remove barriers faced by prospective and/or current participants trying to attain permanent housing.
- Housing First projects do not require prerequisites to access housing support beyond what is required in the tenant’s lease

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## DIVERSION

Diversion is a problem-solving approach that uses targeted conversations and limited financial assistance to help individuals avoid or shorten shelter stays by quickly addressing the root causes of their housing crisis through strategies like reuniting with safe supports, returning to a home jurisdiction, or securing stable housing with modest aid.

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## RAPID REHOUSING (RRH)

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) is designed to swiftly transition individuals and families experiencing homelessness into stable, permanent housing by offering short-term rental assistance and supportive services. The program provides financial aid for rent and security deposits, while also delivering personalized support such as case management, life skills training, and connections to community resources. RRH emphasizes helping clients gain employment or access income, improve financial literacy, and build the skills necessary to maintain long-term housing stability.

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## PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (PSH)

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) provides long-term housing assistance (such as leasing or rental support) and supportive services to households with at least one member (adult or child) who has a documented disability, helping them achieve and maintain housing stability.

For more information on housing programs and interventions, please reference [The Way Home System Practice Standards](#).

## EVALUATION

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### METHODOLOGY AND CONSUMER FEEDBACK

The Coordinated Entry (CE) system undergoes continuous evaluation by the CoC lead agency's Coordinated Entry team, which monitors operational data and system outcomes to ensure ongoing compliance, efficiency and effectiveness. Alongside this continuous monitoring, a comprehensive annual evaluation is conducted, using a dual quantitative and qualitative approach. This secondary evaluation serves as an alternative review of the system, ensuring that continuous improvements are meaningfully contributing to broader goals and regulations.

Quantitative data for this annual evaluation is obtained from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and include the following specific measures:

- The number of households assessed by Coordinated Entry within the last year.
- The average length of time households remain on the by-name list categorized by program eligibility and household type (single, family, veteran, young adult).
- The total number of referrals to permanent housing and/or assistance interventions.

Alongside these quantitative measures, qualitative feedback is annually collected through structured surveys and interviews with randomly selected CE participants. To support this effort, a random sample of participants from each housing project is selected for contact. Typically, 10 percent of participants are contacted, or a minimum of three individuals for smaller projects. Contact attempts begins at the top of the participant list and continue until the target sample size is reached. Participants are contacted by phone in the order listed, and those who answer and agree to complete the survey are included. Individuals who decline

are not contacted again. This method ensures a broad and unbiased representation of participant experiences, helping to gauge satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.

The results from these annual evaluations, encompassing both HMIS data and participant feedback, are then reviewed by the HMIS Support Committee. This committee consists of a voluntary group of representatives from participating CE agencies. The findings are then published on the Coalition for the Homeless (CFTH) website, shared with all stakeholders through a regular newsletter and presented at the next quarterly HMIS forum, which is open to all CE participating agencies.

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## AGENCY PARTICIPATION

All CE participating agencies are invited to engage in the evaluation process. Opportunities for engagement include attending HMIS forums, participating in the HMIS Support Committee, accessing evaluation materials on the HMIS bulletin board, and offering feedback after reviewing the published findings. Agencies are also encouraged to provide direct feedback and suggest improvements to the Coordinated Entry team as such suggestions arise, ensuring a dynamic and responsive evaluation process.

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## INCORPORATION OF OUTCOMES

The insights gained from these evaluations are crucial for the CoC lead agency, which uses them to regularly update and refine CE policies, procedures, and operations. When recommendations for policy changes arise from either continuous or annual evaluations, they are subject to a rigorous review process. This process includes detailed discussions to assess the impact and feasibility of each recommendation, referencing established protocols to ensure compliance with existing standards and laws, and implementation only when a consensus is reached on their potential effectiveness and necessity. All proposed changes undergo an extensive internal and external review process, involving consultations with Consumer Advisory Committees, the CoC Steering Committee, and provider focus groups. Updates are then communicated to all participating agencies and incorporated into ongoing training and operational guidelines.

This structured yet flexible approach ensures that our Coordinated Entry system remains responsive to the needs of both the community and the individuals we serve, while also respecting the voluntary nature of agency participation.



## APPENDIX

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### APPENDIX 1. COORDINATED ENTRY AGENCY PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

PENDING UPDATE

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## APPENDIX 2. LOCALLY DEVELOPED COORDINATED ENTRY ASSESSMENT TOOL

*Similarly, the tool below has been reformatted for print and is intended for demonstration purposes only. The official and functional version of the Coordinated Entry Assessment resides within our Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database. Additionally, questions from the Universal Data Assessment and CE HMIS Triage Assessment, both HUD required elements, are not included in this appendix.*

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### Homeless History

Record all places of residence during the last three years.

Start Date	End Date	Type of Residence	Description of Location	Literal Homelessness Y/N
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Where did you stay last night? Drop Down  
Have you been homeless in the past? Yes / No  
What is the Zip Code of your last permanent housing residence? Insert Text  
Have you been homeless in a different city in Texas within the last 3 years? Yes / No If yes, then;  
Would you like a referral to pull your homeless history from other Texas cities? Yes / No  
Desired housing county: Drop Down Menu

### Domestic Violence

Are you homeless or do you remain homeless because someone is hurting you? Yes / No  
Has someone asked (or forced) you to have sex or sell anything in exchange for something? Yes / No  
Is someone threatening to harm you or your family if you don't do what they ask? Yes / No  
Are you currently staying at a DV shelter or receiving services from a DV provider? Yes / No If no, then;  
Are you interested in accessing DV services? Yes / No If yes, then;  
Provide participant with Houston Area Women Center Hotline [\(713\) 528-2121](tel:7135282121)

### Veteran Affairs

Have you ever served in the US military forces? Yes / No If yes, then;  
Do you have a DD-214 document? Yes / No If yes, then;  
Would you like a referral to access VA services? Yes / No

### Health History

Do you have any of the following conditions that limits your ability to work or perform daily activities?  
- Mental illness: Yes / No  
- Developmental disability: Yes / No  
- Chronic physical illness or permanent disability: Yes / No  
- Substance use disorder: Yes / No  
- HIV+/AIDS: Yes / No  
Do you have a serious physical health diagnosis that requires palliative care, hospice or terminal illness treatment? Yes / No  
Are you or is someone in your household pregnant? Yes / No  
Were you in Special Education or Resource classes? Yes / No  
Have you ever been hospitalized for a mental health condition? Yes / No  
In the past year, have your drugs or alcohol usage had a negative impact on your life? Yes / No

How many times in the past 6 months have you accessed medical services in the ER?	Yes / No
Have you ever been involved in the foster care system?	Yes / No

#### Legal History

Do you have any tickets with the City of Houston?	Yes / No, If yes;
Would you like a referral to Homeless Court?	Yes / No
Have you ever been involved in the juvenile justice system?	Yes / No
How many times in the past year have you been arrested or been in jail/prison/juvenile detention?	Yes / No
Do you have past felony conviction(s)?	Yes / No
Have you or anyone who will live with you been convicted of a sexual offense?	Yes / No

#### Employment & Income

Do you currently have any income?	Yes / No, If yes;
How much do you receive or earn per month?	Yes / No
Where does your income come from?	Yes / No
When was the last time that you worked?	Yes / No

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## APPENDIX 3. COORDINATED ENTRY INFORMATION RELEASE AND CONSENTS

*The Coordinated Entry Information Release and Consent is embedded within the Coordinated Entry assessment workflow in HMIS. The version included below is provided for instructional purposes only and has been reformatted for readability and print. The official and legally binding consent form is captured directly within the HMIS system as part of the assessment process.*

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Information gathered during this coordinated assessment will be used to evaluate your housing and stability service needs. Some of this information will include:

- your personal information, such as name, date of birth, and social security number
- history of homelessness
- legal and criminal history
- income and employment status
- medical history
- additional information if applicable

The information that you tell us during the assessment will be stored in a secure database and will only be shared as needed with individuals involved in your case to ensure appropriate follow-up and services. All of your information will be kept secure, and individuals who will see it have signed confidentiality waivers. This information may also be shared with authorized agencies, including organizations participating in The Way Home project, to provide or receive information for the purpose of coordination, evaluation, and furthering housing and stability services. Information will be retained to support these efforts unless your request for removal is made.

### Signature

By participating in the assessment, you give permission to the organizations participating in The Way Home project to provide or receive your information to/from authorized agencies for the purpose of coordination, evaluation, and furthering housing and stability services. Your signature (or mark) below indicates that you have read (or been read) the information provided above, have gotten answers to your questions, and have freely chosen to participate. By agreeing to participate in the coordinated assessment, you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

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## APPENDIX 4. PREREQUISITES FOR COORDINATED ENTRY ACCESS

Coordinated Entry (CE) is an intake, screening and referral process designed to prioritize resources and services based on vulnerability and housing need. To maintain the integrity of this process, CE HMIS access is determined by the following minimum criteria:

1. Partnership with The Way Home Continuum of Care: Agencies must be active partners within The Way Home, ensuring alignment with the system's policies, procedures, and collective goals.
2. Serving Individuals Experiencing Homelessness as a Primary Population: Organizations or projects must have a primary focus on providing services to individuals experiencing homelessness. These services should be central to their mission and operations and provided in settings where staff have the capacity to directly witness and document clients' experiences. Examples include street outreach teams, emergency shelters and day centers providing essential services such as lunch, laundry or shower.
3. Participation in HMIS: Agencies must have a project in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) where these services are actively recorded and archived for a minimum of 90 days.

