

# MFA Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Written Standards



**MFA**

| *Housing New Mexico*



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## INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations, specifically 24 CFR 91.220(l)(4)(i) and 576.400(e)(1), New Mexico MFA (MFA) and the Albuquerque and Balance of State Continuums of Care (NM CoCs) have developed the following written standards for the provision and prioritization of Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding. The following standards are intended as basic, minimum standards to which individual ESG recipients may add additional and more stringent standards applicable only to their own projects. These required minimum standards help to ensure that the ESG program is administered fairly and methodically. MFA and the NM CoCs will continue to build upon and refine this document.

## BACKGROUND

MFA is awarded ESG funds annually from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as part of the Annual Action Plan Process. These funds are designed to identify sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, as well as those at risk of homelessness, and provide the services necessary to help those persons quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness. The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 (HEARTH Act) significantly amended the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, including major revisions to the Emergency Shelter Grants program, which was renamed the Emergency Solutions Grants program. The HEARTH Act, and implementation of the applicable federal regulations by HUD, incorporated many of the lessons learned from the implementation of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Recovery Act Program (HPRP) into the new ESG program, including placing a stronger emphasis on rapid re-housing assistance.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The ESG Program allows MFA to set priorities based on the individualized needs of communities across the state of New Mexico as identified in MFA's Consolidated Plan. These standards serve to outline the specific guidelines and priorities that will be used by MFA in awarding and administering ESG funding. Currently, eligible program components that are prioritized under MFA's ESG Program are emergency shelter, homeless prevention, rapid re-housing, housing stability case management, housing search and placement and HMIS. MFA and NM CoCs may revise ESG component priority in subsequent years based on the needs of the community.

## **STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ALL PROGRAMS**

The following standards are intended as basic, minimum standards that apply to all ESG projects.

### **PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY BY HOMELESS STATUS**

Every participant served with ESG funds must qualify for assistance according to HUD standards. Sub-recipients are responsible for determining eligibility status for all ESG program participants and are required to obtain documentation at intake of homelessness, imminent risk or at-risk of homelessness status. This documentation must show that the “Order of Priority for Obtaining Evidence of Homelessness” was followed at intake, as defined in Appendix D and in 24 CFR 576.500. A copy of the documentation must be kept in the participant file and made available to MFA, the NM CoCs and HUD for monitoring or risk analysis purposes. Complete details regarding participant eligibility for ESG-funded programs are outlined in Appendix B and C.

### **STREET OUTREACH**

Street Outreach services shall target unsheltered, homeless individuals and families, defined as those 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 camping ground.

### **EMERGENCY SHELTER**

Individuals and families eligible for Emergency Shelter assistance must meet HUD’s Definition of Homelessness. (see Appendix B)

### **RAPID RE-HOUSING**

Individuals and families eligible for Rapid Re-Housing assistance must meet HUD’s Definition of Homelessness. (see Appendix B)

There is no income limit upon intake for this program. All participants must meet the ESG income limits of at or below 30% of the area median income (AMI) for the area upon annual recertification

### **HOMELESS PREVENTION**

Individuals and families eligible for Homeless Prevention assistance must meet HUD’s Definition of Imminent Risk or At-Risk of Homelessness. (see Appendix C)

Additionally, Homeless Prevention projects must only serve individuals and families that meet the ESG income limits of below 30% of the area median income (AMI) for the area.



Income limits can be found at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>

## **THE NEW MEXICO COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM (NMCES)**

To ensure homeless households receive immediate housing and to minimize barriers to housing access, all sub-recipients will be required to assist program participants in accessing resources through the New Mexico Coordinated Entry System (NMCES) and accept (where applicable) all referrals for housing from the NMCES. Coordinated Entry is a state-wide process for facilitating access to all resources designated for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. This system ensures that every homeless individual or family is known by name and is provided assistance based on the individual or family's unique needs and matches them to the most appropriate service strategy or housing intervention. The NMCES ensures system coordination among emergency shelters, essential service providers, homeless prevention providers, rapid re-housing providers, other homeless assistance providers, and mainstream services and housing providers.

Sub-recipients will have, at a minimum, one staff member who is trained and certified in conducting the common assessment tool used by the NMCES. The NMCES uses the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) as its common assessment tool. To the maximum extent practicable, households presenting for assistance will be assessed using the VI-SPDAT. All completed assessments must be entered into the NMCES, in accordance with NMCES Policies and Procedures. (see [nmceh.org](http://nmceh.org) or email [info@nmceh.org](mailto:info@nmceh.org) for more information.)

Where the sub-recipient is unable to administer the VI-SPDAT, households that present for service will be provided appropriate referrals to NMCES.

Note: A victim services provider may choose not to use the CoC's centralized or coordinated assessment system. (24 CFR 576.400(d))

## **FAIR HOUSING**

Sub-recipients will not prohibit access to ESG funded programs to anyone who would otherwise be eligible for assistance based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, familial status, disability type, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status. Sub-recipients will post publicly a HUD-issued Fair Housing notice, in a place that is visible to all program participants and persons who present for assistance or services.

## **EQUAL ACCESS**

Units of general local government and nonprofit organizations shall make it known that facilities and services supported by this grant are available to any person (who otherwise meets the eligible criteria for the program) in accordance with the Equal Access Rule (24 CFR 5.105(a)(2)) which prohibits

discriminatory eligibility determinations in HUD-assisted or HUD-insured housing programs based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status, including any projects funded by ESG Programs. The ESG Interim Rule also contains a Fair Housing Provision at 24 CFR 576.407(a)(b).

It is allowable for shelters or housing programs to exclusively serve families with children, but they must serve all types of families with children including both male and female headed households. The housing or shelter may also be limited to one sex where such housing consists of a single structure with shared bedrooms or bathing facilities such that the considerations of personal privacy and the physical limitations of the configuration of the housing make it appropriate for the housing to be limited to one sex.

Providers that operate single-sex projects must provide all individuals, including transgender individuals and other individuals who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth, with access to programs, benefits, services, and accommodations in accordance with their gender identity without being subjected to intrusive questioning or being asked to provide documentation.

## **AFFIRMATIVE OUTREACH**

Sub-recipients must make known that use of the facilities, assistance, and services are available to all on a nondiscriminatory basis. To this end, the sub-recipient must take appropriate steps to ensure effective communication with persons with disabilities including, but not limited to, adopting procedures that will make available to interested persons information concerning the location of assistance, services, and facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities. Consistent with Title VI and Executive Order 13166, sub-recipients are also required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to programs and activities for limited English proficiency (LEP) persons.

Sub-recipients will market their program in an ongoing effort to assure that potential participants who are least likely to access the program, (without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, familial status, sexual orientation, and disability) have access to the program. Sub-recipients will document efforts to conduct outreach to educate those least likely to access resources. Affirmative marketing strategies will include efforts to communicate information regarding services and resources available through the program, eligibility requirements, and information about how the program participates in the NMCES.

