2019 Homeless Leadership Coalition OR-503 Continuum of Care (CoC) Housing First Standards Assessment Tool

Agency Name:			
Grant Program Name:			
Project Type:			
Current Operating Year:	Grant Start Date:		Grant End Date:
Primary Contact:	Name:		
	Email:		Phone:

Overview

This tool aims to assess and document how closely a housing and service provider adheres to the recommended best practice standards of the Housing First Model, in the context of the broader work to implement a Housing First orientation at the system level. This tool specifically evaluates project-level fidelity to Housing First, which directly impacts a systems fidelity.

Housing First projects are effective in assisting all subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness to access and sustain permanent stable housing. It has been demonstrated that projects can operate well and safely without requirements that prevent many people living on the streets and in the shelter system from entering and/or remaining in housing.

HLC requires no attachments to this Questionnaire. However, as part of an annual project assessment process, HLC may request copies of current lease agreements and your agency's policies and procedures relating to Housing First.

Directions

Standards: The standards have been arranged into the following categories: *Access, Input, Services, Housing, Leases, and Project Specific.* Some of the categories are not applicable for all project types, and those standards do not need to be completed. See the table below for which standards to complete.

Project Type	Applicable Standards
Coordinated Entry	Access & Input; Project-Specific
Street Outreach	Access & Input; Project-Specific
Emergency Shelter	Access & Input; Service & Housing; Project-Specific
Transitional Housing	Access & Input; Service & Housing; Leases; Project-Specific
Rapid Rehousing	Access & Input; Service & Housing; Leases; Project-Specific
Permanent Supportive Housing	Access & Input; Service & Housing; Leases; Project-Specific

Scoring: For each standard, there are three scoring criteria: "Say It", "Document It", and "Do it" as explained further below. To show that a project is in full compliance with each applicable standard, the assessor should mark "Always" for each scoring criteria. Use the drop down in the the three columns to the right to select "Always", "Somewhat", or "Not at All".

-*"Say It"* means that project and agency staff can describe verbally what they do concerning each standard. The assessor should be able to identify that the organizational culture supports the standard by how staff talk about what is done.
-"*Document It*" means that there is written documentation that supports the project's compliance with each standard. Written documentation could include Policies and Procedures, Personnel Handbooks, Professional Development Plans, Project Rules, etc. -"*Do It*" means that the assessor can show evidence that the supports the project's compliance with each standard. Evidence could include information contained in client or other administrative files, client acknowledgment that something is being done, staff who are able to point to documentation that support implementation of the standards, etc.

Access & Input					
No.	Standard	Access Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Access 1	Projects are low-barrier	Admission to project is not contingent on pre-requisites such as abstinence of substances, minimum income requirements, health or mental health history, medication adherence, age, criminal justice history, financial history, completion of treatment, participation in services, "housing readiness", history or occurrence of victimization, survivor of sexual assault or an affiliated person of such a survivor or other unnecessary condition unless required by law or funding source.			
Access 2	Projects do not deny assistance for unnecessary reasons	Procedures and oversight demonstrate that staff do everything possible to avoid denying assistance or rejecting an individual family for the reasons listed in Access Standard #1.			
Access 3	Access regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status	Equal access is provided in accordance with the 2012 and 2016 Equal Access Rules, meaning that any project funded by HUD must ensure equal access for persons regardless of one's sexual orientation or marital status, and in accordance with one's gender identity. Adult only household regardless of marital status, should have equal access to projects (if these project types are not available within a CoC, the CoC should conduct an assessment to determine if these project types are needed and work with providers to accommodate the need).			
Access 4	Admission process is expedited with speed and efficiency	Projects have expedited admission processes, to the greatest extent possible, including helping participants obtain documentation required by funding sources, as well as processes to admit participants regardless of the status of their eligibility documentation whenver applicable.			
Access 5	Intake processes are person-centered and flexible	Intake and assessment procedures are focused on the individual's or family's strengths, needs, and preferences. Projects do not require specific appointment times, but have flexible intake schedules that ensure access to all households. Assessments are focused on identifying household strengths, resources, as well as identifying barriers to housing that can inform the basis of a housing plan as soon as a person is enrolled in the project.			