While meeting these minimum criteria is a necessary first step, it does not guarantee access to the Coordinated Entry process. Access is granted based on a variety of factors, including alignment with system-wide priorities and available resources.

By maintaining these standards, we ensure that assessments are administered appropriately and that resources are allocated based on system-wide prioritization criteria. This safeguards the integrity of the process and ensures consistent application, prioritizing the most vulnerable households experiencing homelessness.

While organizations may not have the privilege to administer assessments, they can still play a critical role by referring clients and facilitating their access to the Coordinated Entry process.

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## APPENDIX 5. PRIORITIZATION POLICY

PENDING

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## APPENDIX 6. RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS

PENDING

## APPENDIX 7. VERIFICATION OF HOMELESSNESS

# VERIFICATION OF HOMELESSNESS

We kindly request your assistance in verifying [insert Name/DOB/HMIS # if applicable] \_\_\_\_\_ homeless status, which is essential for connecting them to housing assistance and/or supportive services.

Please complete this document, detailing each instance in which you witnessed and/or assisted the individual mentioned above while they were experiencing homelessness, as defined by [Housing and Urban Development](#) HUD's 'literal homelessness' criteria below and include your contact information in the document for any necessary follow-up.

Your support in this matter is greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions or need further clarification, please contact a Way Home representative using the contact information below, if provided.

### THE WAY HOME POINT OF CONTACT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### HUD'S DEFINITION OF LITERAL HOMELESSNESS

An individual is considered literally homeless if they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- They have a primary night-time residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation (e.g., streets, parks, cars, abandoned buildings); OR
- They are living in a publicly or privately operated emergency shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (e.g., including congregate shelters, federally funded safe havens, and hotels or motels paid for by charitable organizations or government programs); OR
- They are exiting an institution where they have resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter, or a place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering the institution.

### VERIFICATION OF HOMELESSNESS INSTRUCTIONS

Homelessness verification can be obtained through either direct observation of an individual in a situation that meets HUD's definition of literal homelessness (defined above) or documented evidence from a professional interaction, such as a hospital visit, clinic appointment, or law enforcement contact. The witness must determine, based on their observations and/or professional judgment, that the individual is residing in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., streets, parks, cars, abandoned buildings), an emergency shelter, or a federally funded safe haven.

Document as many dates as possible to provide a full picture of ongoing homelessness. At minimum, one observation per month is sufficient to establish homelessness for that period. Acceptable witnesses include outreach workers, case managers, medical personnel, law enforcement officers, business owners, employees, librarians, or other concerned community members who have directly witnessed the individual's circumstances. Ensure all required fields are completed for each observation.



Location of encounter (e.g., exact address, cross streets, business name, etc.):	Describe the interaction that indicated the individual was homeless at the time (e.g., physical observations of living situation, services provided, compelling evidence)	Approximate Date of encounter: (MM/DD/YYYY)

#### VERIFICATION OF HOMELESSNESS FORM SIGNATURES

I hereby certify that the information above is true and correct. I understand that I may be contacted to verify this statement but have no further obligations beyond providing this information:

Witness Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Relation to the HoH: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### THE WAY HOME OFFICIAL USE ONLY – DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS SECTION.

HoH Name/DOB/HMIS: \_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed the above information with the witness:

TWH Staff Printed Name and Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

TWH Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 8. HOMELESS SELF CERTIFICATION FORM

## HOMELESS SELF-CERTIFICATION

This form is intended for rare instances when a person has been unsheltered and out of contact for an extended period. It serves both to document attempts to obtain third-party verification—along with reasons why such documentation could not be obtained—and to allow the client to self-certify their experience.

The Way Home pre-navigators, navigators, case managers and/or other relevant staff should complete the form in collaboration with the head of household (HoH). Each CoC housing project is responsible for maintaining records of self-certification form usage in accordance with HUD's guidelines for their project. For additional guidance, consult project supervisors and/or CFTH.

### STEPS TAKEN TO OBTAIN THIRD-PARTY VERIFICATION

Instructions: Check each option explored.

- ☐ HMIS / Domestic Violence comparable database record; or
- ☐ Individual record of stay at emergency shelter, federally funded safe haven or from a street outreach contact; or
- ☐ Written observation by an outreach or intake worker of encounters with the individual or head of household that includes a description of the conditions where the individual or head of household was living or is currently living; or
- ☐ Written observation by community member that has physically observed where the person or household was or is currently living (a written referral by another housing/service provider must also be included)

### DETAILED REASON(S) THE THIRD-PARTY DOCUMENTATION WAS NOT ABLE TO BE OBTAINED:

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### DOCUMENTATION OF CLIENT'S CURRENT LIVING SITUATION

Information Requested	Detailed Information to Provide
Location of encounter (e.g., exact address, cross streets, business name)	
Date of encounter: (MM/DD/YYYY)	

### HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD SELF-CERTIFICATION

HoH's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ HMIS #: \_\_\_\_\_

Each row is sufficient to establish homelessness for that month. Please refer to the self-certification description for limitations.

Location of living situation (e.g., address, cross streets, business name, etc.):	Additional description of living situation	Approximate Date of encounter: (MM/DD/YYYY)

#### HOMELESS SELF-CERTIFICATION FORM SIGNATURES

The above information is correct to the best of my recollection:

HoH's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

THE WAY HOME OFFICIAL USE ONLY – DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS SECTION.

I have reviewed the above information with the client:

TWH Staff Printed Name and Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

TWH Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 9. VERIFICATION OF DISABILITY

## VERIFICATION OF DISABILITY FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DoB: \_\_\_\_\_

This form verifies that the applicant identified above has a disability consistent with determining eligibility for a HUD CoC Permanent Supportive Housing Program. A person shall be considered to have a disability if their diagnosis meets the threshold of physical, mental or emotional impairment or developmental disability as defined in the criteria below. Please check applicable boxes and include details of diagnosis that contribute to eligibility criteria.

☐ Physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, brain injury, or a chronic physical illness that:

- It is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration; and
- Substantially impedes the person's ability to live independently; and
- Could be improved by more suitable housing.

☐ Developmental Disability as defined by the [CoC and ESG Homeless Eligibility - Disability Definition - HUD Exchange](#).

Details of diagnosis that contribute to the criteria above: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Physician or Licensed Professional: \_\_\_\_\_

License Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency/Clinic Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Professionals must be licensed to treat the disability that they are verifying. By signing below, you verify that this applicant has the condition as stated above & that you are qualified to make that diagnosis.*

Signature/Credentials: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPLICANT'S AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize the release of the requested information pertaining to my disability to The Way Home for the purposes of permanent housing.

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

list of any federal, state, and local terms or acronyms that will appear throughout the CE P&P document.

- **Assessor** – Staff from CoC partnering agencies receive specialized training in Coordinated Entry and are responsible for conducting the Coordinated Entry assessment process. Many assessors serve in dual capacities, working as shelter or day center staff, outreach workers, social workers, or in other roles dedicated to serving individuals experiencing literal homelessness.
- **Chronically Homeless** – An individual or adult head of household with a disability who is living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter and who has been living as described continuously for at least 12 months, or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, where the combined occasions total a length of time of at least 12 months.
- **Comparable Database** – is a database that meets all HUD HMIS data collection, management, and reporting standards but is used by agencies that are legally prohibited from entering client data into the community's shared HMIS—such as domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking service providers.
- **Continuum of Care (CoC)** – The local planning body responsible for coordinating the full range of homelessness services in a geographic area. The local Continuum of Care (CoC), identified by HUD as the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care, covers the geographic area of Houston, Harris County, Montgomery County, and Fort Bend County and is governed by the CoC Steering Committee. The CoC is governed by the Steering Committee.
- **Coordinated Entry (CE)** – The Coordinated Entry (CE) system is a standardized process designed to provide streamlined access to resources for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The primary goals of CE are to ensure that the highest-need, most vulnerable households in the community are prioritized for services, improve fairness and ease of access to resources, and maximize the efficient use of available housing and supportive services.
- **Coordinated Entry Referral** – A referral for an intervention or housing project, which is generated in HMIS. This serves as formal notification to the project that an individual or family is being referred to their project for assistance.
- **Disability** – A physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that

is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration, substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently, and could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions; includes:

- **Developmental Disability Defined in §102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 USC 15002).** Means a severe, chronic disability that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination AND is manifested before age 22 AND is likely to continue indefinitely AND reflects need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated. An individual may be considered to have a developmental disability without meeting three or more of the criteria listed previously, if individual is 9 years old or younger AND has a substantial developmental delay or specific congenital or acquired condition AND without services and supports, has a high probability of meeting those criteria later in life.
- **Diversion** – An intervention designed to immediately address the needs of someone who has just lost their housing & become homeless or is at imminent risk of homelessness. Diversion is a client-driven approach; its goal is to help the person or household find safe alternative housing immediately, rather than entering shelter or experiencing unsheltered homelessness. It is intended to ensure that the homelessness experience is as brief as possible, to prevent unsheltered homelessness, and to avert stays in shelter.
- **Equal Access to Housing** – HUD's Equal Access final rule as stated in 24 CFR 5.2001-2011, that programs must be open to all eligible individuals and families regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, or family composition.
- **Exit** – when an individual or household is removed from service via HMIS because of program completion, transition, termination, or relinquishment.
- **Fair Housing** – Fair Housing Act 42 U.S.C. 3601-19, stating that program will not discriminate against individuals based on race, color, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs, family status, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy, military or veteran status or any basis protected by federal, state, and/or local law.
- **HCDVCC** – acronym for Harris County Domestic Violence Community, the lead agency for the Domestic Violence Coordinated Entry System.

- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) – A local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. HMIS usage is required by HUD. The local HMIS is Client Track.
- Household or Family – one or more persons who live together.
- Housing First – A model of providing housing to homeless individuals that focuses on providing services to individuals once they are in housing to assure housing stability and does not require sobriety, medication compliance or agreement to participate in specific services as a condition of receiving assistance.
- HUD Homeless Categories for CoC – The following are the qualifying homeless categories for CoC grant recipients.
  - Category 1, Literally Homeless – An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution
  - Category 2, At Imminent Risk of Homelessness – Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that: (i) The residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; and (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
  - Category 3, Homeless under other Federal statutes – Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who: (i) Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes; (ii) have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the 60 days immediately preceding the date of application for homeless assistance; (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the 60-day period immediately preceding the

date of applying for homeless assistance; and (iv) can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers

- Category 4, Fleeing domestic abuse or violence – Any individual or family who: (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; (ii) Has no other residence; and (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing an individual or family who is living in a place not meant for human habitation or in an emergency shelter.
- Lead Agency – A private non-profit or a city or county government agency tasked by HUD with developing a systemic response to homelessness in a geographic area, increase capacity, improve practices & performance, and oversee the local CoC grant cycle. The lead agency for the local CoC is the Coalition for the Homeless (CFTH).
- Housing Prioritization Tool – Assessment within the Coordinated Entry Assessment used to prioritize individuals and families for entry into a housing program. The housing prioritization tool focuses on the length of literal homelessness, physical & mental disabilities, frequency of service usage, & lack of adequate mental or health care. Vulnerability factors include the following:
  - Homeless history
  - History of involvement with hospitals or jails
  - Criminal background history
  - Mental health history and lack of care
  - Physical health history and lack of care
- MOU – More formal and detailed, outlining specific obligations, reporting requirements, scope of work, goals, metrics, KPIs, and funding details, if applicable. Suitable for relationships involving financial transactions or specific deliverables.
- Participation Agreement - Document a mutual understanding of collaborative efforts on specific initiative where there is no financial transaction occurring between CFTH and the agency.
- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) – A housing intervention for singles or heads of households with disabilities that combines rental assistance paired with supportive services. PSH is permanent and designed to serve the most vulnerable in a community. PSH is prioritized for individuals & families experiencing chronic homelessness. If there are no individuals that meet this definition, then the next priority is individuals with disabilities.



- **Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)** – A housing intervention designed to provide rental assistance and case management to help singles and families that don't need intensive and ongoing supports to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid Re-Housing is a temporary intervention. In order to be eligible for RRH an individual or family must be literally homeless.
- **Special Populations** – specialized services for homeless youth, people living with HIV/AIDS, persons engaged in victim services programs. The term victim services means services that assist program participants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, including services offered by rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters, and other organizations with a documented history of effective work concerning domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
- **Street Outreach** – A program designed to provide essential services necessary to reach out to unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness by meeting individuals where they are at both physically and psychologically. Program design includes engaging and developing relationships with people experiencing homelessness in unconventional settings such as, campsites, public parks, bus/train stations, highway exit or entrance ramps, abandoned buildings, under bridges, or other places not meant for human habitation. CFR 576.101 providing essential services necessary to reach out to unsheltered homeless people; connect them with emergency shelter, housing, or critical services; and provide urgent, non-facility-based care to unsheltered homeless people who are unwilling or unable to access emergency shelter, housing, or an appropriate health facility.
- **Triage Score** – Numerical score generated from the Coordinated Entry Assessment that is used, in conjunction with other factors listed in the Housing Prioritization Policy, for the housing match.
- **U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)** – A U.S. government agency created in 1965 as part of then-President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society agenda to expand America's welfare system. Its primarily responsible for national policy and programs that address America's housing needs, improve and develop the nation's communities, and enforce fair housing laws.
- **Verification of Disability (VOD)** – A document signed by a licensed practitioner that confirms that an individual has a disability that prevents the individual from working or living independently.

- Verification of Homelessness (VOH) – Document(s) or records that confirm an individual's homeless history.
- The Way Home – The alternate name for the TX-700 CoC, or the group of more than 100 partners working together to end homelessness in Harris, Fort Bend, & Montgomery Counties.
- Young Adult – Persons between the ages of 18-24.

# **Coordinated Entry Policies & Procedures – Previous Version**





## **System Operations Manual**

### **TX – 700 Continuum of Care**



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## A. Introduction

The Coalition for the Homeless (CFTH), in partnership with direct service agencies, coordinates the housing response for The Way Home (aka TX-700) Continuum of Care as the lead agency. The Way Home has designed the *Coordinated Access System (CAS)* described in this manual to coordinate and strengthen access to housing for families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness throughout Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery Counties. The CAS is a consistent and uniform assessment and referral process to determine and secure the most appropriate response to each individual or family's immediate and long-term housing needs. It is a process that also ensures that all individuals have fair and equal access to housing and assistance based on their strengths and needs.

## B. Purpose

Under the requirements of the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing: Continuum of Care Program (HEARTH Act), the TX-700 Continuum of Care has implemented a coordinated assessment system. Coordinated assessment is a powerful tool designed to ensure that homeless persons and persons at risk of homelessness are matched, as quickly as possible, with the intervention that will most efficiently and effectively end their homelessness. The CAS described in this manual is designed to meet the requirements of the HEARTH Act, under which, at a minimum, Continuums of Care must adopt written standards that include:

- Policies and procedures for providing an initial housing assessment to determine the best housing and services intervention for individuals and families;
- A specific policy to guide the operation of the centralized or coordinated assessment system on how its system will address the needs of individuals and families who are fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, but who are seeking shelter or services from non-victim service providers;
- Policies and procedures for evaluating individuals' and families' eligibility for assistance;
- Policies and procedures for determining and prioritizing which eligible individuals and families will receive transitional housing assistance;
- Policies and procedures for determining and prioritizing which eligible individuals and families will receive rapid rehousing assistance; and
- Policies and procedures for determining and prioritizing which eligible individuals and families will receive permanent supportive housing assistance.

The CAS is designed to:

- Allow anyone who needs assistance to know where to go to get that assistance, to be assessed in a standard and consistent way, and to connect with the housing/services that best meet their needs;

- Ensure clarity, transparency, consistency and accountability for individuals experiencing homelessness, referral sources and homeless service providers throughout the assessment and referral process;
- Facilitate exits from homelessness to stable housing in the most rapid manner possible given available resources;
- Ensure that individuals experiencing homelessness are able to access the type of intervention most appropriate to their immediate and long-term housing needs as efficiently and effectively as possible; and
- Ensure that individuals with the longest histories of homelessness and severe service needs have priority access to scarce permanent supportive housing resources.

To achieve these objectives the CAS includes:

- A **uniform and standard assessment process** to be used for all those seeking assistance along with procedures for determining the appropriate next level of assistance to resolve the homelessness of those living in shelters or in places not meant for human habitation;
- Establishment of **uniform guidelines** among components of homeless assistance regarding eligibility for services, priority populations, expected outcomes, and targets for length of stay;
- Agreed upon **prioritization for accessing homeless assistance**;
- **Referral policies and procedures** the CAS to homeless services providers to facilitate access to services; and
- The **policies and procedure manual** contained herein and detailing the operations of the CAS.

The implementation of the CAS necessitates significant, community-wide change. To help ensure that the system will be effective and manageable for individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and for the housing and service providers tasked with meeting their needs, a comprehensive group of stakeholders was involved in its design. In addition, the TX-700 Continuum of Care anticipates adjustments to the processes described in this manual. A periodic evaluation of the CAS will provide ongoing opportunities for stakeholder feedback. The Coalition for the Homeless, as the designated Coordinated Access Lead, is responsible for monitoring the CAS, including:

- Creating and widely disseminating materials regarding services available through the CAS and how to access those services;
- Designing and delivering training at least annually to all key stakeholder organizations, including but not limited to the required training for *CA Staff*;
- Ensuring that pertinent information is entered into HMIS for monitoring and tracking the process of referrals including vacancy reporting and completion of assessments;

- Managing case conferences to review and resolve rejection decisions made by receiving programs and refusals by clients to engage in a housing plan in compliance with receiving program guidelines;
- Managing an eligibility determination appeals process in compliance with the protocols described in this manual;
- Managing manual processes as necessary to enable participation in the CAS by providers not participating in HMIS;
- Designing and executing ongoing quality control activities to ensure clarity, transparency, and consistency in order to remain accountable to clients, referral sources, and homeless service providers throughout the coordinated access process;
- Periodically evaluating efforts to ensure that the CAS is functioning as intended;
- Making periodic adjustments to the CAS as determined necessary or upon recommendation by the CoC;
- Ensuring that evaluation and adjustment processes are informed by a broad and representative group of stakeholders;
- Updating policies and procedures; and
- Managing all PR requests related to the CAS.

