



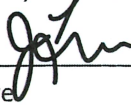
Lee County  
Continuum of Care  
Making Homelessness **Rare**, **Brief**, and **One-Time**

# Written Standards & Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures

Approved by the Lee County CoC Governing Board on  
January 17, 2018

Addendum I added June 30, 2026

Lee County CoC Board Chair Approval:

  
Signature

Jessica Turner  
Printed Name

7/08/2026  
Date

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## Record of Changes

| Version  | Reason for Change                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Date Approved by Governing Board | Signature of Board Chair or Co-Chair |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Original | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 1/10/2018                        | See Original                         |
| 1        | Updates made to programs and Coordinated Entry procedures                                                                                                                                                         | 2/13/2019                        | See Original                         |
| 2        | Updated Definitions and RRH standards to comply with HUD changes to Housing First guidelines. Updated Coordinated Entry to reflect Coordinated Entry updates                                                      | 9/12/2019                        | See Original Version 1               |
| 3        | Incorporate changes required for State and Federal ESG CARES Funds; Change SWFL Connect to Coordinated Entry                                                                                                      | 8/06/2020                        | See Original Version 2               |
| 4        | Incorporate changes to case management thresholds and outreach standards for Coordinated Entry referrals                                                                                                          | 8/25/2021                        | See Original Version 3               |
| 5        | Update Section I: Housing First due to Federal Policy Change, update RRH client selection process.                                                                                                                | 1/12/2022                        | See Original Version 4               |
| 6        | Updated Section V: Prioritization to include disaster policies, updated coordinated entry prioritization and added Rapid Rehousing Exit policies.                                                                 | 7/12/2023                        | See Original Version 5               |
| 7        | Removed Section F: Duplication of Section E regarding educational services. Updated IV. Section D: Now reflects current emergency shelter operations. Updated Appendix C: Now contains current staff information. | 8/16/24                          | See Original Version 6               |
| 8        | Removed gender identity language on page 12.                                                                                                                                                                      | 04/30/2026                       | See Original Version 7               |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |            |                        |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------------|
|   | Add Language under the Prevention Services section on page 28:<br><b>FOR CHALLENGE GRANT ONLY:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gross annual income must be less than 50% of area median income based on the income limits most recently published by HUD.</li> </ul> |            |                        |
| 9 | Addendum 1 added HUD requirements for the FY26 NOFO, updated local prioritization criteria and added immigration verification information.                                                                                                                                      | 07/08/2026 | See Original Version 8 |

## I. Overview

The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 reauthorized the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance programs. Through the enactment of the HEARTH Act, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the new Continuum of Care (CoC) Program interim rule.<sup>i</sup> The CoC Program interim rule requires that the CoC establish and consistently follow written standards for providing CoC assistance, in consultation with recipients of the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program. At a minimum, these written standards must include:

- Policies and procedures for evaluating individuals' and families' eligibility for assistance in all CoC and ESG programs.
- Policies and procedures for determining and prioritizing which eligible individuals and families will receive assistance through homelessness prevention, diversion, street outreach, emergency shelter, rental assistance, permanent supportive housing assistance, transitional housing assistance, joint transitional housing to rapid re-housing, and rapid re-housing assistance.
- Policies and procedures for coordination among emergency shelter providers, essential services providers, homelessness prevention, and rapid re-housing assistance providers; other homeless assistance providers; and mainstream service and housing providers.
- Standards for determining what percentage or amount of rent and utilities costs each program participant must pay while receiving homelessness prevention, rental assistance, or rapid re-housing assistance.
- Standards for determining how long a particular program participant will be provided with rental assistance and whether and how the amount of that assistance will be adjusted over time; and
- Standards for determining the type, amount, and duration of housing stabilization and/or relocation services to provide to a program participant, including the limits, if any, on the homelessness prevention or rapid re-housing assistance that each program participant may receive, such as the maximum amount of assistance, maximum number of months the program participant receive assistance; or the maximum number of times the program participant may receive assistance.

In addition, 24 CFR 578.7(a)(8) and CPD-17-01 requires the Lee County Continuum of Care (CoC) to establish and operate a Coordinated Entry System (CES) that provides an initial, comprehensive assessment of the needs of individuals and families for housing and services. Coordinated Entry is designed to provide standardized access and assessment and

*Lee County Continuum of Care Written Standards & Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures*

*Last Updated: June 30, 2026 – Revision 9*



coordinate housing and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Coordinated Entry facilitates referrals and housing placements to ensure that individuals and families experiencing homelessness receive appropriate assistance with both immediate and long-term housing and service needs.

The Lee County CoC agrees that these standards must be applied consistently across the entire CoC defined geographic area. Additionally, Lee County CoC members agree to administer their assistance in compliance with the CoC's written standards upon award of CoC, ESG or other applicable funds. Recipients and sub-recipients of CoC, ESG and other applicable funds may develop additional standards for administering program assistance, but these additional standards cannot be in conflict with those established by the Lee County CoC, the CoC Program interim rule, or any other federal guidance.

## II. Definitions & Cross-Cutting Requirements

### A. Housing First

The *Housing First* approach is a data driven solution to homelessness. *Housing First* approaches feature direct, or nearly direct, placement of persons who are homeless into permanent housing where supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals prior to permanent housing entry. *Housing First* approaches ensure that the risk factors that make finding and maintaining housing more challenging are used to screen people into assistance rather than screening them out.

*Housing First* requires that program participants are not screened out based on:

- Having too little or no income;
- Active or history of substance use;
- Type or extent of disability related support needed;
- Resistance to receiving services;
- History of eviction, poor credit, lease violations, or no lease history;
- Having a criminal record with exceptions for state-mandated restrictions; or
- History of victimization (e.g. domestic violence, sexual assault, childhood abuse).

The CoC maintains the commitment to unconditional acceptance of individuals into housing, especially for people with a high degree of vulnerability. For Outreach to continue to promote client service participation and safety, programs will provide clients written notice of "client conduct standards" upon intake. If at any time the client is inappropriate, intimidating or threatening, Outreach staff must follow policy HVS-Admin-Crisis-Violence Response.

All Lee County CoC service providers are required to implement a *Housing First* approach that ensures low-barrier program entry and the provision of supportive services, both during and post-housing, that promote housing stability and overall well-being.

### B. Housing/Project Types

The CoC must coordinate the implementation of a housing and service system within Lee County that meets the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Lee County's system encompasses the following:

1. **Outreach (SO)** - activities to locate, identify, and build relationships with unsheltered [homeless](#) people and engage them for the purpose of providing immediate support, intervention, and connections with [homeless](#) assistance programs and/or mainstream social services and housing programs.

2. **Coordinated Entry/Assessment (CE)** – a process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access and are quickly identified, assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and assistance based on their strengths and needs.
3. **Emergency Shelter (ES)** - any facility, the primary purpose of which is to provide a temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless and which does not require occupants to sign leases or occupancy agreements.
4. **Transitional Housing (TH)** - a project that is designed to provide housing and appropriate supportive services to homeless persons to facilitate movement to independent living within 24 months.
5. **Permanent Housing (PH)** - community-based housing without a designated length of stay in which formerly homeless individuals and families live as independently as possible.
  - a. *Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)* – a form of permanent housing that is short-term (up to 3 months) and/or medium-term (for 3 to 24 months) tenant-based rental assistance, as set forth in 24 CFR 578.51(c), as necessary to help a homeless individual or family, with or without disabilities, move as quickly as possible into permanent housing.
  - b. *Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)* – permanent housing with indefinite leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist homeless persons with a disability or families with an adult or child member with a disability to achieve housing stability.
6. **Supportive Services (SSO)** - community or in home based services necessary to ensure the retention of permanent housing. Includes, but is not limited to, mental health, substance abuse, and medical services.
7. **Diversion and Prevention Services (HP)** - a strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to or remain in permanent housing.

### C. Severity of Service Needs

In General, persons identified as having the most severe service needs, are those individuals or families for whom at least one of the following is true:

1. History of high utilization of crisis services, which include but are not limited to, emergency rooms, jails, and psychiatric facilities; and/or
2. Significant health or behavioral health challenges, substance use disorders, or functional impairments which require a significant level of support in order to maintain permanent housing.
3. For youth and victims of domestic violence, high risk of continued trauma or high-risk of harm or exposure to very dangerous living situations.

The Lee County CoC prioritizes individuals through a dynamic prioritization system, which draws on data from client assessments to indicate whether a person is chronically homeless, has suffered abuse and trauma which caused their current state of homelessness, suffers from significant mental health, physical health, and substance abuse issues. Homeless veterans, homeless families with children, and homeless individuals who indicate they are suffering the largest number of the vulnerability indicators will be prioritized for placement into housing and services.

### Category 1: Literally Homeless

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.

#### Verification Requirements

1. Written observation by an outreach worker; or
2. Written referral by another housing or service provider, which includes all due diligence documentation and/or narrative, including dates to validate homelessness eligibility; or
3. Certification by the individual or head of household seeking assistance state that (s)he was living on the streets or in a shelter, accompanied by an outreach or caseworker's statement of due diligence to establish the client's homeless status;
4. For individuals exiting from an institution – one of the forms of evidence above, and:
  - a. Discharge paperwork or written/oral referral, or
  - b. Written record of intake worker's due diligence to obtain above evidence and certification by individual that they exited the institution.

#### Category 2: Imminent Risk of Homeless

Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that: (i) 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.

#### Verification Requirements

1. A court order resulting from an eviction action notifying the individual or family that they must leave; or
2. For individuals and families leaving a hotel or motel – evidence that they lack the financial resources to stay; or
3. A documented and verified oral statement; and
4. Certification that no subsequent residence has been identified; and
5. Self-certification or other written documentation that the individual lacks the financial resources and support necessary to obtain permanent housing.

#### Category 3: Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes

Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with Category 3 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 during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application; (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during in the preceding 60 days; and (iv) Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers.

#### Verification Requirements

1. Certification by the non-profit or state or local government that the individual or head of household seeking assistance met the criteria of homelessness under another federal statute; and
2. Certification of no PH in the last 60 days; and
3. Certification by the individual or head of household, and any available supporting documentation, that (s)he has moved two or more times in the past 60 days; and
4. Documentation of special needs or 2 or more barriers.



#### Category 4: Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence

Households who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence; have no subsequent residence; and have no resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

##### Verification Requirements

1. For victim service providers:
  - a. An oral statement by the individual or head of household seeking assistance which states; they are fleeing; they have no subsequent residence; and they lack resources. Statement must be documented by a self-certification or a certification by an intake workers.
2. For non-victim service providers:
  - a. Oral statement by the individual or head of household seeking assistance that they are fleeing. This statement is documented by a self-certification or by a caseworker. Where the safety of the individual or family is not jeopardized, the oral statement must be verified; and
  - b. Certification by the individual or head of household that no subsequent residence has been identified; and
  - c. Self-certification, or other written documentation, that the individual or family lacks the financial resources and support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

#### Category 5: Chronically Homeless

The definition of “chronically homeless”, as stated in the definition of Chronically Homeless final rule is:

1. A “homeless individual with a disability,” as defined in Section 401(9) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act,<sup>ii</sup> who:
  - a. Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and
  - b. Has been homeless and living as described in paragraph (a)(i) continuously for at least 12 months or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights of not living as described in paragraph (a)(i). Status in institutional care facilities for fewer than 90 days will not constitute as a break in homelessness, but rather such stays are included in the 12-month total, as long as the individual was living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter immediately before entering an institutional care facility;
2. 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 (a) of this definition, before entering the facility;
3. 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 (a) or (b) of this definition (as described in Section I.D.2.(a) of Notice CPD-16-11), including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

##### Verification Requirements

All recipients of dedicated and non-dedicated CoC Program-funded PSH must obtain documentation to verify that an individual or family is chronically homeless for the purposes of eligibility.<sup>iii</sup>

1. Documentation from HMIS/Comparable Databases showing entries/exits at shelters; or
2. Written Observation by an outreach worker; or

3. Referral by another housing or service provider, which includes all due diligence documentation and/or narrative, including dates to validate homelessness eligibility; or
4. Documentation from institutions like hospitals, correctional facilities, etc., which include records about the length of stay, and are signed by a clinician or other appropriate staff; and
5. Signed certification by the individual seeking assistance describing how they meet the definition, which must be accompanied by the above documentation.

#### D. Violence Against Women Act of 2013 (VAWA)

On November 16, 2016, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development published the final rule regarding housing protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. This final rule prohibits an applicant for assistance or tenant assisted under a covered housing program from being denied assistance under, denied admission to, terminated from participation in, or evicted from housing on the basis or as a direct result of the fact that the applicant or tenant is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking, so long as the applicant otherwise qualifies for admission, assistance, participation or occupation.<sup>v</sup>

In addition, the VAWA Final Rule requires that each covered housing provider produce a detailed emergency transfer plan, which ensures that a tenant receiving rental assistance through or residing in a unit subsidized under a covered housing program who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking qualifies for an emergency transfer within the criteria stated in 24 CFR 5.2005 (e)(2). Lee County's Emergency Transfer plan, Attachment 1, encompasses all CoC, Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and HOME funded programs. All covered housing providers must maintain records on emergency transfers requested under 24 CFR 5.2005(e). Data must include the outcomes of each request and must be provided to Lee County upon request.<sup>vi</sup>

VAWA in no way limits the authority of the covered housing program to terminate assistance or evict a tenant under a covered housing program if the provider can demonstrate that an actual and imminent threat to other tenants or those employed at or providing service to the property of the covered housing provider would be present if that tenant is not evicted or terminated.

