

Western PA CoC Written Standards Training 2025


PRESENTED BY DIANA T. MYERS AND ASSOCIATES, CONSULTANT FOR THE COC
MARCH 13, 2025

What are the Written Standards?

- Provide guidance for CoC and ESG programs related to service delivery
- Ensure that all programs are operating in a consistent, coordinated way that is compliant with HUD and CoC standards
- Required by HUD

Structure of Written Standards

- Standards for all project types
 - Includes recordkeeping and case management standards
- Standards by project type – specific standards that must be followed if you are operating PSH, RRH, etc.
- Appendices
- Optional Forms and Templates – separate document. Not required, but available as a resource



Standards for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Access

- Referrals must come through Coordinated Entry.
- Projects must follow CoC Order of Prioritization in filling vacancies.

Eligibility

- Literally homeless (Cat. 1) or Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV (Cat. 4)

AND

- At least one member of the household has a disability

*Please note: Disabilities of a child do not meet qualifications for chronically homeless

100% of CoC-funded PSH units are chronic dedicated

- This means that CoC PSH units must first be made available to households that meets HUD's chronically homeless definition.

Eligibility: Chronic Homelessness Definition

Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual or head of household ***with a disabling condition*** who has either:

Been continuously homeless for a year or more.

- Category 1 Homeless = sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g. streets or shelter)
- Stays in institutional care facilities for fewer than 90 days will not constitute a break in homelessness, but 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 the institutional care facility.

OR

Has had four (4) episodes of homelessness in the last three (3) years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the episodes was at least 7 consecutive nights.

- Category 1 Homeless = sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g. living on the streets OR living in a homeless emergency shelter)

Prioritization

- All CoC and ESG funded projects are required to prioritize households with the longest history of homelessness and with the most severe service needs for all available CoC resources through regional CE case conferencing.
- The determination of severe service needs will be based on the Housing and Service Needs Assessment Score, CE Assessment Tool score, and information presented during regional case conferencing.
- If there are no chronically homeless households choosing to occupy a particular PSH unit, the unit may then be rented to a non-chronically homeless household per the CoC's Order of Prioritization.

Prioritization

| Priority Bracket | Criteria | Tie-Breaker |
|------------------|--|--|
| First Priority | Special populations designated by the CoC | HN/SN Score, LOT Homeless, then CE Assessment Tool score |
| Second Priority | People experiencing chronic homelessness | HN/SN Score, LOT Homeless, then CE Assessment Tool score |
| Third Priority | All eligible households not included under First Priority or Second Priority | HN/SN Score, LOT Homeless, then CE Assessment Tool score |

Prioritization

In applying the order of priority, households shall be considered for:

- all counties they've expressed interest in via the CE assessment; AND
- all counties in the region where they are currently experiencing homelessness

Transfers into PSH

- If the household was chronically homeless at entry into their current project, the household will be prioritized in the Second Priority Bracket.
- Within each priority bracket, it will be determined via case conferencing where a transferring household will be prioritized compared to currently homeless households.
- While TH to PSH transfers are eligible under the order of priority, TH residents will not be prioritized for PSH transfers unless there are no other eligible chronically homeless households for the PSH project opening.

Documentation (PSH Specific)

- Documentation of Disability*
- Documentation of Chronic Homelessness Status*
Detailed guidance on recordkeeping related to documenting chronic homelessness can be found in the WS and HUD CoC Virtual Binder
- An executed occupancy agreement or lease*
- *See Documentation for All Project Types for additional requirements*

**there's a template for that!*

PSH Duration and Amounts

Each participant should be assessed at least annually to determine whether they are able to move from PSH to other permanent housing without supports.

- If exit is feasible, staff should support in this transition, including identifying alternative housing and connection to community supports.
- Staff are encouraged to assist participants in signing up for all appropriate subsidized housing waiting lists.

PSH Duration and Amounts

To determine rent for **rental assistance** projects, rent contribution or maximum occupancy charge is highest of the following:

- 30% of the family's monthly adjusted income;
- 10% of the family's monthly gross income; or
- If the family is receiving payments for welfare assistance from a public agency and a part of the payments is specifically designated by the agency to meet the family's housing costs, the portion of the payments that is designated for housing costs

PSH Duration and Amounts

- For projects that provide PSH using funds other than rental assistance funds (leasing or operating), the occupancy charge is optional and can be lower, but not higher, than the maximum occupancy charge outlined on the previous slide.
- Vacancy: If an assisted unit is vacated before the expiration of the lease, the project may pay no more than 30 days from the end of the month in which the unit was vacated.