## C. Definitions

1. **Area Median Income (AMI)** – Annual income estimates published annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and based on Fair Market Rent (FMR) Areas. For the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care, the HUD FMR Area is Houston-Woodlands-Sugarland. AMI and Median Family Income (MFI) are used interchangeably to determine the income limits for a household eligible for assistance.
2. **At-Risk Categories** – The following are the qualifying categories for CoC, ESG, HOME ARP, & other projects dedicated to serving populations at-risk of homelessness. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provides \$5 billion to assist vulnerable individuals and households. These grant funds are administered through the City of Houston’s HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME).
  - a. An individual or family who:
    - Has an annual income below 30 percent of Median Family Income (MFI) for the area, as determined by HUD;
    - Does not have sufficient resources or support networks, (e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks), immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place described in paragraph (1) of the “homeless” definition in this section; and
    - Meets one of the following conditions:
      - i. Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for homelessness prevention assistance;
      - ii. Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;



- iii. Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance;
  - iv. Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost of the hotel or motel stay is not paid by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals;
  - v. Lives in a single-room occupancy or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than two persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than 1.5 persons reside per room, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau;
  - vi. Is exiting a publicly funded institution, or system of care (such as a health-care facility, a mental health facility, foster care or other youth facility, or correction program or institution); or
  - vii. Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient's approved consolidated plan.
- b. A child or youth who does not qualify as "homeless" under this section, but qualifies as "homeless" under Section 387(3) of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5732a(3)), Section 637(11) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832(11)), Section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e- 2(6)), Section 330(h)(5)(A) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h)(5)(A)), Section 3(m) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012(m)), or Section 17(b)(15) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b)(15)).
  - c. A child or youth who does not qualify as "homeless" under this section, but qualifies as "homeless" under Section 725(2) of the McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)), and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of that child or youth if living with her or him.
  - d. An individual or family who are fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking.
    - Definitions of *Domestic Violence*, *Dating Violence*, *Sexual Assault*, and *Stalking* from Violence Against Women Act) regulation at 24 CFR 5.2003
    - Definition of *Human Trafficking* from Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000
      - i. Includes both sex trafficking and labor trafficking
  - e. Other families requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness or at greatest risk of housing instability. Includes individuals and families who:
    - Have previously been qualified as "homeless" as defined in 24 CFR 91.5.
    - Are currently housed due to temporary or emergency assistance, including financial assistance, services, temporary rental assistance or some other type of assistance to allow the household to be housed.
    - Need additional housing assistance or supportive services to avoid returns to homelessness.
    - Has an annual income of less than or equal to 30% of the area median income and is experiencing severe cost burden (i.e., is paying more than 40% of monthly household income towards housing costs) OR
    - Has an annual income of less than or equal to 50% of area the area median income and meets on of the conditions of the "at-risk of homelessness" definitions.

3. **Case Management** – A collaborative process that assesses, plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, and evaluates the options and services required to meet an individual’s housing and health needs.
4. **Case Manager (CM)** – A staff person whose primary role is providing supportive services to ensure formerly homeless individuals maintain their housing. Services can vary and should be tailored to meet the needs of the individual. Some case managers can also serve as Navigators while the individual is going through the housing process.
5. **Chronically Homeless** –
  - a. An individual who:
    - Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter;
    - Has been homeless and living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least one year; OR
    - Has had at least four (4) separate occasions of the above homelessness in the past three (3) years where the combined length of the occasions is twelve (12) months; AND
    - Can be diagnosed with a disability such as a substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability (as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002)), post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability;
  - b. An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility; or
  - c. A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.
6. **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** – A program that provides annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities, & counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. CDBG flexibility empowers people & communities to design & implement strategies tailored to their own needs & priorities (example: homelessness).
7. **Continuum of Care (CoC)** – The local planning body responsible for coordinating the full range of homelessness services in a geographic area. The local Continuum of Care (CoC), identified by HUD as the TX-700 Continuum of Care, covers the geographic area of Houston, Harris County, Montgomery County, and Fort Bend County and is governed by the CoC Steering Committee.
8. **Coordinated Access (CA)** – A process developed to ensure that all individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness have fair and equal access and are quickly identified, assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and assistance based on their strengths and needs. CA is not a project but rather a housing assessment. The assessment generates a vulnerability score. Individuals and families are referred to housing based on this vulnerability score, with the highest scores being referred first.

9. **Coordinated Access Referral** – A referral to a housing or service project, which is generated in HMIS. This serves as formal notification to the project that an individual or family is being referred for a specific intervention.
10. **Couch Surfing** – Also known as precariously housed, this is when an individual does not have a permanent address and instead spends different nights in various locations such as friends, families, hotels. An individual who is couch surfing is NOT considered homeless.
11. **Disability** – A physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration, substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently, and could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions; includes:
  - a. **Developmental Disability** Defined in §102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights **Act of 2000 (42 USC 15002)**. Means a severe, chronic disability that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination AND is manifested before age 22 AND is likely to continue indefinitely AND reflects need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated. An individual may be considered to have a developmental disability without meeting three or more of the criteria listed previously, if Individual is 9 years old or younger AND has a substantial developmental delay or specific congenital or acquired condition AND without services and supports, has a high probability of meeting those criteria later in life.
  - b. **HIV/AIDS Criteria** Includes the disease of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or any conditions arising from the etiologic agent for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, including infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
12. **Diversion** – An intervention designed to immediately address the needs of someone who has just lost their housing & become homeless or is at imminent risk of homelessness. Diversion is a client-driven approach; its goal is to help the person or household find safe alternative housing immediately, rather than entering shelter or experiencing unsheltered homelessness. It is intended to ensure that the homelessness experience is as brief as possible, to prevent unsheltered homelessness, and to avert stays in shelter.
13. **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)** – A competitive grant that awards funds to private non-profit organizations, cities, & counties to provide the services necessary to help persons that are at-risk of homelessness or homeless quickly regain stability in permanent housing. The ESG program is funded by HUD and can be administered by the city, counties, or state.
14. **Exit** – when an individual or household is removed from service via HMIS because of program completion, transition, termination, or relinquishment.
15. **Exit Destination** – A place where an individual or family ends up after exiting RRH or PSH. The goal for both interventions is for the exit destination to be permanent.
16. **Fair Market Rent (FMR)** – The estimated amount (base rent + essential utilities) that a property in a given area usually rents for. Annual listings of FMR can be found [here](#).
17. **Financial Assistance Intermediary** - Agency responsible for the management, distribution and reporting for all financial assistance available through City of Houston HOME TBRA & CoC RRH funding only. The current FAI is the Houston Housing Authority (HHA).
18. **Frequent** – Indicator on the HMIS dashboard that shows when a household has received

services on at least 5 out of the last 12 months.

19. **Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA)** – The Harris County Housing Authority manages the rental assistance for some of our PSH housing programs.
20. **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)** – A local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. HMIS usage is required by HUD. The local HMIS is Client Track.
21. **Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)** – Teams of Houston Police or Harris County Sheriff Officers that provide services to individuals living unsheltered throughout Houston & Harris County.
22. **Housing Inventory Count (HIC)** – A point-in-time inventory of provider programs within a Continuum of Care that provide beds and units dedicated to serve people experiencing homelessness for five program types: emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, safe haven, and permanent supportive housing.
23. **HOT ID** – A photo ID that is obtained from Homeless Outreach Teams from the Houston Police Department or the Harris County Sheriff's Department.
24. **Household or Family** – one or more persons who live together.
25. **Housing First** – A model of providing housing to homeless individuals that focuses on providing services to individuals once they are in housing to assure housing stability and does not require sobriety, medication compliance or agreement to participate in specific services as a condition of receiving assistance.
26. **Housing Length of stay (LOS)** – the number of days that an individual or family spends in a housing intervention such as RRH or PSH.
27. **HUD Homeless Categories for CoC** – The following are the qualifying homeless categories for CoC grant recipients.
  - a. **Category 1, Literally Homeless** – An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution
  - b. **Category 2, At Imminent Risk of Homelessness** – Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that: (i) The residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; and (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
  - c. **Category 3, Homeless under other Federal statutes** – Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who: (i) Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes; (ii) have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the 60 days immediately preceding the date of application for homeless assistance; (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the 60-day period immediately preceding the date

- of applying for homeless assistance; and (iv) can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers
- d. **Category 4, Fleeing domestic abuse or violence** – Any individual or family who: (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; (ii) Has no other residence; and (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing an individual or family who is living in a place not meant for humanhabitation or in an emergency shelter.
28. **Lead Agency** – A private non-profit or a city or county government agency tasked by HUD with developing a systemic response to homelessness in a geographic area, increase capacity, improve practices & performance, and oversee the local CoC grant cycle. The lead agency for the local CoC is The Coalition for the Homeless.
  29. **Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA)** – A report that demonstrates how households are moving through a CoC’s system using the head of household’s data. It is intended to give CoCs detail about system functioning to inform interventions to improve that functioning. In addition to system wide totals, the LSA provides detailed breakdowns for household types, populations, & demographic characteristics. The LSA must be submitted to HUD by the lead agency every year
  30. **Housing Prioritization Tool** – Assessment used to prioritize individuals and families for entry into a housing program. The housing prioritization tool focuses on the length of literal homelessness, physical & mental disabilities, frequency of service usage, & lack of adequate mental or health care. Vulnerability factors include the following:
    - a. Homeless history
    - b. History of involvement with hospitals or jails
    - c. Criminal background history
    - d. Mental health history and lack of care
    - e. Physical health history and lack of care
  31. **Houston Housing Authority (HHA)**- The Houston Housing Authority manages the rental assistance for several of our housing programs.
  32. **Move-In Date (aka lease-up date)** – The date that the household moved into RRH or PSH.
  33. **Navigation Center** - A low-barrier facility that provides temporary housing for individuals that have been referred to a housing program and are waiting to move into permanent housing.
  34. **Navigator (NAV)** – A staff person whose primary role is working with clients from the point of referral through the housing move-in date
  35. **New Hope Housing (NHH)** – Largest SRO affordable housing developer in Houston. NHH properties are built using tax credits and units are typically subsidized via project-based housingchoice vouchers through HHA.
  36. **Parent Lease (formerly master lease)** – A single lease that covers multiple units and properties leased from a landlord to a tenant (usually a non-profit). A parent lease will not break out rents ascribed to individual units. All units within a parent lease are bound by a single payment & lease. Non-profits can then place individuals into the units that have been traditionally hard to house.
  37. **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)**- A housing intervention for singles or heads of households with disabilities that combines rental assistance paired with supportive services. PSH is permanent and designed to serve the most vulnerable in a community. To be eligible for

PSH an individual or family must be chronically homeless.

