

HAMPDEN COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE

2014 Continuum of Care Request for Proposals

Questions and Answers from the October 1, 2014 Bidders' Conference

Opportunity to Ask Additional Questions

1. Will the CoC answer additional questions submitted in writing?

Yes, the CoC will answer questions relating the FY2014 funding opportunity provided that they are submitted by email to gmccafferty@springfieldcityhall.com no later than 4:30 pm on October 9, 2014. Written answers to all questions will be made public on or before October 10, 2014.

Number of Applications Submitted By an Agency

2. Can an applicant submit more than one application for new projects?

Yes, a single applicant may submit more than one new application. There are several categories in which an applicant may choose to apply: 1) Bonus Project; 2) New project to provide permanent supportive housing to chronically homeless individuals or families; and/or 3) New project to provide rapid rehousing to homeless families with children.

Renewal Applications

3. On Sept. 30, 2014, Gerry McCafferty sent an email to renewal applicants that referenced Section 4C. What is this section and where is it located?

Renewal applications in *esnaps* include a page which is labeled 4C: HMIS Participation. It is accessible from the navigation bar on the left hand side of the screen. The City of Springfield will complete this section for all renewal applications, based on project reports generated by HMIS. Applicants should not enter information into this section.

Reallocations and "Conversions"

4. Are reallocations considered new projects?

Yes. An applicant seeking reallocation must complete a new project application for the project the applicant proposes.

5. For a reallocation project, can an applicant request more funds than the project that the applicant is discontinuing? Is a reallocation applicant tied to the line items or budget amounts from the project that is being discontinued?

When an applicant submits a new application which seeks reallocation funds, the applicant is submitting an entirely new project. There are no requirements that the project link back to the project that is being discontinued. The applicant may submit a budget with any amount that is reasonable to operate the new program, which may be more than the budget for the previously operating program. The budget may contain any eligible costs, and is not limited to budget lines or amounts in the prior project.

6. If a program converts from transitional housing to permanent supportive housing, can it accept a chronically homeless person to fill an opening in the month or so before the new project begins?

This question has been submitted to HUD's Ask-a-Question portal, and an answer will be provided once HUD responds to the question.

7. On page 1 of the HC CoC FY2014 Instructions for Reallocation, in the paragraph regarding HUD's guidance it states "if a project converts from transitional housing to permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless, the program must stop providing housing to its transitional housing residents at the end of the program's existing contract year." If there is no housing available for all the participants to move into at the end of the contract year, is there a compliance issue for discharge to the shelters? To try and avoid that situation, all intakes will be stopped and any vacancies will remain unfilled. Will that impact any future performance scoring further jeopardizing the program's continued funding?

In reallocation, a program is discontinued, and must wind down operations. The program should focus all efforts on assisting residents to transition to stable housing prior to the end of the program. However, there may be instances in which a person returns to homelessness as a result of the program's discontinuance. While this is an unfortunate situation, it does not constitute failure to comply with program requirements.

While the CoC cannot guarantee how renewal applications will be considered and scored in future competitions, this year the CoC has recognized that it is unfair to penalize new programs for program performance by a different program. In addition, the CoC wants to reward applicants who have used reallocation opportunities to convert from another model to a best-practice model. As a result, in this year's competition, newly converted projects are being automatically prioritized for renewal.

Esnaps

8. How does an applicant access *esnaps*?

The applicant agency must designate a staff person to access *esnaps*. The designated individual must visit the *esnaps* site, www.esnaps.hud.gov, click the “Create Profile” button, and provide the required information. Following this step, the individual must send an email to Deborah Merkman, dmerkman@springfieldcityhall.com, and Gerry McCafferty, gmccafferty@springfieldcityhall.com and request that the individual be linked to the Hampden County CoC account. Ms. Merkman or Ms. McCafferty will send a response email conforming that the individual has been added. For additional information about accessing the applicant’s project in *esnaps*, please see the Request for Proposals.

9. Can agencies have more than one user in *esnaps*?

Yes. It is discouraged, due to the possibility of people overwriting each other’s work, but if an agency has a real need for more than one person to access *esnaps* it will be granted.