Methods outlined in the sub-recipient's marketing strategy may include:

- Distributed printed materials
- Postings to agency website and/or social media accounts
- Public listings through community resource services
- Education provided to community partners

## COORDINATION WITH OTHER TARGETED HOMELESS SERVICES

ESG-funded programs must coordinate and integrate, to the maximum extent practicable, eligible activities with other programs targeted to homeless people in their geographical region. Efforts to coordinate with other targeted homeless services must be documented by sub-recipients. These programs may include, but are not limited to:

- Continuum of Care Program (24 CFR 578)
- Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Program for Single Room Occupancy Program for Homeless Individuals (24 CFR 882)
- HUD—Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD—VASH) (division K, title II, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008, Pub. L. 110–161 (2007), 73 FR 25026 (May 6, 2008))
- Education for Homeless Children and Youth Grants for State and Local Activities (title VII–B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.))
- Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals (section 506 of the Public Health Services Act (42 U.S.C. 290aa– 5))
- Healthcare for the Homeless (42 CFR part 51c)
- Programs for Runaway and Homeless Youth (Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5701 et seq.))
- Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (part C of title V of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 290cc–21 et seq.))
- Services in Supportive Housing Grants (section 520A of the Public Health Service Act)
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program (title III of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11331 et seq.))
- Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program (section 40299 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (42 U.S.C. 13975))
- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (section 5(a)(1)) of the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act (38 U.S.C. 2021)
- Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program (38 U.S.C. 2043)
- VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program (38 CFR part 61)
- Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program (38 U.S.C. 2031)
- Homeless Veterans Dental Program (38 U.S.C. 2062)
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program (38 CFR part 62)
- Veteran Justice Outreach Initiative (38 U.S.C. 2031)

## **OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL, AND PRIVATE ASSISTANCE**

ESG-funded programs must support each program participant, as needed, in obtaining other federal, state, local, and private assistance, the end goal being housing stability. Assistance provided to program participants must be documented by sub-recipients. Assistance programs include:

- Medicaid
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- Federal-State Unemployment Insurance Program
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Public housing programs
- Housing programs receiving tenant-based or project-based assistance
- Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Health Center Program
- State Children's Health Insurance Program
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Block Grants
- Services funded under the Workforce Investment Act

## **HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS) 24 CFR 576.107**

All ESG funded programs are required to enter participants in the NM Homeless Management Information System (NM-HMIS) at first contact, reassessment, and exit, per current HMIS Data Standards. Programs that are specifically forbidden by other statutes or regulations to participate in HMIS, (e.g., victim service providers) must participate utilizing an approved comparable database to meet reporting requirements. New Mexico victim service providers currently utilize the Osnium database for this purpose.

All participating agencies must collect and maintain common data fields as determined by current HUD data standards and as applicable to all relevant federal regulations. This requirement helps to ensure coordination between service providers through NMCES while avoiding duplication of services and client data and provides an opportunity to document eligibility for assistance. Sub-recipients must enter and maintain all data required to complete all reporting requirements established by HUD, MFA, and the NM CoCs. All NM-HMIS participating agencies must also adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in the NM-HMIS Standard Operating Procedures, including timely, accurate, and complete data quality management.

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## CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

All ESG-funded programs must uphold all privacy protection standards established by the NM-HMIS Standard Operating Procedures and relevant federal and state of New Mexico confidentiality laws and regulations that protect client records. Confidential client records may only be released with the participant's or the participant's guardian's consent, unless otherwise provided for in the pertinent laws and regulations. All required HMIS forms can be found within the NM-HMIS database program.

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## VERBAL EXPLANATION

Prior to every participant's initial assessment, ESG-funded programs must provide a verbal explanation to the participant of how their personal information will be entered into an electronic database that stores client information. The participant must also be given a verbal explanation of the NM-HMIS Client Consent Form terms.

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## WRITTEN CONSENT

After being provided a verbal explanation, each participant who agrees to have their personally identifiable information (PII) entered into the NM-HMIS must sign the NM-HMIS Client Consent Form. (Exception: verbal consent to enter PII into the NM-HMIS may be obtained during a phone screening, outreach, or diversion, provided that the sub-recipient obtains the participant's written consent at the next available opportunity.) Participants must be informed that they may be removed from the database at any time at their request. Those who do not sign the Consent Form are entered into NM-HMIS using only an identifier number.

## TERMINATION OF ASSISTANCE

Sub-recipients may terminate assistance to participants who violate program requirements as outlined below, in accordance with 24 CFR 576.402(a)(b)(c).

If a program participant violates written program requirements, the sub-recipient may terminate assistance in accordance with a formal process established by the sub-recipient that recognizes the rights of individuals affected. The sub-recipient must exercise judgment and examine all extenuating circumstances in determining when violations warrant termination so that a program participant's assistance is terminated only in the most severe cases.

When terminating rental assistance or housing relocation and stabilization services, the required formal process shall minimally consist of:

- A written notice to the program participant containing a clear statement of the reasons for termination; and

- A review of the decision, in which the program participant is given the opportunity to present written or oral objections before a person other than the person (or a subordinate of that person) who made or approved the termination decision; and
- Prompt written notice of the final decision to the program participant.

Termination does not bar the sub-recipient from providing further assistance at a later date to the same family or individual.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

All ESG sub-recipients must create a formal standardized grievance process which they must incorporate into their internal policies and procedures and at a minimum include:

- An established escalation process if no resolution is found through initial efforts
- A designated grievance liaison within the agency
- A standard grievance form that can be filled out and returned to a grievance liaison

Participants are informed, at initial intake, of their right to file a grievance and that no services will be denied based on complaints or grievances. In the event that a grievance is filed, participants must be provided with contact information for the agency's director, the MFA program manager, and/or a HUD representative, if applicable. The signed grievance form is to be kept in the participant's permanent file. (Refer to the MFA Performance Agreement (contract), Article 20, "Maintenance of Grievance System).

## **FAITH-BASED ACTIVITIES**

Minimum standards for faith-based activities (24 CFR 576.406) are:

- Providers receiving ESG funding shall not engage in inherently religious activities as part of the ESG-funded programs or services. Such activities must be offered separately from ESG-funded programs and services and participation must be voluntary.
- A religious organization receiving ESG funding retains independence from the government and may continue with its mission provided that ESG funds are not used to support inherently religious activities. An ESG-funded organization retains its authority over its internal governance.
- An organization receiving ESG funding shall not discriminate against a participant or prospective participant based on religion or religious beliefs.
- ESG funding shall not be used for the rehabilitation of structures used specifically for religious activities but may be used for rehabilitating structures that are used for ESG eligible activities.

## HOMELESS REPRESENTATION

Sub-recipients must ensure that, to the maximum extent practicable, not less than one homeless individual or formerly homeless individual participates on the board of directors or other equivalent policymaking entity of the agency, to the extent that the entity considers and makes policies and decisions regarding any facilities, services, or other assistance that receive ESG funds. (24 CFR 576.405)

If the sub-recipient is unable to meet requirements outlined in the above paragraph, it must instead develop and implement a plan to consult with homeless or formerly homeless individuals in considering and making policies and decisions regarding any facilities, services, or other assistance that receive ESG funds. This plan must be included in the annual action plan, as required at 24 CFR 91.220.

To the maximum extent practicable, the provider must also involve homeless individuals and families in constructing, renovating, maintaining, and operating facilities assisted under ESG, in providing services assisted under ESG, and in providing services for occupants of facilities assisted under ESG. This involvement may include employment or volunteer services.

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

MFA will provide assistance to NMCEH in developing annual performance standards for evaluating the effectiveness of ESG program funded activities. Sub-recipient performance will be evaluated annually and performance outcomes will be considered in allocating funding.

At a minimum, the performance standards will address the degree to which ESG sub-recipients are succeeding in:

- Targeting those who most need assistance; and
- Reducing the number of people living on the streets or in emergency shelter; and
- Reducing the time people spend homeless; and
- Reducing program participants' housing barriers or housing stability risks; and
- Improving HUD System Performance Measures; and
- Submitting an accurate and timely annual CAPER

## STREET OUTREACH STANDARDS

Street Outreach should be principally focused on one goal: supporting persons experiencing homelessness in achieving some form of permanent, sustainable housing. While Street Outreach teams may use incentives to encourage trust and build relationships, or to ensure that homeless households' emergency needs are met, the awards should be used with permanent housing as the end goal rather than simply seeking to alleviate the burden of living on the streets.

ESG street outreach funds may be used for the costs of providing essential services necessary to reach out to unsheltered persons, connecting them with emergency shelter, housing, or critical services and providing urgent, non-facility-based care to unsheltered homeless people who are unwilling or unable to access emergency shelter, housing, or an appropriate health facility. Individuals and families shall be offered the following eligible Street Outreach activities, as needed and appropriate: engagement, case management, emergency health services, mental health services and transportation (24 CFR 576.101).

