



New York State Balance of State Continuum of Care

# Rapid Rehousing Standards Manual

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## **Overview**

Rapid Rehousing (RRH) is designed to assist individuals and families who are homeless move quickly out of homelessness and into permanent housing through the provision of time-limited housing support and services with the ultimate goal of stable housing. RRH uses housing location and stabilization services combined with financial assistance, if necessary, to assist homeless households move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve housing stability. RRH utilizes the following four key principles to guide program operations.

### **Housing Focus**

Homelessness is a housing problem and should be treated as such. Housing focus understands the individual's or family's immediate barriers to obtaining and keeping housing and then finds ways to eliminate or compensate for those barriers. Non-housing related barriers are addressed if and when the program participant chooses.

### **Housing First**

The program participant will be assisted in obtaining permanent housing as quickly as possible and will be connected to resources necessary to sustain that housing. Permanent housing is the immediate goal. If there are skills that the participant needs to sustain housing, those skills are addressed and learned while the participant is residing in their own housing.

### **Choice and Respect**

Families and individuals are empowered to make their own choices about housing and services and respond to the consequences of those choices.

### **Tailored Assistance**

The minimum assistance (financial and/or housing supports) necessary is provided for the shortest period of time possible. Barriers are identified at the outset of services and supports are provided to eliminate those barriers and improve the household's ability to sustain housing.

## **Types of Rapid Rehousing**

There are two main funding sources for Rapid Rehousing programs. Continuum of Care (CoC) Rapid Rehousing is funded through a CoC's annual Consolidated Application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This includes Domestic Violence Rapid Rehousing (DV-RRH) and Special NOFO funding for rural and unsheltered Rapid Rehousing (SNOFO RRH).

Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Rapid Rehousing can be funded in two ways. A jurisdiction may receive direct funding from HUD through the ESG program, or grantees can apply for ESG funding through New York State's Solutions to End Homelessness Program (STEHP).

## **Program Referral**

The Rapid Rehousing program will work with the CoC's Coordinated Entry (CE) team to receive appropriate referrals that coincide with vulnerability assessment scores. Program vacancies must be filled from the CE prioritization list, including individuals who are fleeing domestic violence. Potential program participants should only be referred to a RRH program if they meet the appropriate eligibility requirements.

### **Prioritization for Serving Individuals and Families with Severe Service Needs**

SNOFO RRH programs must make special considerations to prioritize households per the CoC's Plan for Serving Individuals and Families with Severe Service Needs, which was submitted as part of the SNOFO funding application. The NYS BoS CoC Plan prioritizes individuals or households who:

- Are experiencing unsheltered homelessness and have histories of unsheltered homelessness.
- Have long histories of being disenfranchised.
- Lack a foundational support system.
- Have complex service needs.
- Are part of a historically underserved community.

## Program Eligibility

Programs should prioritize chronically homeless individuals for vacancies. An individual is defined as chronically homeless if a homeless individual has a disabling condition as defined in section 401(9) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360(9)) who:

1. Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven or an emergency shelter, **AND**
2. Has been homeless continuously for at least 12 months or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years. Combined occasions must equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least seven consecutive nights of not living as described previously. Stays in institutional care facilities for fewer than 90 days will not constitute a break in homelessness, but such stays are included in the 12-month total, as long as the individual was living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter immediately before entering an institutional care facility.

The Coordinated Entry team should only make a referral to a RRH program if a household is eligible, however, if a household is referred and screened but determined to be ineligible, the household will be notified in writing of the assessment results and the reason for ineligibility. A determination of ineligible status is recorded as well as the reasons for the determination. Reasons for an ineligible determination may include:

- Program participant/household is not in an eligible homeless situation.
- Program participant/household refused further participation or moved out of geographic area.
- Program participant/household unresponsive to multiple communication attempts.
- Program participant/household resolved crisis without assistance.

While Rapid Rehousing does not have income requirements to determine eligibility, Program Staff are required to verify income at program intake and annual recertification to accurately assess need and the amount of rental subsidy to be received.

