

City of Albuquerque

Standards for Providing Emergency Solutions Grant Assistance

This is approved by the Albuquerque Strategic Collaborative and updated on October 2015

1. Evaluating Eligibility

All ESG funded service providers must establish eligibility during the intake process for their program. In order to be eligible for ESG funded services an individual or family will first have to meet the HUD requirements for eligibility which are specific to each type of ESG program. For outreach beneficiaries must meet the criteria in paragraph (1)(i) of 24 cfr 576.2. For emergency shelter and services related to emergency shelter beneficiaries must meet the criteria in the definition of homelessness in 24 cfr 576.2. For homeless prevention beneficiaries must meet the criteria in 24 cfr 576.103. For Rapid Re-Housing beneficiaries must meet the criteria in 24 cfr 576.104. Intake forms must document the information needed to determine whether the individual or family meets HUD's criteria for the program for which they are applying.

Each individual program may have additional eligibility criteria related to the population it is serving provided that such criteria are necessary for the safety and comfort of the population being served and that such additional criteria do not serve to screen out the people who are most in need of shelter as determined by the City.

2. Street Outreach

Street outreach activities are targeted toward engaging unsheltered people experiencing homelessness and assessing their need for housing and services. Whenever possible, outreach workers will administer the common assessment tool for the NM Coordinated Assessment System (CAS) to the unsheltered people experiencing homelessness they encounter so that they can be prioritized for openings in supportive housing programs. The CAS uses the VI-SPDAT as its common assessment tool.

3. Admission, diversion, referral and discharge

Emergency shelters funded under ESG must set clear standards for admission that do not include un-necessary barriers to admission. Emergency shelters may serve particular populations provided that all populations are served within the shelter system including unaccompanied individuals, families with children, victims of domestic violence, transgender people, and people with active substance abuse problems. Shelters that serve families must all serve

children under age 18 regardless of their gender. No shelter may deny shelter to anyone because of a disability. Victims of domestic violence that are actively fleeing a domestic violence situation should be referred to a specialized domestic violence shelter regardless of where they first access the shelter system.

Emergency shelters funded under ESG must offer everyone who enters the shelter an opportunity to complete the common assessment tool for the NM Coordinated Assessment System (CAS) within the first seven days of their stay. The CAS uses the VI-SPDAT as its common assessment tool. This will allow shelters to connect families and individuals experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate long-term housing option available through the Coordinated Assessment System.

Emergency shelters must develop policies on length of stay that take into account the varying needs of people who are homeless. When possible, people with long term serious disabilities should be allowed to stay until they are able to access permanent supportive housing. Emergency shelters funded under ESG must set clear discharge policies and procedures.

4. Assessing and prioritizing essential service needs

Each ESG funded program that provides essential services must develop an internal process for assessing essential service needs and prioritizing clients according to their level of need. ESG funded programs that provide essential services should do an initial assessment of service needs for each client that they admit to their program. Essential services should then be offered with those who demonstrate the greatest need getting priority.

5. Coordination among providers

Coordination among providers is achieved through regular Albuquerque Continuum of Care meetings, which are sponsored by the City of Albuquerque and the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness. ESG providers are expected to participate in these regular meetings.

More formal coordination occurs through the New Mexico Coordinated Assessment System (CAS). Programs funded under ESG must offer everyone who enters the program an opportunity to complete the common assessment tool for the NM Coordinated Assessment System (CAS) within the first seven days of their stay. The CAS uses the VI-SPDAT as its common assessment tool. This will allow ESG funded programs to connect families and individuals experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate long-term housing option available through the Coordinated Assessment System.

6. Prioritization for Rapid Re-Housing

ESG Rapid ReHousing programs must use the statewide Coordinated Assessment System (CAS) to identify which individual or family they will house when they have an opening. The CAS uses the VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) as its common assessment tool. The VI-SPDAT helps determine the vulnerability of a household experiencing homelessness and which type of supportive housing would best meet their needs. Based on a household's answers to the VI-SPDAT, the household receives a vulnerability score between 0-20 for individuals and 0-22 for families. The score includes duration of homelessness, physical health, behavioral health, and other factors to come up with an overall assessment of vulnerability. Each household's VI-SPDAT is entered in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which calculates the score. All agencies that participate in the CAS are able to view in HMIS the households experiencing homelessness that have completed the VI-SPDAT and are part of the CAS.

