



**PALM BEACH COUNTY**  
**HOMELESS AND HOUSING ALLIANCE**  
**RAPID RE-HOUSING PROGRAM**  
**STANDARDS**  
**Revised August 2023**



## **RAPID RE-HOUSING PROGRAM STANDARDS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) is a “Housing First” approach to move individuals and families experiencing homelessness into appropriate permanent housing as rapidly as possible, by providing the type, amount, and duration of housing assistance needed to stabilize the household. RRH is made up of 3 core components: housing search and identification, move-in and rent assistance, and case management and services. All RRH Programs must have all three components available, however, it is not required that a single partner agency provide all three services. In RRH, the program provides rental assistance that gradually declines over a period of time as the participant becomes able to take over the cost of their housing.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

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- All participants must be referred through Coordinated Entry (See process in HHA Policies and Procedures for Coordinated Intake & Assessment).
  - Cat 4 DV Clients come through their own CE System of prioritization
- Applicants may not be screened out due to having too little or no income, active or history of substance abuse, having a criminal record (with the exception of state-mandated restrictions), or having a history of victimization (e.g. domestic violence, sexual assault, childhood abuse).
- The participant (individual or family) must meet one of HUD’s definitions of homelessness as defined below:
  - Category 1, literally homeless, as defined by HUD: Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, meaning
    - Sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g. car, park bench, etc.) or
    - Living in a shelter, including transitional housing, designated to provide temporary living arrangements or
    - Exiting an institution (e.g. jail, hospital) where they resided for 90 days or less, and were residing in emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering the institution.
  - Category 4 as defined by HUD: Any individual or family who:
    - is fleeing or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions related to violence and who
    - Has no identified subsequent residence; and
    - Lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

- Youth aged 18-24, who meet Category 2, Imminent Risk of Homelessness, as defined by HUD: 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,
  - Have no subsequent residence has been identified; and
  - The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
- Rental Assistance cannot be provided to any individual or family who is already receiving rental assistance from any federal, state or local source for the same expense.

## **INTAKE & ASSESSMENT**

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- Partner Agencies will work with Coordinated Entry to provide any additional eligibility criteria in order to facilitate receiving appropriate referrals.
- Partner Agencies will work with Coordinated Entry to advise of any other eligibility criteria they may have.
- Partner Agencies will notify Coordinated Entry when there are openings in the program. All participants will be referred in order of Acuity as determined in the HHA standards for Coordinated Intake & Assessment.
- Once a referral is received, it is the responsibility of the Partner Agency to gather any additional documentation needed prior to accepting the participant into their program.
- Once the participant(s) is referred to the Partner Agency, the Partner Agency will assess with the individual or family what assistance they need in order to achieve housing stability.
- The program is designed to be “low barrier”: Clients do not need to be considered “housing-ready”.
- If it is determined that the participant needs more intensive or different services than can be provided by RRH, the agency may refer the applicant to more appropriate service, without losing housing. Rapid Rehousing may be used for temporary placeholder while waiting for an opening in PSH.
- Within 5 business days of entry into the program;
  - An individualized housing-based case plan will be developed with each participant that includes the participant’s goals, strengths, preferences and needs, the resources needed, and the steps that will be taken to move the individual or family into permanent housing as soon as possible.
  - A budget will be developed in order to assess the income and expenses that the client currently has and to make a plan to increase that income or adjust expenses in order to achieve and maintain stable housing.

- The participant is considered to have entered the program when the following factors have been met:
  1. Information provided by the participant or from the referral indicates they meet the criteria for admission;
  2. The participant has indicated they want to be housed in this program;
  3. The participant is able to access services and housing through the program. The expectation is the program has a housing opening (on-site, site-based, or scattered-site subsidy) or expects to have one in a reasonably short amount of time.

