

HUD received valuable public comment on the definition of “**chronically homeless**” through the public comment process on the Emergency Solutions Grants program interim rule. Based on public comment, this rule for the Continuum of Care program is not adopting the full definition of “chronically homeless” that was included in the conforming amendments to the Consolidated Plan that were published as a part of the Emergency Solutions Grants program rule. Commenters raised concerns with the meaning of the phrase “where each homeless occasion was at least 15 days.” The concerns raised about this phrase, used for the first time in a definition of “chronically homeless,” has caused HUD to reconsider proceeding to apply a definition that includes this phrase, without further consideration and opportunity for comment. In this rule, HUD therefore amends the definition of “chronically homeless” in the Consolidated Plan regulations to strike this phrase. The removal of this phrase returns the definition to one with which service providers are familiar. The following highlights key definitions used in the Continuum of Care program regulations, and HUD solicits comment on these definitions.

Applicant is defined to mean an entity that has been designated by the Continuum of Care as eligible to apply for assistance on behalf of that Continuum. HUD highlights that the Act does not contain different definitions for “**applicant**” and “**collaborative applicant**.” HUD distinguishes between the applicant(s) designated to apply for and carry out projects (the “applicant”) and the collaborative applicant designated to apply for a grant on behalf of the Continuum of Care (the “collaborative applicant”). Please see below for more information on the definition of a collaborative applicant, which is the only entity that may apply for and receive Continuum of Care planning funds.

Centralized or coordinated assessment system is defined to mean a centralized or coordinated process designed to coordinate program participant intake, assessment, and provision of referrals. A centralized or coordinated assessment system covers the geographic area, is easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing or services, is well advertised, and includes a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool. This definition establishes basic minimum requirements for the Continuum’s centralized or coordinated assessment system.

Collaborative applicant is defined to mean an eligible applicant that has been designated by the Continuum of Care to apply for a grant for Continuum of Care planning funds on behalf of the Continuum. As discussed above, the “applicant” is the entity(ies) designated to apply for and carry out projects on behalf of the Continuum. In contrast to the definition of “applicant” above, the collaborative applicant applies for a grant to carry out the planning activities on behalf of the Continuum of Care. The interim rule simplifies the statutory language in order to make the Continuum of Care planning process clear.

HUD highlights that its definition of collaborative applicant does not track the statutory definition, which is found in section 401 of the McKinney-Vento Act. As will be discussed in further detail later in this preamble, the concept of collaborative applicant,

its duties and functions, as provided in the statute, is provided for in this rule. However, HUD uses the term Continuum of Care to refer to the organizations that carry out the duties and responsibilities assigned to the collaborative applicant, with the exception of applying to HUD for grant funds. The clarification is necessary in this rule because Continuums of Care are not required to be legal entities, but HUD can enter into contractual agreements with legal entities only.

Continuum of Care and **Continuum** are defined to mean the group that is organized to carry out the responsibilities required under this part and that is composed of representatives of organizations including nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons. These organizations consist of the relevant parties in the geographic area. Continuums are expected to include representation to the extent that the type of organization exists within the geographic area that the Continuum represents and is available to participate in the Continuum. For example, if a Continuum of Care did not have a university within its geographic boundaries, then HUD would not expect the Continuum to have representation from a university within the Continuum.

These organizations carry out the responsibilities and duties established under Subpart B of this interim rule. The Continuum of Care, as noted above, carries out the statutory duties and responsibilities of a collaborative applicant. HUD established the Continuum of Care in 1995. Local grantees and stakeholders are familiar with the Continuum of Care as the coordinating body for homeless services and homelessness prevention activities across the geographic area. Consequently, HUD is maintaining the Continuum of Care terminology, and the rule provides for the duties and responsibilities of a collaborative applicant to be carried out under the name Continuum of Care.

High-performing community is defined to mean the geographic area under the jurisdiction of a Continuum of Care that has been designated as a high-performing community by HUD. Section 424 of the McKinney-Vento Act provides that HUD shall designate, on an annual basis, which collaborative applicants represent high-performing communities. Consistent with HUD's substitution of the term "Continuum of Care" for "collaborative applicant," the definition of "high-performing community" in this interim rule provides for designation of Continuums of Care that represent geographic areas designated as high-performing communities. The standards for becoming a high-performing community can be found in § 578.65 of this interim rule and will be discussed later in this preamble.

Private nonprofit organization is based on the statutory definition for "private nonprofit organization." The term "private nonprofit organization" is defined in section 424 of the McKinney-Vento Act as follows: "The term 'private nonprofit organization' means an organization: '(A) no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any member, founder, contributor, or individual; (B) that has a voluntary board; (C) that