

## NWCEH Street Outreach Written Standards

Street Outreach is an eligible activity within the Northwest Michigan Coalition to End Homelessness (hereafter referred to as the Coalition) as a funded Continuum of Care Program. In an effort to provide continuity of services to all being served throughout Coalition Street Outreach projects, the Coalition has aligned its programmatic requirements for services across the entire 10 counties, except in cases where there are differences in regulatory requirements. In these cases, separate expectations are clearly noted.

All Street Outreach projects should adhere to a Housing First philosophy, and the Coalition expects all funded projects to adopt this model of care. Housing First does not require persons experiencing homelessness to address all of their problems, including behavioral health problems, or to graduate through a series of service programs, prior to accessing permanent housing. While based fundamentally on client choice, Housing First prioritizes providing permanent housing first, thus ending a person's episode of homelessness, and serving as a platform from which to pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. Street Outreach is an intervention designed to help individuals and families exit homelessness as quickly as possible, return to permanent housing, and achieve stability in that housing. Housing assistance is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, criminal record or sobriety), and the resources and services provided are typically tailored to the unique needs of the household.

### Eligibility:

The Coalition developed the following eligibility guidelines for HUD CoC Program funded Street Outreach Programs in order to ensure program accountability to all population groups (Chronic, Youth, Veterans, Families, Individuals, Justice Involved, and Victims of Domestic Violence) experiencing homelessness, program compliance with HUD specifications, program uniformity and common client expectations in all service areas, adequate program staff competence and training for all Outreach staff, and agencies have a set of standards by which to guide their programming. All funded programs within the Coalition must comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of Federal civil rights laws, including, but not limited to, the Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and Titles II or III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as applicable.

### Eligibility Standards:

The Coalition has adopted and adheres to the eligibility guidelines from HUD. HUD Continuum of Care Street Outreach assistance can be provided to individuals and families defined as homeless under any of the following three categories included in the HUD federal definition of homeless:

- Literally homeless (Category 1): An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:
  - (i) an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or campground,
  - (ii) an individual or family living in a supervised 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, or local government programs for low- income individuals); **or**
  - (iii) an individual who is exiting an institution where he or she 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.
- Imminent Risk of Homelessness (Category 2): Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:
  - (i) The primary nighttime 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, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, needed to obtain other permanent housing,
- Fleeing Violence (Category 4): An individual or family who is:
  - (i) Fleeing or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence,
  - (ii) Has no other residence; **and**
  - (ii) Lacks the resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, and faith- based or other social networks, to obtain other permanent housing.

The CoC Program Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) may impose additional eligibility requirements not reflected in the regulation. Projects funded to carry out street outreach under the CoC program must follow both CoC Program NOFA and regulatory requirements (ex. Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project).

### Standards for Documenting Eligibility

The following documentation requirements are listed in order of preference for each category of homelessness. The service provider and/or referring agency are required to provide the following documentation in order to prove eligibility for CoC funded homeless programming:

- Literally Homeless (Category 1):
  1. Written observation by the outreach worker; **or**
  2. Written referral by another housing or service provider; **or**
  3. Certification by the individual or head of household seeking assistance stating that they are living on the streets or in emergency shelter,
  4. For individuals exiting an institution, one of the forms of evidence above and:
    - Discharge paperwork or written/oral referral, **or**
    - Written record of intake worker's due diligence to obtain above evidence and certification by individual that they exited the institution.
- Imminent Risk of Homelessness (Category 2):
  1. A court order resulting from an eviction notifying the individual or family that they must leave; **or**
  2. For individual and families leaving a hotel or motel with 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 they individual lacks the financial resources and support necessary to obtain permanent housing.
- Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Violence (Category 4):
    1. (For victim service providers) 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 the intake worker.
    2. (For non-victim service providers) 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 the caseworker. Where they safety of the individual or family is not jeopardized, the oral statement must be verified; **and**
    3. Certification by the individual or head of household they no subsequent residence has been identified; **and**
    4. Self-certification, or other written documentation, that the individual or family lacks the financial resources and support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

*Citation: [https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition\\_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf](https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf)*

## Core Principles of Street Outreach:

A fundamentally sound Street Outreach program will adopt the following Core Principles:

- Community and Street Outreach efforts are Systemic, Coordinated and Comprehensive.
- Outreach uses a Person Centered, Trauma Informed and Culturally Responsive approach at all times.
- Outreach efforts Emphasize Safety and Reduce Harm for the clients.
- Outreach is always Housing Focused.

These principles should be incorporated into all Street Outreach activities.

## Core Services of Street Outreach:

The core components of a street outreach program are Identification, Engagement, Assessment, Referral, Housing Identification and Move-in Warm / Transfer services. While a household that is offered street outreach services is not required to utilize all six core components, in order to meet the program standards in this document, a street outreach program must make available to program participants all six core components.