#### E. Educational Services

All Lee County CoC service providers must have written policies in place which ensure that individuals and families who become homeless are informed of their eligibility for and receive access to educational services. These policies should include how homeless families with children will be informed of and referred to the Lee County School Districts homeless students program, A.C.C.E.S.S. Such policies should also include information for all homeless individuals and families regarding local technical schools and universities, which may offer programs and assistance for persons who are homeless.

Additionally, programs that specifically serve families with children must have a staff person designated as the education liaison that will ensure that children are enrolled in school and connected to the A.C.C.E.S.S. program, as well as Head Start, if applicable.

#### G. Coordination with Mainstream Services

A primary function of case management is to make and coordinate referrals with community resources and mainstream services such as: Food Stamps, Medicaid, Child Care, SSI/SSDI, Veteran's Services, Section 8 Housing, mental health services, abuse services, etc. Staff from all funded agencies are required to make referrals and ensure clients access the referred services. Staff must also make necessary accommodations to ensure that clients needing additional assistance to utilize services have the necessary resources. Client files from funded agencies will be monitored to ensure that referrals and accommodations are appropriate, consistent, and timely.



## H. Diversion Practices

Diversion is implemented to ensure that scarce resources are preserved for the most vulnerable individuals and families. Diversion identifies alternative resources, encourages the development of problem-solving skills, and ultimately diverts individuals and families to a safe and secure temporary or permanent housing location outside of the CoC homelessness response system.

Prioritization for diversion services is largely based on client choice. Individuals and families must be willing to participate in mediation, problem-solving, and be willing to invest time in developing and implementing solutions that prevent or avoid homelessness. Additional priorities for diversion services may be established by service providers, so long as the policies are outlined in a written document(s) and do not conflict with any part of these standards.

## I. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

All projects funded by or through Lee County Human and Veteran Services must ensure that data on all persons served and all activities assisted are entered into the community-wide HMIS, Client Services Network (CSN), in accordance with HUD's standards on participation, data collection, and reporting under a local HMIS. If the recipient of funds is a victim service provider or a legal services provider, it may use a comparable database that collects client-level data over time (i.e., longitudinal data) and generates unduplicated aggregate reports based on the data. Information entered into a comparable database must not be entered directly into HMIS.

## J. Environmental Reviews

Lee County Human and Veteran Services serves as the responsible entity. Environmental reviews for applicable projects will be completed in accordance with 24 CFR Part 58.

CoC funded projects that consist only of leasing or rental assistance activities require a “limited scope” environmental review. The limited scope review need only analyze applicable environmental laws and authorities and may document that the project is in compliance with others without analysis. A limited scope review is appropriate only if the project consists entirely of leasing or rental assistance activities in existing residential buildings without any associated physical impacts, including repairs, rehabilitation, or new construction.

Limited scope reviews shall be completed for all CoC rental assistance activities which do not consist of any repairs, rehabilitation, or new construction using the “Limited Scope Environmental Review Instructions – Continuum of Care (CoC)” and “Limited Scope Environmental Review Format – Continuum of Care (CoC)” supplied by HUD.

## K. Just Enough Assistance

The “Just Enough Assistance” principle ensures that the minimum assistance necessary for a household to obtain and maintain stable housing is provided for the shortest period of time possible. Barriers to housing stability are identified at the outset of services and supports are provided to eliminate those barriers and improve the household’s ability to sustain housing.

## L. Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunities

The Lee County CoC operates the Coordinated Entry system in accordance with all federal statutes including, but not limited to: the Fair Housing Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act. All service providers, where assistance is provided through Community Planning and Development (CPD) programs, including assistance under the: HOME Investment Partnerships program, Housing Trust Fund program, Community Development Block Grant program, Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS program, Emergency Solutions Grants program, Continuum of Care program, or Rural Housing Stability Assistance



Program,<sup>xiii</sup> must ensure equal access to the HUD-assisted program in accordance with all general HUD program requirements as specified in 24 CFR Part 5.

Lee County CoC requires service providers to implement a person-centered approach that prioritizes participant choice and ensures access to services for all individuals and households experiencing homelessness in Lee County. This includes, but is not limited to, veterans, youth, families with children, single adults, seniors, and survivors of domestic violence..

All CoC and ESG funded service providers must ensure that all persons have fair and equal access to the Coordinated Entry process and all forms of assistance regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sex, Lee County CoC status, religious preference, disability type, or amount of disability, gender identity, perceived gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation.

Additionally, service providers must maintain compliance with the HEARTH Act's involuntary family separation provision, which ensures that emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing (PSH and RRH) providers within the CoC do not deny admission to or separate any family members from other members of their family based on age, sex, marital status, gender, gender identity, perceived gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability, when entering shelter or housing.

### M. Reasonable Accommodations

The Lee County CoC ensures that persons with disabilities have equal access to the Coordinated Entry System through compliance with the requirements of Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Lee County does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in the County's services, programs, or activities.

To request an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or a reasonable modification clients may contact Lee County Human and Veteran Services at 239-533-7900 or the service provider from which they are seeking assistance. Persons needing translation services should contact Lee County Human and Veteran Services at 239-533-7900 or the service provider from which they are seeking assistance. Accommodations and translation services will be provided at no cost to the requestor.

All Coordinated Entry access points must be accessible for persons with disabilities, include those who use wheelchairs and those who are least likely to access homeless assistance. Upon request, all agencies must provide appropriate and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities and/or Limited English Proficiency (LEP) so they can participate equally in the Coordinated Entry process, including qualified language interpreters, and other ways of making information and communications accessible to people who have speech, hearing or vision impairments, disabilities, or those with LEP.

### N. Recordkeeping

All projects must maintain and follow written intake procedures to ensure compliance with the homeless definition in §576.2. The procedures must establish the order of priority for obtaining evidence as third-party documentation first, outreach or intake staff observations second, and certification from the person seeking assistance third. Documentation of intake must include evidence relied upon to establish and verify homeless status; however, lack of third-party documentation must not prevent an individual or family from being immediately admitted to an emergency shelter, receiving street outreach services, or receiving services provided by a victim service provider.

The following documentation must be obtained in the priority order listed below.

1. Third Party Documentation – Agency Letter or Outreach Worker certification verifying client is chronically homeless in accordance with 24 CFR 578.3. Documentation must record all dated incidences of homelessness. If no 3rd Party Documentation exists, then the following info must be collected.
2. Staff Observations – Narrative from outreach or intake staff describing homeless events; where, when (dates), why; and work up documenting eligibility.  
And:
3. Client Certification – letter written by client or as dictated to Intake Worker explaining all incidences of homelessness
  - a. Dates of homelessness are required to be calculated and verified, even if the client is not determined to be Chronically Homeless

Records from HMIS or comparable database used by victim service or legal service providers are acceptable evidence of third-party documentation.

Documentation of outreach or intake staff observations from HMIS are acceptable only if HMIS retains an auditable history of all entries, including the person who entered the data, the date of entry, and records of changes made; and if HMIS prevents overrides or changes of the dates on which entries are made.

NOTE: Agencies making and receiving referrals must perform due diligence to document a client's homelessness status, as defined in 24 CFR 578.3. A letter from another agency simply stating the client is homeless does not constitute homelessness, as defined in 24 CFR 578.3.

## O. Strategy for Ensuring Compliance

CoC and ESG-funded service providers will be monitored annually by Lee County to ensure compliance with the standards and laws listed here within. The monitoring will include a review of the provider policies, procedures, and practices to ensure compliance with all federal regulations, laws, standards, rules, and any other local policies applicable to the program being monitored. The monitoring report will include any findings or concerns related applicable laws, standards, and rules specified herein.

## III. Core Elements of the Coordinated Entry System

The Lee County CoC Coordinated Entry process has four distinct elements: access, assessment, prioritization, and referral. The goals of the Coordinated Entry System are to provide:

### Access

- By ensuring that clients know how and where to gain access and receive assistance as efficiently and effectively as possible.

### Assessment

- By ensuring all clients receive standardized assessments and experiences when seeking assistance throughout the CoC, and
- By ensuring clarity, transparency, consistency, and accountability for homeless clients, referral sources, and homeless service providers throughout the assessment process.

### Prioritization



- By ensuring that clients who have the longest instances of homelessness and/or are the most vulnerable have priority access to limited resources.

### **Referral**

- By ensuring clients are referred to the type of intervention most appropriate to their immediate and long-term housing and service needs, and
- By ensuring CoC resources are being used to their full capacity to meet the needs of individuals and families who are homeless.

## **IV. Access**

In 2019, the Lee County CoC transitioned from a “no wrong door” approach to a Centralized Coordinated Entry System (CES) that uses access points as the front door for all housing resources. Client must call the local number or visit an in-person access point to receive an assessment and be prioritized for services. Staff will attempt diversion with all clients and provide a housing needs assessment with all clients not successfully diverted.

### **A. Affirmative Marketing Strategy**

The Coordinated Entry Affirmative Marketing Strategy (CEAMS) is a communication and management strategy designed to make the Coordinated Entry access points and CoC housing and services accessible to all persons regardless of sex, gender identity, perceived gender identity, sexual orientation, perceived sexual orientation, age, color, national origin, ethnicity, limited English proficiency, disability status, family status, marital status, or religion.

All providers participating in the Coordinated Entry system (CES) shall:

1. Identify special populations and subpopulations in the CoC jurisdiction who are eligible for CES services but have historically not participated, enrolled, and entered in CoC programs in rates commensurate with overall subpopulation prevalence.
2. Outline an outreach program that includes special measures designed to attract those groups identified as least likely to apply and other efforts designed to attract persons from the total population.
3. The effectiveness of the marketing program can be determined by noting if the program effectively attracted persons experiencing homelessness who are:
4. From minority groups, regardless of gender, as represented in the population of the CoC jurisdiction;
5. Persons with disabilities and their families;
6. Persons whose legal history, housing history, substance use history, behavior health status, physical health status, or any other attribute or characteristic has historically served as a barrier to gaining entry to CoC services and/or housing.

The Lee County CES shall be marketed throughout the CoC’s geographic area via the Lee County and Lee County Homeless Coalition websites, social media pages, and other means as deemed appropriate. All policies and procedures related to CES shall be advertised on the Lee County HMIS page: <http://www.leegov.com/dhs/csn/downloads>.

Additional efforts to carry out the CEAMS shall include:

1. Advertising in locations or media that are used and viewed or listened to by those identified as least likely to enter CoC services and housing, such as youth, individuals who are chronically homeless, and families with children;
2. Marketing CoC services and housing to specific community, religious, support organization or other groups frequented by those least likely to enter CoC services and housing;

3. Distribution of a brochure and other printed materials, which describe the Coordinated Entry process to be used by persons experiencing a housing crisis to locate, identify, and access CES services.
4. Incorporating information regarding compliance with the Fair Housing Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and the CEAMS into CES training protocols.

*In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Lee County does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in its services, programs, or activities. To request an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or a reasonable modification clients may contact Lee County Human and Veteran Services at 239-533-7900 or the service provider from which they are seeking assistance. Persons needing translation services should contact Lee County Human and Veteran Services at 239-533-7900 or the service provider from which they are seeking assistance. Accommodations and translation services will be provided at no cost to the requestor.*

## B. Privacy Protections & Participant Autonomy

The Lee County HMIS Privacy Notice describes the privacy policy of the Lee County HMIS and the agencies participating in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The notice outlines that personal information is collected only when appropriate, and no information may be used or disclose for any purpose other than for that of the program. Information may only be used or disclosed to comply with legal and other obligations. Before conducting a Coordinated Entry, the Client Informed Consent and Release of Information Authorization form must first be signed, and the client must give consent to the exchange of information on Client Services Network (CSN). All CSN users are required to sign a user agreement with further instruction related to protecting client's privacy and personally identifying information.

Individuals are free to decide what information they provide during the assessment process, and agencies are prohibited from denying assessment or services to individuals who refuse to provide specific information, unless that information is necessary to establish program eligibility according to program regulations. Additionally, the assessment and prioritization process cannot require disclosure of specific disabilities or diagnoses. Specific diagnosis or disability information may only be obtained for the purposes of determining program eligibility to make appropriate referrals, such as for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH).

Individuals shall be allowed to refuse to answer assessment questions and to refuse housing and service options without retribution or limitations on their access to assistance. Should an individual reject a housing or service option they will maintain their prioritization for the next available housing or service option. The housing or service option that was rejected shall be provided to the next individual according to the prioritizations outlined in the program prioritizations here within.

Individuals who do not sign the release of information should not have an assessment completed and shall not be denied services unless a federal statute requires collection, use, storage, and reporting of the individual's personally identifiable information as a condition of program participation.

## C. Safety Planning

No individual may be denied access to the assessment process, supportive services, housing or other services provided by victim specific or non-victim specific service providers on the basis that an individual is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking.

Victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking are not maintained in HMIS within the Lee County CoC. Individuals and families who are fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking will receive an assessment via paper, which will be entered into an HMIS comparable



database. Data maintained in comparable databases by victim-specific service providers is reconciled to Lee County HMIS data annually.

Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child or elder is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's or elder's welfare is a mandatory reporter,<sup>xv</sup> and must make a report to the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-962-2873 or online at [www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline/report-online](http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline/report-online). To report an allegation in Spanish or Creole, call 1-800-962-2873, for TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf) 1-800-453-5145. This toll-free number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with counselors waiting to assist you. All reports are confidential.

#### D. Emergency After Hours Services

The Coordinated Entry line is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Lee County has trained assessors who are available to complete Coordinated Assessments and add clients to the Connection List. Clients who call after hours seeking assessment for permanent housing resources will be entered into the Coordinated Entry system by after-hours call takers and receive referrals through the same process as all other applicants.

