# Greater Richmond Continuum of Care

## Standards for Prevention 2026

### Introduction

The Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC) has developed the following standards for partner agencies providing Virginia Homeless Solutions Program (VHSP) funded Prevention services. These standards were created in collaboration with Homeward, Commonwealth Catholic Charities, Hanover Safe Place, and the GRCoC Board.

### Description

Prevention assistance can aid households in preserving their current housing situation when at risk of losing housing. By targeting limited resources and assistance to households prior to losing housing, our community can help households avoid the trauma and cost of losing housing and becoming homeless while also decreasing the number of households that need costlier, more intensive homeless services and assistance. Essential elements for Prevention include trained staff that treat the screening process as an opportunity to explore a household's current housing crisis and be creative about options to retain housing. Prevention programs support exploring financial options; helps mediate conflicts with landlords, family, or friends connected to retaining housing; leveraging community and mainstream resources to retain housing; and assists in identifying resources and natural supports to retain housing. Assistance is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety).

### Eligibility Criteria

In order to be eligible for Prevention assistance/services, an individual or family must:

a. Face an eviction from or other loss of their primary nighttime residence within 14 days; AND
b. Not have a subsequent residence identified; AND
c. Not have the resources or support networks to obtain permanent housing.

Prevention resources must furthermore be targeted to households with less than 30% of Area Median Income (AMI). The GRCoC Board may elect to set additional target criteria to better serve the Greater Richmond community.

### Determination of Eligibility

For all services/assistance, an initial evaluation to determine eligibility of households will be conducted by Prevention staff. The evaluation will be as concise as possible and center on confirming that the household is within fourteen days of losing housing, has no other permanent housing identified, and does not have the resources or networks to obtain permanent housing. Confirmation of imminent housing loss may include:

- A court order or formal eviction notice
- Oral or written statement from the owner or renter of the current residence that the individual or family is not allowed to stay for more than 14 days
- Evidence that an individual or family staying in a hotel or motel that they are paying for does not have the financial means to stay for more than 14 days

Confirmation of lack of resources and support networks may include a certification by the head of household or other, written documentation.

**Types of Prevention Assistance**

The primary services provided by Prevention providers are listed below. Because Prevention is tailored to the needs and situation of each household, the type and intensity assistance provided to a household may include any combination of Prevention components. Prevention is, by nature, a creative process of empowering the client/household through natural supports and community resources and, as such, the list below is not exhaustive. Specific financial assistance provided by Prevention providers must be in compliance with grant funding requirements and used as a last resort.

Housing Resource Exploration:

- Reason(s) for imminent housing loss, avoiding losing housing if possible, asserting tenant rights and interventions through the eviction process
- Personal financial supports, finding creative methods to keep housing
- Exploring family and friend supports to retain housing (financial help)
- Making connections with, coordinating, and piecing together other community assistance programs and mainstream resources to stabilize and retain housing
- Using creative combinations of resources and assistance to retain housing

Mediation:

- Talking with landlords to help clients stay in housing, including conflict mediation and/or access to financial assistance or other community programs to pay rent or utility arrears, provide legal assistance, etc.
- Conflict resolution and mediation with family members/friends with whom a client is staying, including connections to other community resources (e.g. food pantry)

Financial Assistance:

- Financial assistance should always be paid to a third party (landlord/leasing agency, utility company, repair service) or provided in a non-cash payment (gas gift card, bus ticket)
- Financial assistance should be provided at the minimal level necessary for retention of safe, habitable housing
- Financial assistance should be verified and reality-tested to ensure that it will lead to a household retaining safe, stable housing

- Financial assistance may include (but is not limited to) paying rent or utility arrears; single-instance transportation to employment, housing, or other community assistance program(s); food and gas gift cards; and other, similar, indirect payments

**Amount, Duration, and Repetition of Prevention Services**

The amount and duration of Prevention services/assistance must be provided in compliance with grant funding requirements. Prevention providers should refer to regulations or parameters associated with awarded grants for specific guidance on eligible Prevention financial assistance. The GRCoC expects that households will receive the minimal amount of services/assistance necessary to retain safe, stable housing. Providers may choose to self-impose a maximum limitation on that amount and/or type of financial (such as rental arrears) or in-kind assistance that they will provide to a client in a single instance or over a period of time. However, no limitation shall be imposed for the number of times that a household may access and receive Prevention services (such as mediation and referrals to community resources), so long as the household meets the aforementioned eligibility criteria.

**Confidentiality**

All Prevention providers will establish, abide by, and keep updated a written policy to ensure client confidentiality, which will include development and maintenance of signed or verbal client confidentiality agreements.

**Conflicts of Interest**

All Prevention providers will establish a written policy to:

a. Formally document conflicts of interest among all employees, agents, officers, consultants, and board members; and
b. Take appropriate action(s) to ensure that all employees, agents, officers, consultants, and board members do not use their positions for purposes that are motivated by or give the appearance of being motivated by a desire for private gain for themselves or others.

**Complaints & Appeals**

Prevention providers must have an internal agency appeals process. If a client's complaints are not resolved under the internal agency appeals process, the dispute will move into the GRCoC appeals process.

**Data System**

Prevention providers must adhere to the Data Quality Plan approved by the GRCoC Board. Providers must use HMIS or a comparable data system if the agency is prohibited from using HMIS. All households that receive Prevention services or assistance must be entered into a "prevention" HMIS project, regardless of outcome. All Prevention financial assistance must be recorded in the relevant household's Prevention HMIS entry.

**Outcomes**

A standard set of outcomes will be reviewed for all Prevention providers. Outcomes will be based on the following data:

a. Percentage of permanent housing destinations.
b. The percentage of households that do not fall into homelessness within 1 year of project entry.
c. The amount of funding used for Prevention assistance and the returns to homelessness of households that received Prevention financial assistance.
d. Percent of persons served with a history of homelessness in the past five years.