Chronic Homeless Definition

10. If a person lives in transitional housing and met the chronic definition before entering transitional housing, can they become homeless for a few days and then again meet the definition of chronically homeless?

To meet the definition of chronically homeless, a person must be currently homeless; must meet the required length or repetition of homelessness (homeless for a year or longer of four or more times in the last three years); and must be disabled. If a person meets this definition, then it does not matter if at some time in the past the person resided in a transitional housing program. However, the time in the transitional housing program may interfere with a person’s ability to meet length or repetition of homelessness.

11. Please clarify the definition of chronically homeless family—is the requirement that the head of household meet the definition of chronic, or any member of the household? Specifically, how does the rule apply when there is a head or household plus a co-housing adult, or where there are two heads of household coming together to co-house?

The requirement is that there be a single person who is designated as the head of household and meets the definition of chronically homeless. The HUD definition of “chronically homeless” is:

- (1) An individual who: (i) Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and (ii) Has been homeless and living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in in emergency shelter continuously for at least one year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years;

- and (iii) Can be diagnosed with one or more of the following conditions: substance abuse disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability; or
- (2) an individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, mental health or substance abuse facility, hospital or other similar facility for fewer than 90 days and has met all the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition before entering that facility; or
- (3) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

Screening and Prioritization for Chronically Homeless

12. What rules will apply regarding screening and prioritization for permanent supportive housing funded in this competition?

The Hampden County Board of Directors has recently voted to require use of the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) as a pre-admission requirement for all CoC-funded permanent supportive housing. Any new PSH funded will need to comply with this requirement. As the CoC becomes familiar with use of the VI-SPDAT, it expects to develop policies and procedures that will govern required use of the instrument, and any new policies and procedures will apply to any PSH projects funded in this competition. There is also a likelihood that the CoC will start to require the Family VI-SPDAT for rapid rehousing projects funded in this competition.

HUD has encouraged CoCs to create procedures that will prioritize placement into CoC PSH units according to the following order: 1) Chronically homeless, one year or longer, with severe service needs; 2) Chronically homeless, one year or longer, without severe service needs; 3) Chronically homeless, 4 or more time in last 3 years, with severe service needs; and 4) Chronically homeless, 4 or more times in the last 3 years, without severe service needs. The CoC is likely to create policies and procedures that will require this type of prioritization. In addition, implementation of this prioritization is likely to require a centralized wait list, and the CoC will consider creation of a centralized wait list in the next year. The CoC has applied to be part of the Zero 2016 campaign, which seeks to end chronic homelessness by the end of 2016; if the CoC is selected to be part of the campaign, the campaign will provide technical assistance to the CoC on creation of a centralized waitlist and prioritization by VI-SPDAT score. Again, projects funded in this competition will be required to participate in these coordinated assessment and prioritization procedures adopted by the CoC.

13. How does the requirement to use the VI-SPDAT apply to Friends of the Homeless PSH, where all screening is done by the Springfield Housing Authority and screening information is not provided to FOH?

Screening and selection of tenants for the FOH Worthington House Campus Project is complicated by the program design that includes screening by the Springfield Housing Authority. The CoC will work individually with FOH and SHA to design a process that works for both entities and complies with coordinated assessment requirements.

Match

14. If a permanent supportive housing project is not receiving leasing or operating funds, can the value of the building they are using be counted as match? Can the value of this in-kind match be documented by an audit?

The CoC Interim Rule, at 24 CFR 578.73(c)(1) provides that a subrecipient may use the value of any real property, equipment, goods, or services contributed to the project as match, provided that if the recipient or subrecipient had to pay for them with grant funds, the costs would have been eligible under the CoC Program Interim Rule. Eligible costs for permanent supportive housing are acquisition, rehabilitation, new construction, leasing, rental assistance, operating costs, and supportive services.

The ability of an audit to document match depends on the actual language of the audit. Any applicant is invited to submit an audit for review and the City of Springfield will respond individually as to whether the audit meets match documentation requirements.