## ESG-Funded Programs

At initial evaluation, ESG RRH participants must be homeless under one of the following categories:

- A. Category One: Literally homeless. Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:
  - a. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation, **OR**
  - b. 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**
  - c. 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.
- B. Category Four: Fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence. Any individual or family who:
  - a. Is experiencing trauma or a lack of safety related to, or fleeing or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous, traumatic, or life-threatening conditions related to the violence against the individual or a family member in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, **AND**
  - b. Has no other residence, **AND**
  - c. Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

## CoC-Funded Programs (Including DV-RRH and SNOFO RRH)

At initial evaluation, CoC RRH participants must be homeless under one of HUD's four categories:

- A. Category One: Literally homeless. Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:
  - a. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation, **OR**
  - b. 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**
  - c. 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.
- B. Category Two: Imminent risk of homelessness. Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:
  - a. Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance, **AND**
  - b. No subsequent residence has been identified, **AND**
  - c. The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
- C. Category Four: Fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence. Any individual or family who:
  - a. Is experiencing trauma or a lack of safety related to, or fleeing or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous, traumatic, or life-threatening conditions related to the violence against the individual or a family member in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, **AND**
  - b. Has no other residence, **AND**
  - c. Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

## Intake and Assessment

Upon admission into the program, Program Staff will enter the household into HMIS with the "Project Start Date" or admission date. Once the household has found a unit and moved in, the HMIS record must be updated with the appropriate "Move-In Date." RRH Program Staff will complete the following with the program participant/household upon intake:

- Documentation of Homelessness
- Identification Information
- Income Verification
- Program Agreement
- Rent Calculation Worksheet (update as needed)
- HMIS Intake (or comparable database) and Consent
- Balance of State Release of Information
- Agency Releases of Information (landlord, income, medical, substance use, mental health, etc.) (update annually or as needed)
- Housing Stability Plan (optional)

## Housing Search and Placement

RRH Program Staff will work with the program participant/household to identify housing options in the community suitable to the program participant's needs. When a unit is selected, the following must be completed:

- HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection Checklist (for CoC RRH)
- HUD Habitability Standards (for ESG RRH)
- Rental Agreement or Lease
- Lead-Based Paint Disclosure Form

## Inspection

An on-site inspection of the unit is required anytime a program participant is receiving financial assistance or case management. Payment will not be provided for units that fail the inspection, unless the deficiencies are corrected within 30 days from the date of the initial inspection and the case manager verifies that all deficiencies have been corrected. Inspections must be conducted annually. RRH Program Staff are required to take HUD's online Lead-Based Paint Training Course. RRH Program Staff will establish and maintain relationships with landlords in the community who provide safe and affordable housing.

## Lead-Based Paint Disclosure

Before a lease is signed, programs must ensure that landlords are aware of the lead-based paint requirements. Refer to the "Disclosure of Information on Lead-Based Paint and/or Lead-Based Paint Hazards" found in the sample document section of this document. Programs must ensure landlords provide an EPA-approved information pamphlet on identifying and controlling lead-based paint hazards ("Protect Your Family from Lead In Your Home") to program participants. Landlords must retain a copy of the disclosures for at least three years from the date the lease begins. More information can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/>.

## Fair Market Rent and Rent Reasonableness

HUD calculates FMR for unit size and geographic area: <https://huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>.

	ESG RRH	CoC RRH
Housing Standard	Habitability Standards	Housing Quality Standards (HQS)
Rent Standard	Rent Reasonableness and FMR	Rent Reasonableness

## Security Deposits

The RRH program can pay a security deposit to the landlord on behalf of a program participant. Program staff should inform the landlord that they must comply with state and local laws regarding interest payments on security deposits. After a participant has moved from the unit and been discharged from the program, the landlord may, subject to state and local law, use the security deposit as reimbursement for unpaid rent or damages to the unit. Program staff should work with the landlord to obtain an itemized written list of all charges against the security deposit. After deducting the amount used as reimbursement to the landlord, the landlord shall return the full amount of the balance to the program participant.

