



North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care

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ATTACHMENTS C1, C2, D1, D2, D3, E1, E2 & E3 – Written Standards

Background

The goal of these written standards is to have clear guidelines for all ESG-funded agencies on the purpose, types, and methods for delivering services in the Balance of State CoC (BoS). These standards are required as part of the FY2015 ESG application and must be adopted by all agencies within the Balance of State that receive ESG funding.

The Balance of State CoC's written standards are to guide agencies in administering assistance so that the CoC can meet its vision¹ to ensure that individuals and families who become homeless return to permanent housing within 30 days.

Shelters, rapid re-housing, and prevention programs in the Balance of State CoC that receive ESG funding are required to participate in the BoS coordinated assessment process. Coordinated assessment assists the Balance of State CoC to end homelessness by increasing exits to housing, decreasing length of time homeless, and reducing returns to homelessness. The goal is to assist consumers in quickly accessing appropriate services to address housing crises through a right-sized, well-coordinated agency network².

¹ NC Balance of State Governance Charter, 2014: <http://www.ncceh.org/files/3443/download/>

² NC Balance of State Coordinated Assessment Toolkit, 2014: <http://www.ncceh.org/files/5195/>

Emergency Shelter

- *How shelters move homeless persons to permanent housing as quickly as possible*

Shelters in the BoS work within the CoC vision and federal goal of returning people who become homeless to permanent housing within 30 days. Shelters that receive ESG funds participate in the BoS coordinated assessment process, which is designed to move people who are homeless to permanent housing through:

- Diversion: For those households that have another safe option for housing for the night besides shelter, the system will assist the households to return to those options rather than entering the homeless system. National data show that diversion programs reduce entries into homelessness.
- Streamlining referral process: The coordinated assessment system coordinates referrals to permanent housing programs so that people will receive program referrals that fit a program's eligibility criteria and are appropriate to the need of the household. This system also reduces the time spent by households in seeking assistance from community programs.
- Connecting programs: Coordinated assessment systemizes coordination efforts so that shelters are partnering with permanent housing programs on the local level.
- Tracking system outcomes: Regional Committees complete quarterly outcome reports that measure the number of people entering shelter, emergency services, and permanent housing. Regional Committees and CoC staff will examine these reports to identify system gaps and redirect resources accordingly in order to quickly move households into permanent housing.

- *How clients are prioritized to receive emergency shelter services*

The coordinated assessment system uses a standardized prevention and diversion screen to divert those people who have other safe housing options from entering shelter. This prioritizes shelter beds for those with no other options. Many communities within the Balance of State CoC do not have shelters to cover all populations and household types. In these situations, Regional Committees are forming partnerships with shelters in neighboring communities to formalize the process of shelter referral.



Rapid Re-housing

- *How clients are prioritized to receive rapid re-housing financial assistance and services*
Eligible households that are literally homeless at the time of contacting the program and are living in shelter or in a place not meant for human habitation will receive rapid re-housing services. As part of the Balance of State CoC coordinated assessment process, clients within the shelter system are screened using the VI-SPDAT assessment. Each Regional Committee determines the score ranges that result in referral to rapid re-housing programs, taking into account the numbers and types of programs available locally as well as local demographics and trends. Overall, the clients with more severe needs are prioritized to receive services before those with lower needs.
- *Determining percentage or amount of rent and utility costs each program participant must pay while receiving rapid re-housing financial assistance (only applicable for clients with income)*
BoS agencies are to use the progressive engagement model to determine the amount of financial subsidies, like rent and utility costs, that each program participant must pay. Assistance is based in providing "the least amount of assistance for the least amount of time" while providing enough initial support to be reasonably sure that the housing will stick. Agencies are encouraged to be highly flexible and look at each household's particular needs when determining an individualized plan that will include the amount of financial subsidies and services. Since agencies are required to serve those with higher needs before those with lower needs, it is expected that some households will not have income at program entry. Agencies are expected to offer assistance with the goal of providing "the lightest touch possible" while also meeting clients where they are and ensuring a long-term positive exit to permanent housing. Given all of this, agencies must be highly flexible and there should NOT be a standard percentage of rent clients pay.
- *Maximum number of months a program participant will be provided with rental assistance and eligibility amount for each participant*
BoS agencies again are expected to be flexible on the number of months assistance is provided. Agencies must provide assistance for the shortest amount of time possible that ensures an exit to permanent housing. Agencies should be aware of funding restrictions on the length of assistance (24 months maximum for ESG grantees). The goal is to serve the largest number of households possible with a high degree of successful exits to permanent housing.



Prevention

- *How clients are prioritized to receive prevention financial assistance and services*
Clients are prioritized to receive prevention financial assistance using the BoS prevention and diversion screen as part of the coordinated assessment process. BoS agencies are expected to tie all prevention programs directly to the local coordinated assessment process. The BoS focuses prevention efforts more narrowly on diverting households presenting for shelter beds from entering the homeless system. When an individual or family has another safe option to go to rather than entering shelter, programs will use the prevention and diversion screen to help those people think through all the other options available.
- *Determining percentage or amount of rent and utility costs each program participant must pay while receiving prevention financial assistance (only applicable for clients with income)*
Prevention programs are expected to focus specifically on shelter diversion and to be tied to the local coordinated assessment system. Agencies are encouraged to be highly flexible in determining the amount of rent and utility costs clients need for a successful shelter diversion with the goal of serving the largest number of households with the CoC's limited resources. Assistance is based in providing "the least amount of assistance for the least amount of time" while providing enough initial support to be reasonably sure that the housing will stick.
- *Maximum number of months a program participant will be provided with rental assistance and eligibility amount for each participant*
Prevention programs are expected to focus specifically on shelter diversion. To that end, rental assistance should only be provided if needed in order to prevent the household from becoming literally homeless. Agencies should be aware of funding restrictions on the length of assistance (24 months maximum for ESG grantees). The goal is to serve the largest number of households possible with a high degree of successful exits to permanent housing.