ESG Rapid ReHousing programs should prioritize households with a VI-SPDAT score above 5.

Rapid ReHousing is usually the most appropriate intervention for households that score between a 5 and 9. If a household receives a score of 10 or greater, they may be more appropriately assisted with permanent supportive housing and it is acceptable to direct a household to permanent supportive housing instead of providing rapid rehousing when it is deemed that this will better meet the needs of that household. However, Rapid ReHousing programs may also serve a household with a score above 9 if they feel that household could benefit from Rapid ReHousing.

The CAS will rank households experiencing homelessness in priority order according to their VI-SPDAT score. The higher the VI-SPDAT score, the higher the priority for the person or family to be placed into housing. In general, Rapid ReHousing programs should identify households who scored a 9 and work down the list from there. However, as stated above Rapid ReHousing Programs may also choose to house someone who scores a 10 or higher.

ESG Rapid ReHousing programs will prioritize households with children under age 18 and to unaccompanied youth age 17-23 for openings in their Rapid ReHousing Programs..

At least 70% of clients should be accepted from the high priority clients on the waiting list in HMIS. Projects are allowed to accept 30% of their clients from those with lower VI/SPDAT scores where other factors justify placing these clients into housing and still be considered to be in full compliance with Coordinated Assessment.

7. Rent and utilities paid by participants

Program participants that receive Rapid Re-Housing or Prevention assistance are expected to pay 30% of their adjusted gross income toward rent and utilities. Subrecipients may waive this requirement to pay rent for individuals and families whose incomes are so low as to make even that modest payment a hardship; for example, an individual whose only source of income is State General Assistance. Program participants may be asked to pay more than 30%, but no more than 50%, of their adjusted gross income toward rent and utilities, as they prepare to exit the Rapid Re-Housing program. Rapid Re-Housing subrecipients should have policies and procedures in place to determine how this will be determined based on each participant's individual budget plan for housing. Beneficiaries of rental assistance should have their need re-evaluated and their income recomputed every 3 months and the rent payments adjusted accordingly.

8. Length of time receiving rental assistance

A family or individual may receive rental assistance for up to two years depending on their need. Each household receiving rental assistance will be re-evaluated every three months to determine their need for continued rental assistance for the following three months and the portion of rent to be paid by the household for those upcoming three months. When the household income reaches a point that the household no longer needs the assistance then the assistance is discontinued.

9. Duration of housing stabilization services

The duration of all housing stabilization services should be determined on a case by case basis with re-evaluation of each case every three months. Services can be provided for up to two years.

10. Involuntary Family Separation

Any group of people that present together for assistance and identify themselves as a family, regardless of age or relationship or other factors, are considered to be a family and must be served together as such. Further, a recipient or sub-recipient receiving funds under the ESG or CoC Programs should not discriminate against a group of people presenting as a family based on the composition of the family (except as noted below), the age of any family members, the disability status of any members of the family, marital status, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Exceptions: It is allowable for shelters or housing programs to exclusively serve families with children, but they must serve all types of families with children including both male and female headed households. The housing or

shelter may also be limited to one sex where such housing consists of a single structure with shared bedrooms or bathing facilities such that the considerations of personal privacy and the physical limitations of the configuration of the housing make it appropriate for the housing to be limited to one sex.

11. Educational Rights & Services for Children and Youth

Any agencies that receives ESG funding must:

- Ensure that all school-aged children in our program(s) are enrolled in school and, to the maximum extent practicable, place families with children as close to possible to their schools of origin so as not to disrupt the children's education.
- Inform all homeless families and youth of their eligibility for McKinney-Vento education services.
- Make a best faith effort to ensure that all children in our program(s) are connected to appropriate services in the community, including early childhood education programs such as Head Start, Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and McKinney-Vento education services.
- Are consistent with, and do not restrict the exercise of rights provided by the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act, and other laws relating to the provision of education and related services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
- Designate a staff person to all children in our program(s) are connected to appropriate services in the community, including early childhood education programs such as Head Start, Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and McKinney-Vento education services.
- Work in the best interest of all children, including those with disabilities, to help them access all McKinney-Vento services for which they are eligible