38. **Point-In-Time Count (PIT)** – A count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January and required by HUD. The CoC Lead agency is responsible for conducting the PIT.
39. **Pre-Navigation**- the action of working with a client to collect the 4 essential documents to be Navigation ready (ID, Social Security Card, VOD, and VOH).
40. **Project Exit Date** – The date when the household left the project and no longer receives services. This happens due to project completion, transition, termination, or relinquishment.
41. **Project Start Date (aka Enrollment Date)** – The date that the household begins receiving services from a RRH or PSH project. This is not necessarily the move-in date, although in some cases these can be the same.
42. **Public Housing Authority (PHA)**- An entity that provides affordable housing opportunities for vulnerable populations. Houston Housing Authority and Harris County Housing Authority are local examples.
43. **Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)** – A housing intervention designed to provide rental assistance and case management to help singles and families that don't need intensive and ongoing supports to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid Re-Housing is a temporary intervention. To be eligible for RRH an individual or family must be literally homeless.
44. **Rent Reasonableness (RR)** – A process designed to ensure that rents being paid are reasonable in relation to rents being charged for comparable unassisted units in the same area. This can be done by HHA or by the CM or NAV prior to submitting a rental payment.
45. **Returns to Homelessness** – also known as recidivism, when an individual or family accesses a homeless intervention within a certain number of days after having previously exited to permanent housing. The number of days typically used are 90 days, 6 months, 1 year, and 2 years.
46. **Scattered-Site Housing Unit** – A market rate apartment unit located throughout the CoC in regular market apartment complexes or single-family homes.
47. **Single Room Occupancy Unit (SRO)** – A small, furnished single apartment unit with a bed, chair, desk, microwave, & mini-fridge. The kitchen is shared, and utilities are included in the rent.
48. **Site-based Housing Unit** – A block apartment units located within a single location. The site usually includes offices where individuals can meet with support staff.
49. **System Performance Measures (SPMs)** – A summary & year-to-year comparison of system wide counts, averages, & medians related to seven areas of performance: length of time persons remain homeless, returns to homelessness, number of homeless persons, employment & income growth, first time homeless, homelessness prevention placements, & successful housing placements. The SPMs are based on all persons served & must be submitted to HUD by the lead agency every year.
50. **Tax Credit Property** – An apartment complex or housing project owned by a developer or landlord who participates in the federal low-income housing tax credit program (LIHTC). These developers & landlords can claim tax credits for eligible buildings in return for renting some or all of the apartments to low-income tenants at a restricted rent.
51. **Triage Score** – Numerical score generated from the Coordinated Access Assessment that is used, in conjunction with the *Housing Prioritization Tool*, for the housing match.

52. **U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)** – A U.S. government agency created in 1965 as part of then-President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society agenda to expand America’s welfare system. Its primarily responsible for national policy and programs that address America’s housing needs, improve and develop the nation’s communities, and enforce fair housing laws.
53. **Verification of Disability (VOD)** – A document signed by a licensed practitioner that confirms that an individual has a disability that prevents the individual from working or living independently.
54. **Verification of Homelessness (VOH)** – Document(s) that confirm an individual’s homeless history.
55. **The Way Home** – The alternate name for the TX-700 CoC, or the group of more than 100 partners working together to end homelessness in Harris, Fort Bend, & Montgomery Counties.
56. **Youth Homeless Demonstration Project (YHDP)** – A HUD grant designed to reduce the number of youths experiencing homelessness within a CoC. The grant supports communities in the development & implementation of a coordinated community approach to preventing & ending youth homelessness.
57. **Young Adult** – Persons between the ages of 18-24.

## D. Target Population

The CAS is open to all households who meet one of the homeless or at-risk categories set by the US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). The system uses a locally developed prioritization tool (described in Definitions & located in the Appendix of this manual) to rank Applicants in order of vulnerability, with the most vulnerable households ranked at the top.

## E. System Overview and Workflow

To illustrate how the CAS functions, the following overview provides a brief description of the path a household may follow from an initial request for assistance through placement in a program. The overview also describes roles and expectations of the partner organizations that play a critical role in the system. Additional details can be found in the subsequent sections of this manual and the Coordinated Access workflow.

### From Initial Request for Services to Permanent Housing Placement – Pathway through the CAS

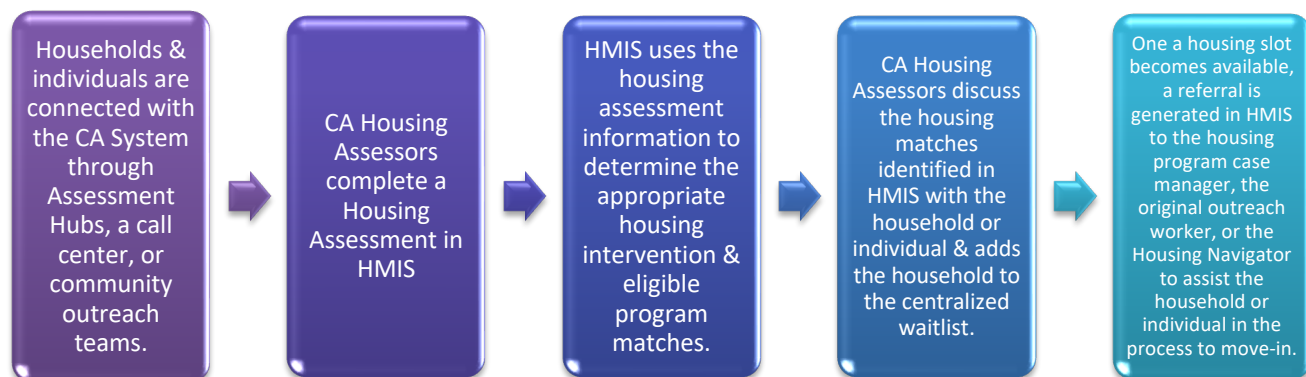
1. Connecting to the CAS/Initial Request for Services - To ensure accessibility to households in need, the CAS provides access to services from multiple, convenient physical locations. Households in need may initiate a request for services in person through any of the designated Assessment Hubs, 211, through the CA Hotline, and/or through community outreach teams.

Detailed information regarding Hub locations and CA Hotline hours of operation are posted on the [Coalition for the Homeless’s website](#), on the [CoC’s website](#), and social media sites. The ease of providing the CA assessment via internet, tablet, or mobile devices ensures that this process can happen quickly, when the individual determines the need.

2. Housing Assessment - The assessment is completed using HMIS. Information gathered from the assessment is used to determine which housing intervention is best suited to address the household's housing crisis as quickly as possible.
3. Housing Match - HMIS automatically generates a Triage Score to match households to a particular housing intervention based on the *Housing Prioritization Tool*. Once the housing match has been identified in HMIS, the *Housing Assessor* adds the household member(s) to the *Centralized Waitlist* (or by-name list).
4. Housing Referral – When housing programs have availability, households will be pulled from the *Centralized Waitlist* and referred to the respective housing provider. Households will be connected with a *Housing Navigator* to support the process from referral to “lease up”.
5. Housing Navigation – *The Housing Navigator* begins the process of securing the identified unit. This process may include, but is not limited to the following activities: Obtaining ID, obtaining social security cards, obtaining homeless verification documents, obtaining a security deposit, obtaining application fees, providing transportation to tour available units, etc. **The Housing Navigator aims to complete the process from referral to move-in within 30 days.**

Below is an illustration of the CA Workflow:

### Coordinated Access Workflow





## F. Coordinated Access Policies and Procedures

### 1. Connecting to the CAS:

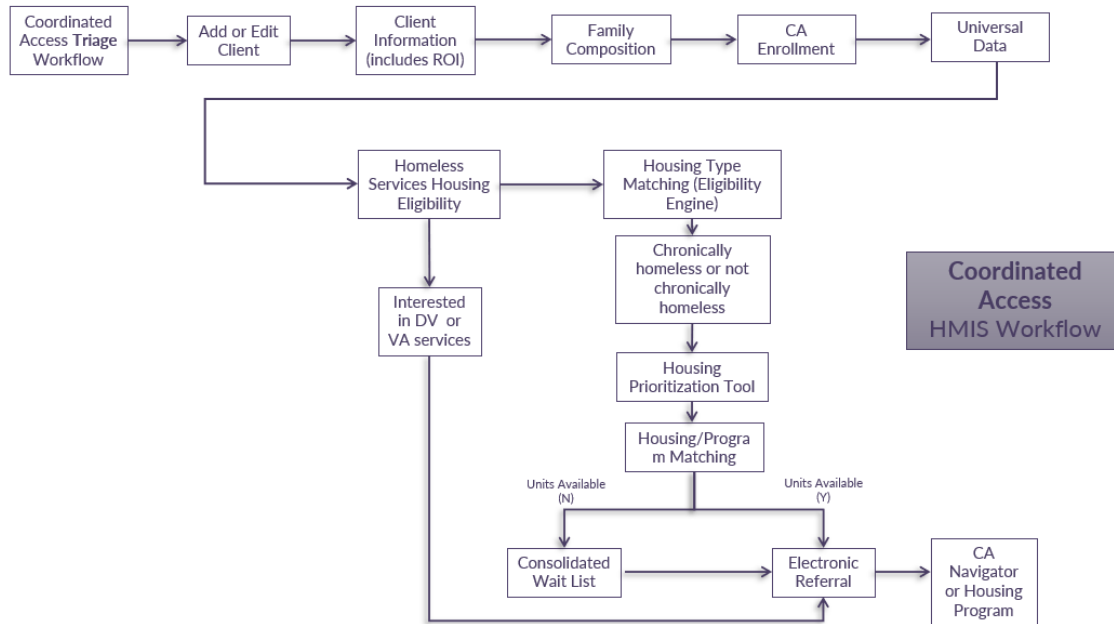
- a. Locations & Hours – Assessments are conducted at designated Assessment Hubs and through the CA Hotline. Current Assessment Hub locations and assessment hours are posted on the [Coalition for the Homeless's website](#) and the [CoC's website](#).
- b. Eligibility – Coordinated Access is intended to facilitate access to the most appropriate housing intervention for each household's immediate and long-term housing needs and ensure that scarce permanent housing resources are targeted to those who are most vulnerable and/or have been homeless the longest.
- c. Marketing/Advertising – As needed, the CFTH will send information & updates regarding the CAS via email to stakeholders, the 211 hotline, and the general public. The CFTH also distributes flyers and brochures and maintains information available on its website.

### 2. The Housing Assessment Process

- a. Housing Assessors
  1. Roles and Responsibilities - *Housing Assessors* are staff from designated community agencies. *Housing Assessors* may office out of Assessment Hubs, be designated as the Assessor for their agency, be a member of the CA Hotline, or be part of a mobile outreach team. All *Housing Assessors* are required to complete a CA intake and housing assessment training. *Housing Assessors'* responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:
    - Operating as the initial contact for the CAS
    - Conducting *Housing Assessments*, completing enrollments in HMIS, and documenting homelessness as appropriate
    - Notifying client of *Eligibility Determination* and educating on essential documents
    - Placing eligible clients on the *Centralized Waitlist*
    - Collecting & uploading all documents available at assessment
    - Informing clients of *Referral Decisions* and connecting them with the assigned *Housing Navigator*
    - Exiting clients they assessed from the Coordinated Access enrollment in HMIS
    - Participation in case conferences and workgroups
    - Responding to requests by the CFTH
  2. Training Requirements – *Housing Assessors* are trained by the CFTH. The training consists of "Housing Assessor Orientation" in addition to HMIS training on the Coordinated Access workflow.
  3. Exits – The Housing Assessor will complete enrollment exits for the clients under the following outcomes:
    - Housed - Client moves into permanent housing or is identified as housed on the "CA Enrolled & Housed" report.
    - Ineligible - Clients who don't qualify for an intervention through Coordinated Access should be exited immediately with the same destination as current living situation.

- Inactive - Clients who receive no services in HMIS after 90 days may be exited to the destination “unknown”.

b. HMIS Workflow – The workflow below outlines the CA steps in HMIS:



- c. Release of Information – All clients must sign a release of information prior to the assessment process.
- d. Client Photos – Photos can be taken at the time of assessment but are not required. If a photo is taken and uploaded into HMIS, a photo release must be signed by the client prior to the photo being taken.
- e. Timeline - The *Housing Assessor* notifies the client of his/her eligibility and referral decision immediately. Once a referral is made, the *Receiving Program* 1 business day to acknowledge the receipt of the referral. The *Receiving Program* must then enroll or deny the referral within 7 business days.

### 3. Housing Matching

- a. Housing Prioritization – Housing is matched based on criteria embedded in the *CA Assessment*.
- b. Waitlist Placements – Assessors are responsible for placing households who have completed the CA intake and housing assessment on the waitlist based on the following:
  1. *Frequent* households who are identified as chronically homeless are placed on the Centralized Waitlist at the time of assessment.
  2. If a chronically homeless household is not *frequent* on the HMIS dashboard, the assessor must obtain chronic homelessness documentation prior to placing on the Centralized Waitlist.
  3. All households with a prioritization score between 10-27 are identified as literally homeless and placed on the Centralized Waitlist at the time of assessment.

4. Households that are either within 5 days of becoming literally homeless or have a prioritization score of 9 or lower are placed on the Diversion Waitlist at the time of assessment.
- c. Reassessment Requirements – To ensure accurate housing matching, households on the Centralized Waitlist must be re-assessed if more than 90 days have passed since the previous assessment and there have been no services in HMIS during that time, or if they have undergone a major event that might impact the housing vulnerability score.

#### 4. Housing Referral

##### a. CA Staff

- Roles and Responsibilities – Staff at the Coalition for the Homeless are responsible for the daily administration of the HMIS and the *Centralized Waitlist*
  - i. CA staff provide technical assistance and user trainings to participating agencies and end-users
  - ii. If the waitlist indicates an opening in the program identified by the *Housing Prioritization Tool*, then a referral to that opening will be generated by CA staff at The Coalition for the Homeless
  - iii. If the program to which the referral was made does not provide Housing Navigation, then the CA staff will also generate a referral to the appropriate Housing Navigator

##### b. Receiving Program

- Roles and Responsibilities – Once a referral is made, the Receiving Program has one business day to acknowledge the receipt of the referral. The Receiving Program must then enroll or deny the referral within 7 days. The Receiving Program can reject or deny the referral if the assigned case manager has been unable to contact the household after seven (7) days. If a household shows up at the Receiving Program after the seven (7) days have expired, the case manager will assist the household in reentering the system through the CA. All of this information is tracked in HMIS.
- Document Requirement – Receiving Programs make eligibility determination decisions within one business day of the intake interview. The Receiving Program orally reviews the intake decision notification with the client to ensure that the client understands the decision, and applicable next steps, including the client's right to appeal the decision and instructions on how to reenter the system through CA. Documentation requirements are listed in the appendix. An intake decision notification must be documented in HMIS and include the following:
  - i. reason the client cannot enter the program, including reason for rejection by client or program (which includes redirection to the Housing Navigator), if applicable.
- Reasons for denial – Receiving Programs may only decline individuals and families found eligible for and referred through CA under limited circumstances and all interactions must be documented in the referral outcome screen in HMIS. Denials may include:
  - i. Program is at capacity:
    - there is no actual vacancy available;

- the household presents with more people when referred by the Housing Assessor and the Receiving Program cannot accommodate the increase;
  - the household was denied by the sole property owner/landlord contracted by the Receiving Program; or
  - based on their individual program policies and procedures the Receiving Program has determined that the individual or family cannot be safely accommodated or cannot meet tenancy obligations with the supports provided by the program.
- i. Unable to Contact / No Show / Ineligible:
- the Receiving Program has been unable to make contact with the individual or family for seven (7) business days;
    - There must be a MINIMUM of three (3) attempts to contact using three (3) different methods.
  - the individual or family missed two intake appointments; or
  - The *Housing Navigator* has been unable to furnish eligibility documentation after case conferencing with CFTH.
- Housing First – All housing programs in The Way Home must participate in the Housing First model. Therefore, programs may not decline persons for refusal to participate in case management services. The Receiving Program must update the referral outcome in HMIS for any decisions to accept or reject a client. If the ineligible client has not otherwise been accommodated for the night, e.g. via an intervention by emergency services, the Receiving Program must notify the Housing Navigator, refer the client back to CA, and document that outcome in HMIS.
  - Client Choice – Clients may decline a referral because of program requirements that are inconsistent with their needs or preferences. For example, clients may decline to reside in an SRO unit. The Receiving Program must notify the Housing Navigator, refer the client back to CA, and document that outcome in HMIS.
  - Move-In – If the individual(s) experiencing homelessness is accepted, the *Receiving Program* must update the referral outcome in HMIS and arrange for move-in within 30 days. If the client does not move-in as scheduled or within three (3) business days of the original move-in date, the *Receiving Program* must notify and refer the client back to the *Housing Navigator* so that the outcome is documented in HMIS. To the extent possible, the *Receiving Program* will provide the individual or family with move-in assistance including transportation of household members and personal belongings.
- c. PSH to PSH Transfers – under the CoC Program, permanent supportive housing projects may serve individuals and families from other permanent supportive housing projects who originally met the eligibility requirements for PSH so long as the program participants were eligible for the original PSH (Section 423(f) of the McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by the HEARTH Act). This means that an individual or family may transfer from one PSH program to another under the CoC Program, if available. This could occur under the following circumstances:

- If there were another PSH program that better met the service needs of the program participant, especially as it relates to safety;
  - The PSH program participant is evicted by the landlord or housing program and the participant is still eligible for case management services; or
  - The current PSH program in which the individual or family is enrolled in has lost their funding.
  - PSH to PSH Referral – If any of the above scenarios apply, a staff member from the current PSH program must notify *Coordinated Access Staff* in writing via email to initiate the process of transferring the client.
    - i. The *CA Staff* will verify that the request falls within the guidelines for the transfer as outlined in this manual.
    - ii. The *CA Staff* will determine if a PSH unit is available, create the referral in HMIS, and notify the current PSH.
    - iii. The current PSH program will then be responsible for assisting the program participant in completing the documentation necessary for the new PSH.
    - iv. Transfer requests outside of the ones outlined in this manual will not be approved. If PSH program is not available, then the current PSH will have to continue to work with the program participant in securing alternate housing options.
- d. Referrals to and from other systems not using HMIS – The CAS appropriately addresses the needs of Veterans and individuals and families who are fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
- Domestic Violence (DV) – When a homeless or at-risk individual/household is identified by the CAS to be in need of domestic violence services, that individual/household is referred to the domestic violence hotline immediately. If the individual/household does not wish to seek DV specific services, the individual/household will have full access to the CAS, in accordance with all protocols described in this manual. If the DV helpline determines that the individual/household seeking DV specific services is either not eligible for or cannot be accommodated by the DV specific system, the helpline will refer the client to an *Assessment Hub* for assessment and referral in accordance with all protocols described in this manual.
  - i. Emergency Transfer Plan – An individual or household who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and/or human trafficking and is currently residing in a non-DV housing program may request a transfer if: the individual reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the individual remains within the same unit. If the individual is a victim of sexual assault, then they may also be eligible to transfer if the sexual assault occurred on the premises.  
 A client/tenant requesting an emergency transfer must expressly request the transfer by notifying their Case Manager. Case Manager and Client will troubleshoot any other possible options to resolve the situation in a safe way. Case Manager and Client will discuss how much of the situation the Client wants to reveal to the Landlord to possibly resolve the situation. If the situation cannot be

resolved and moving the Client is the only option, the Case Manager will contact Coordinated Access and request a transfer.

Coordinated Access will discuss options with the Client and determine if the Client is eligible for a program that has an available space. The Client will be offered the option to go through the DV Coordinated Access process and receive services from a DV provider. In this situation the DV CAS will take over and the Client's record in HMIS will be closed upon transfer. If client declines DV services/programs, Coordinated Access will provide the next possible transfer and inform the Client of the program/location. At that point the Client can accept or deny the referral. If the Client approves of the transfer, the Case Manager will complete a warm hand off to the next program, assist with the transfer, and facilitate a mutual rescission with the Landlord. If the Client wants to deny the transfer, they will stay at the top of the list and wait for the next vacancy in a program they are eligible for. If the Client is in a Scattered Site program with a voucher or rental assistance through Rapid Re-Housing, the Case Manager can assist the Client with a unit transfer to a safer location.

- e. Veterans – When a homeless or at-risk individual is identified by the CAS to be a Veteran, additional questions concerning service era, length of service, and discharge status will be asked. If eligible for VA services, the Veteran will be given the option of being referred to the VA Drop-In Center. If the Veteran chooses that option, then that individual is referred to the VA Drop-In Center immediately. If the VA Drop-In Center determines that the individual seeking veteran specific services is not eligible for VA services, the *Housing Assessor* at the VA Drop-In Center will complete the CA Assessment in HMIS and will add the household to the appropriate waitlist in accordance with the processes outlined in this manual.

## 5. Housing Navigation

### a. Housing Navigators

1. Roles and Responsibilities - *Housing Navigators* are staff from designated community agencies. *Housing Navigators* office out of *Assessment Hubs*, their home agencies, or in the field. All *Housing Navigators*, *Outreach Workers*, and *Case Managers* operating as *Housing Navigators* carry the following responsibilities:
  - Directly assisting with pre-navigation to overcome any challenges related to gathering essential documentation (transportation, accompaniment to documentation appointments, gathering documentation on behalf of the household) and uploading in HMIS.
  - Overcoming any challenges related to the housing process (transportation, accompaniment to potential housing options, application and/or inspection process, landlord negotiation, etc.)
  - Securing voucher funding or additional financial assistance, if needed
  - Participation in case conferences and workgroups

- Responding to requests by the *CFTH*, as appropriate
- 2. Training Requirements – *Housing Navigators* are trained by the *CFTH*. The training consists of the “Housing Navigator Orientation” in addition to training HMIS training on the Coordinated Access workflow in HMIS and shadowing experienced Navigators in the field for a minimum of five (5) days.
- 3. Timeline – Navigators attempt to make contact with the client for seven (7) business days and all interactions must be documented in the referral outcome and case notes screen in HMIS.
  - There must be a MINIMUM of three (3) attempts to contact using three (3) different methods.
  - If the client cannot be contacted within 7 days, then staff move on to the next client on the list.
    - If a household contacts the Housing Navigator after the 7 days have expired, they will assist the household in reentering the system through CA.
  - Once staff contacts the client, the client must decide immediately whether to accept or decline the Housing Referral.
  - If the client accepts the Housing Referral, they moves forward in the next steps towards enrollment with the Receiving Program.
  - If the client declines the Housing Referral, then the next client on the waitlist is contacted and the client that refused is placed back on the appropriate waitlist with a note indicating the reason for refusal.

## 6. Case Conferences

- a. CFTH Staff – Case conferences are made available to support staff in the CA process and maintain compliance to the CA Operations Manual. The CFTH will determine which parties will attend a case conference, including but not limited to the Housing Assessor, the Housing Navigator, the Receiving Program, the client, and other contacts as determined necessary. The CFTH will make all logistical arrangements for the case conference, including but not limited to notifying all parties. Case conferences will be offered in the following areas:
  - 1. Coordinated Access
    - Housing Assessors may request a case conference, at their discretion, regarding any eligibility questions, client barriers, or technical assistance needed in the Coordinated Access intake and housing assessment process.
  - 2. Housing Referrals
    - The *CFTH* may require a case conference to review and resolve rejection decisions by *Housing Navigators* or *Receiving Programs*. The purpose of the case conference will be to resolve barriers to the client receiving the indicated level of service. Such a case conference will be held in all instances in which an individual or family is declined by a *Receiving Program*. Case conferences will be held in all instances in which an individual or family has declined two or more housing placement.
  - 3. Housing Navigation

- Housing Navigators may request a case conference, at their discretion, in circumstances in which a household is insufficiently engaged in actions necessary to secure a permanent placement or to overcome barriers in the navigation process.
4. Program Termination
- In cases in which a household is facing program termination, the Provider will notify the *CFTH*. The *CFTH* may then require a case conference to review and determine next steps. The purpose of the case conference will be to discuss interventions used to date and resolve barriers to securing permanent housing including plans to have the individual or family re-assessed for a more suitable housing program.

## **G. Fair Housing, Tenant Selection Plan, and Other Statutory and Regulatory Requirements**

The *CFTH* takes all necessary steps to ensure that the *CAS* is administered in accordance with the Fair Housing Act by promoting housing that is accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. The *CAS* complies with the non-discrimination requirements of the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in all housing transactions on the basis of race, national origin, sex, color, religion, disability status and familial status. This also includes protection from housing discrimination based on source of income. Additional protected classes under state law include sexual orientation (including gender identity), marital status, military discharge status, age (40+). Agencies cannot preference any protected class unless allowed by statute/regulation, or written waiver from their funding or regulatory body (i.e. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development).

All Authorized User Agencies who enter into an MOU for the *CAS* agree to take full accountability for complying with Fair Housing and all other funding and program requirements. The MOU requires User Agencies to use the *CAS* in a consistent manner with the statutes and regulations that govern their housing programs.

The *CFTH* will request from each Authorized User Agency their tenant selection plan and any funding contract that requires or allows a specific subpopulation of persons to be served. For instance, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs will show funding contract, a single-gender program must produce its HUD waiver. It is further recognized that the Fair Housing Act recognizes that a housing provider may seek to fulfill its “business necessity” by narrowing focus on a subpopulation within the homeless population. The *CAS* may allow filtered searches for subpopulations while preventing discrimination *against* protected classes.

## **H. Evaluating and Updating CAS Policies and Procedures**

The implementation of the *CAS* necessitates significant, community-wide change. To help ensure that the system will be effective and manageable for homeless and at-risk households and for the housing and service providers tasked with meeting their needs, particularly during the early stages of implementation, THE TX-700 Continuum of Care anticipates adjustments to the processes described in this manual. To inform those adjustments, the *CAS* will be periodically evaluated, and



there will be ongoing opportunities for stakeholder feedback, including but not limited to Referral and Receiving Program work groups convened and managed by the *CFTH*. Specifically, the *CFTH* is responsible for:

1. Leading periodic evaluation efforts to ensure that the *CAS* is functioning as intended, as needed.
2. Leading efforts to make periodic adjustments to the *CAS* based on evaluation efforts, as needed.
3. Ensuring that evaluation and adjustment processes are informed by a broad and representative group of stakeholders.
4. Ensuring that the *CAS* is updated as necessary to maintain compliance with all state and federal statutory and regulatory requirements.

Evaluation efforts shall be informed by metrics established annually by the *CFTH*, in conjunction with the *CoC Steering Committee* and *Coordinated Access Transition Team*. These metrics will be displayed on dashboards located on the *CFTH's* & community's websites and shall include indicators of the effectiveness of the functioning of the *CAS* itself.

