

LEAD ME HOME
MONTEREY AND SAN BENITO COUNTY CONTINUUM OF
CARE

OPERATIONAL STANDARDS FOR
EMERGENCY SHELTERS

Approved by Leadership Council June 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION / OVERVIEW

A. Background and Purpose

The Monterey and San Benito County CoC Shelter Standards provide the policy framework for emergency shelter programs located within these two counties. These standards have been developed collaboratively by the primary funders of shelter in the community: the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers (CHSP), County of Monterey, County of San Benito, City of Salinas and United Way of Monterey County.

The purpose of these standards is to:

- Create a baseline set of funder expectations for shelter program operations
- Ensure shelter programs are operating in alignment with known best practices in the field, including Housing First principles and practices.
- Ensure all participants who access emergency shelter have a similar experience, regardless of funding source.
- Provide all local funders of shelter with a common set of standards for the programs they fund.

These general standards serve as minimum requirements for the operation of shelter programs in Monterey and San Benito Counties. The standards outlined in this manual are designed to provide a framework that individual shelter programs can align to. Each individual provider or program will be expected to develop and maintain policies and procedures consistent with this umbrella set of standards.

Some funding sources have specific requirements. The program operator shall ensure that each program complies with all funder requirements. If any funder requirements are not aligned with these standards, the program will ensure compliance with all funding requirements. In those cases where a specific funding regulation does not align with these standards, the program operator will notify CHSP of the situation to discuss possible options and strategies. The program operator will also note the reason(s) for any inconsistencies in their written program documentation.

B. Programs Covered by These Standards

The Lead Me Home CoC Written Standards define “Emergency Shelter” as: *facilities providing shelter in a permanent location, for a limited period of time, to individuals and families having neither a home nor the means to obtain a home or other temporary lodging.* Shelters provide time-limited accommodations in either a congregate or non-congregate setting.

These shelter standards cover emergency shelter programs receiving funding from any of the following sources:

- HUD Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- State of California Homelessness Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP)
- State of California Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA)
- Community Action Agency/Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

Programs receiving funding from alternative sources may also align to these standards to ensure community-wide continuity in shelter services.

Seasonal shelters are activated in inclement weather or cold/wet winter weather. Seasonal shelters may not offer the same level of services as a year-round shelter and may not be able to align to all the standards detailed in this document. Seasonal shelter operators should, however, strive to comply with these operational standards to the maximum extent possible given space and funding constraints.

Transitional housing provides time limited housing but with longer lengths of stay and more intensive services than emergency shelter. Transitional housing programs are not covered by these standards.

C. Guiding Principles for Shelters

The Monterey and San Benito County CoC maintains a strong commitment to prevent and end homelessness for county residents, with the goal of reducing the total population of people experiencing homelessness by 50% by June 2026. The CoC recently adopted a Five-Year Strategic Plan that provides a roadmap for the CoC and its partners to coordinate, align, and focus their efforts to maximize impact on reducing homelessness.

The strategies and policies adopted by Monterey and San Benito County CoC, jurisdictions (Counties and Cities), funders, providers and other key stakeholders are guided by the following principles:

- **Embedded with dignity and respect:** The homelessness response system's efforts center the needs of people requesting assistance by delivering individualized, comprehensive, and culturally competent services. Strengths-based, person-centered, trauma-informed, and harm reduction-based approaches are integrated into all aspects of service design and delivery.
- **Informed by people with lived experience of homelessness:** People experiencing homelessness are experts of their personal needs; the homelessness response system honors and elevates their input on service design and delivery.
- **Housing-focused:** The solution to homelessness is housing; all efforts of the homelessness response system work towards the goal of helping people gain and maintain stable, permanent housing situations.
- **Data-driven towards results:** Strategies and priorities for reducing homelessness will be informed by data to best serve people experiencing homelessness, achieve desired outcomes, and guide strategic investments in programs and services.
- **Coordinated:** The homelessness response system and other systems of care will communicate and partner towards shared goals of improving service linkages and reducing homelessness.
- **Equitable and social justice oriented:** The homelessness response system acknowledges the barriers to housing and resource connection that disproportionately impact people by race, ethnicity, gender, and other identities. The system adopts intentional policies and programs to reduce these disparities and advance equity in system experiences and outcomes.

