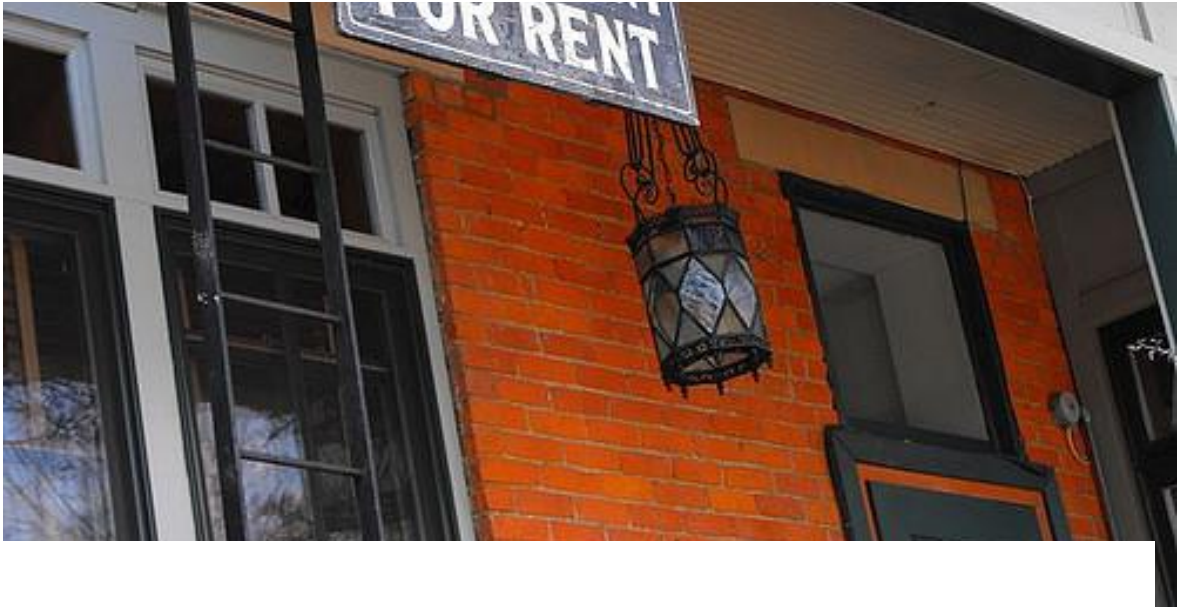


RAPID RE-HOUSING in Connecticut

COC and ESG programs

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



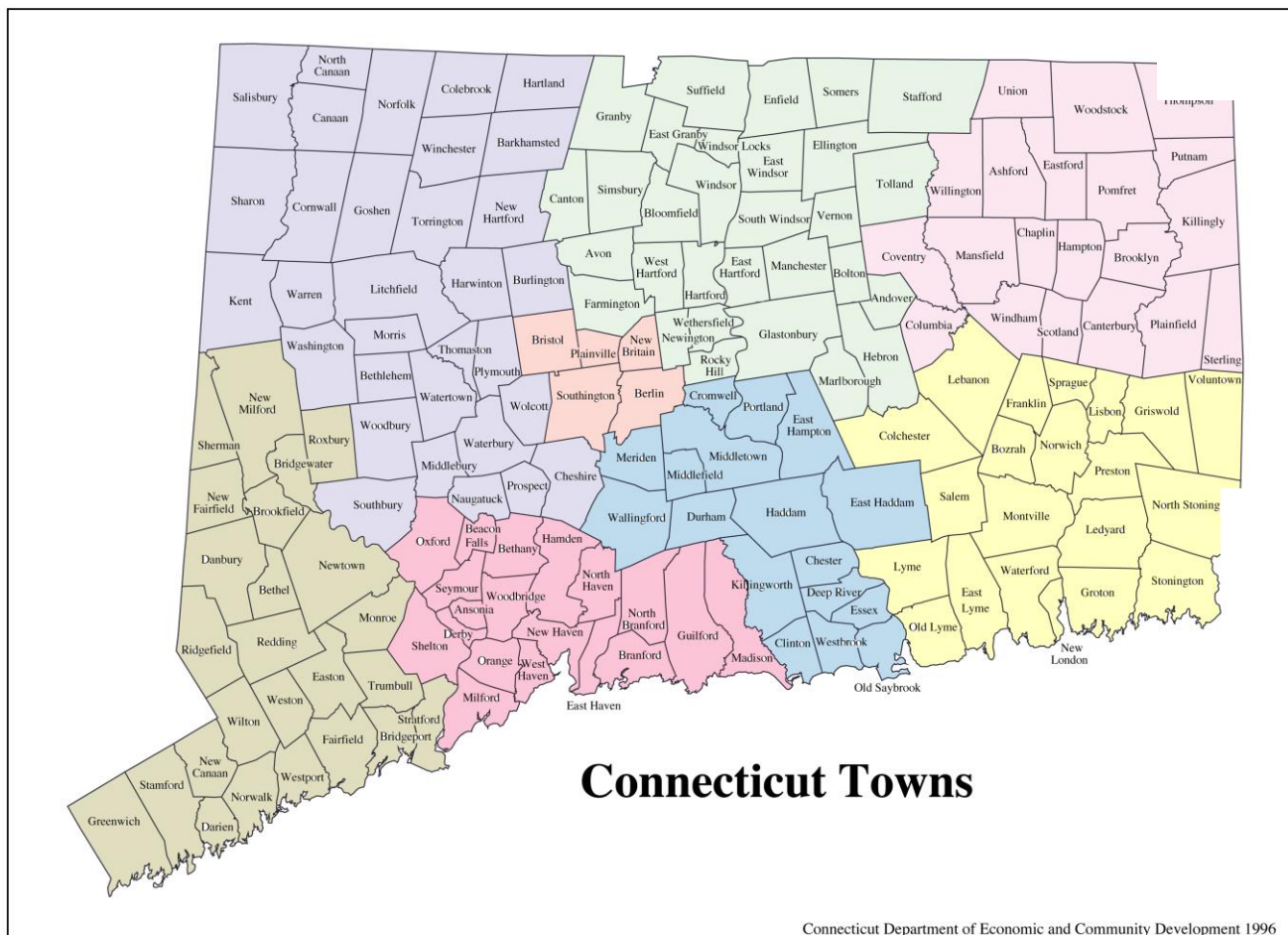
Overview

Rapid Re-housing (RRH) is designed to assist literally homeless households (individuals and families) as they quickly move out of homelessness (Category 1 and 4, as defined by HUD) and into permanent housing through the provision of time-limited housing support and strategies with the ultimate goal of stable housing. RRH uses a combination of housing location and stabilization services combined with financial assistance, if necessary, to assist homeless households (individuals and families) to move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve housing stability.

RRH providers will work with their coordinated access networks (CAN) to obtain referrals to their rapid re-housing program.

All agencies with a Department of Housing (DOH) or Balance of State Continuum of Care (COC) contract are required to follow state and federal guidelines in the implementation and subsequent operation of RRH. Please refer to Balance of State and Opening Doors Fairfield County policies and procedures for additional information. This policy manual includes both Federal Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), which is contracted through DOH and COC policies. The following policies and procedures will assist with the operationalization of either RRH program.

Services will be provided in coordinated access networks:



Eligibility – (see attached ESG and COC program chart for more details)

RRH eligible participants are literally homeless households. The term “homeless”, “homeless individual”, “homeless person” or “homeless household shall be defined as:

1. a household who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
2. a household who has a primary nighttime residence that is
 - (a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
 - (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
 - (c) A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
3. Any individual or family who: (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; (ii) Has no other residence; and (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

Please note that this definition complies with HUD’s Category 1 and 4 definition of homelessness.