## **I. Termination**


Any Authorized User Agency may terminate their participation in the *CAS* by giving written notice. Housing programs that are required to participate due to HUD guidelines will need HUD approval to terminate participation.

## Appendix



### FY2024 Housing Prioritization Tool

		Answer	Score
1	Where did you sleep last night?	Streets	4
		Shelter	2
2	Have you been homeless in the past?	Yes	2
3	How many times have you been homeless in the past 3 years?	4+	2
4	Frequent service user (calculated)	Yes	2
5	Do you or anyone in your household have a disabling condition?	Yes	4
6	How many times in the past 6 months have you accessed medical services in the ER?	1	1
		2-3	2
		4+	3
7	Do you have a serious physical health diagnosis that requires palliative care, hospice or terminal illness treatment? (Examples: symptomatic AIDS, cancer, tracheotomy, colostomy, open wounds with instructions to keep clean, end-stage renal disease, end-stage liver disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gherig's disease) terminal illness, or in hospice)	Yes	3
8	Have you ever been involuntarily hospitalized for mental health condition?	Yes	2
9	In the past year, have your drugs or alcohol usage had a negative impact on your life?	Yes	2
10	Have you ever been involved in the foster care system?	Yes	2
11	Have you ever been involved in the juvenile justice system?	Yes	2
12	How many times in the past year have you been arrested or been in jail/prison/juvenile detention?	1	1
		2-3	2
		4+	3
13	Are you homeless or do you remain homeless because someone is hurting you?	Yes	2
14	Has someone asked (or forced) you to have sex or sell anything in exchange for something?	Yes	1
15	Is someone threatening to harm you or your family if you don't do what they ask?	Yes	1
16	Do you have income?	No	1
Max Score:			36

	Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County Subject: Service Delivery  <i>Applies to: The Way Home CoC</i>	Housing Prioritization  <i>Effective: 11/13/2023</i>
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**PURPOSE:**

To ensure that homeless and at-risk individuals and families identified through The Way Home’s Coordinated Access Assessment Process receive services in a standard and expedient way, while ensuring the most efficient allocation of system resources.

**POLICY:**

It is the policy of The Way Home that individuals and families with the most severe homeless service needs with the longest documented lengths of time homeless, and who are least likely to end their homelessness in the absence of CoC support as identified by the Coordinate Access Process, are prioritized for housing. Homeless individuals with unsheltered status in locations deemed as posing an immediate health and safety risk to both the individual and the community at large will be our foremost priority, and they will be paired with housing pathways tailored to their specific needs.

**PROCEDURE:**

The Way Home Continuum of Care (TX-700) has established guidelines that outline the order of priority for housing homeless individuals and families. The coordinated access process consist of standardized assessments to assess one’s needs, generate a vulnerability score and collection of eligibility documentation. The goal of this policy is to ensure that those individuals and families who have spent the longest times in places not meant for human habitation or in emergency shelters, and who have the most severe service needs are prioritized for housing. Severity of service needs refers to individuals or families who have a history of high utilization of crisis services such as emergency shelters, street outreach, day centers, emergency rooms, jails, and psychiatric facilities as well as significant health or behavioral challenges, such as substance use disorders or functional impairments.

**ORDER OF PRIORITY IN CoC PROGRAM FUNDED PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**


1. Chronically homeless individuals and families with the longest documented history of homelessness and the highest vulnerability score of those exhibiting the most severe homeless service needs.
2. Literally homeless individuals and families with a disability with the longest documented history of homelessness and the high vulnerability score of those exhibiting the most severe homeless service needs.
  - a. The CoC has not identified any chronically homeless individuals and families who meets all of the criteria for housing under the first priority.
3. Third Priority – Literally homeless individuals and families with the longest documented history of homelessness and the highest vulnerability score of those exhibiting the most severe homeless service needs.
  - a. The CoC has not identified any chronically homeless individuals, families, or youth who meets all of the criteria for housing under the first priority.
  - b. The CoC has not identified any chronically homeless individuals, families, or youth who meet all of the criteria for the housing under the second priority.

#### **ORDER OF PRIORITY IN CoC AND ESG PROGRAM FUNDED RAPID REHOUSING**

1. First Priority – Literally homeless individuals and families with a disability with the longest documented history of homelessness and the high vulnerability score of those exhibiting the most severe homeless service needs.
  - a. The literally homeless individual, head of household of a family, or youth who has previously received RRH rental assistance is eligible for a new RRH referral twelve (12) calendar months after the RRH exit. This group will remain eligible for Diversion.
2. Second Priority – Literally homeless individuals and families with the longest documented history of homelessness and the highest vulnerability score of those exhibiting the most severe homeless service needs.
  - a. The literally homeless individual, head of household of a family, or youth who has previously received RRH rental assistance is eligible for a new RRH referral twelve (12) calendar months after the RRH exit. This group will remain eligible for Diversion.

#### **ORDER OF PRIORITY IN CoC, ESG, & HOME PROGRAM FUNDED HOMELESS PREVENTION & DIVERSION**

1. First Priority – Literally Homeless individuals and families with the highest vulnerability score of those exhibiting the most severe homeless service needs.
2. Second Priority – Imminently at Risk
  - a. The imminently at risk of homelessness individual, head of household of a family, or youth, when assessed through Coordinated Access, do not receive a score due to not being literally homeless.

	<b>Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County</b> <b>Subject: Service Delivery</b> <i>Applies to: The Way Home CoC</i>	<b>Recordkeeping Requirements</b> <i>Effective: 11/13/2023</i>
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#### **PURPOSE:**

To ensure that individuals and families experiencing homelessness and identified through The Way Home's Coordinated Access Assessment Process receive services in a standard and expedient way, while ensuring the most efficient allocation of system resources.

#### **POLICY:**

It is the policy of The Way Home that individuals and families with the most severe homeless service needs with the longest documented lengths of time homeless, and who are least likely to end their homelessness in the absence of CoC support as identified by the Coordinate Access Process, are prioritized for housing. Homeless individuals with unsheltered status in locations deemed as posing an immediate health and safety risk to both the individual and the community at large will be our foremost priority, and they will be paired with housing pathways tailored to their specific needs.

#### **PROCEDURE:**

The Way Home Continuum of Care (TX-700) has established guidelines that outline the recordkeeping requirements for recipients providing permanent housing to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. This policy provides uniform recordkeeping requirements for all permanent housing staff and partners, in order to document a participant's eligibility for either permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing. Additionally, all permanent housing providers are required to adhere to the CoC's Prioritization Policy.

#### **RECORDKEEPING REQUIREMENTS FOR PERMANENT HOUSING**

- **PSH Eligibility Requirements:**

- In order to qualify for PSH, participants must meet the HUD Definition of Chronic Homelessness which includes:
  1. Evidence of homeless status
    - a. That the participant is residing in a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter or a safe haven, and
  2. Evidence of the duration of the homelessness
    - a. That the homeless occasion was continuous, for at least one year, or
      - **Note:** At least nine (9) months of the one-year period must follow the order or prioritization described below.
    - b. That the homelessness was experienced on at least four (4) separate homeless occasions over three (3) years, and
      - **Note:** At least three (3) occasions must be 3<sup>rd</sup>-party but the 4<sup>th</sup> occasion can be documented by self-certification.
  3. Evidence of diagnosis with one or more of the following conditions:
    - a. Substance use disorder,
    - b. Serious mental illness,
    - c. Developmental disability (as defined in Section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act of 2000),
    - d. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,
    - e. Cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or
    - f. Chronic physical illness or disability.

- **RRH Eligibility Requirements:**

- In order to qualify for RRH, participants must meet the HUD Definition of literal homelessness which includes:

1. Evidence of homeless status

- a. That the participant is residing in a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter or a safe haven, or
- b. Fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence.

- **Order of priority for documenting homeless status:**

1. 3<sup>rd</sup>-party documentation

- a. HMIS/comparable database record,
- b. Individual record of stay at emergency shelter,
- c. Written observation by an outreach or intake worker that has physically observed and includes a description of location and conditions where the participant is living, and/or
- d. Written observation by a community member that has physically observed where the participant is living.

- **Note:** A single encounter with a homeless service provider on a single day within 1 month that is documented through third-party documentation is sufficient to consider the individual homeless for the entire month unless there is evidence of a break (e.g., HMIS).

2. Intake worker observations

- a. Written observation by outreach and/or intake worker of encounters with the participant where he/she indicated their residency, and a description is included.

3. Self-certification

- a. Signed certification by the individual seeking assistance,
- b. Intake worker must still document living situation,
- c. Intake worker must document all steps taken to obtain higher order of documentation and why it was not obtained,
- d. Limited to rare & extreme cases, and
- e. Cannot be more than a total of 25% of households served in one grant year.

- **Documenting disability:**

1. Written verification from a professional licensed to diagnose & treat the disability AND certification that the disability is expected to be of long-continuing or indefinite duration & substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently,
2. Written verification from the Social Security or Veterans Administration,
3. Award letter for SSI/SSD/SSDI/VA disability benefits
  - Copies of disability checks
4. SSD Insurance check or Veterans Disability Compensation, or
5. Intake staff-recorded observation of a disability that is confirmed & accompanied by evidence above within 45 days of program intake.
  - [CoC Verification of Disability final rule.pdf](#)