

Title: 3.3 Housing First

Prepared By: CAFTH

Reviewed By: Governing Council

Approved By: Governing Council

Date Reviewed: March 8th, 2023

Purpose:

The following policy outlines the integration of Housing First principles into all housing aspects of the Memphis/Shelby County CoC.

Scope:

This policy applies to everyone who operates under the umbrella of the CoC, including the CoC and HMIS Lead Agencies, the MSCHC Governing Council, and agencies that receive CoC and/or ESG funding for program operation.

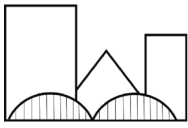
Policy:

The following overview of Housing First, taken from a HUD resource on Housing First principles¹, will be implemented by all housing providers and homeless services providers that fall under the umbrella of CoC and/or ESG funding:

“Housing First is an approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals prior to permanent housing entry.

Housing First emerged as an alternative to the linear approach in which people experiencing homelessness were required to first participate in and graduate from short-term residential and treatment programs before obtaining permanent housing. In the linear approach, permanent housing was offered only after a person experiencing homelessness could demonstrate that they were ‘ready’ for housing. By contrast, Housing First is premised on the following principles:

¹ Department of Housing & Urban Development. (2014). Housing first in permanent supportive housing brief. Retrieved from: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-First-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Brief.pdf>



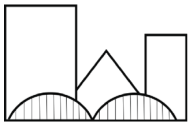
- Homelessness is first and foremost a housing crisis and can be addressed through the provision of safe and affordable housing.
- All people experiencing homelessness, regardless of their housing history and duration of homelessness, can achieve housing stability in permanent housing. Some may need very little support for a brief period of time, while others may need more intensive and long-term supports.
- Everyone is 'housing ready.' Sobriety, compliance in treatment, or even criminal histories are not necessary to succeed in housing. Rather, homelessness programs and housing providers must be "consumer ready."
- Many people experience improvements in quality of life, in the areas of health, mental health, substance use, and employment, as a result of achieving housing.
- People experiencing homelessness have the right to self-determination and should be treated with dignity and respect.
- The exact configuration of housing and services depends upon the needs and preferences of the population."

Housing First in Program Practices

Housing First principles must be integrated into program practices for all CoC and ESG funded programs to ensure that participants must face as few barriers as possible when accessing homeless assistance services. Supportive services implemented by programs should emphasize engagement and problem-solving over therapeutic goals. Services plans are tenant-driven without predetermined goals. Programs must not bar participant access to housing or services based on

- Income or lack of income (except for income levels higher than 30% of the AMI for ESG RRH programs)
- Sobriety status
- Mental health
- Medical status
- Criminal background (If the housing has in residence at least one family with a child under the age of 18, the housing may exclude registered sex offenders and persons with a criminal record that includes a violent crime from the project so long as the child resides in the housing.² However, this determination must be made on a project basis, not for an entire agency. Programs/CES staff must also take into consideration proximity of the housing

² Department of Housing & Urban Development. (2017). 24 CFR 578.93(b)(4). Retrieved from: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2017-title24-vol3/xml/CFR-2017-title24-vol3-part578.xml>



program to schools, daycares, etc. that may also prevent a sex offender from being placed into housing in that particular program.)

- Credit or financial history, and/or;
- Any other factors that attempt to measure “housing readiness”.

Housing First for Persons Fleeing Domestic Violence

Housing First principles can and should be applied to persons fleeing domestic violence to help reduce any additional barriers that someone may be facing while trying to flee their abuser. Persons fleeing domestic violence do not need to be literally homeless in order to access housing resources through CoC and ESG programs and should not be barred from accessing housing or homelessness services based on their status as fleeing domestic violence per VAWA regulation adopted by HUD in 24 CFR 578.3 and 578.99(j). Persons who are fleeing domestic violence may also need more or less services than other persons experiencing homelessness, and programs should work to address the individual needs of survivors through a survivor-driven, trauma informed lens.