RRH is targeted to serve literally homeless families with children and adult-only households.

RRH contractors must work within their CAN to receive appropriate referrals that coincide with VI-SPDAT assessment scores. The rapid re-housing score range is 4-8 although providers in the CAN are able to complete an exception form for households scoring outside of this range. The CAN decides how to prioritize their allocation of RRH funds for financial assistance.

Households can be served with up to 12 months of housing stabilization services and financial assistance. Households can receive stabilization services only if needed. In rare cases there can be an exemption form completed for a household that has returned to a housing crisis during their time in RRH and in need of more than 12 months of assistance. See the exemption form in the attachments.

Key Principles of Program Operation

RRH utilizes 4 “Key Principles” to guide program operations. The principles are as follows: Housing Focus; Housing Comes First; Choice and Respect; and Just Enough Assistance. Below the principles are defined.

Housing Focus.

The “Housing Focus” principle believes that *“homelessness is first and foremost 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 Comes First.

The “Housing Comes First” principle believes that the program participant is assisted to obtain permanent housing as quickly as possible and is 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 the participant’s own housing.

Choice and Respect.

The “Choice and Respect” principle believes that families and individuals are empowered to make their own choices about housing and services and to respond to the consequences of those choices.

Just Enough Assistance.

The “Just Enough Assistance” principle believes 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.

Program Design

RRH is designed with four (4) key components that are integral to programmatic success for program participants. The components are as follows: (a) *Coordinated intake, screening, and housing-based assessment*; (b) *Housing search, landlord recruitment, and relocation assistance*; (c) *Housing stabilization and sustainability supports, including linkages to community services*; and (d) *Financial assistance*.

Coordinated intake, screening, and housing-based assessment.