D. State of CA Housing First Principles

The State of California has adopted a set of Housing First requirements that apply to programs receiving funding from a range of sources, including HHAP. Some of these requirements are only applicable to permanent housing programs, but others are applicable to both shelter and housing. Shelter providers are expected to comply with the State of California's Housing First requirements as applicable to

emergency shelter programs. The requirements may be found in the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 8275(b). Additional information on Housing First may be found at the California Interagency Council on Homelessness (CA-ICH) website at: <https://bcsh.ca.gov/calich/resources.html>

2. SHELTER ACCESS

To ensure consistency with Housing First principles and ensure that people who are unsheltered have streamlined access to available shelter beds, shelter programs should adopt policies for eligibility and screening that impose minimal barriers to access.

A. Eligibility Criteria and Screening

Screening Criteria

Each shelter program in Monterey or San Benito County will establish its own eligibility criteria in compliance with applicable funding sources. Funder-mandated eligibility restrictions are allowed and may include factors such as: maximum income levels, convictions for specific criminal offenses (e.g., sex offender), minimum or maximum age of participants (e.g., must be at least 18, must be 18-24), veteran status and other factors.

Shelter programs **shall not** adopt additional eligibility or screening criteria beyond what is required by a funding source. In particular, providers shall **not** impose additional targeting or screening criteria designed to identify whether an individual or household is “suitable” or housing ready,” such as:

- Sobriety or participation in treatment services
- Employability or employment readiness
- Income or ability to pay rent
- “Motivation” or willingness to participate in services
- Proof of citizenship/immigration status

Shelter programs will adopt policies and procedures that “**screen in**” individuals and households with higher barriers to housing, including:

- Adult individuals and families who are unsheltered (living outdoors or in vehicles);
- Households with no, low or fixed income;
- Adults with disabilities, including behavioral health issues (mental illness, substance use);
- People with limited or no employment history; and
- People with criminal records and/or evictions.

Shelter programs may conduct a service needs assessment as part of the screening and admission process, but only for the purpose of developing a housing-focused case plan with the participant and determining their immediate needs. Service needs or other types of assessments are not to be used to make eligibility and admission decisions. However, shelters may decline to accept a participant if there is a clear safety issue (see below).

Safety Screening

Shelters may use their screening procedures to identify individuals who might pose a safety concern to other shelter participants, including, for example, recent history of violent behavior. Criteria for assessing safety concerns must be clear and objective to the maximum extent possible. These instances should be rare and the reason for the refusal to serve a participant must be documented. Shelters may also terminate a client's participation after enrollment should they receive information that raises concerns about safety.

Compliance with Federal Requirements

Shelter Programs will operate in compliance with the **Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Equal Access to Housing Final Rule**, ensuring that all individuals have equal access and accommodations to shelter, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or marital status.

Programs must have policies to ensure compliance with Fair Housing rules and implement a set of policies and procedures to provide reasonable accommodations for households with disabilities.

Screening Criteria Relating to Youth and Families

Programs should ensure they are operating in compliance with HUD requirements relating to involuntary separation of families. The CoC and ESG Interim Rules require that the age and gender of a child under age 18 must not be used as a basis for denying any family admission to a project that receives funds through the CoC or ESG program.

Unaccompanied minors may only be served with agreement of a legal guardian or appropriate authorities. Basic Center Programs (BCP) projects serving runaway youth must create a MOU between their programs and child welfare agencies that clarify roles, responsibilities and define the provision of services at the time youth enter shelter. This requirement is in accordance with the **Runaway and Homeless Youth Act**.

No one under the age of 18 should be allowed to reside in a single-adult shelter. If a household with minors presents for service at a single-adult shelter, shelter staff should refer the family to more appropriate services.

B. Admission, Intake, and Readmission Policies

Admissions

Shelters are required to create policies and procedures for accepting individuals into their shelter programs including procedures for intake and readmission policies. Admission policies must specify the process individuals or families should follow to request access to shelter including how to contact the shelter, times of day when intakes are conducted, and waiting list procedures (if applicable).