ACT, the local domestic violence shelter, provides services to all persons without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, citizenship, marital status, gender identity (or expression), language spoken, immigration status and any other protected class, through their 24-hour crisis hotline. The crisis hotline (239-939-3112) offers information and referrals, safety planning, and shelter admission assessments.

Lee County community partners have adopted a strong collaborative approach to reduce barriers for individuals seeking emergency shelter and/or transitional housing services. Several emergency shelters and transitional housing organizations are currently operational within Lee County and can be found under the Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing sections of the Lee County Pocket Guide to Emergency Assistance. These organizations provide temporary emergency shelter and/or transitional housing to Lee County residents who are experiencing a housing crisis and serve both individuals and families with children. Admission and acceptance are determined by availability and need, as well as established community and agency guidelines.

#### V. Assessment

All persons experiencing homelessness and in need of permanent housing will be required to contact Coordinated Entry by the local number to complete a Housing Needs Assessment (also known as a Coordinated Assessment). Upon completion the client will be referred to shelter if shelter space is available and appropriate; or to street outreach or other services. Individuals that are determined to be literally homeless, per HUD's definition of homelessness and are seeking housing services will be referred to a VI-SPDAT assessment, which will be used to prioritize the household for housing services. Shelter and outreach staff will assist the client in becoming "document ready," which includes the assembly of the necessary documents for housing.

*NOTE: All assessments conducted on paper must be recorded in HMIS within 48 hours of when the information was first collected.*

Information gathered and prioritizations made must be consistent with 24 CFR 576.400(e) and 24 CFR 578.7(a)(9). Under no circumstances should a client be told their assessment score or their qualification status based on their assessment score because the assessment tools may not produce a complete body of information necessary to determine household prioritization or program qualification. Case workers may be required to gather additional information relevant to the factors in accordance with CoC prescribed prioritization criteria to make prioritization and qualification decisions.

The Coordinated Entry process must not be used to screen people out due to perceived barriers to housing or services, including, but not limited to:

- Too little or no income;
- Active or a history of substance abuse;
- Domestic violence history;
- Resistance to receiving services;
- The type or extent of disability-related services or supports that are needed;
- History of evictions, lease violation or lack of leaseholder history;
- Criminal records; or
- Poor credit.

### A. Assessor Training

The HMIS Lead Agency will provide at least one annual training opportunity, which may be in-person, a live or recorded online session, or a self-administered training, to participating staff at organizations that serve as access points or otherwise conduct assessments. Annual training opportunities will be advertised on the Lee County Human and Veteran Services webpage, Facebook page, and solicited directly to service providers in the CoC's geographic area.

### B. Training Protocols

The purpose of the annual Coordinated Entry training is to provide all staff administering assessments with access to materials and training that clearly describe the methods by which assessments are to be conducted with fidelity to the CoC's Coordinated Entry process, including its written policies and procedures.

Data Quality for all HMIS participating agencies will be monitored in accordance with the Lee County CoC Data Quality Plan, which is available on the Human Services website. (Link)

Coordinated entry training will include:

1. Basic HMIS training including data quality and data security training
2. Protocols for conducting assessments, including the CSN Policies and Procedures Manual
3. Training in the administration of the VI-SPDAT and Coordinated Assessment for participating agencies
4. A review of the Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures, which include the requirements for prioritization and the criteria for uniform decision-making and referrals
5. An overview of the requirements for use of assessment information to determine prioritization in accordance with CoC Written Standards

All training is tailored to the individual needs of the service agencies but based primarily on the Coordinated Assessment CSN User Manual available on the HMIS webpage: <https://www.leegov.com/dhs/csn/downloads>.

*Training protocols may vary by agency. The general Coordinated Entry System training protocols will be reviewed and updated by the Coordinated Entry Committee annually.*

## VI. Prioritization

Homelessness interventions, including Permanent Supportive Housing Rapid Re-Housing, and Joint Transitional Housing – Rapid Re-Housing will be prioritized based on the severity of service needs and vulnerability. The specific factors that



determine a household's position on the list to access housing resources and the structure of the referral process was crafted through the engagement of a diverse group of community partners, including individuals with lived expertise of homelessness, and people from groups disproportionately affected by homelessness and approved by the CoC Governing Board. The criteria seek to leverage CoC funds more effectively and address increases in unsheltered homelessness. The selection criteria for each intervention will be as follows:

#### A. Permanent Supportive Housing Criteria

The Coordinated Entry System will maintain separate lists for clients who are prioritized for Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing resources ("RRH List" and "PSH List"). Only individuals who score above an 8 on the individual VI-SPDAT will be considered for Permanent Supportive Housing resources unless a written exception is provided to and approved by Coordinated Entry staff. Not more than 50% of clients referred to Permanent Supportive Housing programs will be selected through the exception process.

Lee County's Coordinated Entry system identifies and prioritizes service needs for individuals seeking placement in permanent supportive housing programs as follows:

1. **Mental Health:** The first prioritization factor targets individuals and households with behavioral health conditions, traumatic head injuries, learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, or other mental health impairments. This score is based on questions 23-24 of the individual vulnerability analysis, or 26-27 of the family vulnerability analysis.
2. **Chronic Homelessness:** The second prioritization factor targets individuals and households who have experienced chronic homelessness, per HUD's definition of chronic homelessness. This score is based on questions 1-3 of the individual vulnerability analysis, or 5-7 of the family vulnerability analysis.
3. **Tri-Morbidity:** The third prioritization criteria will expedite placement into supportive housing for individuals with severe physical, mental health, and substance abuse issues. This score is based on questions 15-20, 21-22, and 23-24 of the individual vulnerability analysis, or 28 of the family vulnerability analysis.
4. **Lack of Capacity for Self-Care:** The fourth prioritization criteria will expedite placement into housing for individuals and households who indicate that they have difficulty taking care of daily needs. This score is based on question 13 of the individual vulnerability analysis, or 17 of the family vulnerability analysis.
5. **Household Member 60 years of age or older:** The fifth prioritization factor targets individuals who are 60 years of age or older. This score is based on the client's date of birth as recorded in HMIS.
6. **Veteran Status:** The sixth prioritization criteria will expedite placement into housing for individuals who have served at least one day of active duty in the United States Armed Forces, or who were disabled during a period of active-duty training. This score is based on household members' responses on the Client Enters Project screen in HMIS.

In cases where multiple applicants have the same number of these vulnerability indicators, priority will be given based on the by the length of time the client has been active in the Coordinated Entry System. Prioritization will be made according to the approved Lee County CoC Written Standards, which have been established in accordance with 24 CFR 576.400(e) and 24 CFR 578.7(a)(9).

When no Permanent Supportive Housing resources are available due to a lack of capacity, clients who would otherwise be prioritized for Permanent Supportive Housing may be referred to a Rapid Rehousing program. The client maintains "client choice," and may elect to instead wait for an opening in a permanent supportive housing program, without penalty. No more than 25% of the referrals made to Rapid Rehousing programs from Coordinated Entry will be selected from the PSH list. Clients selected from the PSH will be referred in order, according to the prioritization criteria above.

## B. Rapid Rehousing/Joint TH-RRH Criteria

The Coordinated Entry System will maintain separate lists for clients who are prioritized for Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing resources (“RRH List” and “PSH List”). Not more than 25% of individuals and families who score above an 8 on the individual VI-SPDAT or above a 9 on the Family VI-SPDAT will be referred to for Rapid Rehousing resources. Not more than 50% of clients referred to Rapid Rehousing/ Joint TH-RRH programs will be selected through the exception process.

Lee County’s Coordinated Entry system identifies and prioritizes service needs for individuals and families seeking placement in Rapid Rehousing programs as follows:

1. **Parents with Children:** The first prioritization factor targets households with children experiencing homelessness. This score is based on the number of children indicated on the Households Housing Needs Assessment.
2. **Household member 60 years of age or older:** The second prioritization factor targets individuals who are 60 years of age or older. This score is based on the household member’s date of birth as recorded in HMIS.
3. **Fleeing Domestic Violence:** The third prioritization criteria will expedite placement for individuals and families who meet HUD’s definition of Category 2 homelessness. This score is based on household members’ responses on the Coordinated Assessment screen in HMIS.
4. **Veteran Status:** The fourth prioritization criteria will expedite placement into housing for individuals who have served at least one day of active duty in the United States Armed Forces, or who were disabled during a period of active-duty training. This score is based on household members’ responses on the Client Enters Project screen in HMIS.
5. **First Time Homeless:** The fifth prioritization criteria will target individuals and families homeless for the first time as recorded on the Client Enters Project screen in HMIS.

Lee County CoC considers many factors when selecting clients for housing interventions. To maintain flexibility and consider input from agency partners, the CoC Manager and CE Coordinator will establish and maintain criteria for policy exceptions in collaboration with agency partners during regular Connect List meetings. Such criteria will comply with all non-discrimination policies contained in these Written Procedures and all other applicable rules and regulations.

Notwithstanding the prioritization criteria above, the Coordinated Entry System will accept referrals for justice-involved individuals from Lee County’s High Need High Utilizer Task Force (HNU) without requiring the completion of a VI-SPDAT. The number of referrals accepted from the HNU will not exceed five households per calendar year.

To facilitate the rapid transition out of the shelter for individuals and families who were homeless or precariously housed prior to Hurricane Ian’s landfall on September 28, 2022, priority for referral to rapid rehousing programs will be given to individuals and families who were housed in emergency shelters following the storm. The policies and procedures detailed in this document may be modified as needed in accordance with the CoC’s disaster plan.

In all programs, priority shall be given for eligible individuals and families who are relocating as per the Emergency Transfer Plan, and in accordance with 24 CFR 576.409. All CoC-funded transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing programs will ensure that applicants are prioritized according to the emergency transfer priority required under 24 CFR 578.99(j)(8).

Lee County CoC seeks to be a strong partner to local geographies affected by natural disasters. In these situations, Lee County CoC will leverage all resources under its purview to provide support to vulnerable homeless clients. ESG funding is one of the resources that Lee County CoC may use to support homeless people impacted by natural disasters.



In order to provide flexible and meaningful support, Lee County CoC reserves the right to focus grant funding and corresponding eligible component types to the most impacted areas. In these situations, Lee County CoC may make targeted grant awards to subrecipients that are governments and/or nonprofits to address direct deficits to existing programs, to fund local preparedness needs and requirements. Lee County CoC may also make strategic awards to expand shelter beds or renovate shelters damaged by the disaster. All activities that may be funded must still align with regulations that govern the Emergency Solutions Grant and with the local policies and procedures. ESG funding may also be targeted specifically to individuals and families staying in emergency shelters in the aftermath of a disaster.

Lee County CoC will temporarily modify its traditional rating and ranking process to award funding to areas of the County affected by disasters. The modification of the traditional rating and ranking process serves two purposes. First, it acknowledges that areas affected by disasters may not have the bandwidth to put forward applications. Second, it allows funding to be focused on the areas where it is most needed and will have the greatest impact. Lee County CoC may prioritize individuals and families served by FEMA Temporary Shelter Assistance, FEMA Direct Housing, state and local disaster sheltering programs, or any other federal, state, or local program designed to address the housing needs of persons affected by a natural disaster.

## VII. Referral

Clients who are assessed and prioritized by Coordinated Entry will be added to the Connection List and referred to appropriate resources. To the greatest extent possible, referrals should be person-centric, not program-centric (i.e., the end result will not always be PSH placement, but rather to match a highly vulnerable person to another appropriate housing resource). Individuals and agencies making referrals will make every effort to consider the individuals strengths, goals, risks, lived experiences, and choices in the referral process.

### A. Coordinated Entry

All individuals and families seeking permanent housing resources must be referred through Lee County's Coordinated Entry System. To be connected with these housing resources, an individual or family must:

1. Complete a Housing Needs Assessment (Coordinated Assessment) at a Coordinated Entry Access Point
2. Connect with outreach or shelter staff to complete the appropriate Crisis Needs Assessment
  - a. VI-SPDAT (Individuals)
  - b. F-VI-SPDAT (Families)
  - c. Y-VI-SPDAT (Youth)
3. Obtain Homeless Verification (Or self-certification for those fleeing Domestic Violence)
4. Obtain other documents as required by each housing program

### B. Connection List Meeting

Connection List meetings, formerly known as By Name List Committee meetings, are held to connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to housing resources, and will address the needs of high-risk individuals and those where the assessment process did not reveal the full depth and/or urgency of their situation. The meetings will be attended by representatives from the CoC Lead Agency, the HMIS Lead Agency, and agencies funded with CoC, ESG, TANF, Challenge Grant, and other federal, state, and local funds. Case managers, housing coordinators, street outreach workers, and shelter staff should attend these meetings to facilitate the housing process.

*Agencies funded through the Lee County Human and Veterans Services, with one of the funding sources identified above, MUST attend each Connection List Meeting.*

In the context of the Coordinated Entry process, determining eligibility is a project-level process governed by written standards as established in 24 CFR 576.400(e) and 24 CFR 578.7(a)(9). Coordinated entry processes incorporate mechanisms for determining whether potential participants meet project-specific requirements of the projects for which they are prioritized and to which they are referred.

**The assessment process cannot require disclosure of specific disabilities or diagnoses. Specific diagnosis or disability information may only be obtained for purposes of determining program eligibility to make appropriate referrals.**

Projects or units may be legally permitted to limit eligibility, e.g., to persons with disabilities, through a Federal statute which requires that assistance be utilized for a specific population, e.g, the HOPWA program, through State or local permissions in instances where Federal funding is not used, and Federal civil rights laws are not violated.

