

ATTACHMENT I

WRITTEN STANDARDS FOR PROVISION OF EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT ASSISTANCE

In accordance with the requirements of 24 CFR 91.220(l)(4)(i) and 576.400(e)(1) and (e)(3), Pinellas County has developed the following written standards for the provision of Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding.

Pinellas County is awarded ESG funds annually from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a part of the Annual Action Plan Process. ESG funds are designed to identify sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, as well as those at risk of homelessness, and provide the services necessary to help those persons quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness.

For 2015-2016, Pinellas County will focus on the following eligible components of the ESG Program: Emergency Shelter, Rapid Re-Housing, Homelessness Prevention, and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

The program will be designed to decrease the number of homeless and at-risk households who need emergency assistance. The goals are to: 1) help households that are at-risk of homelessness remain in their housing; 2) help households living in emergency shelters or in uninhabitable places move into stable housing; 3) provide case management to increase the likelihood of housing stability (participants of the program are provided one-on-one counseling to ensure housing stability); and 4) support emergency shelters who serve individuals and families meeting the definition of homeless. The program will service eligible participants to avoid homelessness by providing short-term rental assistance and security and/or utility deposits and eligible emergency shelters by providing funding for essential services, shelter operations or shelter renovations.

For rapid re-housing, homelessness prevention, and HMIS components of the ESG Program, staff will outreach to various non-profit agencies to provide an awareness of the available funding and an RFQ will be issued to select agencies to administer the program. Proposals received in response to the RFQ will be reviewed and scored by County staff based on 1) capacity and related experience to perform the technical functions identified in the RFQ Scope of Services, including methods of complying the Federal requirements pertaining to income requirements, property inspections, and rent reasonableness; 2) ability to provide comprehensive case management services and thoroughly analyze the situation of the applicant and their compatibility with the structure of the program; 3) past experience and current capacity of lead agency (if applicable) and/or collaborating agencies to coordinate service delivery, collect and use client data, and knowledge and compliance with Federal regulations; and 4) comprehensiveness of the ancillary support services and referral resources that include broad participation of service providers. Selected agencies will enter into Specific Performance Agreements with the County for funding. The agencies will provide the counseling and processing of applications to determine participant eligibility for the program. Agencies providing funding will determine the type and amount of assistance being provided as determined by participant needs assessment. All documentation will be submitted to the County for final approval and disbursement of funds. Additionally, in order to ensure timely expenditure of funds, the County may choose at any time to administer the rapid re-housing, homelessness prevention and HMIS components of the ESG Program using County staff.

For the emergency shelter component of the ESG Program, staff will seek applications from homeless service providers through the annual competitive application cycle. Applications received from eligible homeless service providers will be reviewed and ESG-eligible activities will be selected for funding based on the County's identified needs and Continuum of Care's homeless delivery system.

Selected agencies will enter into Specific Performance Agreements with the County for funding. Funding for activities under the emergency shelter component will not exceed sixty percent (60%) of the total annual ESG allocation.

There will be coordination among emergency shelter providers, essential services providers, homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance providers, and other homeless assistance providers to maximize the use of the ESG funding and ensure that there is a centralized effort to reach families in need.

The following eligibility requirements have been established for the rapid re-housing and/or prevention components of the program.

- The program participant must meet the criteria under paragraph (1) the "at risk of homelessness" definition or who meet the criteria in paragraph (2), (3), or (4) of the homeless definition in 576.2 for homeless prevention assistance. A homeless certification form will be required.
- The household income must be less than 30% AMI. Annual income will be calculated using the standards for calculating income under the HOME Investment Partnership Program (24 CFR 92.508) and other HUD regulations.
- The program participant lacks sufficient resources and support networks necessary to retain housing without ESG assistance (but for this assistance they would be homeless).
- Ensure that the rent for a subsidized unit does not exceed the established fair market rent for the area and that the unit meets the rent reasonableness test.

The maximum amount that can be provided by the program is \$3,000 per individual/family within a 24-month period. The actual amount provided will be based on the individual/family need and not a set amount. In the Re-housing program clients are encouraged to pay deposits if they have the ability to pay; however, participants may receive assistance with utility and/or security deposits based on specific need. In addition, Pinellas County providers are required to utilize the Tampa Bay Information Network (TBIN) the County's community-wide HMIS, to comply with the HUD's data collection, management, and reporting standards and used to collect client level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at-risk of homelessness and to ensure that there are no duplicated services being provided.

HUD defines homelessness using the following definition: A homeless person is someone who is living on the street or in an emergency shelter, or who would be living on the street or in an emergency shelter without HUD's homelessness assistance. A person is considered homeless only when he/she resides in one of the places described below:

- In places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, on the street; In an emergency shelter;

In transitional or supportive housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelters;

- In any of the above places but is spending a short time (up to 30 consecutive days) in a hospital or other institution;
- Is being evicted within a week from a private dwelling unit and no subsequent residence has been identified and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing or their housing has been condemned by housing officials and is no longer considered meant for human habitation;
- Is being discharged within a week from an institution in which the person has been a resident for more than 30 consecutive days and no subsequent residence has been identified and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing; or
- Is fleeing a domestic violence housing situation and no subsequent residence has been identified and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

Continuum of Care

Pinellas County consults with members of the Continuum of Care for the area and is a member of the Homeless Leadership Board through the Pinellas County Human Services and Planning Departments. The Homeless Leadership Board, made up of elected officials and community leaders, drafted *Opening Doors of Opportunity: A 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Pinellas County*, to establish the groundwork for guiding Pinellas County in their efforts to end homelessness.

The Consortium supports the Homeless Leadership Board and the priorities of Pinellas County match those of the Continuum of Care and the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

The Continuum of Care Strategic Planning objectives include:

- Creation of new permanent housing beds for chronically homeless through conversion of transitional housing beds to permanent supportive housing.
- Increase the percentage of homeless persons that are successful in staying in permanent housing over six months.
- Increase the percentage of persons employed at program exit to a success rate of 20 percent.
- Decrease the number of homeless households with children.
- Facilitate access to essential services needed to obtain mainstream services.

The Homeless Leadership Board convenes meetings with representatives from the City of St. Petersburg, Pinellas County Human Services Department, Pinellas County Planning Department, the City of Clearwater, the City of Largo, and homeless service providers in an effort to enhance opportunities to collaborate to better serve the homeless and at risk populations in Pinellas County.