Whenever possible programs shall work to divert participants seeking shelter entry by encouraging them to re-connect with family or friends who could temporarily or permanently house them.

Shelter Intake Documents

Shelter intake documents should be compliant with funding source requirements and should not impose additional or unnecessary barriers to access. The following are examples of intake documents that may be required.

1. Personal identification; at least one photo ID is preferred.
1. Documentation of Homelessness or At-Risk status per federal guidelines.
2. Income self-declaration.
3. HMIS Intake form.
4. Signed Release of Information (ROI)
5. Signed acknowledgement of receiving program rules or requirements.
6. Signed acknowledgement of receiving any other participant rights and responsibility.
7. Signed acknowledgement of receiving an agency grievance procedure. All participants will be provided a copy of the procedure.

Shelters should adopt policies that allow for maximum flexibility to make exceptions in cases where a participant cannot secure a needed document. Shelters should also do everything possible to minimize the number and length of forms to be completed by participants to ensure the intake process is not creating barriers to access.

Readmission

Shelter providers shall develop written policies regarding the conditions under which participants who have been exited from a program for violations of rules may be re-admitted. Policies may include conditions under which participants may be “banned” either temporarily or permanently. If a shelter program chooses to have policies regarding bans (due to significant safety concerns and/or related to “time out” periods where participants may not access shelter for a certain amount of time after exiting the program), the program will maintain documentation of their “ban” policies, the grievance/appeal process, and documentation of the reason for any bans that occur. All shelter providers should operate low barrier programs and strive to avoid banning participants whenever possible, utilizing techniques and resources such as harm reduction and de-escalation. Bans should be reserved for instances where participants pose safety threats to other program participants and/or staff.

3. SERVICES STANDARDS

A. Housing-Focused Case Management

The primary purpose of shelter is to provide a safe place for participants to stay while they quickly implement a plan to secure housing. To meet this objective, the primary support service intervention offered at shelter programs is housing-focused case management and service linkages.

Shelter case managers will respond to participants’ immediate and short-term service needs, complete an initial housing needs assessment, and develop a housing-focused case plan to secure and sustain housing. Case managers will work to identify and build upon participants’ strengths. Additionally, case management will provide linkage to appropriate services and supports, including housing retention planning and retention services, as well as continued monitoring and follow-up regarding participant

progress and ongoing needs. The goal of the housing-focused case management is to help participants locate and move to a permanent housing situation as quickly as possible and to retain their housing once they leave shelter. Permanent housing includes market housing, senior housing, affordable housing, shared housing situations, moving in with a relative or friend, obtaining housing with a voucher or subsidy, or any housing situation that is not time limited.

Case management is offered to all participants, not only participants who are there for longer stays or participants in certain parts of the shelter program(s).

Shelter providers may establish rules strongly encouraging participants to participate in case management. However, participants should not be discharged from shelter for failure to attend case management meetings. Case managers will engage with and develop a rapport with each participant, using engagement techniques such as motivational interviewing, and offer assistance that is relevant and useful to addressing the goals and needs the participant has identified to reach the goal of re-entering permanent housing as quickly as possible.

While service participation should be voluntary, shelters are not expected to allow participants to stay in shelter indefinitely if they are not participating in case management or housing search activities. If shelter staff have made robust efforts to engage a participant and “meet them where they are,” yet the participant declines to participate, the shelter may provide the participant with an exit date. Shelters should have a written policy laying out their process and criteria for determining whether to terminate participation for a participant on the basis that they not engaging in the process of developing a housing plan or taking steps along a pathway to housing.

Case Manager Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the case manager shall generally include:

- Employ a person-centered, strengths-based approach that tailors case management to each participant/household. Case management is individualized to each participant or household; case managers actively work to identify the unique needs and goals of each participant.
- Develop individual housing plan with each participant/household, with participant participation, covering goals related to housing and other needed services. Housing plan templates should limit the number of goals and action steps to be included in a single plan in order to focus attention on housing and related goals.
- Assist the participant with exploring potential housing resources, such as shared housing, reunifying with relatives, and identifying friends or relatives who could provide housing options.
- Support participants to draw on their existing support networks, and help participants identify people already in their lives who can help with specific things, such as transportation or childcare.
- Implement Housing First principles, focusing on addressing participants’ housing needs and goals.
- Employ harm-reduction and trauma-informed care to tailor services to participants’ needs.