## VIII. Program Standards

### A. Eligibility

For all ESG and CoC-funded permanent housing programs, households must meet both the HUD definition of homelessness under **Category 1** or **Category 4**.

For beds prioritized for Chronically Homeless individuals and families, the head of household must have a qualifying disability and meet all of the criteria required as defined in 24 CFR 578.3. Once meeting the Category 1 or Category 4 and disability requirements, households are then prioritized as indicated below.

### B. Prioritization

Lee County's Coordinated Entry system identifies and prioritizes service needs in accordance with Section V: Prioritization, above.

### C. Minimum Standards

#### 1. Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) can only assist individuals with disabilities and families in which one adult or child has a disability. Supportive services designed to meet the needs of the program participants must be made available to the program participants, but should not be required as a condition to remaining in housing.

All referrals to permanent supportive housing will be made through Coordinated Entry. The following minimum standards will be applied to all permanent housing programs:

1. Support services must be made available throughout the duration of stay in housing.
2. Program participants must enter into a lease agreement for a term of at least one year, which is terminable for cause. The lease must be automatically renewable upon expiration for terms that are a minimum of one month long, except on prior notice by either party.
3. There is no designated length of stay for program participants.

#### 2. Rental Assistance

Tenant, Sponsor, or Project-Based Rental Assistance can only provide assistance to individuals with disabilities and families in which one adult or child has a disability. Supportive services designed to meet the needs of the program participants must be made available to the program participants, but should not be required as a condition to remaining in housing.



#### *a. CoC Project Based Rental Assistance*

Program participants are required to pay a portion of their rent if they are receiving CoC Program Rental Assistance, unless they have no income at all. In permanent supportive housing and transitional housing projects,<sup>xvii</sup> the program participant's rent contribution **must be equal to the highest of:**

1. 30% of the family's monthly adjusted income (adjustment factors include allowances and deductions for disabled household members, medical expenses, childcare expenses, etc.);
2. 10% of the family's monthly gross income; or
3. Portion of welfare payments specifically designated by the public welfare agency to meet the family's housing costs.

Rental Assistance providers must assess, at least quarterly, each program participant's income to calculate the program participants rent contribution, and to determine the amount the recipient must pay toward rent. If the participant is required to pay for utilities, then a utility allowance must be factored into the rent calculation determination.

#### *b. HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance*

Housing selected should not exceed Fair Market Value (FMV) and, most importantly, be affordable to the client according to household size and income. HUD provides maximum HOME rent limits.<sup>xviii</sup>

The maximum HOME rents are the lesser of:

- The fair market rent for existing housing for comparable units in the area, as established by HUD under 24 CFR 888.111; or
- A rent that does not exceed 30 percent of the adjusted income of a family whose annual income equals 65 percent of the median income for the area, as determined by HUD, with adjustments for the number of bedrooms in the unit.

The HOME rent limits provided by HUD will include average occupancy per unit and adjusted income assumptions. If staff cannot locate, or if the client needs, housing that exceeds FMV, County Homeless (or other non-federal funds) may be used, or the client may pay the difference, if able.

Program participants are required to pay a portion of their rent if they are receiving rental assistance unless they have no income at all. Rental Assistance providers must assess each program participant's income to calculate the program participant's rent contribution and to determine the amount the recipient must pay toward rent. If the participant is required to pay for utilities, then a utility allowance must be factored into the rent calculation determination.

#### *c. Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)*

Direct referrals will be made from Coordinated Entry for veterans served through Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) due to the amount of funding currently available for the program. SSVF will continue to prioritize placements based on the vulnerability analysis scores and continue to work with providers to streamline processes in order to make progress towards accepting referrals.

### **3. Rapid Re-housing**

Continuum of Care funds may provide supportive services, as set forth in § 578.53, and/or short-term (up to 3 months) and/or medium-term (for 3 to 24 months) tenant-based rental assistance, as set forth in § 578.51(c), as necessary to help a homeless individual or family, with or without disabilities, move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing. When providing short-term and/or medium-term rental assistance to program participants. All rapid rehousing programs must use the "Just Enough Assistance" principle to ensure that the minimum

assistance necessary for a household to obtain and maintain stable housing is provided for the shortest period of time possible. Barriers to housing stability are identified at the outset of services, and supports are provided to eliminate those barriers and improve the household's ability to sustain housing. Rapid Re-Housing programs should provide the lightest touch possible for financial assistance, with the goal of ending financial assistance as quickly as possible, while ensuring long-term housing stability. Households are expected to contribute at least 30 percent of their total household income toward the payment of rent to encourage self-sufficiency and long-term sustainability.

All referrals to rapid re-housing will be made through Coordinated Entry. The following minimum standards will be applied to all ESG, HOME TBRA, and CoC funded rapid re-housing programs:

1. Support services in compliance with 24 CFR Part 576.10 (ESG) or 24 CFR 578.53 (CoC) must be made available throughout the duration of stay in housing.
2. Program assistance cannot be conditioned upon participation in services or classes, complying with work requirements, etc. or meeting conditions such as sobriety, medication compliance, etc., either before or after entry into the program.
3. Program participants must enter into a written lease agreement between the owner and program participant. The lease term must be at least one year, which is terminable for cause, and the lease must be automatically renewable upon expiration for terms that are a minimum of one month long, except on prior notice by either party.
4. Maximum participation in ESG and CoC funded rapid re-housing programs cannot exceed 24 months.
5. For all rapid re-housing programs, an income assessment is required at initial evaluation. At re-evaluation — which must take place not less than once annually for rapid re-housing — the participant's household must have an annual income that does not exceed 30% of AMI or 50% of AMI for ESG-CV funds. Program participants must be re-evaluated not less than once quarterly to ensure that the type and amount of assistance being received is necessary to retain housing.
6. Program participants must meet with a case manager not less than once per month to assist the program participant in ensuring long-term housing stability (see Appendix E). Case management caseloads will not exceed 30 program participants per case manager to facilitate monthly client contact. The project is exempt from once a month contact if the Violence Against Women Act of 1994<sup>xxi</sup> or the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act<sup>xxii</sup> prohibits the recipient carrying out the project from making its housing conditional on the participant's acceptance of services.
  - a. Supportive Services may not be received for longer than 6 months after rental assistance has ended.
  - b. Case managers must craft a "program exit plan" with all individuals or families placed in any Rapid Re-Housing program within one week before or after the Housing Move-In Date. While no specific form of this plan is required, each plan should include, at minimum:
    - i. The steps that will be completed by the client to establish sufficient income to maintain housing without rental assistance from the Rapid Re-Housing Program.
7. The rent charged for a unit must be reasonable in relation to rents currently being charged for comparable units in the private unassisted market and must not be in excess of rents currently being charged by the owner for comparable unassisted units. When possible, the rent must not exceed:
  - a. The fair market rent for existing housing for comparable units in the area as established by HUD under 24 CFR 888.111;
  - b. 30 percent of the adjusted income of a family whose annual income equals 65 percent of the median income for the area, as determined by HUD, with adjustments for the number of bedrooms in the unit.



- c. **For ESG funded programs:** Rents must be reasonable and below fair market rent for existing housing for comparable units in the area as established by HUD under 24 CFR 888.111, unless a HUD approved waiver is in place.
- 8. The amount of grant funds used to pay monthly assistance for an eligible person may not exceed the difference between:
  - a. The lower of the rent standard or reasonable rent for the unit; and
  - b. The resident's rent payment calculated under § 574.310(d).
- 9. The amount of financial assistance granted may include all rental application fees, security deposits (not to exceed 2 months), last month's rent, moving expenses, and utility deposits.
- 10. Clients referred to Rapid Rehousing programs will be accepted regardless of barriers to housing, including but not limited to
  - a. Eviction history
  - b. Arrest history
  - c. Substance use issues
  - d. Mental health issues

#### 4. Joint Transitional Housing – Rapid Re-housing

Joint Transitional Housing-Rapid Re-Housing (TH-RRH) facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to Permanent housing (PH) within 24 months of entering TH. Grant funds may be used for acquisition, rehabilitation, new construction, leasing, rental assistance, operating costs, and supportive services.

All referrals to joint transitional housing and rapid re-housing must be made through Coordinated Entry. The following minimum standards will be applied to all joint transitional housing and rapid re-housing programs:

- 1. Maximum length of stay cannot exceed 24 months.
- 2. Assistance in transitioning to permanent housing must be made available/provided.
- 3. Supportive services must be provided throughout the duration of stay in transitional housing.
- 4. Program participants in transitional housing must enter into a lease, sublease or occupancy agreement for a term of at least one month. The lease, sublease or occupancy agreement must be automatically renewable upon expiration, except on prior notice by either party, up to a maximum of 24 months.

#### 5. Rapid Re-housing Exit Policies

Please refer to Addendum G for policies describing the criteria, procedure, notification and documentation requirements related to the discharge of clients from RRH and RRH-TH projects participating in Coordinated Entry.

#### 6. Transitional Housing

Transitional housing (TH) facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to Permanent housing (PH) within 24 months of entering TH. Grant funds may be used for acquisition, rehabilitation, new construction, leasing, rental assistance, operating costs, and supportive services.

All referrals to transitional housing must be made through the Coordinated Entry. The following minimum standards will be applied to all transitional housing programs:

- 1. Maximum length of stay cannot exceed 24 months.
- 2. Assistance in transitioning to permanent housing must be made available/provided.
- 3. Supportive services must be provided throughout the duration of stay in transitional housing.

Program participants in transitional housing must enter into a lease, sublease or occupancy agreement for a term of at least one month. The lease, sublease or occupancy agreement must be automatically renewable upon expiration, except on prior notice by either party, up to a maximum of 24 months.

## 7. Emergency Shelter

Emergency shelter provides temporary shelter for persons experiencing homelessness and does not require occupants to sign leases or occupancy agreements. Emergency shelters must be low barrier and housing focused, working to connect persons residing in the shelter with permanent housing resources as quickly as possible.

All referrals to the shelter will be made from street outreach or other designated homeless assistance program after any client has completed a Coordinated Assessment through Coordinated Entry, or directly from Law Enforcement, Lee Health. The following minimum standards will be applied to all emergency shelter programs:

1. Assistance in transitioning to permanent housing must be made available/provided.
2. Supportive services must be made available throughout the duration of stay in the emergency shelter.

## 8. Street Outreach

Street outreach efforts are linked to Coordinated Entry. Outreach staff receive referrals from Coordinated Entry, and engage clients within 72 hours. After initial engagement, outreach staff conduct Vulnerability Assessments with clients, as necessary. Lee County ensures that outreach workers have adequate access to both paper and electronic methods of administering a Vulnerability Assessment. Outreach staff are provided regular training to ensure that assessments are administered consistently across the CoC.

All referrals to homelessness assistance projects must be made through Coordinated Entry. Street outreach efforts must actively engage the unsheltered homeless population for the purposes of providing immediate support, interventions, and connections with homeless assistance programs and/or mainstream services. Additional minimum standards are assigned based on the funding source.

## 9. Prevention Services

Lee County CoC homelessness prevention programs provide rental assistance, utility assistance, and supportive services to at-risk and otherwise eligible individuals and families to prevent homelessness. Clients may access homelessness prevention services through Coordinated Entry or directly through any agency administering prevention programs. All prevention programs must integrate diversion practices and adhere to the “just enough assistance” principle to ensure housing stability. Additional minimum standards may be assigned based on the funding source.

### **FOR CHALLENGE GRANT ONLY:**

- Gross annual income must be less than 50% of the area median income (AMI) based on the income limits most recently published by HUD.

# IX. Planning

## A. Stakeholder Consultation

The Lee County CoC and HMIS Lead Agency facilitates ongoing planning and stakeholder consultation concerning the implementation of the Coordinated Entry System through Coordinated Entry Committee Meetings. The Committee is intended to develop an accurate picture of the number and characteristics of Lee County persons who are homeless in order to provide targeted assistance. In addition to collecting information, objectives include developing a provider survey to establish resources and identify gaps and provide a user group for HMIS users for training and updates.



In addition to Committee meetings, the Lee County CoC solicits feedback annually from funded agencies and households that participated in Coordinated Entry to gather data regarding the quality and effectiveness of the entire Coordinated Entry experience. Data is gathered through the following methods:

1. Surveys:
  - a. A survey will be made available to gather data from individuals who have participated in the Coordinated Entry system. Clients will be notified by their caseworkers that the survey is available and feedback is appreciated.
  - b. A survey to gather data from funded agencies is sent during the month of January by the Lee County Homeless Coalition. Agencies are notified via direct e-mail of the availability of the survey.
2. An annual focus session conducted during at least one Coordinated Entry Committee meeting, and at least one Connection Meeting.

The Lee County CoC and HMIS Lead Agency evaluate the feedback received and make necessary updates to the Coordinated Entry process, and these written policies and procedures if necessary to improve user experience.

## B. Quality Evaluation

Annual Coordinated Entry System monitoring will be conducted by the HMIS lead agency, and will include a review of system performance measures, participating agency survey data, client survey data, and adherence to the requirements of these policies. The monitoring report will be presented to the CoC Governing Board and general membership for review and feedback.

## C. Discharge Planning

Each CoC service provider must develop and implement, to the maximum extent practicable, policies and protocols for the discharge of persons from public funded institutions and systems of care (such as health care facilities, foster care or other youth facilities, or correction programs and institutions) in order to prevent such discharge from immediately resulting in homelessness for such persons.

CoC and ESG funded service providers will be monitored annually by Lee County to ensure compliance with the standards and laws listed above. The monitoring will ensure that appropriate discharge policies, procedures, and practices have been developed and implemented. The monitoring report will include any findings or concerns related to discharge planning.