## **TARGET POPULATION**

Providers of Street Outreach services shall target unsheltered homeless individuals and families, meaning those 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 but not limited to a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground, and who would not otherwise access homeless services.

## **NM COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM**

All individuals and families served through street outreach programs should be assessed using a comprehensive, universal assessment tool, the Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT), in order to make an informed and objective decision on the level of need of each family and streamline eligibility determinations. All completed assessments must be submitted to the NMCES program or entered into the NM-HMIS database in accordance with NMCES Policies and Procedures.

## **EMERGENCY SHELTER STANDARDS**

ESG funds may be used for the following costs:

- Essential Services
- Shelter Operations
- HMIS/Osniium

An emergency shelter is any facility with the primary purpose of providing temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for a specific population of the homeless. Emergency shelters will not require occupants to sign leases or occupancy agreements.

Shelter stays should be avoided, if possible, and when not possible, limited to the shortest time necessary to help participants regain permanent housing. Households should only be referred to ESG-funded emergency shelters after exhausting all available options for diversion. Emergency shelter programs should be closely linked to the New Mexico Coordinated Entry System (NMCES) to ensure residents are referred to the most appropriate housing resources including, but not limited to, rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing.



## **ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS**

ESG-funded emergency shelter programs serve individuals and families who meet the Definition of Homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 576.2 (see also Appendix B). This includes those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; cannot be served by other programs or resources; and have no other options for overnight shelter.

## **ADMISSION**

Sub-recipients must develop clear and standard policies and procedures regarding admission to the shelter when need exceeds available resources. Admission policies and procedures must be applied consistently for all households presenting for assistance and take into account the varying needs of people who are homeless. Emergency shelters will prioritize individuals/families in the following situations:

- Those who cannot be diverted; and
- Those who are literally homeless; and
- Those who can be safely accommodated in the shelter; and
- Those who are not in need of emergency medical or psychiatric services, including those who do not appear to pose a danger to themselves or others

No shelter may deny entry based on disability status. Victims of domestic violence who are actively fleeing a domestic violence situation should be referred to a specialized domestic violence shelter, when possible, regardless of where they first access the shelter system.

## **RECORDKEEPING REQUIREMENTS**

Sub-recipients may document homeless status through a certification by the individual or head of household as the primary method of establishing homeless eligibility. (see Appendix D for complete list of requirements)

## **NMCES**

Sub-recipients must offer all individuals/families that enter the shelter an opportunity to complete the common assessment tool for the NM Coordinated Entry System (NMCES) within the first seven days of their stay. The NMCES uses the VI-SPDAT as its common assessment tool. This will allow shelters to connect families and individuals experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate long-term housing option available through the Coordinated Entry System. All ESG-funded programs must also post notice providing information about the NMCES in a place that is visible to all persons presenting for services.

## **PROHIBITION AGAINST INVOLUNTARY FAMILY SEPARATION**

Any group of people that present together for assistance and identify themselves as a family, regardless of age or relationship or other factors, is considered to be a family and must be served together as such. Further, any shelter receiving funds under the ESG programs, including faith-based organizations, cannot discriminate against a group of people presenting as a family based on the composition of the family (e.g. adults and children or adults only), the age of any family member, the disability status of any member of the family, marital status, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or gender identity. Further, the age and gender of a child under age 18 must not be used as a basis for denying any family admission to any shelter receiving ESG funds.

### **Child School Enrollment and Connection to Services**

Emergency Shelters will designate a staff person to be responsible for ensuring that children being served in the program are enrolled in school and connected to appropriate services in the community, including Title 1, early childhood programs such as Head Start, and parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Sub-recipients that serve households with children will post publicly, and/or provide for households with children at intake, notice of education services available within the community, and document efforts to verify that children are enrolled in school and connected to appropriate services.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

Emergency Shelter programs must create policies and procedures that minimize barriers and follow harm-reduction methods to the maximum extent practicable, while also creating a safe environment for shelter participants and staff. Policies and procedures may vary depending on the shelter population being served.

## **LENGTH OF STAY**

Emergency shelters must develop clear, standard policies and procedures regarding length of stay. Policies and procedures must be applied consistently for all program participants and take into account the varying needs of people who are homeless. When possible, people with long-term, serious disabilities should be allowed to stay until they are able to access permanent supportive housing.

## **SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

While shelter staff may encourage trust and build relationships by discussing non-housing related topics with shelter residents, the primary purpose and ultimate goal of all resident interactions should be to ensure that participants obtain permanent housing as quickly as possible. Emergency shelter programs will connect shelter residents to other federal, state, local, and private assistance as outlined under

“Standards Applicable to All Programs.” Interactions that include discussion of setting or making progress towards housing goals and connection to other resources must be documented by the emergency shelter and kept in the participant file.

## **HABITABILITY STANDARDS FOR EMERGENCY SHELTERS**

Shelters receiving ESG program funds must meet HUD’s Minimum Habitability Standards for Emergency Shelters. A Minimum Habitability Standards Inspection must be conducted at the shelter annually. The inspection may be completed by a shelter employee and documentation provided to MFA. This may be done prior to contract renewal or as a part on an on-site monitoring visit.

## **LEAD-BASED PAINT REQUIREMENTS**

All ESG-funded housing programs must incorporate lead-based paint remediation and disclosure requirements. Generally, these provisions require the sub-recipient to screen for, disclose the existence of, and take reasonable precautions against the presence of lead-based paint in buildings built prior to 1978. However, there are specific requirements for shelters that are outlined in detail in the EHAP Program Manual as well as the annual EHAP Performance Agreement. Shelters must have a detailed policy to ensure that this process is followed and meets all applicable federal guidelines.

## **HOMELESS PREVENTION & RAPID RE-HOUSING STANDARDS**

Homeless Prevention (HP) assistance includes housing relocation and stabilization services and/or short- and/or medium-term rental assistance necessary to prevent an individual or family from moving into an emergency shelter or another place described in paragraph 1 of the homeless definition in 24 CFR 576. The costs of homelessness prevention are only eligible to the extent that the assistance is necessary to help the program participant regain stability in the program participant’s current permanent housing or move into other permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) assistance includes housing relocation and stabilization services and short- and/or medium-term rental assistance to help a homeless individual or family move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing.

Financial assistance cannot be provided to a program participant who is receiving the same type of assistance through other public sources or to a program participant who has been provided with replacement housing payments under the Uniform Relocation Act (URA), during the period of time covered by the URA payments.

## **PRIORITIZATION**

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### **HOMELESS PREVENTION**

Programs must target households at greatest risk of homelessness and assist participants to increase household income during enrollment. Households must be prioritized using a standardized assessment policy that is applied consistently for all households presenting for need.

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## RAPID RE-HOUSING

Assistance targets and prioritizes homeless families who are most in need of temporary assistance and are most likely to achieve and maintain stable housing, whether subsidized or unsubsidized, after the program concludes. All sub-recipients are required to select program participants through the NMCES, in accordance with the prioritization system outlined in CoC RRH Written Standards that cover their program area.

## ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

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### HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

- Individuals or families who meet HUD’s definition of imminent risk or at-risk of homelessness. (see Appendix C)
- Homeless Prevention sub-recipients must only serve individuals and families that meet the ESG income limits of **below** 30% of the area median income (AMI) for the area.

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### RAPID RE-HOUSING

- Individuals or families who meet HUD’s definition of homelessness. (see Appendix B)
- Income limits are not imposed for Rapid Re-Housing individuals or families upon intake however they must be **at or below** 30% of the area median income (AMI) for the area at annual recertification.

## RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS

Sub-recipients must establish and follow written intake procedures to ensure compliance with HUD’s Definition of Homelessness, Imminent Risk and At-Risk of Homelessness and recordkeeping requirements.