No.	Standard	Access Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Access 6	The provider/project accepts and makes referrals directly through Coordinated Entry	Projects actively participate in the CoC-designated Coordinated Entry processes as part of streamlined community-wide system access and triage. If these processes are not yet implemented, projects follow communities existing referral processes. Referrals form Coordinated Entry are rarely rejected, and only if there is a history of violence, the participant does not want to be in the project, there are legally valid grounds (such as restrictions regarding sex offenders) or some other exceptional circumstance that is well documented.			
Access 7	Exits to homelessness are avoided	Projects that can no longer serve particular households utilize the coordinated entry process, or the communities existing referral processes if coordinated entry processes are not yet implemented, to ensure that those individuals and families have access to other housing and services as desired, and do not become disconnected from services and housing. Households that encounter these exits under certain circumstances, such as if they demonstrate violent or harassing behaviors, which are described within agencies' regulation-adherent policies.			
No.	Standard	Input Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Input 1	Participant education is ongoing	Project participants receive ongoing education on Housing First principles as well as other service models employed in the project. In the beginning of and throughout tenancy, participants are informed about their full rights and responsibilities as lease holders, including the potential causes for eviction.			
Input 2	Projects create regular, formal opportunities for participants to offer input	Input is welcomed regarding the project's policies, processes, procedures, and practices. Opportunities include involvement in quality assurance and evaluation processes, a participant leadership/advisory board, processes to formally communicate with landlords, the design of and participation in surveys and focus groups, planning social gatherings, integrating peer specialists and peer-facilitated support groups to compliment professional services.			

Leases					
No.	Standard	Leases Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Leases 1	Housing is considered permanent (not appliable for Transitional Housing)	Housing is not time-limited (though rent assistance may be) and leases are automatically renewable upon expiration, except with prior notice by either party.			
Leases 2	Participant choice is fundamental	A participant has, at minimum, choices in deciding the location and type of housing based on preferences from a range of housing types and among multiple units, as available and as practical. In project-based settings, participants should be offered choice of units within a particular building, or within the portfolio of single site properties. In projects that use shared housing, i.e. housing with unrelated roommates, participants should be offered choice of roommates, as available and as practical. Additionally, as applicable, participants are able to choose their roommates when sharing a room or unit.			
Leases 3	Leases are the same for participants as for other tenants	Leases do not have any provisions that would not be found in leases held by any other tenant in the property or building and is renewable per the participants' and owner's choice. People experiencing homelessness who receive help moving into permanent housing should have leases that confer the full rights, responsibilities, and legal protections under Federal, state, and local housing laws. For transitional housing, there may be limitations on length of stay, but a lease/occupancy agreement should look like a lease that a person would have in the normal rental market.			
Leases 4	Participants receive education about their lease or occupany agreement terms	Participants are also given access to legal assistance and encouraged to exercise their full legal rights and responsibilities. Landlords and providers abide by their legally-defined roles and responsibilities.			

No.	Standard	Leases Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Leases 5	Measures are used to prevent eviction	Property or building management, with services support, incorporates a culture of eviction avoidance, reinforced through practices and policies that prevent lease violations and evictions among participants, and evict participants only when they are a threat to self or others. Clear eviction appeal processes and due process is provided for all participants. Lease bifurcation is allowed so that a tenant or lawful occupant who is a victim of a criminal act of physical violence committed against them by another tenant or lawful occupant is not evicted, removed or penalized if the other is evicted.			
Leases 6	Providing stable housing is a priority	Providers engage in a continued effort to hold housing for participants, even if they leave their housing for short periods due to treatment, illness, or any other temporary stay outside of the unit.			
Leases 7	Rent payment policies respond to tenants' needs (as applicable)	While tenants are accountable to the rental agreement, adjustments may be needed on a case by case basis. As necessary, participants are given special payment arrangements for rent arrears and/or assistance with financial management, including representative payee arrangements.			

Services & Housing					
No.	Standard	Services Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Services 1	Projects promote participant choice in services	Participants are able to choose from an array of services. Services offered are housing focused and include the following areas of support: employment and income, childhood and education, community connection, and stabilization to maintain housing. These should be provided by linking to community-based services.			
Services 2	Person Centered Planning is a guiding principle	Person-centered Planning is a guiding principle of the service planning process.			
Services 3	Service support is as permanent as the housing	Service connections are permanently available and accessible for participants in Permanent Supportive Housing. Rapid Re-Housing projects should, at a minimum, be prepared to offer services for up to 6 months after the rental assistance ends. In emergency shelter and transitional housing, services are available as long as the participant resides in the unit or bed – and up to 6 months following exit from transitional housing.			
Services 4	Services are continued despite change in housing status or placement	Wherever possible, participants continue to be offered services even if they lose their housing unit or bed (for congregate projects), or if they are placed in a short-term inpatient treatment. Ideally, the service relationship should continue, despite a service hiatus during some institutional stays.			
Services 5	Participant engagement is a core component of service delivery	Staff provide effective services by developing relationships with participants that provide immediate needs and safety, develop trust and common ground, making warm hand-offs to other mainstream service providers, and clearly explain staff roles. Engagement is regular and relationships are developed over time.			