## D. System Performance

A critical aspect of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, (the “Act”) as amended, is a focus on viewing the local homeless response as a coordinated system of homeless assistance as opposed to homeless assistance programs and funding sources that operate independently in a community. To facilitate this perspective the Act now requires communities to measure their performance as a coordinated system in addition to analyzing performance by specific projects or project types.

With the 2016 CoC funding round, HUD introduced a series of system performance measures requiring each CoC to provide reporting that aggregates data from each individual program in response to a series of performance based elements describing the efficacy of the CoC. To this end, the Act established a set of criteria for HUD to use that require all CoCs to report their system-level performance to HUD. The intent of this criteria or “system performance measures, is to encourage CoCs and ESG program recipients, as well as all other homeless assistance stakeholders in the CoC, to regularly measure their progress in meeting the needs of people experiencing homelessness in their community and to report this progress to HUD.

The following provides the resulting system performance measures that each program—emergency, rapid rehousing, transitional and permanent housing—will similarly be measured, as applicable to program type.

|    | RELEVANT PROJECT TYPE* |    |     |    |    | SYSTEM PERFORMANCE MEASURES and CoC GOALS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----|------------------------|----|-----|----|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | SO                     | ES | RRH | TH | PH |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 1a |                        | X  | X   | X  | X  | <b>Length of Time Persons Remain Homeless</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average length of time persons in ES and SH. <b>Goal: &lt;30</b></li> <li>Average length of time persons in ES, SH, and TH. <b>Goal: &lt;45</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 1b |                        | X  | X   | X  | X  | <b>Length of Time Persons Remain Homeless</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average length of time persons in ES, SH and PH. <b>Goal: &lt;120</b></li> <li>Average length of time persons in ES, SH, TH, and PH. <b>Goal: &lt;120</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 2  |                        | X  | X   | X  | X  | <b>Returns to Homelessness</b><br>Measurement of clients exiting from any project type to a permanent housing destination in the date range two years prior to the production of the system performance report as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of those exiting from ES who returned to homelessness. <b>Goal: &lt;30%</b></li> <li>Percentage of those exiting from TH returning to homelessness. <b>Goal: &lt;10%</b></li> <li>Percentage of those exiting from PH returning to homelessness. <b>Goal: &lt;10%</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3  |                        | X  | X   |    |    | <b>Number of Homeless Persons</b><br>Measurement of the change in the CoC's total annual count of sheltered ES and TH homeless persons in HMIS. This metric only has relevance in the aggregate, as such, individual projects are not expected to use this measure.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 4  |                        |    | X   | X  | X  | <b>Employment and Income Growth for Persons in CoC Programs during the reporting period</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measurement of the percentage of adults (among stayers) who increased their earned income. <b>Goal: 45%</b></li> <li>Measurement of the percentage of adult stayers who increased their non-employment cash income. <b>Goal: 45%</b></li> <li>Measurement of the percentage of adult stayers who increased their total income <b>Goal: 45%</b></li> <li>Measurement of the percentage of adults (among leavers) who increased their earned income. <b>Goal: 45%</b></li> <li>Measurement of the percentage of adult leavers who increased their non-employment cash income. <b>Goal: 45%</b></li> <li>Measurement of the percentage of adult leavers who increased their total income. <b>Goal: 45%</b></li> </ul> |
| 5  |                        | X  | X   | X  | X  | <b>Number of Persons who Become Homeless for the First Time</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in number of active participants in ES and TH projects who were not previously enrolled in HMIS. <b>Goal: &gt;80%</b></li> <li>Change in number of persons entering ES, TH and PH with no prior enrollment in HMIS. <b>Goal: &gt;80%</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 6  |                        |    |     |    |    | <b>Reserved.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 7  |                        | X  | X   | X  | X  | <b>Successful Placement from Street Outreach and Successful Placement in or Retention of Permanent Housing.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |



|  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurement of the change in exits to permanent housing destinations. <b>Goal: &gt;65%</b></li> <li>• Measurement of the change in exits or retention of permanent housing from ES, SH, TH, and PH-RRH. <b>Goal: &gt;75%</b></li> <li>• Measurement of the change in exits or retention of permanent housing from PH (Not including PH-RRH). <b>Goal: &gt;85%</b></li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Whereas system performance measures are intended to provide a snapshot into the homeless response system as an entire coordinated initiative, project performance measures takes a closer look at each project within the CoC. The standards provided below establish the performance standards set by this CoC in assessing and evaluating each project's performance, individually. On August 6, 2020, the CoC Governing Board established the following performance targets for all CoC and ESG funded projects:

1. 75% of persons in ES, SH, TH, or PH-RRH should be exited to permanent housing destinations.
2. 45% of persons in CoC and ESG funded programs should maintain OR increase their income.
3. No more than 30% of persons who were exited from CoC and ESG funded ES and no more that 10% of persons who were exited from CoC and ESG funded TH, PH, and PH-RRH programs should return to homelessness within 1 year.

## E. Appeals Process

The CoC Written Standards outline that the most severe service needs will be determined by the household's Coordinated Assessment and VI-SPDAT, and will prioritize according to these written standards.. In the event that two or more homeless households within the same geographic area are identically prioritized for referral to the next available unit, and each household is also eligible for referral to that unit, the household that first presented for assistance will be referred to the next available unit. In the event that an individuals or family wishes to appeal a Coordinated Entry Assessment result, they shall make an appeal to the Lee County Human and Veteran Services using the Applicant/Client Appeal and Grievance Policy. Appeals for program denial shall be made directly to the agency which conducts such program, according to the agencies appeal or grievance policy.

Staff administering assessments and/or the staff supervisor should address any client complaints, whether discrimination based or not, as best as they can in the moment. Complaints that should be addressed directly by the assessment staff member or assessment staff supervisor include complaints about how they were treated by assessment staff, assessment center conditions, or violation of data agreements. Any other complaints should be referred to the Connection List Meetings for resolution as above. Any complaints filed by a client should note their name and contact information so they can be contacted.

## X. Appendix Table

|            |                                                                                                                   |
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| Appendix A | Emergency Transfer Plan for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking            |
| Appendix B | Notice of Occupancy Rights under the Violence Against Women Act                                                   |
| Appendix C | Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking                                  |
| Appendix D | Emergency Transfer Request for Certain Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking |
| Appendix E | Coordinated Entry Workflows                                                                                       |
| Appendix F | Coordinated Entry Referral Recipients Responsibilities                                                            |
| Appendix G | Rapid Re-housing Exit Policies                                                                                    |

|            |                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Appendix H | Endnotes                                                                                                                                                 |
| Appendix I | Incorporates the specific requirements of the FY 2026 Continuum of Care Competition and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program NOFO (CPD-2600-DC-0025) |

## XI. Appendix A

### Emergency Transfer Plan for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking

#### A. Emergency Transfers

Lee County and other local CoC, HOME or ESG funded housing providers are concerned about the safety of our tenants and such concern extends to tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. In accordance with the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Lee County along with other applicable housing providers allow tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to request an emergency transfer from the tenant's current unit to another unit. The ability to request a transfer is available regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The ability of Lee County and other applicable housing providers to honor such request for tenants currently receiving assistance, however, may depend upon a preliminary determination that the tenant is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and on whether Lee County or other applicable housing providers has another dwelling unit that is available and is safe to offer the tenant for temporary or more permanent occupancy.

This plan identifies tenants who are eligible for an emergency transfer, the documentation needed to request an emergency transfer, confidentiality protections, how an emergency transfer may occur, and guidance to tenants on safety and security. This plan is based on a model emergency transfer plan published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Federal agency that ensures that the rapid re-housing, tenant based rental assistance, and all other CoC, ESG, and HOME funded rental assistance programs are in compliance with VAWA.

#### B. Eligibility for Emergency Transfers

A tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, as provided in HUD's regulations at 24 CFR part 5, subpart L is eligible for an emergency transfer, if: the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant remains within the same unit. If the tenant is a victim of sexual assault, the tenant may also be eligible to transfer if the sexual assault occurred on the premises within the 90-calendar-day period preceding a request for an emergency transfer. A tenant requesting an emergency transfer must expressly request the transfer in accordance with the procedures described in this plan. Tenants who are not in good standing may still request an emergency transfer if they meet the eligibility requirements in this section.

#### C. Emergency Transfer Request Documentation

To request an emergency transfer, the tenant shall notify Lee County or other applicable housing provider's management office and submit a written request for a transfer to the assigned case manager. The tenant may, but is not required, to use the Emergency Transfer Request form provided in the attached Appendix C. Lee County and other applicable housing providers will provide reasonable accommodations to this policy for individuals with disabilities. The tenant's written request for an emergency transfer should include either:



1. A statement expressing that the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant were to remain in the same dwelling unit assisted under Lee County or other applicable housing provider's program; **OR**
2. A statement that the tenant was a sexual assault victim and that the sexual assault occurred on the premises during the 90- calendar-day period preceding the tenant's request for an emergency transfer.

#### **D. Confidentiality**

Lee County and other applicable housing providers will keep confidential any information that the tenant submits in requesting an emergency transfer, and information about the emergency transfer, unless the tenant gives Lee County and other applicable housing providers written permission to release the information on a time limited basis, or disclosure of the information is required by law or required for use in an eviction proceeding or hearing regarding termination of assistance from the covered program. This includes keeping confidential the new location of the dwelling unit of the tenant, if one is provided, from the person(s) that committed an act(s) of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking against the tenant. See the Notice of Occupancy Rights under the Violence Against Women Act. For All Tenants, Lee County and other applicable housing providers are responsible to maintain the confidentiality of information related to incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

#### **E. Emergency Transfer Timing and Availability**

Lee County or other applicable housing providers cannot guarantee that a transfer request will be approved or how long it will take to process a transfer request. Lee County or other applicable housing providers will, however, act as quickly as possible to move a tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to another unit, subject to availability and safety of a unit. If a tenant reasonably believes a proposed transfer would not be safe, the tenant may request a transfer to a different unit. If a unit is available, the transferred tenant must agree to abide by the terms and conditions that govern occupancy in the unit to which the tenant has been transferred. Lee County or other applicable housing provider may be unable to transfer a tenant to a particular unit if the tenant has not or cannot establish eligibility for that unit.

If Lee County or other applicable housing providers have no safe and available units for which a tenant who needs an emergency transfer is eligible, Lee County or other applicable housing providers will assist the tenant in identifying other housing providers who may have safe and available units to which the tenant could move. At the tenant's request, Lee County or other applicable housing providers will also assist tenants in contacting the local organizations offering assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

#### **F. Safety and Security of Tenants**

Pending processing of the transfer and the actual transfer, if it is approved and occurs, the tenant is urged to take all reasonable precautions to be safe.

Tenants who are or have been victims of domestic violence are encouraged to contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, or a local domestic violence shelter, for assistance in creating a safety plan. For persons with hearing impairments, that hotline can be accessed by calling 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).

Tenants who have been victims of sexual assault may call the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network's National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE, or visit the online hotline at <https://ohl.rainn.org/online/>.

Tenants who are or have been victims of stalking seeking help may visit the National Center for Victims of Crime's Stalking Resource Center at [https:// www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/ stalking-resource-center](https://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center).

*Lee County Continuum of Care Written Standards & Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures*

*Last Updated: June 30, 2026 – Revision 9*

## XII. Appendix B

### **LEE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE LEE COUNTY HUMAN AND VETERAN SERVICES Notice of Occupancy Rights under the Violence Against Women Act**

To all Tenants and Applicants, The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) provides protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. VAWA protections are not only available to women but are available equally to all individuals regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the Federal agency that oversees that the Rapid Re-Housing, Tenant Based Rental Assistance, and all other CoC, ESG, and HOME rental assistance programs are in compliance with VAWA. This notice explains your rights under VAWA.

**A HUD-approved certification form is attached to this notice. You can fill out this form to show that you are or have been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and that you wish to use your rights under VAWA.**

#### **Protections for Applicants**

If you otherwise qualify for assistance under the Rapid Re-Housing, Tenant Based Rental Assistance, or any other CoC, ESG, and HOME funded rental assistance programs, you cannot be denied admission or denied assistance because you are or have been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

#### **Protections for Tenants**

If you are receiving assistance under the Rapid Re-Housing, Tenant Based Rental Assistance, or any other CoC, ESG, and HOME funded rental assistance programs, you may not be denied assistance, terminated from participation, or be evicted from your rental housing because you are or have been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Also, if you or an affiliated individual of yours is or has been the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking by a member of your household or any guest, you may not be denied rental assistance or occupancy rights under the Rapid Re-Housing, Tenant Based Rental Assistance, or any other CoC, ESG, and HOME funded rental assistance programs solely on the basis of criminal activity directly relating to that domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Affiliated individual means your spouse, parent, brother, sister, or child, or a person to whom you stand in the place of a parent or guardian (for example, the affiliated individual is in your care, custody, or control); or any individual, tenant, or lawful occupant living in your household.

#### **Removing the Abuser or Perpetrator from the Household**

Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider may divide (bifurcate) your lease in order to evict the individual or terminate the assistance of the individual who has engaged in criminal activity (the abuser or perpetrator) directly relating to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.



If Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider chooses to remove the abuser or perpetrator, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider may not take away the rights of eligible tenants to the unit or otherwise punish the remaining tenants. If the evicted abuser or perpetrator was the sole tenant to have established eligibility for assistance under the program, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider must allow the tenant who is or has been a victim and other household members to remain in the unit for a period of time, in order to establish eligibility under the program or under another HUD housing program covered by VAWA, or, find alternative housing.