## Financial Assistance

Rental assistance can be provided on a short-term basis (up to three months) or medium-term (four to 24 months). Participants are required to contribute no more than 30% of their income towards rent, not to exceed the full contract rent. The remaining rental amount will be subsidized by the Rapid Rehousing program. Rental contributions must be consistently applied to all program participants. All payments will be issued directly to a third party (landlord, utility company, etc.) and not to the program participant/household. Copies of payment must be retained in the participant's program file.

## Allowable Expenses

The expenses below are eligible costs but may not be included in a particular program's budget.

	ESG RRH	CoC RRH
<b>Rental Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rental assistance up to 24 months</li> <li>Rental arrears (one-time payment of up to 6 months of rent in arrears, including any late fees on those arrears)</li> <li>Tenant-based rental assistance</li> <li>Project-based rental assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rental assistance up to 24 months</li> <li>Security deposits (up to 2 month's rent*)</li> <li>First and last* month's rent</li> <li>Property damage</li> <li>Tenant-based rental assistance only</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Assistance Costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Security deposits (up to 2 month's rent*)</li> <li>Last month's rent*</li> <li>Rental application fees</li> <li>Utility deposits and payments (up to 24 months, including up to 6 months in arrears)</li> <li>Moving costs</li> </ul>	
<b>Service/Supportive Services Costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing search and placement and housing stability case management</li> <li>Credit repair</li> <li>Mediation</li> <li>Legal services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing search and counseling services, mediation, credit repair, and payment of rental application fee</li> <li>Case management</li> <li>Outreach services</li> <li>Moving costs and utility deposits</li> <li>Childcare</li> <li>Food</li> <li>Education services, job training, employment assistance</li> <li>Legal services</li> <li>Life skills training</li> <li>Outpatient health services</li> <li>Substance abuse treatment and mental health services</li> <li>Transportation</li> </ul>

*\*Per NYS law, landlords can only require first month's rent and one month security deposit at move-in*

## SNOFO Rapid Rehousing Costs

In addition to the CoC-eligible costs listed above, eligible activities under SNOFO RRH include:

- Rent or utility assistance after two months of nonpayment of rent or utilities to prevent eviction or loss of utility service. Funds may be used to pay rent or utility arrear payments up to six months on behalf of program participants residing in permanent housing.
- Short-term emergency lodging for program participants in motels or shelters, either directly or through vouchers.
- Repairs to permanent housing units, such as insulation, window repair, door repair, roof repair, and repairs that are necessary to make housing habitable for program participants. The total cost of repairs may not exceed \$10,000 per structure.
- Capacity building activities that maintain or improve the skills of recipient/sub-recipients, such as staff financial incentives, employee education, continuing education opportunities, staff training, professional licensing or certification, and other professional development activities.
- Emergency food and clothing assistance, such as meals, groceries, and clothing.

## **Housing Stabilization and Sustainability Supports**

At intake, RRH Program Staff and the program participant/household will develop a Rent Calculation Worksheet. The rent calculation worksheet determines the potential amount of financial assistance and support needed. A Housing Stability plan and/or a Budget Worksheet can also be created at any time, including at intake, and could include:

- Developing housing and financial goals including prioritization and timeframe.
- Securing and coordinating services and assistance in obtaining public benefits.
- Providing referrals to entities such as substance use or mental health counseling, food banks, financial literacy courses, educational or vocational services, credit repair, legal assistance, etc.
- Monitoring and evaluating participant progress.

As a general guideline, RRH program staff will meet with participants on the following basis, but no less than once per month:

- While participant is searching for housing: 1-2 times per week
- Initially housed: 2-4 times per month
- Once stably housed: once per month
- If crisis or significant changes occur with participant: weekly

### **Case Notes**

All Rapid Rehousing activities and encounters will be documented in case notes in the program participant's case file. Case notes can be created in HMIS or a comparable database. Victim Services Providers (VSPs) that are recipients or subrecipients under HUD's CoC and ESG Programs are required to collect client-level data consistent with HMIS data collection requirements. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) contain confidentiality provisions that limit VSPs from sharing, disclosing, or revealing survivors' personally identifying information (PII), including entering information into shared databases like HMIS. To protect participants, VSPs must enter required client-level data into a comparable database that complies with all HMIS requirements.