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### EVIDENCE OF HOMELESS STATUS

Sub-recipients must make effort to obtain documentation providing evidence of homeless status as stated in the Order of Priority for Obtaining Evidence of Homelessness (see Appendix D)

1. Individuals Residing in an Institution: For individuals residing in an institution (including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, or hospital) for fewer than 90 days, acceptable evidence includes:
  - a) Discharge paperwork or a written or oral referral from a social worker, case manager, or other appropriate official of the institution, stating the beginning and end dates of the time residing in the institution that demonstrates the person resided there for less than 90 days. All oral statements must be recorded by the intake worker; or
  - b) Certification from the person seeking assistance. Where the evidence above is not obtainable, a written record of the intake worker's due diligence in attempting to obtain the evidence described in the paragraph above and a certification by the individual seeking assistance that states that they are exiting or have just exited an institution where they resided for less than 90 days; and
  - c) Evidence of literally homeless status prior to entry. Evidence that the individual was homeless and living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, and was chronically homeless prior to entry into the institutional care facility (as defined in paragraph (1) of 25 CFR 578.3) (acceptable documentation listed above).

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## EVIDENCE OF IMMINENT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS STATUS

Sub-recipients must make effort to obtain documentation providing evidence of at-risk of homeless status in the order of priority listed below:

1. Source Documents: Notice of termination from employment, unemployment compensation statement, bank statement, health care bill showing arrears, utility bill showing arrears, a Notice to Quit or Notice to Terminate (see MFA RAP Program Manual).
2. Third Party Documentation: To the extent that source documents are unobtainable, a written statement by the relevant third party (e.g. former employer, public administrator, relative) or written certification by the intake staff of the oral verification by the relevant third party that the applicant meets one or both of the criteria of the definition of "at risk of homelessness."
3. Intake Worker Observation: If source documents and third-party verification are unobtainable, a written statement by intake staff describing the efforts taken to obtain the required evidence.

## SECURING AND MAINTAINING HOUSING

Sub-recipients will assist participants, to the maximum extent practicable, in reducing barriers to securing or maintaining housing, including connection to appropriate resources, efforts to resolve matters related to poor rental history or bad credit, and obtaining identification.

Sub-recipients will follow Housing First Principles. Participants will not be screened out for having too little or no income, a history of or active substance abuse, a criminal record (except for state mandated

restrictions, or a history of victimization from domestic violence, sexual assault, or childhood abuse. Participants will not be terminated from the program for failure to participate in supportive services outside of the required monthly meeting with a case manager, failure to make progress on a service plan, loss of income or failure to improve income, or any other activity not covered in a lease agreement typically found for unassisted persons in the area.

## **RAPID RE-HOUSING**

Sub-recipients will assist rapid re-housing program participants, to the maximum extent practicable, in identifying potential housing opportunities. Participants will select their own housing. Sub-recipients will not restrict housing choices, or deny assistance or services based on the participant's choice to accept or deny a housing opportunity.

Sub-recipients will establish clear and consistent policies and procedures that outline length of time that rapid rehousing program participants have to secure housing after program intake. Sub-recipients may grant extensions for a specific amount of time, for program participants that are actively addressing barriers to securing housing.

At program intake, sub-recipients will provide rapid re-housing program participants, in writing, of time limits for securing housing. If program participants do not secure housing within the established timeframe, they will be terminated from the program, in accordance with the sub-recipient's termination policy.

## **CONTINUED ELIGIBILITY**

At a minimum, Homeless Prevention sub-recipients must re-evaluate program participant's eligibility and the types and amounts of assistance the program participant receives prior to the end of the second full month of rental assistance, and then not less than once every three months for the remainder of program enrollment.

Rapid Re-Housing sub-recipients must re-evaluate program participant's eligibility and the types and amounts of assistance the program participant needs at least once annually. Annual re-evaluation for rapid rehousing will occur prior to the end of the eleventh full month of rental assistance. To continue to receive assistance, a program participant's re-evaluation must demonstrate eligibility based on:

## **LACK OF RESOURCES AND SUPPORT NETWORKS**

The program participant's household must continue to lack sufficient resources and support networks to retain housing without ESG program assistance.

## **INCOME LIMITS**

In addition, both HP & RRH re-evaluation must demonstrate that the program participant's annual household income is at or below the ESG limits of **below** 30% of the AMI for Homeless Prevention and **at or below** 30% of AMI for Rapid Re-Housing.

If a household is determined to be able to maintain permanent housing without assistance from the RRH program, the program will provide written and verbal notice to both the household and the landlord at a minimum of 30 days prior to program assistance ending.

## **CASE MANAGEMENT**

Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing 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. Additional case management will be provided on a case-by-case basis based on demonstrated need. (24 CFR 576.401)

Case managers should work with the program participant to develop a plan to assist the program participant in retaining permanent housing after the assistance ends, taking into account all relevant considerations, such as the program participant's current or expected income and expenses, other public or private assistance for which the program participant will be eligible and likely to receive, and the relative affordability of available housing in the community. Identification of housing goals outlined in their plan should be led by the participant, with support and information provided by the case manager.

While case managers may encourage trust and build relationships by discussing non-housing related topics with participants, the primary purpose and ultimate goal of all participant interactions should be to ensure that the participant maintains permanent housing once assistance ends. Case managers will connect HP & RRH program participants to other federal, state, local, and private assistance as outlined under Standards Applicable to All Programs. Interactions with participants will be documented in participant files and include details about progress towards housing goals and connection to other resources.

If program participants do not meet with a case manager not less than once per month, it is the responsibility of the sub-recipient to continue to attempt in engaging with the participant, in an effort to identify the cause and begin meeting with the participant. If efforts to engage the participant are unsuccessful, this must be documented in the participant's file.

Case management assistance may not exceed 30 days during the period in which the program participant is seeking permanent housing and may not exceed 24 months during the period in which the program participant is living in permanent housing. Case management assistance will also be documented in NM-HMIS, in accordance with the NM-HMIS Standard Operating Procedures, or in the Osnum database (victim service providers).

## **CHILD SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND CONNECTION TO SERVICES**

Sub-recipients will designate a staff person to be responsible for ensuring that children being served in the program are enrolled in school and connected to appropriate services in the community, including Title 1, early childhood programs such as Head Start, and parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Sub-recipients that serve households with children will post publicly, and/or provide for households with children at intake, notice of education services available within the



community, and document efforts to verify that children are enrolled in school and connected to appropriate services.

Rapid Re-Housing programs will also take the educational needs of children into account when families are placed in housing and will, to the maximum extent practicable, place families with children as close as possible to their school of origin so as not to disrupt such children's education.

## **RENTAL ASSISTANCE**

Sub-recipients may provide program participants with up to 24 months of tenant-based or project-based rental assistance during any 3-year period. No program participant shall receive more than 24 months of rent during any 3-year period, administered by any CoC or ESG program within the state of New Mexico. Assistance may include any combination of short-term rental assistance (up to 3 months) and medium-term rental assistance (more than 3 months but less than 24 months). Applicants can return for rental assistance if they have received less than 24 months of rent during any 3-year period. In addition, program participants may receive funds for security deposits in an amount not to exceed two months of rent.

Each sub-recipient must meet the RFP or renewal criteria set by MFA each program year therefore funding is not automatically awarded beyond June 30. This should be taken into consideration when providing assistance that crosses over between program years.

Program participants receiving rental assistance may move to another unit or building and continue to receive rental assistance, as long as they continue to meet the program requirements.

Financial assistance cannot be provided to a program participant who is already receiving the same type of assistance through other public sources however, ESG funds may be used to provide different types of assistance from that being provided to the program participant. Program participants must still meet all of the eligibility requirements for ESG HP & RR.

Note: Rental arrears can be paid on behalf of a household receiving a subsidy from another public source (e.g. Section 8) because it represents a different time period and cost type than the rental subsidy (i.e. the arrears represent a back payment of the household portion and the current rental assistance is a forward payment).