In removing the abuser or perpetrator from the household, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider must follow Federal, State, and local eviction procedures. In order to divide a lease, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider may, but is not required to, ask you for documentation or certification of the incidences of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

## Moving to Another Unit

Upon your request, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider may permit you to move to another unit, subject to the availability of other units, and still keep your assistance. In order to approve a request, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider may ask you to provide documentation that you are requesting to move because of an incidence of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. If the request is a request for emergency transfer, the housing provider may ask you to submit a written request or fill out a form where you certify that you meet the criteria for an emergency transfer under VAWA. The criteria are:

1. **You are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.** *(If your housing provider does not already have documentation that you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, your housing provider may ask you for such documentation, as described in the documentation section below.), AND*
2. **You expressly request the emergency transfer.** *(Your housing provider may choose to require that you submit a form or may accept another written or oral request.), AND*
3. **a.) You reasonably believe you are threatened with imminent harm from further violence if you remain in your current unit.** *(This means you have a reason to fear that if you do not receive a transfer you would suffer violence in the very near future.)*

**OR**

**b.) You are a victim of sexual assault and the assault occurred on the premises during the 90-calendar-day period before you request a transfer.** *(If you are a victim of sexual assault, then in addition to qualifying for an emergency transfer because you reasonably believe you are threatened with imminent harm from further violence if you remain in your unit, you may qualify for an emergency transfer if the sexual assault occurred on the premises of the property from which you are seeking your transfer, and that assault happened within the 90-calendar-day period before you expressly request the transfer.)*

Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider will keep confidential requests for emergency transfers by victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and the location of any move by such victims and their families.

Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider's emergency transfer plan provides further information on emergency transfers, and Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider must make a copy of its emergency transfer plan available to you if you ask to see it.

## Documenting You Are or Have Been a Victim of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault or Stalking

Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider can, but is not required to, ask you to provide documentation to “certify” that you are or have been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Such request from Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider must be in writing, and Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider must give you at least 14 business days (Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays do not count) from the day you receive the request to provide the documentation. Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider may, but does not have to, extend the deadline for the submission of documentation upon your request.

You can provide one of the following to Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider as documentation. It is your choice which of the following to submit if Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider asks you to provide documentation that you are or have been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

1. A complete HUD-approved certification form given to you by Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider with this notice, that documents an incident of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The form will ask for your name, the date, time, and location of the incident of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and a description of the incident. The certification form provides for including the name of the abuser or perpetrator if the name of the abuser or perpetrator is known and is safe to provide.
2. A record of a Federal, State, tribal, territorial or local law enforcement agency, court, or administrative agency that documents the incident of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Examples of such records include police reports, protective orders, and restraining orders, among others.
3. A statement, which you must sign, along with the signature of an employee, agent, or volunteer of a victim service provider, an attorney, a medical professional or a mental health professional (collectively, “professional”) from whom you sought assistance in addressing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, or the effects of abuse, and with the professional selected by you attesting under penalty of perjury that he or she believes that the incident or incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking are grounds for protection.
4. Any other statement or evidence that Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider has agreed to accept.

If you fail or refuse to provide one of these documents within 14 business days, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider does not have to provide you with the protections contained in this notice.

If Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider receives conflicting evidence that an incident of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking has been committed (such as certification forms from two or more members of a household each claiming to be a victim and naming one or more of the other petitioning household members as the abuser or perpetrator), Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider has the right to request that you provide third-party documentation within thirty (30) calendar days in order to resolve the conflict. If you fail or refuse to provide third-party documentation where there is conflicting evidence, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider does not have to provide you with the protections contained in this notice.

### Confidentiality



Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider must keep confidential any information you provide related to the exercise of your rights under VAWA, including the fact that you are exercising your rights under VAWA.

Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider must not allow any individual administering assistance or other services on behalf of Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider (for example, employees and contractors) to have access to confidential information unless for reasons that specifically call for these individuals to have access to this information under applicable Federal, State, or local law.

Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider must not enter your information into any shared database or disclose your information to any other entity or individual. Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider, however, may disclose the information provided if:

1. You give written permission to Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider to release the information on a time limited basis.
2. Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider needs to use the information in an eviction or termination proceeding, such as to evict your abuser or perpetrator or terminate your abuser or perpetrator from assistance under this program.
3. A law requires Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider or your landlord to release the information.

VAWA does not limit Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider's duty to honor court orders about access to or control of the property. This includes orders issued to protect a victim and orders dividing property among household members in cases where a family breaks up.

### Reasons a Tenant Eligible for Occupancy Rights Under VAWA May Be Evicted or Assistance May Be Terminated

You can be evicted and your assistance can be terminated for serious or repeated lease violations that are not related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking committed against you. However, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider cannot hold tenants who have been victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to a more demanding set of rules than it applies to tenants who have not been victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

The protections described in this notice might not apply, and you could be evicted and your assistance terminated, if Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider can demonstrate that not evicting you or terminating your assistance would present a real physical danger that:

1. Would occur within an immediate time frame, and
2. Could result in death or serious bodily harm to other tenants or those who work on the property.

If Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider can demonstrate the above, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider should only terminate your assistance or evict you if there are no other actions that could be taken to reduce or eliminate the threat.

### Other Laws

VAWA does not replace any Federal, State, or local law that provides greater protection for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. You may be entitled to additional housing protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking under other Federal laws, as well as under State and local laws.

### Non-Compliance With the Requirements of This Notice

You may report a covered housing provider's violations of these rights and seek additional assistance, if needed, by contacting or filing a complaint with HUD Miami Field Office, Brickell Plaza Federal Building, 909 SE First Ave, Room 500, Miami, FL 33131-3028, Phone: 350-536-5678, Fax: 350-536-5765.

### Additional Information

You may view a copy of HUD's final VAWA rule at:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/16/2016-25888/violence-against-women-reauthorization-act-of-2013-implementation-in-hud-housing-programs>.

Additionally, Lee County or any other CoC or ESG funded housing provider must make a copy of HUD's VAWA regulations available to you upon request. For questions regarding VAWA or to request a copy of the regulation, please contact Joan Hoxter, Grants Analyst, Lee County Human and Veteran Services, 2440 Thompson St., Fort Myers, FL 33901, Phone: 239-533-2902, E-mail: [jhoxter@leegov.com](mailto:jhoxter@leegov.com).

For help regarding an abusive relationship, you may call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or, for persons with hearing impairments, 1-800-787-3224 (TTY). For tenants who are or have been victims of stalking seeking help may visit the National Center for Victims of Crime's Stalking Resource Center at <https://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center>.

For help regarding an abusive relationship, sexual assault or stalking, you may also contact Abuse Counseling & Treatment's 24-Hour Hotline at 239-939-3112.

## XIII. Appendix C

U.S. Department of Housing  
and Urban Development

Form HUD50066 - OMB Approval No. 2577-0249  
Exp. (07/31/2017)

### Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking

**Purpose of Form:** The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 ("VAWA") protects qualified tenants, participants, and applicants, and affiliated individuals, who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking from being denied housing assistance, evicted, or terminated from housing assistance based on acts of such violence against them.

**Use of Form:** This is an optional form. A Public Housing Authority (PHA), owner or manager presented with a claim for continued or initial tenancy or assistance based on status as a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking (herein referred to as "Victim") has the option to request that the victim document or provide written evidence to demonstrate that the violence occurred. The Victim has the option of either submitting this form or submitting third-party documentation, such as:



(1) A record of a Federal, State, tribal, territorial, or local law enforcement agency (e.g. police), court, or administrative agency; or

(2) Documentation signed by the Victim and signed by an employee, agent or volunteer of a victim service provider, an attorney, a medical professional, or a mental health professional from whom the Victim has sought assistance relating to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, or the effects of abuse, in which the professional attests under penalty of perjury (28 U.S.C. 1746) that he or she believes that the incident of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking is grounds for protection under 24 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 5.2005 or 24 CFR § 5.2009.

If this form is used by the Victim, the Victim must complete and submit it within 14 business days of receiving it from the PHA, owner or manager. This form must be returned to the person and address specified in the written request for the certification. If the Victim does not complete and return this form (or provide third-party verification) by the 14th business day or by an extension of the date provided by the PHA, manager or owner, the Victim cannot be assured s/he will receive VAWA protections.

If the Victim submits this form or third-party documentation as listed above, the PHA, owner or manager cannot require any additional evidence from the Victim.

**Confidentiality:** All information provided to a PHA, owner or manager concerning the incident(s) of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking relating to the Victim (including the fact that an individual is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking) shall be kept confidential by the PHA, owner or manager, and such information shall not be entered into any shared database. Employees of the PHA, owner, or manager are not to have access to these details unless to afford or reject VAWA protections to the Victim; and may not disclose this information to any other entity or individual, except to the extent that disclosure is: (i) requested or consented to by the Victim in writing; (ii) required for use in an eviction proceeding; or (iii) otherwise required by applicable law.

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**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,  
DATING VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, OR STALKING:**

Date Written Request Received by Victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Other Family Members Listed on the Lease: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Perpetrator\*: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Note:** The Victim is required to provide the name of the perpetrator only if the name of the perpetrator is safe to provide and is known to the victim.

Perpetrator's Relationship to Victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s), time(s), and location(s) of the incident(s) of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking Occurred: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Description of Incident(s) (This description may be used by the PHA, owner or manager for purposes of evicting the perpetrator. Please be as descriptive as possible.):

|  |
|--|
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|  |
|  |

I hereby certify that the information that I have provided is true and correct and I believe that, based on the information I have provided, that I am a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking. I acknowledge that submission of false information is a basis for denial of admission, termination of assistance, or eviction.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Executed on (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

*Information provided is to be used by PHAs and Section 8 owners or managers to request a tenant to certify that the individual is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking. The information is subject to the confidentiality requirements of the HUD Reform Legislation.*

*This agency may not collect this information and you are not required to complete this form*



## XIV. Appendix D

### Emergency Transfer Request for Certain Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking

**Purpose of Form:** If you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and you are seeking an emergency transfer, you may use this form to request an emergency transfer and certify that you meet the requirements of eligibility for an emergency transfer under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Although the statutory name references women, VAWA rights and protections apply to all victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking. Using this form does not necessarily mean that you will receive an emergency transfer. See your housing provider's emergency transfer plan for more information about the availability of emergency transfers.

**The requirements you must meet are:**

**(1) You are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.** If your housing provider does not already have documentation that you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, your housing provider may ask you for such documentation. In response, you may submit Appendix B – Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking (Form HUD50066), or any one of the other types of documentation listed on that Form.

**(2) You expressly request the emergency transfer. Submission of this form confirms that you have expressly requested a transfer.** Your housing provider may choose to require that you submit this form, or may accept another written or oral request. Please see your housing provider's emergency transfer plan for more details.

**(3) You reasonably believe you are threatened with imminent harm from further violence if you remain in your current unit.** This means you have a reason to fear that if you do not receive a transfer you would suffer violence in the very near future. **OR**

**You are a victim of sexual assault and the assault occurred on the premises during the 90-calendar-day period before you request a transfer.** If you are a victim of sexual assault, then in addition to qualifying for an emergency transfer because you reasonably believe you are threatened with imminent harm from further violence if you remain in your unit, you may qualify for an emergency transfer if the sexual assault occurred on the premises of the property from which you are seeking your transfer, and that assault happened within the 90-calendar-day period before you submit this form or otherwise expressly request the transfer.

**Submission of Documentation:** If you have third-party documentation that demonstrates why you are eligible for an emergency transfer, you should submit that documentation to your housing provider if it is safe for you to do so. Examples of third party documentation include, but are not limited to: a letter or other documentation from a victim service provider, social worker, legal assistance provider, pastoral counselor, mental health provider, or other professional from whom you have sought assistance; a current restraining order; a recent court order or other court records; a law enforcement report or records; communication records from the perpetrator of the violence or family members or friends of the perpetrator of the violence, including emails, voicemails, text messages, and social media posts.

**Confidentiality:** All information provided to your housing provider concerning the incident( s) of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and concerning your request for an emergency transfer shall be kept confidential. Such details shall not be entered into any shared database. Employees of your housing provider are not to have access to these details unless to grant or deny VAWA protections or an emergency transfer to you. Such employees may not disclose this information to any other entity or individual, except to the extent that disclosure is: (i) consented to by you in writing in a time-limited release; (ii) required for use in an eviction proceeding or hearing regarding termination of assistance; or (iii) otherwise required by applicable law.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE PERSON REQUESTING A TRANSFER**

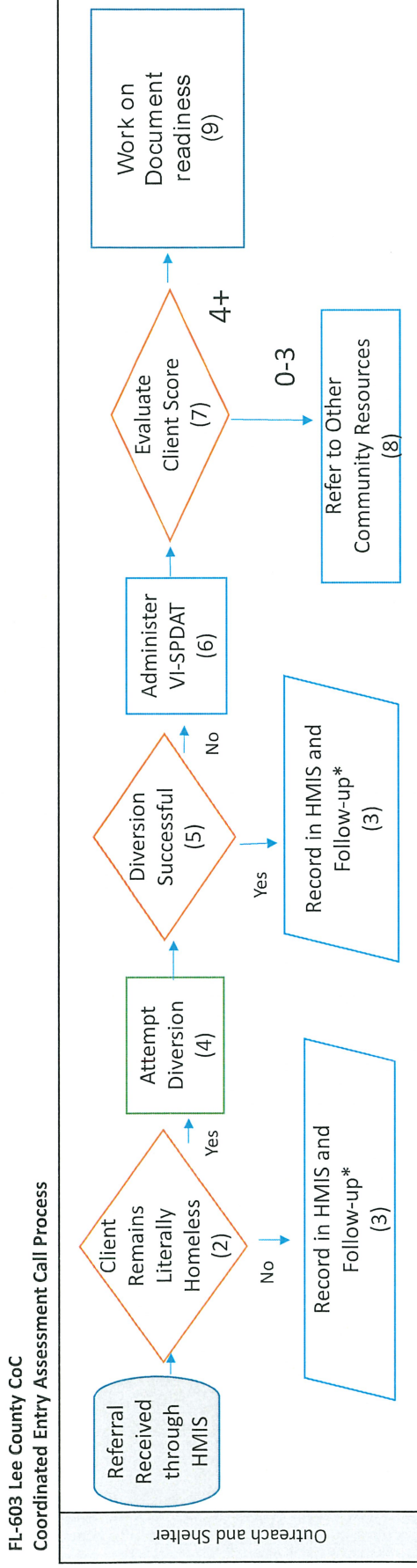
1. Name of victim requesting and emergency transfer: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your name (if different from victim's): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name(s) of other family member(s) listed on the lease:  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Name(s) of other family member(s) who would transfer with the victim:  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Address of location from which the victim seeks to transfer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Victim's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Name of the accused perpetrator (if known and can be safely disclosed):  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Relationship of the accused perpetrator to the victim: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Date(s), time(s), and location(s) of the incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Is the person requesting the transfer a victim of a sexual assault that occurred in the past 90 days on the premises of the property from which the victim is seeking transfer?  
  
