

SNAPS In Focus: The New Joint Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-Housing Component

July 13, 2017

In the Registration Notice for the FY 2017 Continuum of Care (COC) Program Competition, we announced that communities could apply for a new type of project that combines the activities of a transitional housing project with those of a rapid re-housing project. We will provide more details about this joint component project when the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is published, but in the meantime, I want to explain the purpose of the joint component project and how we will expect these projects to operate,

Joint component projects are not intended to replace transitional housing projects that have been reallocated or lost funding in recent years. Instead, they provide a new way to meet some of the pressing challenges that communities are facing. They provide a safe place for people to stay – crisis housing - with financial assistance and wrap around supportive services determined by program participants to help them move to permanent housing as quickly as possible. Stays in the crisis housing portion of these projects should be brief and without preconditions, and participants should quickly move to permanent housing. These projects can help address several needs:

- In communities where there are large numbers of people living in unsheltered locations, including encampments, joint component projects can reduce unsheltered homelessness by providing temporary, low-barrier housing to individuals and families while helping them quickly move to permanent housing.
- In some communities, there is a lack of safe crisis housing for people fleeing domestic violence to access while they are searching for a safe, permanent place to reside. Joint component projects can provide survivors with safe and supportive temporary housing and connect them to safe, permanent housing and continued services as soon as they are ready.
- Youth have high rates of unsheltered homelessness. The joint component provides a tool to develop projects specially tailored to meet their unique developmental needs and help

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maintain that housing.

When determining whether to apply for joint component projects, CoCs, applicants, and other stakeholders should consider the needs of populations within their communities that would best be served by this type of project and design their projects accordingly. This means thinking about the length of assistance, the types of wraparound services that will be needed, and whether these resources will be applied for as part of the COC Program-funded portion of the project or whether a mainstream resource will need to be leveraged.

At a minimum, joint component projects should:

- Use a Housing First approach with client-driven service models and a focus on helping people move to permanent housing as quickly as possible. Participants cannot be required to participate in treatment or services to receive assistance.
- Have low-barriers to entry and accommodate people with possessions, partners, pets, or other needs.
- Incorporate client-choice by helping participants find permanent housing based on their unique strengths, needs, preferences, and financial resources. Participants will choose when they are ready to exit the crisis housing portion of the project and move to permanent housing, with providers assisting participants with this move.
- Provide or connect participants to resources that help them improve their safety and wellbeing and achieve their goals.
- Target and prioritize people experiencing homelessness with higher needs and who are most vulnerable.

A joint-component project may not be a good fit for all communities. Before applying, communities need to assess whether a joint component project is the best use of resources and will best meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in their community. Here are some additional factors to consider:

- Communities with high rates of unsheltered homelessness and where stays in shelter and other forms of crisis housing are usually brief would likely benefit from adding a joint component project to their system. In communities where shelter, crisis housing, and transitional housing stays are long, increasing rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing resources may be more effective ways to increase capacity.
- Communities with no emergency shelter or crisis housing options available for people fleeing domestic violence should consider a joint component project. However, where there are already shelters or crisis housing projects serving survivors, communities should assess whether lowering the barriers in those existing projects and adding rapid re-housing would better meet survivors' needs and be a better use of resources.

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provide their participants with financial resources to obtain permanent housing, should consider whether reallocating funds from those projects to a joint component project would better meet the needs of the people the project is intended to serve.

When designed well, a joint component project should help improve system performance. Communities should establish performance benchmarks appropriate for a project's target population and encourage them to prioritize people with high needs, especially those who are unsheltered, have experienced long or multiple episodes of homelessness, have higher barriers to exiting homelessness, and are more likely to be victims of violence or harm. Some questions to consider when developing performance expectations are:

- How quickly will participants move into permanent housing?
- How well will the project accommodate people with a variety of needs, including different household configurations, service needs, or pets?
- How well will the project connect people to valuable community resources, such as education, health care, and employment?

We are always looking for ways to better help communities end homelessness. Permanent housing and Housing First approaches have helped reduce homelessness across the country, and we are utilizing these approaches to combat the rising rates of unsheltered homelessness in many communities. However, in many communities there is still a lack of crisis housing. We believe that the joint component project, when implemented thoughtfully, can fill this gap and will be an effective tool to ending homelessness.

Here are some additional resources that will help in planning and implementing joint component projects:

- Housing First Checklist: Assessing Projects and Systems for a Housing First Orientation (<https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/housing-first-checklist>) (USICH)
- Emergency Shelter Learning Series (<http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/emergency-shelter>) (NAEH)
- Federal Resources That Can Fund Rapid Re-Housing (<https://www.usich.gov/tools-foraction/federal-resources-that-can-fund-rapid-re-housing>) (USICH)
- Solutions: Rapid Re-Housing (<http://endhomelessness.org/endinghomelessness/solutions/rapid-re-housing/>) (NAEH)

Lastly, I want to express how inspired I am by the tremendous work that you are doing to end homelessness in your communities every day. My colleagues and I at HUD appreciate the feedback you provide about our programs, and I hope you will continue to tell us about your challenges, ideas, and successes.

Norm Suchar

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