## **AMOUNT OF RENTAL ASSISTANCE**

It is expected that the level of assistance will be based on the goal of providing only what is necessary for each household to achieve housing stability in the long-term. Sub-recipients may provide up to 100% of the cost of rent to program participants and the maximum share of rent a program participant may pay is 100%.



## **INCOME VERIFICATION**

All program participants will provide proof of income, or to certify that they have no income at program enrollment, when they provide notice that their income has changed, or at re-evaluation of program eligibility. HP & RRH sub-recipients will complete the HUD rent calculation form to determine the maximum portion that the participant may pay toward rent, to meet utility reimbursement requirements, and to support the completion of a needs assessment. Sub-recipients must follow guidelines found under 24 CFR 5.609 when calculating income.

Sub-recipients must require program participants to notify them regarding changes in their income or other circumstances that affect their need for assistance (e.g. changes in household composition, stability, or support).

## **RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS**

The following order of priority will be followed in collecting documentation to verify income:

1. **Source Documents.** Source documents for the assets held by the program participant and income received over the most recent period for which representative data is available before the date of the evaluation (e.g. wage statement, unemployment compensation statement, public benefits statement, bank statement).
2. **Third Party Verification.** A written statement by the relevant third party (e.g. employer, government benefits administrator, or the written certification by the sub-recipient's intake staff of the oral verification by the relevant third party of the income the program participant received over the most recent period for which representative data is available.
3. **Self-Certification.** If source documents and third-party verification are unobtainable, a written certification by the program participant of the amount of income the program participant received for the most recent period representative of the income that the program participant is reasonably expected to receive over the 3-month period following the evaluation.

## **PARTICIPANT CONTRIBUTION TOWARD RENT**

Program participants that have income are expected to contribute 30% of their monthly adjusted income (adjustment factors include the number of people in the family, age of family members) toward the rent.

If a household has a monthly income that covers more than the entire rental amount, they should be graduated from the program.

Sub-recipients must establish clear policies and procedures for determining the participant's contribution toward rent. Policies and procedures must be applied consistently to all program participants.

## **VAWA EMERGENCY TRANSFER PLAN**

In accordance with HUD VAWA protections (24 CFR 5.2005), sub-recipients will develop a written VAWA Emergency Transfer Plan, based on HUD's [model emergency transfer plan](#) (HUD form 5381), that provides participants who report that they are under actual or imminent threat with the opportunity to secure safe housing. The VAWA Emergency Transfer Plan must include the following:

1. Unit Transfer - Program participants who have complied with all program requirements during their residence and who have been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and who reasonably believe they are imminently threatened by harm from further domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking (which would include threats from a third party, such as a friend or family member of the perpetrator of the violence), if they remain in the assisted unit, and are able to document the violence and basis for their belief, may retain the rental assistance and will be moved, at their request, to another unit as quickly as possible. See recordkeeping requirements to ensure proper documentation of imminent threat of harm (24 CFR 5.2005).
2. Notice of Occupancy Rights - Program participants must be provided with a "Notice of Occupancy Rights under the Violence Against Women Act" under the following circumstances:
  - a) at the time the applicant is denied assistance or admission under a covered housing program;
  - b) At the time the individual is provided assistance or admission under the covered housing program;
  - c) With any notification of eviction or notification of termination of assistance.(The "Notice of Occupancy Rights under the Violence Against Women Act" must be made available in multiple languages).
3. Prohibited Basis for Denial or Termination of Assistance or Eviction - An applicant for assistance through an ESG housing program may not be denied admission to, denied assistance under, terminated from participation in, or evicted from the 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, if the applicant or participant otherwise qualifies for admission, assistance, participation, or occupancy.

4. Program participants may not be denied tenancy or occupancy rights solely on the basis of criminal activity directly relating to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking if:
  - a) The criminal activity is engaged in by a member of the household of the tenant or any guest or other person under the control of the tenant, and
  - b) The tenant or an affiliated individual of the tenant is the victim or threatened victim of such domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking.

## **FAIR MARKET RENT**

Household rent for participants receiving ESG-funded rental assistance must not exceed the Fair Market Rent established by HUD. Current FMR and guidelines for calculating rent are available online through the following link: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>.

FMR requirements do not apply when a program participant receives only financial assistance or services under HUD's Housing Stabilization and Relocation Services. This includes rental application fees, security deposits, an initial payment of "last month's rent," utility payments/deposits, and/or moving costs, housing search and placement and housing stability case management.

## **RENT REASONABLENESS**

For participants receiving assistance rental assistance including rental arrears, household rent must comply with HUD's standard of rent reasonableness, meaning that 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. These rent restrictions are intended to help ensure that program participants can remain in their housing after their assistance ends. To make the determination, sub-recipients must consider (a) the location, quality, size and age of the unit and (b) any amenities, housing services, maintenance and utilities provided by the owner. Sub-recipients will evaluate rent reasonableness at program intake and at least once annually. Documentation of rent reasonableness evaluations must be kept in participant files. (24 CFR 576.106(d)). This requirement applies to HP and RR assistance.

As with FMR, rent reasonableness requirements do not apply when a program participant receives only financial assistance or services under HUD's ESG Housing Stabilization and Relocation Services.

## **MINIMUM HABITABILITY STANDARDS**

Housing for all program participants receiving any type of ESG assistance to move into or remain in housing must meet HUD Minimum Habitability Standards for Permanent Housing. Sub-recipients must document compliance with this standard by signing and completing a current Minimum Habitability Standards Checklist before the participant signs the lease and before the sub-recipient provides any ESG

rental assistance or services specific to the unit. In addition, sub-recipients must inspect all units at least annually upon recertification to ensure that the units continue to meet the minimum habitability standards. Inspection forms must be kept in the participant file. MFA may also inspect the unit as part of the monitoring process. (24 CFR 576.403(a))

## LEAD-BASED PAINT REQUIREMENTS

All HUD-funded housing programs occupied by program participants are required to incorporate lead-based paint remediation and disclosure requirements. Generally, these provisions require the recipient to screen for, disclose the existence of, and take reasonable precautions for the presence of lead-based paint in leased or assisted units constructed prior to 1978. (24 CFR 576.403(a))

ESG-funded programs are required to incorporate the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act (42 U.S.C. 4821-4846), the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (42 U.S.C. 4851-4846), and 24 CFR part 35, subparts A, B, H, J, K, M, and R in the unit.

## LEASE AGREEMENT

Each program participant receiving rental assistance must have a legally binding, written lease for the rental unit. The program participant must be the tenant on a lease and is renewable and terminable only for cause. The lease must be renewable for terms that are a minimum of one month. (24 CFR 576.106(g))

## RENTAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

In addition to a lease between the program participant and the owner, the ESG interim rule also requires a Rental Assistance Agreement between the sub-recipient and the property owner. The sub-recipient may make rental assistance payments only to an owner with whom the sub-recipient has entered into a rental assistance agreement. (24 CFR 576.106(e))

The rental assistance agreement must set forth the terms under which rental assistance will be provided, including the requirements of ESG assistance. In addition, the rental assistance agreement must provide the following:

1. During the term of the agreement, the owner gives the sub-recipient a copy of any notice to the program participant to vacate the housing unit, or any complaint used under state or local law to commence an eviction against the program participant.
2. Agreement must contain the same payment due date, grace period, and late payment penalty requirements as the program participant's lease. The rental assistance agreement with the owner must terminate and no further rental assistance payments under that agreement may be made if:
  - a) The program participant moves out of the housing unit for which the program participant has a lease; or
  - b) The lease terminates and is not renewed; or
  - c) The program participant becomes ineligible to receive ESG rental assistance.