☐ NO ☐ YES *If yes, skip question 11.*
11. Describe why the victim believes they are threatened with imminent harm from further violence if they remain in their current unit. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. If voluntarily provided, list any third-party documentation you are providing along with this notice:  
\_\_\_\_\_

This is to certify that the information provided on this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, and that the individual named above in Item 1 meets the requirement laid out on this form for an emergency transfer. I acknowledge that submission of false information could jeopardize program eligibility and could be the basis for denial of admission, termination or assistance, or eviction.

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



## COORDINATED ENTRY WORKFLOW



- (1) Referral Received through HMIS: Outreach/shelter makes contact with client through referral process
- (2) Client Remains Literally Homeless: Verify client remains unhoused or in ES/TH. YES: UW proceeds with CES. NO: Proceeds with CES.
- (3) Record in HMIS and Follow-up: Record successful diversion measures in HMIS
- (4) Attempt Diversion:
- (5) **Diversion Successful: YES:** Client finds alternative housing option (family/friend) and/or in connected with min. financial assistance necessary to obtain housing. **NO:** Client cannot identify an alternative at the moment, UW proceeds with CES.
- (6) Administer VI-SPDAT: Follows script for VI-SPDAT.
- (7) Evaluate Client Score: UW reviews score: 0-3 = referral to other sources; 4+ = UW proceeds with CES.
- (8) Refer to Other Community Resources: Other resources include utility assistance, budget classes, job training, resume assistance, food pantries. Update HMIS
- (9) Work on Document Readiness: **Record score in HMIS. Client will automatically be added to the connection list**

## XVI. Appendix F

### CE Referral Recipients Responsibilities

#### Initial Contact

1. Attempt to contact the client within 1 business day of receiving a referral
2. Attempt diversion
3. Discuss shelter options
4. Discuss VI-SPDAT
5. Schedule a follow up call/meeting not more than 14 days later
6. Document contact or attempted contact in the "Current Living Situation" screen in HMIS
  - a. Veterans- Enter into SSVF if appropriate

#### First Follow up Contact

1. Contact the client within 14 days of the previous call (Sooner if SSVF space becomes available)
2. Conduct VI-SPDAT and/or exception form if appropriate (Exception forms are mandatory for veterans)
3. Schedule follow up call not more than 45 days later
4. Document contact or attempted contact in the "Current Living Situation" screen in HMIS

#### Subsequent Contacts

1. Contact the client at least once every 30-45 days
2. Document contact or attempted contact in the "Current Living Situation" screen in HMIS
3. Discuss position on the list, problem solving, exception form if appropriate



## XVII. Appendix G

### RAPID RE-HOUSING EXIT POLICIES

- I. Purpose and Scope
  - a. These policies described the criteria, procedure, notification, and documentation requirements for related to the discharge of clients from RRH and RRH-TH projects participating in Coordinated Entry.
  - b. All policies and procedures outlined in this document are subject to funding guidelines. If a funder has guidelines that directly contradict a policy or procedure in this section, the funding guidelines will supersede.
- II. Client Exit and Follow Up (pre housing):
  - a. Criteria
    - i. Lee County CoC follows a Housing First philosophy. Clients may not be discharged from RRH/TH-RRH programs before being housed for any of the reasons listed under the Housing First or VAWA definitions in Section I of these Written Standards, or III.b.i.2 of this section.
    - ii. Clients may be discharged from RRH/TH-RRH programs before being housed for any of the reasons below, subject to the notification requirements in section II.b.ii
      1. Failure/refusal to contact case management staff after at least three documented attempts to contact the client within a two-week period
      2. Incarceration for a period of 60 days or more
      3. Refusal to accept a rental unit after being shown three viable units
    - iii. Clients must be discharged from RRH/TH-RRH programs before being housed for any of the reasons below, subject to the notification requirements in section II.b.ii
      1. Self-resolution (the household obtained permanent housing without program assistance)
      2. Voluntary withdrawal
      3. Harming, or threatening to harm case management staff
      4. Harming, or threatening to harm other household members
      5. Attempting to defraud the program
      6. Ineligibility (including but not limited to):
        - a. Over income
        - b. Not meeting homeless definition
        - c. Not in the geographic area of FL-603
        - d. Any eligibility requirement of the provider's specific funding source
  - b. Procedure and Notification
    - i. Discharge from an RRH/TH-RRH program before housing should only occur in the rare circumstances described in II.a.ii-iii, and in as transparent a manner as possible. Discharge prior to housing must be approved at the program level by the program manager.
    - ii. Prior to discharge, staff at the program level must notify, in writing or by email where possible:
      1. The client
      2. The CoC Manager
      3. The Coordinated Entry Coordinator
      4. The Outreach Worker assigned to the client before referral
      5. Staff in attendance at the biweekly case conferencing meeting (Connect List Meeting)
  - c. Follow up case management

- i. Clients discharged from RRH/RRH-TH programs prior to housing are ineligible for follow up case management from the housing provider, but remain eligible for street outreach, emergency shelter, and all other CoC services unless barred by other policies.
  - d. Documentation
    - i. The client's HMIS Records must
      - 1. Contain notes in the Coordinated Entry workgroup demonstrating the agency's efforts to house the client
      - 2. If the client was entered into the RRH/TH-RRH project in HMIS, the client must be exited as of the last day staff communicated with, or attempted to communicate with the client.
      - 3. Any other documentation required by the funding source
    - ii. The client's case file must
      - 1. Contain a Record of any correspondence and attempts to contact to the client regarding discharge.
      - 2. Contain a record that the client's discharge was approved by the program manager.
- III. Client Exit and Follow Up (post housing):
  - a. Households self-sufficient, compliant, and stably housed at program exit
    - i. Criteria
      - 1. Clients who have been successfully housed by an RRH/TH-RRH program may be considered stably housed and self-sufficient at the discretion of the program manager. In general, clients may be considered stably housed when case management staff has reviewed all supports and resources available to the client and determined that the client is no longer in need of the provider's rental subsidy to sustain housing.
    - ii. Procedure and Notification
      - 1. Program managers must approve all program discharges from RRH/TH-RRH programs
      - 2. Both client and landlord will be issued Rental Assistance Exit letters to indicate the end date of rental assistance. Clients and Landlords will be notified at least 20 days in advance of ending rental assistance. The Rental Assistance Exit letter must, at a minimum:
        - a. Specify the last date the agency will provide rental assistance
        - b. Indicate who will be responsible for ongoing rental payments, if applicable
        - c. Indicate that copies of the letter were provided to both the landlord and the client
    - iii. Follow-up Case management
      - 1. In general, all clients who received rental assistance and are discharged following a finding by the program manager that the client is stably housed should be offered Follow Up Case Management for up to six months after rental assistance ends.
      - 2. Follow Up Case Management is a voluntary service that a client may decline.
      - 3. Case managers will contact clients at least one time each month during follow up case management.
      - 4. If a client does not engage in follow up case management services in any given month, the provider may, at the discretion of the program manager, move forward with closing the case prior to the six-month period concluding.
      - 5. Follow up case management should be focused on housing retention. To the greatest extent possible, case management staff must communicate with clients and link them with community resources prior to discharge.



6. At the end of the follow up case management process, the client should be issued a final exit letter to indicate that case management services are ending
- iv. Documentation
    1. The client's HMIS Records must
      - a. Indicate the dates that rental assistance and follow up case management ended
      - b. Record at least one client contact or attempted client contact during each month of follow up case management
      - c. Indicate that the clients discharge was reviewed by the program manager
      - d. Any other documentation required by the funding source
      - e.
    2. The client's case file must
      - a. Include a copy of the rental assistance exit letter provided to the client and landlord
      - b. Include a copy of the final exit letter issued at the conclusion of follow up case management
  - b. Clients not self-sufficient at program exit
    - i. Criteria
      1. Housing Sufficiency is the primary goal of all RRH/TH-RRH programs. Clients who are not self-sufficient should only be exited from RRH/TH-RRH programs as a last resort. Additional notification and documentation requirements apply to these circumstances as detailed herein.
      2. Restricted discharge- Clients may not be discharged from RRH/TH-RRH programs due to:
        - a. Lack of perceived progress toward goals
        - b. Refusal to participate in mental health or substance use treatment services
        - c. Membership in any protected class detailed in the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunities definition in Section I of these Written Standards
        - d. Incarceration lasting 60 days or less (unless the incarceration is linked to activities described in section II.b.i.3-4
      3. Discretionary discharge- Subject to the notification requirements in section III.b.ii.1, clients may be discharged from RRH/TH-RRH programs due to:
        - a. Failure or refusal to meet at least monthly with case management staff (requires written warning to the client)
        - b. Refusal by the client to pay their share of the rent as agreed at program entry (requires written warning to the client)
        - c. Repeated violations of the residential lease (requires written warning to the client)
        - d. Willful destruction of the housing unit
        - e. Incarceration lasting more than 60 days
        - f. Evictions for cause
        - g. Other reasons which substantially interfere with the provider's capacity to serve the client (requires written warning to the client)
      4. Mandatory discharge- Subject to the notification requirements in section III.b.ii.2, clients must be discharged from RRH/TH-RRH programs due to:
        - a. Defrauding the program
        - b. Reaching the maximum amount of allowable assistance
        - c. Ineligibility, including exceeding maximum income

- d. Leaving the CoC geographic area with no plan to return, or signing a lease outside the CoC geographic area
  - e. Harming, or threatening to harm case management staff
  - f. Harming, or threatening to harm other household members
  - g. Voluntary withdrawal from the program
- ii. Procedure and Notification
  - 1. Discretionary discharges (III.b.i.3)
    - a. Discharges under this section should only occur as a last resort, with the approval of the program manager.
    - b. Program managers must promptly notify the CoC Manager and Coordinated Entry Coordinator by email that the client is being discharged from the program
    - c. To the greatest extent possible, case management staff must communicate with clients and link them with community resources prior to discharge.
    - d. Clients must be provided a discharge letter, indicating:
      - i. That they will be discharged from the program
      - ii. The date that rental assistance will end
      - iii. The reason for their discharge
      - iv. Whether follow up case management is being offered
      - v. That they have the right to appeal the decision as described in section IV
      - vi. If the client remains in possession of the rental unit at the time that the program manager approves the client's discharge from the program, this notice must be sent by certified mail.
    - e. Both client and landlord will be issued Rental Assistance Exit letters to indicate the end date of rental assistance. Clients and Landlords will be notified at least 20 days in advance of ending rental assistance. The rental assistance exit letter must, at a minimum:
      - i. Specify the last date the agency will provide rental assistance
      - ii. Indicate who will be responsible for ongoing rental payments, if applicable
      - iii. Indicate that copies of the letter were provided to both the landlord and the client
      - iv. If the client remains in possession of the rental unit at the time that the program manager approves the client's discharge from the program, this notice must be sent by certified mail.
      - v. Notification to landlords in cases where leases are terminated for cause with no right to cure is not required.
  - 2. Mandatory discharges (III.b.i.4)
    - a. Discharges under this section must be made with the approval of the program manager.
    - b. Program managers must promptly notify the CoC Manager and Coordinated Entry coordinator, by email, that the client is being discharged from the program
    - c. To the greatest extent possible, case management staff must communicate with clients and link them with community resources prior to discharge.
    - d. Clients must be provided a discharge letter, indicating:
      - i. That they will be discharged from the program
      - ii. The date that rental assistance will end



- iii. The reason for their discharge
  - iv. That follow up case management is not being offered
  - v. That they have the right to appeal the decision of the housing provider as described in section IV
  - vi. If the client remains in possession of the rental unit at the time that the program manager approves the client's discharge from the program, this notice must be sent by certified mail.
- e. Both client and landlord will be issued Rental Assistance Exit letters to indicate the end date of rental assistance. Clients and Landlords will be notified at least 20 days in advance of ending rental assistance. Notification to landlords in cases where leases are terminated for cause with no right to cure is not required. The Rental Assistance Exit letter must, at a minimum:
  - i. Specify the last date the agency will provide rental assistance
  - ii. Indicate who will be responsible for ongoing rental payments, if applicable
  - iii. Indicate that copies of the letter were provided to both the landlord and the client
  - iv. If the client remains in possession of the rental unit at the time that the program manager approves the client's discharge from the program, this notice must be sent by certified mail.
  - v. Notification to landlords in cases where leases are terminated for cause with no right to cure is not required.
- 3. Follow up case management
  - a. Subject to the discretion of the program manager, clients discharged under III.b.i.3 (discretionary discharges) may be provided up to six months of follow-up case management
  - b. If follow up case management is provided, the standards in section III.a.i.3 apply
- 4. Documentation- Mandatory and Discretionary discharges (III.b.i.3 and III.b.i.4)
  - a. The client's HMIS records must
    - i. Indicate the dates that rental assistance and follow up case management ended
    - ii. Indicate that the clients discharge was approved by the program manager
    - iii. Keep a record of all communications with the client regarding their discharge
    - iv. Any other documentation required by the funding source
  - b. The client's case file must
    - i. Include a copy of all correspondence to the client regarding their program discharge
    - ii. Include a copy of the rental assistance exit letter provided to the client and landlord
    - iii. Include a copy of the notification provided to the CoC manager and Coordinated Entry Coordinator
    - iv.