In addition, Street Outreach should conduct ongoing Community Reach Out efforts in order to educate community members about outreach services, to ensure local businesses and organization are aware of the Street Outreach program and know how to contact them, and to establish a presence where people experiencing homelessness tend to frequent. A systematic, coordinated and comprehensive plan for ongoing community outreach is essential for success and should include documented collaboration with the Coalition.

## Prioritization:

Street Outreach programs adhere to the Coalition Coordinated Entry Policy and use a standardized assessment tool to determine client need. Services are offered based on need and available service

capacity and will always be centered on client choice. Street Outreach staff should ensure that all eligible clients are placed on the Community By-Name List, and that they are prioritized correctly.

## Identification:

The purpose of Identification is to find, engage, and connect people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the community to the Homeless Response System. Outreach staff should spend about 10% of their time trying to find and engage people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and efforts should be guided by a systemic, coordinated and comprehensive outreach plan.

### Identification Principles

- Street Outreach is systemic, coordinated and comprehensive in its approach to locating and engaging people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
- Homelessness location efforts should include referring agencies, community leads, multi-disciplinary team relationships, and other people experiencing homelessness.

### Program Staffing

- The Outreach Program provider will ensure that Outreach staff are familiar with known homeless locations, community partners, and time management practices.
- The Outreach Program provider will provide onboarding and training to new staff on best practices, program services, and Program policies.
- Program staff adhere to written policies and procedures for identifying people experiencing homelessness that include collaboration with other stakeholders and coordination with other entities such as Federal, State, local government, and non-profits.
- Program staff offer a basic level of support to community stakeholders and the community at large in identifying people experiencing homelessness.
- Street outreach efforts are connected to the Coordinated Entry processes.
- The Program has a written safety policy.

### Identification Activities

- The Street Outreach Program continually engages in locating people experiencing homelessness and has methods of tracking locations and progress towards client housing.
- The Street Outreach Program has methods for collecting client data and making appropriate information available to the Coalition, and in some cases, the public.
- The Street Outreach Program participates in the Coalition Workgroups, including Prioritization and Matching, and works with the Coalition in data collection, analysis and reporting when necessary or appropriate.

## Engagement:

The purpose of Engagement is to establish a client relationship built on trust, client choice, and permanent housing solutions. Clients should be engaged where they are and should not be pressured or coerced into accepting or participating in other services. This can be a process and may take time.

### Engagement Principles

- A Street Outreach program should have the ability to engage people experiencing homelessness for the purpose of accessing housing in a trauma informed, client centered and culturally responsive way.
- Client engagement efforts should be designed with flexibility to meet clients at their comfort level.
- Engagement efforts with individual clients should continue until housing is achieved.

## Program Staffing

- Street Outreach service providers will ensure staff are trained in techniques that promote engagement, including but not limited to:
  - Motivational Interviewing
  - Assertive Engagement
  - Harm Reduction
  - Trauma Informed Approach
  - Mental Health First Aid
  - Other Core Competencies
- Outreach staff will collect client engagement data according to Coalition policy and will document each client's progress towards permanent housing.

## Engagement Policies

- The Outreach Program has written policies and procedures for strategies engaging people experiencing homelessness.

## Assessment:

The Street Outreach Program is part of the Coalition Coordinated Entry System and will conduct various client assessments to determine the most appropriate level of services needed to meet each client's need. Assessment for housing interventions is a core component of Street Outreach. Assessment components include administering the Standardized Acuity Assessment adopted by the Coalition, a Housing Needs Assessment, and Risk Assessments performed in the field where people experiencing homelessness are found, as well as other updates and supplemental assessments as prescribed by Coalition policy.

## Assessment Principles

- Needs and Acuity assessments are essential in identifying client needs and provide one of the foundations of prioritization.
- The assessment process is designed to measure all people experiencing homelessness in a way that identifies the most needy clients, and prioritizes services accordingly.
- Assessment efforts should be designed to be completed in a timely manner and not during a crisis.

## Program Staffing

- Staff have the knowledge, skills, and agency resources to understand clients' perspectives, understand purposes of assessments, and be able to educate clients on the purpose of assessments.
- The Street Outreach Program will ensure that all staff are properly trained in administering all assessments approved for use by the Coalition.

## Assessment Policies

- The Outreach Program should have assessment policies in accordance with the Coalition Coordinated Entry process.
- The Outreach Program has a policy for completing all assessments used by the Coalition for acuity and vulnerability, including when and how often they should be administered.

## Assessment Activities

- The Street Outreach Program will administer all Vulnerability and Acuity assessments in accordance with Coalition policy.
- The Street Outreach Program will properly document assessment results, and ensure clients are prioritized properly on the By Name List.
- The Street Outreach Program performs risk assessment prior to program exit as warranted for non-supportive housing settings.

## Referral:

The purpose of Referral is to connect clients experiencing homelessness with the appropriate services and solutions to make the client's episode of homelessness rare, brief and one time. Referrals are made in accordance with Housing First principles, and clients are not required to accept or act on referrals in order to continue receiving Street Outreach services.