No.	Standard	Services Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Services 6	Services are culturally appropriate with translation services available, as needed	Project staff are sensitive to and support the cultural aspects of diverse households. Wherever possible, staff demographics reflect the participant population they serve in order to provide appropriate, culturally-specific services. Translation services are provided when needed to ensure full comprehension of the project. Projects that serve families with children should have family-friendly rules that allow for different schedules based on work and school hours and have services that allow parents to participate in activities without having to constantly supervise their children themselves (i.e. can use the bathroom or take a shower without their children being in the bathroom with them).			
Services 7	Staff are trained in clinical and non-clinical strategies (including harm reduction, motivational interviewing, trauma-informed approaches, strength-based)	Services support a participant's ability to obtain and retain housing regardless of changes in behavior. Services are informed by a harm-reduction philosophy, such as recognizing that substance use and addiction are a part of some participants' lives. Participants are engaged in non-judgmental communication regarding their behavior and are offered education regarding how to avoid risky behaviors and engage in safer practices.			
No.	Standard	Housing Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Housing 1	Housing is not dependent on participation in services	Participation in permanent and temporary housing settings, as well as crisis settings such as emergency shelter, is not contingent on participating in supportive services or demonstration of progress made on a service plan. Services must be offered by staff, but are voluntary for participants.			
Housing 2	Substance use is not a reason for termination	Participants are only terminated from the project for violations in the lease or occupancy agreements, as applicable. Occupancy agreements or an addendum to the lease do not include conditions around substance use or participation in services. If the project is a recovery housing model focused on people who are in early recovery from drugs or alcohol (as outlined in HUD's Recovery Housing Brief), different standards related to use and subsequent offer of treatment may apply.			

No.	Standard	Housing Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Housing 3	The rules and regulations of the project are centered on participants' rights	Project staff have realistic expectations and policies. Rules and regulations are designed to support safe and stable communities and should never interfere with a life in the community. Participants have access to the project at all hours (except for nightly in and out shelter) and accommodation is made for pets.			
Housing 4	Participants have the option to transfer to another project	Transfers should be accommodated for tenants who reasonably believe that they are threatened with imminent harm from further violence if the tenant remains in the same unit. Whenever possible, transfers occur before a participant experiences homelessness.			

Project Specific					
No.	Standard	Project Specific Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Project 1	Quick access to RRH assistance	A Rapid Re-housing project ensures quick linkage to rapid re-housing assistance, based on participant choice.			
Project 2	RRH services support people in maintaining their housing	Participants and staff understand that a primary goal of rapid re-housing is to end homelessness and move participants to permanent housing as quickly as possible, regardless of perceived barriers.			
Project 3	Providers continuously assess a participants' need for assistance	On an ongoing basis, providers assess a participant's needs for continued assistance and provide tailored assistance based on those assessments.			
Project 4	Transitional housing is focused on safe and quick transitions to permanent housing	Participants and staff understand that the primary goals of transitional housing are to provide temporary accommodations that are safe, respectful, and responsive to individual needs, address the services needs of participants, and re-house participants in permanent housing as quickly as possible, regardless of other personal issues or concerns, and as desired by the participant. Participation in transitional housing services does not inhibit participants from moving to permanent housing when they choose to. Assessment and planning for permanent housing placement begins as soon as the individual or family expresses a desire to transition to permanent housing.			
Project 5	TH projects provide appropriate services	TH projects provide appropriate services to meet the participants health and safety needs (e.g., persons in early recovery; domestic violence survivors; those who need special accommodations) when there are no permanent housing solutions available (with or without supportive services) or when the participant chooses transitional housing. Services are not required in order to participate in housing.			

No.	Standard	Project Specific Definition/Evidence	Say It	Document It	Do It
Project 6	Recovery housing is offered as one choice among other housing opportunites	Connection to recovery housing reflects individual choice for this path toward recovery. Abstinence-only spaces are incorporated into a Housing First model wherever possible, thus providing this type of recovery option to those who choose it. Recovery supports are offered, particularly connections to community-based treatment options.			
Project 7	Services include relapse support	Housing and services include relapse support that does not automatically evict or discharge a participant from the project for temporary relapse. Relapse support might include referrals to outpatient treatment or direct provision of outpatient services or the ability to hold a unit for a certain period of time (30-90 days) while the participant undergoes residential treatment.			
Project 8	Services support sustained recovery	Recovery housing projects provide services that align with participants' choice and prioritization of recovery, including but not limited to abstinence from substances (if that is a personal goal), long-term permanent housing stability, and stable income through employment or benefits. Support is offered through connections to community-based treatment options.			

I certify that the above information is true and complete. I understand and acknowledge that withholding information or providing false information may result in

an increase in monitoring and audit activities conducted by the CoC and/or a designated representative.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Typed/Printed Name: **Title:**

To be completed by CoC Designee Only
Housing First Assessment Max Potential: _____
Housing First Assessment Score: _____
Percentage: _____