#### IV. Appeals

- a. Clients have a right to appeal their discharge from RRH/RRH-TH programs

- b. All RRH/RRH-TH programs must have a client appeal process in place at their agency. Appeals must be handled and determined by members of the agency who did not have direct oversight of the client case while enrolled
- c. Clients must be provided with a copy of the agency appeal process at program entry and exit
- d. Clients must also be notified that they may appeal their discharge from the program by sending an email or letter to the CoC Manager

V. Monitoring

- a. Lee County DHVS reserves the right to monitor client exits to ensure exit is documented appropriately. If DHVS reviews a client exit and has concerns regarding reason for exit, they may reach out to provider agency for additional information.



## XVIII. Appendix H

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR Part 578).

<sup>1</sup> (42 U.S.C. 11360(9))

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with 24 CFR 578.103,

<sup>1</sup> (Federal Register Document #2016-25888)

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR 5.2005 (b)(1))

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR 5.2005 (d)(3))

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR part 92)

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR part 93)

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR part 570)

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR part 574)

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR part 576)

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR part 578)

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR part 579)

<sup>1</sup> (42 USC 11361a)

<sup>1</sup> as specified by Florida Statute § 39.201(1)(a)

<sup>1</sup> On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, a diverse group of forty members of the community convened to reevaluate the process. The group included housing case managers, emergency shelter staff, street outreach workers, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and people with lived experience of homelessness. Participants had access to an optional demographic survey which was completed by 29 of the 40 participants. People who self-reported having lived expertise of homelessness comprised 37.9% of respondents. The group was socially diverse and included members of the community from groups disproportionately effected by homelessness at a higher rate than the general population.

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR 578.77(c))

<sup>1</sup> 24 CFR Part 92.252

<sup>1</sup> The rental assistance is subject to § 578.51(a)(1), but not § 578.51(a)(1)(i) and (ii); (a)(2); (c) and (f) through (i); and (l)(1).

<sup>1</sup> (24 CFR 578.37(a)(1)(ii)(F))

<sup>1</sup> (42 U.S.C. 13925 et seq.)

<sup>1</sup> (42 U.S.C. 10401 et seq.)

<sup>1</sup> (42 USC 11362)

## Addendum I Effective July 8, 2026

### I. Purpose and Scope

This Addendum supplements the Lee County CoC Written Standards & Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures (Revision 8, April 30, 2026). This Addendum replaces the Housing First program approach in Section II.A of the Written Standards with the program approach language required by HUD for FY 2026 CoC funding, establishes updated local prioritization criteria for Rapid Re-Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Transitional Housing and adds citizenship and immigration status verification information.

Where this Appendix conflicts with the Written Standards, this Appendix governs for FY 2026 CoC-funded projects and local prioritization criteria for Rapid Re-Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Transitional Housing.

Unless specifically modified by this Addendum, all remaining provisions of Section VI of the Written Standards remain in effect.

**Authority:** McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 11381-11389; 24 CFR Part 578; 24 CFR Part 576; Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026 (P.L. 119-75); NOFO CPD-2600-DC-0025; 21 U.S.C. § 856; 21 U.S.C. § 863.

### II. Program Approach (Replaces Written Standards Section II.A)

Section II.A of the Written Standards (Housing First) is superseded for FY 2026 CoC-funded projects and replaced with the following.

#### A. Program Approach

The Lee County CoC administers its homelessness assistance programs in accordance with the purposes of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11381, which are to promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; to provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, states, local governments and Indian Tribes or tribally designated housing entities to quickly rehouse homeless individuals, families, persons fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and youth while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused by homelessness; to promote access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs and programs funded with State or local resources; and to optimize self-sufficiency among homeless individuals and families.

For purposes of this Appendix, self-sufficiency, consistent with the purposes of the McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11381(4), means the ability to meet basic needs, including a place to live, without public or private assistance.

#### B. Program Priorities

The Lee County CoC and its funded projects shall be guided by the following HUD priorities in program design, project selection, and performance evaluation.

##### 1. Outcomes over Outputs

The CoC measures success by meaningful, sustained reductions in homelessness and increases in self-sufficiency - not by the number of beds created or filled. Projects are evaluated on exits to stable housing, increases in earned income, reductions in returns to homelessness, and progress toward participants' self-sufficiency goals.



## **2. A Balanced Continuum**

The Lee County CoC maintains a portfolio that includes Permanent Housing, Transitional Housing, Supportive Service Only, and HMIS projects. No single program type is treated as the default solution for all households. Project selection through the local competition process will reflect community need, available resources, and each project type's demonstrated effectiveness.

## **3. Treatment, Recovery, and Services**

The CoC encourages all funded projects to connect participants with substance use disorder treatment, mental health services, employment supports, and other services that address the root causes of housing instability. Consistent with 24 CFR 578.75(h), supportive service agreements should meet individual needs and advance individual progress towards self-sufficiency and independent living goals set forth in 42 U.S.C. 11386a(b)(1)(F).

Projects may require participants to be sober or to participate in treatment as a condition of assistance to the extent permitted under 24 CFR 578. This does not require eviction or exit from assistance for a first-time violation of a drug-related program policy or lease requirement.

## **4. Economic Self-Sufficiency**

One of the four statutory purposes of the CoC Program is to promote access to mainstream benefits and optimize economic self-sufficiency (42 U.S.C. § 11381; 24 CFR 578.1). Funded projects shall connect participants with mainstream benefits, workforce development centers, employers, childcare, and other supports needed to maximize income and economic stability. For participants able to pursue employment, this includes connections to job training and competitive employment opportunities. For participants for whom competitive employment is not a viable or appropriate goal, projects shall instead prioritize connections to disability benefits (SSI/SSDI), SNAP, Medicaid, and other mainstream resources to maximize economic stability. The CoC prioritizes projects that help participants exit homelessness to unsubsidized housing and prevent future returns to homelessness.

## **C. Nondiscrimination in Program Participation**

All CoC-funded projects must comply with the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 3601–3619), 24 CFR 578.93, and all other applicable federal civil rights laws, including VAWA protections in Section I.D of these Written Standards.

## **D. Street Outreach: Engagement with First Responders and Law Enforcement**

Street outreach project must, to meet threshold project quality requirements, demonstrate a history of, or a plan for, partnering with first responders and law enforcement to engage people living in places not meant for human habitation to access emergency shelter, treatment programs, reunification with family, transitional housing, or independent living. Projects must cooperate and not interfere with or impede the enforcement of local laws such as public camping and public drug use laws, and must assist, or be willing to assist, first responders in their efforts to engage homeless individuals.

# **III. Updated Prioritization Criteria**

## **A. Overview**

Amends Section VI. Prioritization of the Lee County CoC Written Standards by establishing updated local prioritization criteria for Rapid Re-Housing (RRH), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), and Transitional Housing (TH). These criteria were developed through stakeholder consultation and are intended to improve access to appropriate housing

interventions by considering household characteristics, vulnerability, functional limitations, and the likelihood that a given intervention will successfully resolve a household's housing crisis.

These prioritization factors guide the Coordinated Entry System only. They do not establish eligibility for any housing program, nor do they supersede eligibility requirements established by HUD, individual funding sources, grant agreements, or program regulations. Where a term is defined by applicable federal regulation, the federal definition governs.

## **B. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) Prioritization**

Rapid Re-Housing provides short- to medium-term rental assistance and supportive services to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness quickly obtain permanent housing and achieve housing stability, with a focus on self-sufficiency and reduced time in homelessness. The following factors shall be used to prioritize households for RRH.

1. **Fleeing Domestic Violence:** Prioritizes households fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, or other life-threatening conditions who have no safe alternative housing or support network.
2. **Parents with Children:** Prioritizes households that include a parent, legal guardian, or primary caregiver of at least one dependent child under age 18 who is residing with, or expected to reunify with, the household.
3. **First Time Homeless:** Prioritizes individuals and households experiencing homelessness for the first time, as documented in HMIS.
4. **Earned Income Through Employment:** Prioritizes households in which at least one adult is currently employed and receiving earned income at the time of assessment or referral.
5. **Veteran Status:** Prioritizes individuals who have served on active duty in the United States Armed Forces and meet the applicable federal definition of a veteran.
6. **Able to Return to the Workforce:** Prioritizes individuals who are unemployed or underemployed but are capable of obtaining and maintaining employment with appropriate housing stabilization, services, or workforce supports.
7. **Enrolled in Postsecondary Education or Workforce Training:** Prioritizes individuals actively enrolled in an accredited postsecondary education program, vocational or technical school, apprenticeship, or recognized workforce training program designed to improve employability or earnings.

## **C. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Prioritization**

Permanent Supportive Housing provides long-term housing stability combined with ongoing supportive services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness who have qualifying disabilities. PSH is intended for households with the highest levels of vulnerability and ongoing service needs. The following factors shall be used to prioritize households for PSH.

1. **Intellectual or Developmental Disability:** Prioritizes individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability that significantly limits independent functioning and workforce participation.
2. **Physical Disability:** Prioritizes individuals with a physical disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities and significantly restricts the ability to obtain or maintain employment.
3. **Age 62 or Older:** Prioritizes households with at least one member who is 62 years of age or older at the time of assessment or referral.
4. **Chronic Homelessness:** Prioritizes individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, consistent with HUD's definition, including those with a qualifying disability and long-term or repeated episodes of homelessness.

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5. **Unable to Return to the Workforce:** Prioritizes individuals whose age, disability, chronic medical condition, or behavioral health condition substantially prevents them from obtaining or maintaining employment.
6. **Fixed Income:** Prioritizes individuals whose primary source of income consists of recurring fixed benefits such as SSI, SSDI, Social Security retirement, pensions, or Veterans disability compensation.
7. **Veteran Status:** Prioritizes individuals who have served on active duty in the United States Armed Forces and meet the applicable federal definition of a veteran.

#### **D. Transitional Housing (TH) Prioritization**

Transitional Housing (TH) is a time-limited (up to 24-month) housing intervention that will provide temporary housing and supportive services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness who require additional assistance prior to transitioning to permanent housing. Transitional Housing is intended to promote housing stability, increase self-sufficiency, and address barriers to successful placement in permanent housing.

Unlike Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), the Coordinated Entry process does not establish a universal prioritization framework for Transitional Housing. Instead, the CoC has identified the target populations listed below for whom Transitional Housing may be an appropriate intervention based on the design and purpose of TH. As additional Transitional Housing resources become available, the CoC may establish project-specific prioritization and referral criteria consistent with the target population and program design of each funded project.

1. **Mental Health Service Needs:** Prioritizes individuals with behavioral or mental health conditions that create barriers to housing stability but do not meet HUD disability requirements for PSH eligibility.
2. **Transition-Age Youth (18–24):** Prioritizes individuals who are between the ages of 18 and 24 at the time of assessment or referral.
3. **Parents with Children:** Prioritizes households that include a parent, legal guardian, or primary caregiver of at least one dependent child under age 18 who is residing with, or expected to reunify with, the household.
4. **Substance Use Disorder:** Prioritizes individuals with a diagnosed or self-disclosed substance use disorder that creates barriers to housing stability and who would benefit from supportive housing services.
5. **Criminal Justice Re-Entry:** Prioritizes individuals re-entering the community from the criminal justice system who are experiencing homelessness or are at imminent risk of homelessness and require housing stabilization services.
6. **High Service Utilization:** Prioritizes households with frequent use of emergency shelters, healthcare, crisis response, or other publicly funded systems that do not meet HUD disability requirements for PSH eligibility.
7. **Fleeing Domestic Violence:** Prioritizes households fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions who lack a safe and stable housing destination.
8. **Institutional Discharge:** Prioritizes individuals being discharged from hospitals, residential treatment, detoxification programs, psychiatric hospitals, nursing facilities, or other medical or behavioral health institutions who are experiencing homelessness or lack a safe and stable housing destination upon discharge.

## **IV. Citizenship and Immigration Status Verification**

On November 26, 2025, HUD published a notice in the Federal Register interpreting the CoC and ESG programs as "federal public benefits" subject to the immigration eligibility restrictions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) (90 Fed. Reg. 54365, FR Doc. 2025-21120, Docket No. FR-6573-N-01, available at [federalregister.gov/documents/2025/11/26/2025-21120](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/11/26/2025-21120)).

This interpretation took effect immediately upon publication but does not itself establish a verification process; HUD states in the notice that it will issue further guidance on the means of verifying immigration status, to be coordinated with forthcoming Department of Homeland Security guidance.

The Lee County CoC will comply with any citizenship or immigration status verification requirements applicable to CoC and ESG programs once HUD's implementing guidance is issued. Lee County will update these Written Standards with an Addendum.