

HUD's Continuum of Care

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocates HUD homeless assistance grants to organizations that participate in local homeless assistance program planning networks. Each of these networks is called a **Continuum of Care (CoC)**. HUD introduced the CoC concept to encourage and support local organizations in coordinating their efforts to address housing and homeless issues and reduce homelessness.

CoC committees at the city, county and state level coordinate their efforts to produce annual plans that identify the needs of local homeless populations, the resources that are currently available in the community to address those needs, and additional resources needed to fill identified gaps. The CoC process is a community-based approach that encourages the creation of collaborative, comprehensive systems to meet the diverse of needs of local homeless populations.

How HUD Funding is Allocated

HUD funding for homeless assistance programs is distributed according to the results of two community planning efforts, called Consolidated Plans and Continuum of Care Plans.

HUD Definition: A Consolidated Plan provides the framework for states and localities to identify housing, homeless, community and economic development needs and resources and to develop a strategic plan to meet those needs.

The Consolidated Plan provides for state and local jurisdictions to develop housing and community development priorities, including a focus on homelessness. The plan lays out a three- to five-year strategy to implement formula-funded grant programs, including the **Emergency Shelter Grants Program (ESG)**, which solely funds projects for the homeless.

Under the ESG program, funds are distributed to state and local jurisdictions that have an approved Consolidated Plan. Funding allocation follows a formula based on factors including the population of a jurisdiction and the level of community need.

A Consolidated Plan provides an assessment of homeless individuals' needs within a jurisdiction, as well as plans for using ESG funds to address those needs.

HUD Definition: A Continuum of Care Plan is a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. It includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness.

The majority of HUD's homeless assistance funds are awarded through the Continuum of Care planning process, which complements and overlaps the Consolidated Plan. CoC funds are allocated through three major programs: **Supportive Housing Program (SHP)**, **Shelter Plus Care Program (S+C)**, and **Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation for Single Room Occupancy (SRO)**.

To receive funds through these programs, state and local governments submit a CoC plan each year that draws upon extensive community participation and includes identification of local funding priorities. The CoC application specifically identifies veterans as a sub-population targeted for assistance.

Typically, each year approximately 15% of the total HUD McKinney-Vento homeless appropriation is allocated for ESG. The majority of funds for homeless assistance are allocated through the Continuum of Care planning process.

CoC Planning Cycle

Homeless veteran service providers and other local organizations working in the homeless services field can use the CoC plan as a tool for planning and building partnerships. The CoC planning process is conducted annually and involves the full range of agencies in the homeless assistance community. The planning cycle follows these basic steps:

1. The planning cycle begins with the organization of the planning process, including identification of a working group and establishment of roles, responsibilities, goals, and a timetable.
2. The committee then collects data about the needs of the local population and sub-populations and the resources available to meet those needs.
3. A gap analysis is conducted to identify needs, existing community capacity, additional resources needed, and the priority of each sub-population.
4. The gap analysis is used to set funding priorities and develop short- and long-term strategies.
5. The final CoC plan is then prepared, criteria established for project selection, and projects are identified for funding and monitoring.

Getting Involved

In some communities, homeless veteran service providers have had difficulty getting support for homeless veteran specific projects and in competing for funding. As a homeless veteran service provider, becoming a part of your local CoC network can help ensure that homeless veteran needs are met. Without a strong veteran voice at the table, those needs and service projects may not receive the priority they deserve. By participating in the local CoC network, your organization is the homeless veteran advocate in the key planning process that sets local funding and project priorities.

Begin by learning about your local CoC network and ways you can get involved. The strategies and resources listed on the next page can help you in your efforts.

- Contact the local HUD office for information about your local or regional CoC. The Director of the Office of Community Development and Planning administers the CoC process. Find out who the lead agencies are and contact those agencies for CoC meeting dates and locations.
- Attend monthly or bi-monthly CoC meetings to ensure homeless veterans have a voice in the planning process and their needs are addressed. Join a committee or participate in data collection.
- Networking within your community should be an organizational priority. Seek out partnerships and collaborate with local veteran and non-veteran organizations to increase capacity and the range of services available to homeless veterans.
- Learn about the type of services that are most likely to receive funding priority and develop an understanding of how veterans issues fit into the need/service gaps identified in your community.
- Develop a strong base knowledge and keep current statistics about homeless veteran numbers and needs.
- Take a leadership role among homeless service providers. Become an activist for homeless veteran issues and provide outreach and education to your local community about serving the needs of homeless veterans.

Find information about CoC resources in the online HUDVet Directory (HUD Veteran Resource Center): www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/hudvet/index.cfm.

For additional CoC resources and guides, check HUD's Community Planning and Development website's Homeless Assistance Library: www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/library/coc/index.cfm.

For descriptions of the CoC process, instructions for applying for funding and current Notices of Funding Availability and application requirements, go to: www.hud.gov/offices/adm/grants/fundsavail.cfm.

HUD's Homeless Assistance

(adapted from A Place at the Table: Homeless Veterans and Local Homeless Assistance Planning Networks)

Supportive Housing Program grants may be used to fund one or more of the following activities: acquisition or rehabilitation of a building to be used as supportive housing or to provide supportive services; new construction of a supportive housing facility; leasing a building to be used for supportive housing or services; the provision of new or increased supportive services; costs associated with the day-to-day operation of a new supportive housing project or project expansions.

Shelter Plus Care Program grants may be used for the provision of rental assistance payments that, when combined with social services, provides supportive housing for homeless people with disabilities and their families.

The Single Room Occupancy Program provides tenant-based rental assistance for moderate rehabilitation of buildings with single-room dwellings, designed for the use of an individual, that do not contain food preparatory or sanitary facilities. A public housing authority makes Section 8 rental assistance payments to landlords on behalf of homeless individuals who rent the rehabilitated units. Rental assistance for SRO units is provided for a period of 10 years, and includes some of the rehabilitation and other costs of owning and maintaining the property.

The Emergency Shelter Grants Program may be used to fund one or more of the following activities: the renovation/rehabilitation/conversion of buildings for use as emergency shelters; shelter operating expenses such as rent, repairs, security, fuel, equipment insurance, utilities, food and furnishings; essential services such as those concerned with employment, health, and education of program participants; activities designed to prevent the incidence of homelessness; and administrative costs. ESG provides funds to states, territories, and qualified cities and counties.

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