Referrals to the RRH must come from each CAN. Statewide assessment (VISPDAT) will be used to score the vulnerability of clients and local case conferencing will assist in deciding to refer to RRH. Rapid rehousing resources are most effective when households are quickly screened and linked to the right assistance to help them exit homelessness as quickly as possible.

Housing search, landlord recruitment, and relocation assistance.

RRH contractors shall work aggressively to identify housing options in the community through on-going housing search and cultivating relationships with landlords. Staff will work with each household to find a rental unit within any available subsidized or public housing, or within the private market. Housing inspections will be completed.

Housing stabilization and sustainability supports, including linkages to community services.

A housing stabilization plan has been developed based on the Critical Time Intervention (CTI) model. RRH program staff and the household, and will include actions to overcome or minimize recurrent, significant barriers to retaining housing. The primary focus will be on the issues that affect housing retention – examining what caused the current crisis and previous episodes of housing instability, and identifying the most pressing needs that impact the current housing. RRH

program staff and the household will prioritize action steps to be taken by each, and set time frames for the steps to be accomplished. The length of housing stabilization and sustainability supports will vary by household.

Monthly case management is essential to housing stabilization for households. SEE THE ATTACHED PROGRAM COMPARISON CHART for more details on case management.

ESG programs - **At least one home visit per month must be noted in the client progress notes.** Since people are most at risk for another episode of homelessness during the first 90 days in permanent housing, service intensity will often be greater during this period.

RRH program staff must be knowledgeable about, and have effective working relationships with, mainstream programs and services available in the community so they can proactively offer help and make connections for households needing assistance. This may include help in increasing income, repairing credit, and referrals for health, mental health, and substance abuse services.

Financial assistance.

The RRH program staff shall obtain financial assistance to help program participants remove barriers to entry into housing, utilizing and/or leveraging the following resources:

1. the Department's Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program Rapid Re-housing Financial Assistance fund with AIDS CT;
2. Municipal (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury) ESG funds, as appropriate;
3. Balance of State Continuum of Care Program Rapid Re-housing financial assistance fund with AIDS CT;
4. Other privately funded resources in the coordinated access networks.

SEE THE ATTACHED PROGRAM COMPARISON CHART for a breakdown of eligible financial assistance services by ESG and COC programs.

RRH programs submit financial assistance request to ACT with applicable supporting documentation for assistance. RRH program staff shall review request for completeness. If complete, ACT will process within 3 – 5 days. If incomplete, ACT will advise RRH of incomplete request and request additional documentation or deny request based upon level of missing documentation.

If approved, ACT will issue payment to third party, update CTHMIS and send copy of payment to providers for program participant file.

RRH Process Flow

Process flow if the CAN determines there is a need and the referral is made directly to the RRH provider

1. The appropriate CAN committee shall provide the name of household being referred with VI-SPDAT assessment score.
2. The Rapid Re-housing Coordinator (or equivalent) will determine if the household that has been referred is literally homeless (self-declaration or letter from homeless provider)
3. If the referred household is literally homeless, the Rapid Re-housing Coordinator (equivalent) will proceed with the program intake.
4. The Rapid Re-housing Coordinator (or equivalent) shall provide housing find and placement, with the goal of 45 days from the date of intake to the date housed in HMIS. (45 days is a goal for rapid re-housing. households do not have to be discharged and determined ineligible if the process takes longer than 45 days)
5. The Housing Coordinator, (or equivalent subcontractor if necessary) will conduct a Housing Quality Standard Inspection, preferably with the tenant present. The tenant will be given a copy of the HQS form for their records. Encourage the tenant to take pictures of the unit for their records as well.
6. The Housing Sustainability Coordinator (or equivalent) shall provide sustainability supports up to one 12-month period. Sustainability coordination services shall also include assistance in increasing income, accessing long-term housing subsidies, establishing and/or expanding family and community based supports, and assistance in increasing access to mainstream services.
7. RRH program staff must exit program participants when support services are no longer needed / desired or when the household has reached the maximum of 12 months of housing sustainability coordination services.
8. RRH program staff must notify the CAN if the household is going to exit the program into literal homelessness, and attempt to Case Conference other options prior to an exit to literal homelessness.

The RRH programs must utilize CTHMIS for data entry.

Lead Inspection Visual Assessment, Rent Reasonableness and Habitability Standards

RRH service providers shall comply with lead inspection visual assessment, rent reasonableness and habitability standards, as defined by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. To assist with these functions, the RRH service provider shall utilize the tools developed and are included in the attachments section of this document.