## RENT PAYMENTS

Program participants receiving rental assistance funds pay their portion of rent directly to the landlord. The difference between the total rent and the amount paid by the program participant is then paid by the sub-recipient. Sub-recipients may not use ESG funds to cover the cost of the program participant's rent, if the program participant fails to pay his or her portion of rent.

Sub-recipients must make timely payments to each landlord or property owner in accordance with the rental assistance agreement. All rent payments must go directly to a third-party (directly to landlord). ESG funds may not be used for late penalties incurred by the sub-recipient or the participant once they are in the program.



## APPENDIX A: ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES BY ESG COMPONENT

### STREET OUTREACH

#### ENGAGEMENT

Unsheltered persons are engaged for the purpose of providing immediate support, intervention, and connections with homeless assistance programs and/or mainstream social services and housing programs. Eligible engagement activities include:

- Making an initial assessment of needs and eligibility using the Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)
- Providing crisis counseling
- Addressing urgent physical needs, such as providing meals, blankets, clothes or toiletries
- Actively connecting and providing information and referrals to programs targeted to homeless people and mainstream social services and housing programs, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, community-based services, permanent supportive housing, and rapid re-housing programs

#### CASE MANAGEMENT

Case management includes assessing housing and service needs, arranging, coordinating and monitoring the delivery of individualized services to meet the needs of the program participant. Eligible services and activities include:

- Utilizing the NMCES
- Conducting the initial VI-SPDAT
- Verifying and documenting program eligibility
- Counseling
- Developing, securing and coordinating services
- Obtaining federal, state, and local benefits
- Monitoring and evaluating program participant progress
- Providing information and referrals to other providers
- Developing an individualized housing and service plan, including planning a path to permanent housing stability.
- If service workers use their own vehicles, mileage reimbursement is allowed to visit or assist program participants with eligible program activities.

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## SERVICES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Services for special populations include services for homeless youth, victim services, and services for people living with HIV/AIDS, as long as the costs of providing these services are one of the above eligible Street Outreach activities. The term “victim services” refers to services that assist program participants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, including services offered by rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters, and other organizations with a documented history of effective work concerning domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

### ESSENTIAL SERVICES

ESG funds may be used for the costs of providing essential services to homeless families and individuals in emergency shelters and may include:

#### **Case Management**

Case management includes assessing housing and service needs, arranging, coordinating and monitoring the delivery of individualized services to meet the needs of the program participant. Eligible services and activities include:

- Utilizing the NMCES
- Conducting the initial VI-SPDAT
- Verifying and documenting program eligibility
- Counseling
- Developing, securing and coordinating services
- Obtaining federal, state, and local benefits
- Monitoring and evaluating program participant progress
- Providing information and referrals to other providers
- Developing an individualized housing and service plan, including planning a path to permanent housing stability

#### **Child Care**

Childcare includes the costs of providing meals and snacks and comprehensive and coordinated sets of appropriate developmental activities. Children must be under the age of 13 unless they have a disability. Children with a disability must be under the age of 18. In addition, the childcare center must be licensed by the jurisdiction in which it operates in order for its costs to be eligible.

## **Education Services**

When necessary for the program participant to obtain and maintain housing, the costs of improving knowledge and basic educational skills are eligible. Services include instruction or training in consumer education, health education, substance abuse prevention, literacy, English as a Second Language, and General Educational Development (GED).

Eligible services or activities may include:

- Screening
- Assessment and testing
- Individual or group instruction
- Tutoring
- Provision of books, supplies, and instructional material
- Counseling
- Referral to community resources

## **Employment Assistance and Job Training**

- Classroom, online, and/or computer instruction
- On-the-job instruction
- Services that assist individuals in securing employment including:
  - Employment screening, assessment or testing
  - Structured job skills and job-seeking skills
  - Special training and tutoring, including literacy training and pre-vocational training
  - Books and instructional material
  - Counseling or job coaching
  - Referral to community resources
  - Acquiring learning skills that can be used to secure and retain a job, including the acquisition of vocational licenses and/or certificates
  - Increasing earning potential
  - Reasonable stipends to program participants in employment assistance and job training

## **Outpatient Health Services**

Outpatient health services include the direct outpatient treatment of medical conditions that are provided by licensed medical professionals. ESG funds may be used only for these services to the extent that other appropriate health services are unavailable within the community. Eligible treatment options may include:

- Assessing a program participant's health problems and developing a treatment plan
- Assisting program participants to understand their health needs

- Providing directly or assisting program participants to obtain appropriate medical treatment, preventative care, and health maintenance services, including emergency medical services
- Providing medication and follow-up services
- Providing preventative and non-cosmetic dental care

### **Legal Services**

Legal services include the hourly fees for legal advice and representation by attorneys licensed and in good standing with the bar association of the state in which the services are provided, and by person(s) under the supervision of the licensed attorney, regarding matters that interfere with the program participant's ability to obtain and retain housing. ESG funds may be used only for these services to the extent that other appropriate legal services are unavailable or inaccessible within the community.

Eligible subject matters include:

- Child support
- Guardianship
- Paternity
- Emancipation
- Legal separation
- Orders of protection and other civil remedies for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking,
- Appeal of veterans and public benefit claim denials
- Resolution of outstanding criminal warrants

Eligible services or activities may include:

- Client intake
- Preparation of cases for trial
- Provision of legal advice
- Representation at hearings
- Counseling

Fees based on the actual service performed (i.e., fee for service) are also eligible, but only if the cost would be less than the cost of hourly fees. Filing fees and other necessary court costs are also eligible. If the sub-recipient is a legal services provider and performs the services itself, the eligible costs are the sub-recipient's employee salaries and other costs necessary to perform the services. Legal services for immigration and citizenship matters and issues relating to mortgages are ineligible costs. Retainer fee arrangements and contingency fee arrangements are ineligible costs.

### **Life Skills Training**

Life skills training includes the costs of teaching critical life management skills that may never have been learned or have been lost during the course of physical or mental illness, domestic violence, substance use, and homelessness. These services must be necessary to assist the program participant to function independently in the community. Life skills training options may include:

- Budgeting resources
- Managing money
- Managing a household
- Resolving conflict
- Shopping for food and needed items
- Improving nutrition
- Using public transportation
- Parenting

### **Mental Health Services**

Mental health services include the direct outpatient treatment by licensed professionals of mental health conditions. ESG funds may only be used for these services to the extent that other appropriate mental health services are unavailable or inaccessible within the community. Mental health services are the application of therapeutic processes to personal, family, situational, or occupational problems in order to bring about positive resolution of the problem or improved individual or family functioning or circumstances. Problem areas may include family and marital relationships, parent-child problems, or symptom management. Eligible treatment options include:

- Crisis interventions
- Individual, family, or group therapy sessions
- The prescription of psychotropic medications or explanations about the use and management of medications
- Combinations of therapeutic approaches to address multiple problems

### **Substance Abuse Treatment Services**

Substance abuse treatment services are designed to prevent, reduce, eliminate, or deter relapse of substance abuse or addictive behaviors and are provided by licensed or certified professionals. ESG funds may only be used for these services to the extent that other appropriate substance abuse treatment services are unavailable or inaccessible within the community. Eligible treatment options include:

- Client intake and assessment
- Outpatient treatment for up to 30 days.

Group and individual counseling and drug testing are eligible costs. Inpatient detoxification and other inpatient drug or alcohol treatment are not eligible costs.

### **Services for Special Populations**

ESG funds may be used to provide services for homeless youth, victim services, and services for people living with HIV/AIDS, as long as the costs of providing these services are one of the eligible Emergency Shelter essential services listed above. The term “victim services” refers to services that assist program participants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, including services offered by rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters, and other organizations with a documented history of effective work concerning domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

### **Salaries**

Salary for shelter employee whose hours are spent directly associated with the shelter clients, supervision of shelter employees or shelter office employees.