### **MOVE – IN AND RENTAL ASSISTANCE**

- A housing specialist or case manager will assist the participant to find a suitable place to live (apartment, house, etc.). In order to afford the apartment, the participant may need to have a roommate to share expenses. The housing specialist or case manager may assist in locating a roommate and working out arrangements for sharing expenses.
- Rent is defined by HUD in the CoC Interim Rule 578.37 as the following: For the purposes of calculating gross rent for rapid rehousing, the gross rent shall equal the sum of the total monthly rent for the unit and, if the tenant pays separately for utilities, the monthly allowance for utilities (excluding telephone) established by the public housing authority for the area in which the housing is located. Note that the HUD CoC Interim Rule is in accordance with HUD’s guidelines for CoC and/or ESG funded programs. Non HUD Funded programs are exempt.
- Consistent with HUD rules, these Standards require that “rent reasonableness” be established before the home can be rented using HUD funding. There are two scales that must be considered.
  - The first is “**Fair Market Rent**” (FMR). This amount can be obtained from
    - <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>
  - The second is to establish “**Rent Reasonableness**” This means that the **gross rent** (rent plus utilities allowance) paid by the program must be reasonable in relation to rents being charged in the area for comparable space taking into account the location, size, type, quality, amenities, facilities, and management and maintenance of each unit.
    - To establish rent reasonableness, first, obtain the amount of the Local Utility Allowance, (Appendix C) and add that amount to the total monthly rent of the unit under consideration. **Note that there are different allowances for different types of units: Multifamily (apartment), Row House/Town House, Single Family House, and Manufactured House, and be sure to use the correct allowance.**
    - Next, use [www.affordablehousing.com](http://www.affordablehousing.com) to obtain information about rentals prices in the area in which the client wants to rent. Choose at least three rentals that are comparable to the one you have located as a possibility for the client. Be sure they are comparable in terms of number of bedrooms,

bathrooms, amenities, etc. [www.affordablehousing.com](http://www.affordablehousing.com) will automatically add the cost of the utility allowance to the properties used for comparison.

- Consistent with funding source regulations/rules, the Partner Agency must reimburse to the participant, or pay to the utility company directly, any amount of the Utility Allowance which exceeds the participant's share of the gross rent. The Partner Agency must have the program participant's permission if payment is going to be made directly to the utility company. The Partner Agency must also notify the participant in writing of the amount paid to the utility company in order to allow the participant to pay any balance.
- **Unit rents can exceed the FMR, but must not exceed rent reasonableness.**
- Reasonable rent must not exceed rents currently being charged by the same owner for comparable unassisted units.
- Once an appropriate apartment is located, the housing specialist or case manager will work with the participant and the landlord to explain the RRH Program, and to help the participant to understand the lease and the amount of rent and utilities. (See Leases Section below)
- Consistent with funding source regulations/rules, participants may be placed in a unit located outside of Palm Beach County, provided that the agency is able to provide an equivalent level of services as would be provided for units located within the County. Approval to locate a household in a Rapid Rehousing unit outside of Palm Beach County will be done on a case by case basis.
- All rental units must meet HUD Housing Quality Standards (Appendix E), as well as any State or local codes
- The unit must be inspected no more than 30 days before move-in and annually thereafter. The annual inspection must take place before lease renewal.
- The inspector does not have to be certified, but must have received documented training in the standards, and utilize the HUD Inspection Sheet. (Appendix E)
- If deficiencies are found, the property owner has 30 days to correct them, unless they present a danger to the participant or family, in which case they must be corrected within 24 hours. Appendix A commits the landlord to these requirements.
- A rapid re-housing program should make efforts to maximize the number of households it is able to serve by providing households with the financial assistance in a progressive manner, providing only the assistance necessary to stabilize in permanent housing.
- Consistent with applicable funding source's regulations/rules, Rapid Rehousing rental assistance may be provided for short-term (1-3 months), medium term (4-24 months) or long-term (24 months or longer) based on contract requirements and the needs of the participant. Case management may continue after rental assistance ends. The reason for the length of rental assistance must be documented in the file.

- For agencies that use a declining subsidy, the form used to calculate the amount the participant will pay is attached as Appendix D. An Excel spreadsheet to use in calculating the rent the participant will pay is to be distributed with these procedures.
- The Partner Agency may also pay rent and utility deposits, first and last month's rent, moving costs, and other costs to assist the individual or family in establishing their home. Rental deposits cannot exceed the cost of two month's rent.
  - During the time rental assistance is paid, the Case Manager will work with the client to prepare for the increase in the amount the client will be paying. This may include assisting the participant or family to obtain employment, increase working hours, apply for benefits, or other methods of increasing the amount of household income. The Partner Agency will also help the client to develop a budget so that household expenses can be foreseen.
  - Rapid Rehousing projects must use a tenant-based rental assistance model. Rental assistance follows the program participant. This means that the program participant or family may move without losing their rental assistance, so long as they are meeting all program requirements and so long as the new rental unit meets the same criteria in terms of rent reasonableness and Housing Quality Standards.