### **Program Changes**

If circumstances change for the program participant/household such as household size or composition, domestic violence in the household, program participant finds alternate housing, etc., the program participant should inform program staff as soon as they are able. Program should make every effort to accommodate changes to the household. Additionally, a change in circumstances should not result in discharge unless the change in circumstance results in program ineligibility. A tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking is eligible for an emergency transfer if the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant remains within the same unit. Refer to the NYS BoS CoC Emergency Transfer Plan for tenant's seeking an emergency transfer.

### **Discharge from Program**

Reasons for program participant discharge may include:

- Program Participant(s) no longer in need of assistance.
- Program Participant(s) moved to a different level of care (treatment facility, hospital, etc.).
- Program Participant(s) voluntarily withdrew from program or moved to a geographic area where ongoing case management is not feasible.
- Program Participant(s) received services for the maximum program period (24 months).
- Program Participant(s) unresponsive to multiple communication attempts, such as both written and verbal attempts for three consecutive months.

When a program participant is discharged from the program, the following must be completed:

- Case Closure letter to program participant and landlord
- Case Closure Aftercare Plan (optional)
- HMIS Exit

### **Grievance Procedure for Program Termination**

Program Participants have the right to appeal the agency's decision to terminate rental assistance through the Rapid Rehousing Program. The program participant must appeal the decision in writing or verbally within 30 calendar days of the date of the program termination letter. If a request is made verbally, program participants must speak with program staff to confirm that the request has been received.

### **Program Participant File Maintenance**

Program participant case files will be maintained for all households referred to and admitted to the program. All documentation related to program participant services shall be maintained in files as described below and in a secure location.

### **Income and Identification Verification**

RRH Program Staff are required to verify identification and income of program participants at the time of intake. Copies of the following verifications are to be included in the case file:

- Proof of social security numbers and documentation of birth dates for household members
- For income verification, any or all of the following as applicable for household members:
  - Most recent paystubs (one month)
  - Public Assistance Budget
  - SSI/SSDI Award Letter
  - Unemployment compensation
  - Child support
  - Other sources of income
  - Tax returns

### **Other Required Documentation**

- Documentation of Homelessness
- Rent Calculation Worksheet
- Program Agreement
- Balance of State Release of Information
- Agency Releases of Information (landlord, income, medical, substance use, mental health, etc.) (update annually or as needed)
- HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection Checklist
- Rental Agreement or Lease
- Lead-Based Paint Disclosure Form
- Case Notes (can be housed in HMIS or comparable database)



## Documentation of Homelessness

For individuals who are literally homeless the following is required:

- Written referral by another housing or service provider; **OR**
- Written observation by the outreach worker; **OR**
- Certification by the individual or head of household seeking assistance stating that (s)he was living on the streets or in shelter.

For individuals who are exiting an institution, one of the forms of evidence above **AND**

- Discharge paperwork or written/oral referral; **OR**
- Written record of intake worker's due diligence to obtain above evidence **AND** certification by individual that they exited an institution.

For individual who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence the following is required.

*For victim service providers:*

- An oral statement by the individual or head of household seeking assistance that states:
  - They are fleeing.
  - They have no subsequent residence.
  - They lack resources.
- This statement must be documented by a self-certification or a certification by the intake worker.
- Written record of intake worker's due diligence to obtain above evidence **AND** certification by individual that they exited an institution.

*For non-victim service providers:*

- An oral statement by the individual or head of household seeking assistance that states that they are fleeing. This statement is documented by a self-certification or by the caseworker. Where the safety of the individual or family is no jeopardized, the oral statement must be verified; **AND**
- Certification by the individual or head of household that no subsequent residence has been identified; **AND**
- Self-certification, or other written documentation, that the individual or family lacks the financial resources and support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

HUD recordkeeping requirements can be found on the HUD Exchange at

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1974/criteria-and-recordkeeping-requirements-for-definition-of-homeless/>