## **SHELTER OPERATIONS**

Eligible expenses under Shelter Operations include:

- The costs of maintenance to the shelter building (including minor or routine repairs)
- Rent
- Security
- Office equipment/supplies
- Insurance
- Utilities
- Food
- Furnishings
- Supplies necessary for the operation of the shelter
- Salary for shelter employee that provides maintenance/security

Where no appropriate emergency shelter is available for a homeless family or individual, eligible costs may also include a hotel or motel voucher for that family or individual.

### **Transportation**

Eligible transportation costs include a program participant’s travel to and from medical care, employment, childcare, or other eligible essential services facilities. These costs include the following:

- The cost of a program participant’s travel on public transportation, as well as travel to use public transportation

- If shelter employees use their own vehicles for this use, mileage reimbursement is allowed
- The cost of gas, insurance, taxes, and maintenance/repair for the shelter's vehicle used to transport program participants and/or staff serving program participants

## HOMELESS PREVENTION AND RAPID-REHOUSING

Homeless Prevention assistance includes housing relocation and stabilization services and short- and/or medium-term rental assistance necessary to prevent an individual or family from moving into an emergency shelter or another place described in paragraph 1 of the “homeless definition” in 24 CFR 576. The costs of homeless prevention are only eligible to the extent that the assistance is necessary to help the program participant regain stability in the program participants current permanent house or move into other permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing

Rapid Re-Housing assistance includes housing relocation and stabilization services and short- and/or medium-term rental assistance as necessary to help a homeless individual or family move as quickly as possible into permanent housing.

### HOUSING RELOCATION AND STABILIZATION SERVICES – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE COSTS

Subject to the general conditions under the Homelessness Prevention Component (24 CFR 576.103) and the Rapid Re-Housing Assistance Component (24 CFR 576.104), ESG funds may be used to pay housing owners, utility companies, and other third parties for the following costs:

- **Rental Application Fees:** ESG funds may pay for the rental housing application fee that is charged by the owner to all applicants.
- **Security Deposits:** ESG funds may pay for a security deposit that is equal to no more than 2 months’ rent.
- **Last Month’s Rent:** If necessary to obtain housing for a program participant, the last month’s rent may be paid from ESG funds to the owner of that housing at the time the owner is paid the security deposit and the first month’s rent. This assistance must not exceed one month’s rent and must be included in calculating the program participant’s total rental assistance, which cannot exceed 24 months during any 3-year period.
- **Utility Deposits:** ESG funds may pay for a standard utility deposit required by the utility company for all customers for the utilities listed below (under utility payments)
- **Utility Payments:** ESG funds may pay for up to 24 months of utility payments per program participant, per service, including up to 6 months of utility payments in arrears, per service. A partial payment of a utility bill counts as one month. This assistance may only be provided if the program participant or a member of the same household has an account in his or her name with a utility company or proof of responsibility to make utility payments. Eligible utility services are gas, electric, water, and sewage. No program participant shall receive more than 24 months of utility assistance within any 3-year period.
- **Moving Costs:** ESG funds may pay for moving costs, such as truck rental or hiring a moving company. This assistance may include payment of temporary storage fees for up to 3 months, provided that the fees are accrued after the date the program participant begins receiving



housing stabilization services and before the program participant moves into permanent housing. Payment of temporary storage fees in arrears is not eligible.

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## HOUSING SEARCH AND PLACEMENT SERVICES

Assist participants in locating, obtaining, and retaining suitable permanent housing, including:

- Housing search
- Tenant counseling
- Understanding leases
- Arranging for utilities
- Making moving arrangements
- Assessment of housing barriers, needs and preferences
- Development of an action plan for locating housing
- Outreach to and negotiation with owners
- Assessment of housing for compliance with ESG requirements for habitability, lead-based paint, and rent reasonableness
- Assistance with submitting rental applications

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## HOUSING STABILITY CASE MANAGEMENT

Assessing, arranging, coordinating, and monitoring the delivery of individualized services to facilitate housing stability for a program participant who resides in permanent housing or to assist a program participant in overcoming immediate barriers to obtaining housing by, for example:

- Conducting the initial VI-SPDAT or F-VI-SPDAT assessment, including verifying and documenting eligibility
- Using the Coordinated Entry System (NMCES)
- Counseling
- Developing, securing, and coordinating services
- Obtaining Federal, State, and local benefits
- Monitoring and evaluating program participant progress
- Providing information and referrals to other providers
- Developing an individualized housing and service plan, including planning a path to permanent housing stability
- Conducting re-evaluations

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## MEDIATION

Mediation between the program participant and the owner or person(s) with whom the program participant is living, provided that the mediation is necessary to prevent the program participant from losing permanent housing in which the program participant currently resides.

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## CREDIT REPAIR

Credit counseling and other services necessary to assist program participants with critical skills related to household budgeting, managing money, accessing a free personal credit report, and resolving personal credit problems.

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## SHORT-TERM AND MEDIUM-TERM RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Subject to the general conditions in 24 CFR 576.103 and 24 CFR 576.104, the recipient or sub-recipient may provide a program participant with up to 24 months of rental assistance during any 3-year period. This assistance may be short-term rental assistance, medium-term rental assistance, payment of rental arrears, or any combination of this assistance. Rental assistance may be tenant-based or project-based.

- Short-Term Rental Assistance: Short-term rental assistance is assistance for up to 3 months of rent.
- Medium-Term Rental Assistance: Medium-term rental assistance is assistance for more than 3 months but not more than 24 months of rent.
- Rental Arrears: Payment of rental arrears consists of a one-time payment for up to 6 months of rent in arrears, including any late fees on those arrears.

## HMIS/OSNIUM

These activities are designed to fund ESG sub-recipient participation in the HMIS collection and analyses of data on individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes data collected by victim service providers through Osnium. Eligible costs include:

- Purchasing or leasing hardware
- Purchasing software or software licenses
- Obtaining technical support
- Leasing office space
- Paying costs for electricity, gas, water, phone service, and high-speed data transmission necessary to operate or contribute data to the HMIS
- Paying salaries for staff operating HMIS and/or completing data entry
  - a) Monitoring and reviewing data quality
  - b) Completing data analysis

- c) Reporting to the HMIS Lead training staff on using the HMIS or comparable database; and
- d) Implementing and complying with all applicable HMIS requirements
- Paying costs of staff to travel to and attend HUD-sponsored and HUD-approved training
- Salary for employee(s) whose hours can be tracked for entering data into the HMIS/Osnum database

## APPENDIX B: HUD DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS 24 CFR 576.2

### Category 1: Literally Homeless

Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; or
- 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
- 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.

### Category 2: Imminent Risk of Homelessness

Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:

- Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance
- No subsequent residence has been identified; and
- The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing

### Category 3: Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes

Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:

- Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes;
- Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application;
- Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the preceding 60 days; and

- Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers

#### **Category 4: Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV**

Any individual or family who:

- Is fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking;
- Has no other residence; and
- Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

### **APPENDIX C: HUD DEFINITION OF “AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS”**

#### **Category 1: Individuals and Families**

An individual or family who:

- Has an annual income below 30% of the median family income for the area; and
- Does not have sufficient resources or support networks immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place defined in Category 1 of the “homeless” definition; and

Meets one or more of the following risk factors:

- Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for assistance; or
- Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship; or
- Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance; or
- Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost is not paid for by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals; or
- Lives in an SRO or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than 2 persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than one and a half persons per room; or
- Is exiting a publicly funded institution or system of care

#### **Category 2: Unaccompanied Children and Youth**

A child or youth who does not qualify as homeless under the homeless definition but qualifies as homeless under another federal statute.

#### **Category 3: Families with Children and Youth**

An unaccompanied youth who does not qualify as homeless under the homeless definition but qualifies as homeless under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) or that child or youth if living with him or her.

The standards set in this document comply with ESG regulations.