## **RENTAL LEASES**

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- Rental leases must be in the participant's name and signed by both the landlord and the participant.
- The initial lease must be for at least 12 months, and must be automatically renewable for at least one month, except where either party has given prior notice that the lease will not be renewed.
- The lease must stipulate the reasons the lease may be terminable before the end of the 12 months, and leases must be terminable only for cause.
- An addendum, The Landlord Certification (Appendix A) is required to be signed by the landlord and tenant and attached to the lease.
- **All participants** will also be given a copy of the Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault or Stalking, and Alternate Documentation under the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (Appendix B). VAWA protection is available to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking regardless of sex, gender identity or sexual orientation. **The participant and the landlord must both sign the receipt of this form and the receipt should be maintained in the client file.**

## **CASE MANAGEMENT**

- Quality Case Management is critical to the success of participants in RRH, in order to assure that their housing situation becomes stable and that they are prepared to assume the full responsibility for home management and costs when they exit the program.
- The program utilizes a strength-based approach that views the individual and/or family as a whole. Case managers identify the inherent strengths of a person or family instead of diagnoses or deficits, and build on those strengths to empower the household to succeed.
- Rapid re-housing case management should be client-driven. Case managers should actively engage participants in case management and service participation by creating an environment in which the participant is driving the case planning and goal-setting based on what they want from the program and services,
- The Full SPDAT (Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) will be administered upon entry to the program and then at a pre-determined frequency: Move-In, 30 days, 90 days, 120 days, 270 days, 365 days, at any major case plan change, or any time the participant is rehoused and at least annually thereafter in order to continually assess the participant's housing stability. It should also be administered after any substantive change in the household circumstances, including changes in income and composition of the household.
- All participants are required to meet with their case manager at least once a month. The goals of rapid re-housing case management is to help participants obtain and move into permanent housing, support participants to stabilize in housing, and connect them to community and mainstream services and supports. Initially, rapid re-housing case management is primarily focused on assisting a participant in obtaining and moving into a housing unit. Case managers help participants resolve or mitigate tenant screening barriers like rental and utility arrears or multiple evictions; obtain necessary identification if needed; support other move-in activities such as providing furniture; and prepare participants for successful tenancy by reviewing lease provisions.
- After moving in, rapid re-housing case management should be home-based and help participants stabilize in housing. Based upon their needs and requests, it should help them identify and access supports including: family and friend networks; mainstream and community services; and employment and income. Case managers may assist in resolving issues or conflicts that may lead to tenancy problems, such as disputes with landlords or neighbors, while also helping participants develop and test skills they will use to retain housing once they are no longer in the program.
- Rapid re-housing program case management reflects the short-term nature of the rapid rehousing assistance. It focuses on housing retention and helping a household build a support network outside of the program. It connects the participant with community resources and service options, such as legal services, health care, vocational assistance, transportation, child care, and other forms of assistance, that continue beyond participation in the rapid re-housing program.

- Rapid re-housing case management should follow the practice of progressive engagement and be flexible in intensity —offering only essential assistance until or unless the participant demonstrates the need for or requests additional help. The intensity and duration of case management is based on the needs of individual households and may lessen or increase.
- In some instances, case management may continue after financial assistance ends if appropriate or requested by the household. For those that will require ongoing support after exiting the rapid re-housing program, case managers should provide participants with warm handoffs to mainstream and community-based services that will continue to assist them.
- All participant interactions as well as actions taken on their behalf, are to be documented in the case notes.
- During the time rental assistance is paid, the Partner Agency will work with the client to prepare for the increase in the amount the client will be paying. This may include assisting the participant or family to obtain employment, increase working hours, apply for benefits, or other methods of increasing the amount of household income.
- The case manager should strongly encourage and assist the client to develop a budget so that household expenses can be foreseen. The budget should be updated regularly or if circumstances change.
- The ~~program~~ case plan should be updated at least quarterly, and with any substantial change in the participant’s circumstances, including income, people in the household, etc.

### **PROGRAM EXIT**

- Program exit may occur when the participant:
  - No longer wants assistance, or
  - No longer needs assistance with rent or case management in order to maintain stable housing, or
  - It is determined that the program cannot meet the participant’s needs
  - Participant fails to meet with case manager once a month as required
  - Commits an act of violence
- At the time of exit, an exit summary will be prepared by the case manager, containing information about the services provided, the date of exit, the reason for exit, and the participant’s housing status.
- Program participants may not be terminated or discharged from the program for any of the following reasons:
  - Failure to participate in supportive services (must still meet at least once per month with case manager)
  - Failure to make progress on a case plan
  - Loss of income or failure to improve income



- Any other activity not covered in a lease agreement typically found for unassisted persons in the participant's geographic area
- A person being terminated from the program is entitled to formal due process that recognizes the rights of individuals receiving assistance under due process of law. At minimum this requires:
  - Providing the participant with a written copy of the rules and the termination process before the participant begins to receive assistance,
  - Written notice to the participant containing a clear statement of the reason for termination,
  - A review of the decision, in which the participant is given the opportunity to present written or oral objections to a person other than the person who (or a subordinate of that person) made or approved the decision to terminate, and
  - Prompt written notice of the final decision to the participant.
- If a participant is evicted by a landlord, this does not constitute termination from the program and reasonable efforts should be made to obtain other housing as soon as possible.