PSH-Specific Standards

- Households must have a lease for at least one year which is automatically renewable for a term of at least one month and only terminable for cause.
- Scattered-site projects should engage landlords, including identifying available units, facilitating move-in, and ensuring participants' ongoing success in housing.
- Projects must exercise judgement and examine all extenuating circumstances in determining when violations are serious enough to warrant termination so that a PSH participant's assistance is terminated only in the most severe cases.

PSH-Specific Case Management

- Support services must be made available to participants, but they may not be required for continued eligibility.
- Case managers should offer monthly case management meetings, with more offered as needed.
- Household case management needs may decrease over time.

PSH-Specific Case Management

- For projects with operating or leasing dollars where occupancy agreements or sub-leases are used:
 - the role of the case manager and the role of landlord/ property manager should be separate and distinct
 - Case manager should be engaging the participant to build trust and rapport instead of focusing on holding the participant accountable to their lease.

PSH-Specific Case Management

- Scattered-site PSH projects with rental assistance dollars must provide housing search/ locator assistance. At a minimum, this should include:
 - Recruitment of landlords to provide housing opportunities
 - Provide education and outreach to landlords to address potential barriers
 - Assist households to find and secure appropriate rental housing. This may include developing lists of participating landlords and rental units and accompanying participants on their housing search.
 - Help households negotiate manageable and appropriate lease agreements

PSH-Specific Case Management

- Some households may need more assistance than others, due to barriers to tenancy (such as criminal record) or lack of experience with rental housing. Scattered-site PSH providers with rental assistance dollars should be prepared to provide a higher level of assistance to households who may need more support to identify an eligible unit. This may include:
 - Assisting the household to look up eligible units online or via other local resources
 - Assisting the household in calling landlords to inquire about available units
 - Accompanying the household to view units and meet with landlords
 - Assisting the household in reviewing and understanding lease terms

PSH-Specific Case Management

- HUD encourages communities to explore **Moving On strategies** for participants who may no longer need or want the intensive services offered in PSH but continue to need assistance to maintain their housing.
- There are indicators that a participant may be ready to explore Move On Options.

PSH-Specific Case Management

- PSH providers are encouraged to explore and support shared housing arrangements if this would support the long-term housing stability of project participants.
- Shared Housing arrangements may be particularly helpful in areas with high costs of living where renting an SRO or 1BR apartment may not be financially viable long term for individual participants.
- Each household must have its own lease.
- HUD has guidance on calculating rent contributions in shared housing.

PSH-Specific Case Management

- Shared housing is broadly defined as a living situation where two or more household units share a single housing unit, including sharing housing costs like rent and utilities.
- Each household unit has its own personal sleeping space, and there are common spaces that are shared such as bathrooms, kitchen and living room.
- Housing can be any unit with multiple bedrooms.
- The homeowner can live on the premises or not, but if the homeowner is related to the tenants, CoC and ESG dollars cannot pay rent.

Performance Measures

- **At least 96% of households** retain their housing or exit to permanent housing
- **At least 48% of adult participants** will increase their income through either employment or benefits.
 - **22% of adults** will increase earned/ employment income.
 - **30% of adults** will increase non-employment income.
- At least **60% of households** will be linked to mainstream resources.
- **No more than 6% of households** that exit to permanent housing after being homeless should become homeless again within 12 months.

Next Steps

- All CoC- and ESG- funded programs sign off by April 30, 2025 that their program(s) have reviewed the WS, understand them, will implement them, and will ensure that all new hires review the standards and recorded CoC trainings within 60 days of hire:
<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8216721/Western-PA-CoC-Written-Standards-Acknowledgment-Form-2025>
- If there are standards that programs are not implementing, make a plan to implement those standards by June 30, 2025.
- Feedback on the standards is welcome year-round:
<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7127925/Western-PA-CoC-Written-Standards-Annual-Feedback>