Security Deposits

- a. For an initial lease, a one-time security deposit of up to two (2) months of the contracted rent may be paid to the landlord as part of rental assistance for individuals under 62 years of age. For individuals 62 years of age or older, a one-time security deposit of up to one (1) month of contracted rent may be paid to the landlord.
- b. The RRH provider shall thoroughly document the condition of the unit prior to move-in.
- c. If the security deposit is provided by the RRH provider, the security deposit does not need to be recouped by the administering agency. The landlord may return the funds directly to the tenant. If the landlord returns the security deposit to your agency automatically, then please see the instructions in the policies & procedures manual. If the security deposit is returned in full or in part, the landlord shall submit payment of the total amount plus interest to the RRH provider in the form of a check.
 - If ACT is your fiduciary: Please make check payable to “AIDS-CT.” The RRH provider will mail the check to: AIDS-CT, 110 Bartholomew Street, Ste. 3030, Hartford, CT 06106
 - If your agency is your fiduciary: Please follow internal protocols.
- d. Additional Resources regarding Connecticut Laws related to security deposits can be found at:
<http://www.jud.ct.gov/lawlib/Law/securitydep.htm>

Client File Maintenance

Case Notes and Client Contact Requirements. All Rapid Re-housing and Sustainability Coordination activities will be documented in case notes in the client case file. Case notes will include at minimum:

- Date, location, purpose of the activity
 - Progress on housing goals
 - Documentation of appointments, meetings, home visits, phone calls, letters with members of the household, landlord and other service providers. For contacts with anyone other than a member of the household, a signed release of information must be included in the case file indicating consent for exchange of information.
 - Referrals made, including date of referral, name of referral and reason for referral
 - Documentation of minimum monthly contact with the household
 - Indication that the housing service plan has been reviewed and updated a minimum of once per month
 - Documentation of activities related to program exit.
1. **Required Verifications.** Rapid Re-housing Coordinators are required to verify identity and income of program participants at the time of intake. Copies of the following verifications are to be included in the case file:
 - To verify identity: proof of social security numbers and documentation of birth dates for the lease holder(s)
 - For income verification, any or all of the following as applicable for the lease holder(s):
 - Most recent paystubs
 - DSS award letters for food stamps or TANF

- SSI/SSDI
- Unemployment compensation
- Child support
- Other sources of income
- W-9

2. Required Releases of Information and Agreements

- Housing Service Plan (CTI form or another comparable form approved by DOH)
- CTHMIS Client Consent (enter information into CTHMIS & share with agencies)
- Agency Client Release(s) of Information
- Lease – once housed, a copy of the household's signed lease will be included in the file.
- Landlord rental assistance agreement
- Completed HQS Form

Required Policies

Required Documentation (must be in client files for anyone receiving financial assistance and documents must be submitted with financial assistance request as outlined on the fund request form). All documents should be signed and dated by appropriate parties.

Confidentiality. All RRH providers must have an agency confidentiality policy. Said Confidentiality policy shall adhere to Departmental requirements, as set forth in executed contracts. Lead agencies shall have a copy of its subcontractor's confidentiality policies on file.

Grievance and Appeal Processes. All RRH programs must have a Grievance and Appeal Process that is written and documented.

Maintenance of Records. RRH providers shall maintain program participant case files for all households referred to the program. All documentation related to program participant services shall be maintained in files as described above, in a secure location. Whenever possible, scan and upload documents to HMIS. HMIS files may be monitored in substitute for pinaper records for Case Notes.

Educational Rights. All RRH programs must inform homeless families and youth of their rights under the Every Student Succeeds Act (formerly McKinney-Vento Education Services).

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). All RRH programs must provide notice of occupancy rights to the head of household and each adult tenant living in the household. An emergency transfer plan must be adopted based on HUD requirements. Records for all emergency transfer requests and outcomes must be maintained. Notice of Occupancy Rights (HUD-5380) & Certification Forms (HUD-5382) are to be given to adult tenants at the time of move-in and termination from the program.

Use the following attachments to implement your RRH program

In no particular order, the following forms should be attached to this manual:

- ESG and COC program comparison chart (for reference only)
- Home Visits at a glance (for reference only)
- CT RRH Program agreement
- Landlord/Tenant Rental Assistance Agreement
- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Homeless Verification Form
- List of Accepted forms of income verification
- Zero Income Affidavit
- Rent Reasonableness Checklist and Certification form
- Disclosure form for Target Housing Rentals and Leases – Lead Based Paint
- Lead Safe Housing Requirements Screening Worksheet
- HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Form
- RRH Fund Request form
- Exemptions to Standard Practice Form
- RRH Client file checklist
- Housing Stabilization Plan template
- Failed Inspection Letter template
- Payment Letter template
- Client Termination Letter template
- 30 Day Letter template
- Notice of Occupancy Rights (HUD-5380) & Certification Forms (HUD-5382)
- Client Bill of Rights
- Sample Educational Rights policy