## Referral Principles

- The Street Outreach Program will be familiar with all local service providers and will have detailed knowledge of the services provided and the ways in which clients can connect to them.
- Referrals are made to eligible programs without pre-conditions.
- The Street Outreach Program will document referrals and outcomes in accordance with Coalition policy.
- In some cases, Street Outreach staff may act on the client's behalf when requested to ensure that proper connections to available resources are made successfully.

## Program Staffing

- The Street Outreach Program will ensure that all staff are properly trained and familiarized with local service providers and what services they provide.
- Street Outreach staff will be familiar with how to connect clients to services provided in that community.
- The Street Outreach Program will ensure staff is properly trained on the Coalition Coordinated Entry process.
- The Street Outreach Programs will have routine ways to stay informed about all community resources.

## Referral Policies

- The Street Outreach Program follows Coalition Coordinated Entry Policy.
- The Street Outreach Program has a standardized referral policy to ensure all appropriate referrals are made for each client, and to build and maintain community partnerships.

## Referral Activities

- Assess client need and perform appropriate referrals.
- Document client referrals and outcomes in accordance with Coalition policy.
- Continually engage in relationship building with community partners.
- Ensure the warm transfer of services when client changes primary service providers.

## Housing Identification:

The purpose of Housing Identification is to match each client with an appropriate permanent housing solution, and to assist the Prioritization and Matching group identify available housing units, and to ensure that the client is document ready for move-in.

### Housing Identification Principles

- Within the limits of the participant's income, the Street Outreach Program will help households access units that are desirable and sustainable—those that are in neighborhoods where the client wants to live in, that have access to transportation and other necessary services, are close to employment opportunities, and that are safe.
- Housing identification efforts should be designed and implemented to actively recruit and retain landlords and housing managers willing to rent to program participants who may otherwise fail to pass typical tenant screening criteria.
- Critical to the formation of landlord-program relationship is the recognition of the landlord as a vital partner. The Street Outreach provider will be responsive to landlords in order to preserve and develop those partnerships for the purposes of obtaining future housing placements.

### Program Staffing

- The Street Outreach Program will ensure staff have the knowledge, skills, and agency resources to understand landlords' perspectives, understand landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities including HUD Fair Housing and VAWA standards, and negotiate landlord supports.
- Street Outreach staff will be trained on the wider array of housing assistance available within a community. In addition, training will be provided on best practices and new initiatives.
- Street Outreach staff will assist clients in fulfilling documentation requirements, filling out and turning in housing applications, and other services necessary to secure a housing unit when needed.

### Housing Identification Policies

- The Street Outreach Program has written policies and procedures for landlord recruitment activities, including screening out potential landlord partners who have a history of poor compliance with their legal responsibilities and fair housing practices.
- The Street Outreach Program offers a standard, basic level of support to all landlords who lease to program participants, and can negotiate additional supports, as needed, on a case-by-case basis.
- The Street Outreach Program has a detailed policy for the type of assistance provided to help households find and secure housing. Staff explain and distribute this policy to households at entry to the program. Some households may decline assistance in finding housing, but the program checks on their progress and offers advice and/ or direct assistance if they encounter obstacles they cannot resolve independently.

### Housing Identification Activities

- The Street Outreach Program continually engages in the recruitment and retention of landlord partners and has methods of tracking landlord partners and unit vacancies, unit locations, characteristics, and costs.
- Outreach provides participants with multiple housing choices within practical constraints. The onus is on the program to provide these housing choices, but this does not preclude program participants from conducting their own search and choosing housing they identify independently.

- Outreach assists participants in making an informed housing choice with the goal that the participant will be able to maintain the unit after program exit. While participants ultimately chose their housing unit, a program uses housing and budgeting plans that help a participant understand the likelihood of being able to pay rent and meet the requirements of the lease by the end of assistance.
- When closing a case, Outreach provides information to landlords about how they can contact the program again if needed and what kind of follow-up assistance may be available.

## Move-In Warm Transfer Services:

The purpose of a Warm Transfer is to provide an easy transition for the client while changing service providers, programs, and case managers, and ensure there are no interruptions in service delivery. This processes will include staff introductions, case conferencing with incoming provider staff, and discussions of relevant details. Various assessment tools should be used to ensure all potential issues are identified where possible.

### Warm Transfer Principles

- Client assessment results and rationale are transparent.
- Service transfer is as seamless as possible for the client.

### Program Staffing

- The Outreach Program will ensure all staff are trained in Warm Handoff procedures and best practices.

### Warm Transfer Policies

- The Street Outreach Program follows Coalition Coordinated Entry policies.
- The Street Outreach Program has policy for completing Warm Handoff.

### Warm Transfer Activities

- Introduce all staff that may be working with the client. Introduce the client to the new staff.
- Explain the program again. This provides the opportunity for potential participant to ask questions and gives the opportunity for the Housing Based Case Manager staff to provide clarification or more details about the program.
- Street Outreach provides a detailed walk-through of results for each client assessment where appropriate.
- Document the warm transfer with a summary and location in the client file.