## **APPENDIX D: ORDER OF PRIORITY FOR OBTAINING EVIDENCE OF HOMELESSNESS**

The recordkeeping requirements found in 24 CFR 576.500(a)(b) require sub-recipients to maintain and follow written intake procedures to determine whether potential program participants meet the homeless definition found in 24 CFR 576.2. These procedures must require documentation at intake of the 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 emergency shelter, receiving street outreach services, or being immediately admitted to shelter or receiving services provided by a victim service provider. Records contained in an HMIS or comparable database used by victim service or legal service providers are acceptable evidence of third-party documentation and intake worker observations if the HMIS retains an auditable history of all entries, including the person who entered the data, the date of entry, and the change made; and if the HMIS prevents overrides or changes of the dates on which entries are made.

The procedures that must be followed to establish the order of priority for obtaining evidence of homelessness are as follows:

1. Third-party documentation, including written and source documentation, and HMIS records;
2. Intake worker observations;
3. Certification from individual seeking assistance

For emergency shelters, sub-recipients are required to document eligibility at program entry. HUD recognizes that third-party documentation at the emergency shelter level is not feasible in most cases. For shelters where program participants may stay only one night and must leave in the morning, documentation must be obtained each night. If program participants may stay more than one night, then documentation must be obtained on the first night the household stays in the shelter. Emergency shelters can document homeless status through self-certification by the individual or head of household as the primary method of establishing homeless eligibility. In these instances, one method of meeting this standard would be to require households to complete a sign-in sheet, with a statement at the top informing the individual or head of household that by signing, they certify that they are homeless.

## APPENDIX E: ESG-CV FUNDING FOR SHELTERS

ESG CARES Act (ESG-CV) funding must be used to prevent, prepare for and respond to coronavirus among individuals and families who are homeless or receiving homeless assistance. The only ESG regulation pertaining to emergency shelters that does not apply to ESG-CV funding is the requirement for shelters to match the funding they receive.

## ESG CV - WAIVERS AND EXCLUSIONS FOR RAPID RE-HOUSING & HOMELESS PREVENTION

HUD has granted waivers on specific regulations due to COVID-19. The waivers are in place until 9/30/2022.

CARES Act funding for Emergency Solutions Grant funds must be used to prevent, prepare for and respond to coronavirus among individuals and families who are homeless or receiving homeless assistance and to support additional homeless assistance and homeless prevention activities to mitigate the impacts created by coronavirus.

All ESG CARES Act funds must be expended by September 30, 2022. Funds not expended in a timely manner may be redirected to another area/service provider.

## AT-RISK OR IMMINENT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

The CARES Act raised the income limit for those at-risk of homelessness (definition at 24 CFR 576.2 from 30 percent of AMI to the Very-Low Income limit of 50 percent the area.

## RE-EVALUATION FREQUENCY

The required frequency of re-evaluations for homeless prevention assistance under section 576.401(b) is waived for up to 2 years beginning 3/31/2020 so long as the subrecipient conducts the required re-evaluation not less than once every 6 months. This waiver expires 4/2/2022.

## LANDLORD INCENTIVES

The limitations on eligible activities under section 415(a) of the McKinney-Vento Act and 24 CFR 576.105 are waived and alternative requirements are established to the extent necessary to authorize ESG-CV funds to be used under 24 CFR 576.105 to add the eligible cost of paying for landlord incentives as reasonable and necessary to obtain housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and at risk of homelessness. However, a recipient may not use ESG-CV funds to pay the landlord incentives set forth below in an amount that exceeds three times the rent charged for the unit. Waiving the limitation on eligible costs under housing relocation and stabilization services to pay for the costs of landlord incentives will increase the number of housing units available to people experiencing

homelessness or at risk of homelessness, especially in tight rental markets and obtaining and maintaining housing is critical to preventing the spread of coronavirus and helping mitigate the economic impact of the crisis. The limitation to three times the rent charged for each unit ensures enough ESG-CV funds remain available to provide other eligible activities necessary to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Eligible landlord incentive costs include:

- a) Signing bonuses equal to up to 2 months of rent;
- b) Security deposits equal to up to 3 months of rent;
- c) Paying the cost to repair damages incurred by the program participant not covered by the security deposit or that are incurred while the program participant is still residing in the unit; and,
- d) Paying the costs of extra cleaning or maintenance of a program participant's unit or appliances.

The incentive is for use with new units only and should not be used for clients that are already housed.

#### SHORT-TERM AND MEDIUM-TERM RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Where medium-rental assistance is defined as “for more than 3 months but not more than 24 months of rent” is waived and an alternative requirement is established where medium-term is established as for more than 3 months but not more than 12 months. This alternative requirement will allow more households to receive rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention assistance, which is necessary to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

Rental arrears is not included in the limitation therefore a household could be assisted with 6 months of arrears and 12 months of rental assistance under ESG-CV assistance.

#### FAIR MARKET RENT

The requirement at 24 CFR 576.106(d) that prohibits rental assistance where the rent for the unit exceeds the Fair Market Rent established by HUD, as provided under 24 CFR Part 888, is waived so long as the rent complies with HUD's standards of rent reasonableness, as established under 24 CFR 982.507. Waiving this requirement will allow recipients to help program participants move quickly into housing or retain their existing housing, which is especially critical at reducing the spread of coronavirus and responding to coronavirus. This waiver provides additional flexibility beyond the waiver made available to the ESG Program on March 31, 2020 and extended to ESG-CV funds on May 22, 2020 by permitting ESG recipients to provide rental assistance for program participants, whose current rent exceeds FMR and by allowing recipients to use this waiver as needed throughout the period they are providing rental assistance to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

#### ASSISTANCE LIMITS



In order to ensure current program participants receiving homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance do not lose their housing during the coronavirus public health crisis and the subsequent economic downturn caused by the crisis, the requirements in 24 CFR 576.105(c) and 576.106(a) are waived and alternative requirements are established as follows:

- a. The requirement at 24 CFR 576.105(c) limiting the total period of time for which any program participant may receive the services under paragraph (b) to 24 months during any 3-year period is waived solely for those program participants who reach their 24-month maximum assistance during the period beginning on the presumed start of this crisis, January 21, 2020 – the date the first confirmed case was reported in the United States, and ending 6 months from the date of publication of this Notice, provided that the services are only extended for these program participants for up to a maximum of an additional 6 months; and
- b. The requirement at 24 CFR 576.106(a) limiting the total number of months a program participant can receive rental assistance to 24 months in a 3-year period is waived solely for those program participants who reach their 24-month maximum during the period beginning on the presumed start of this crisis, January 21, 2020 – the date the first confirmed case was reported in the United States, and ending 6 months from the date of publication of this Notice, provided that the rental assistance is only extended for these program participants for up to a maximum of an additional 6 months.

#### HOUSING STABILITY CASE MANAGEMENT

As required by 24 CFR 576.401(a) and (c), the recipient and its subrecipient must determine the available services and assistance that each ESG-CV program participant will need to achieve independent living and avoid further housing instability or homelessness, and the recipient and its subrecipient must assist each ESG-CV program participant, as needed, to obtain those services and assistance. However, HUD is making an across-the-board waiver of the ESG requirement in 24 CFR 576.401(e)(1) that housing stability case managers to meet not less than once per month with each program participant receiving homelessness prevention or rapid re-housing assistance.

HUD is waiving this requirement for all program participants receiving this assistance after qualifying as homeless, in order to be consistent with the CARES Act prohibition stated in section III.F.10. Additionally, HUD is waiving the requirement for all program participants receiving assistance after qualifying as at risk of homelessness, in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus and reduce the barriers to providing the homelessness prevention that is necessary to respond to coronavirus. This waiver provides additional regulatory relief beyond the waiver HUD made available on March 31, 2020 for annual ESG funds and extended on May 22, 2020 for annual ESG funds and ESG-CV funds, by lifting the 3-month limitation established May 22, 2020, and making the waiver of 24 CFR 576.401(e)(1) apply throughout the period the recipient or subrecipient uses funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