- Work collaboratively with any other programs/staff that are providing services to the participant while in the program (e.g., a rapid re-housing program case manager). Shelter case managers will work to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of care with a participant's new or additional case manager. Ensure collaboration and clear roles and responsibilities on case plan and housing goals.
- Support participants to manage conflict and/or any other problems that may be presented during their shelter stay.
- Provide services that are culturally appropriate and have needed language abilities. Multi-lingual case managers should be available as needed.
- The case manager will support the participant with housing search and assist the participant in obtaining and moving into housing, including helping participants resolve or mitigate tenant screening barriers like rental and utility arrears or multiple evictions, as well as obtain necessary identification or other documents if needed.
- Support participants to access services for which they are eligible and that will help support a successful transition to housing.
- Case managers may offer budgeting assistance when desired by participants.

Case Manager Supervisory Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Case Manager Supervisor shall generally include:

- Monitor the Case Managers duties and accomplishments throughout their engagements with participants. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that case managers are properly connecting participants to services and resources, tracking information for participant record and HMIS usage, and general compliance with case management responsibilities.
- The supervisor should provide support and training opportunities to the Case Managers when needed to ensure strong supportive services for the participants in the shelter program.

Case Loads

Case managers will generally maintain a manageable caseload of households, to the extent this is feasible given funding constraints. Shelters are expected to operate with no more than 20 participants assigned to each case manager (1:20 case manager to client ratio).

Case Manager Training

Case management staff should be provided with initial training and orientation and ongoing training, supervision, and support. Programs will conduct ongoing training, supervision, and quality assurance to ensure consistency and compliance with program policies including housing-focused case management policies, trauma-informed approaches, sexual harassment, harm reduction, de-escalation, and housing first principles. Programs will also ensure that all case management staff maintain updated knowledge of community-based services such as mainstream benefits, employment services, childcare resources, behavioral health services, and other services.

All staff will have written job descriptions that include requirements that they focus on activities relating to obtaining housing, while maintaining participant-centered, low barrier, safe programs.

The program shall have a case review process, as well as ongoing staff supervision and training, to help staff problem-solve around housing plans and around participants who are having difficulty following the established housing plan and/or other challenges while residing at the shelter.

B. Service Linkages

The shelter program shall collect, maintain, and update records of available mainstream and community resources for program participants. This includes community resources that can reduce burdens on income to increase resources to pay for housing costs, including employment opportunities, food banks, clothing consignment stores, mainstream benefits (including CalFresh, WIC, Medi-Cal/health coverage, General Assistance, and CalWORKs) low-income utility programs, childcare resources, and others. Additionally, it is recommended that case managers utilize the Smart Referral Software developed and maintained by United Way of Monterey County to increase service connections and facilitate sending referrals to services.

The program will collaborate with providers that provide domestic violence specific services to determine most appropriate housing or shelter plans for participants who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence, and to connect participants with applicable domestic violence survivor services

Additional Supportive Services & Voluntary Service Participation

As a general matter, supportive services in shelter programs are offered and encouraged, however participation is not mandatory. Programs may offer health and behavioral health services, employment and training services, budgeting classes, life skills, parenting classes and other types of support, but participation is not mandatory as a condition of receiving assistance. Programs may set up savings programs in which participants are supported to save some of their income for move-in expenses once they secure housing. However, savings programs cannot be mandatory.

Programs will utilize motivational interviewing and other engagement techniques to encourage participants to participate in supportive services.

Services for Families with Children

In accordance with federal requirements, each family shelter will consider the educational needs of children in households experiencing homelessness to the greatest extent possible and ensure that staff are trained and knowledgeable about these educational needs and rights of children staying in shelter.

If a family with children is not already connected to McKinney Vento services, the shelter staff should connect them to either the Monterey County or San Benito County Office of Education to ensure the family is receiving the services available to them.

4. PROGRAM OPERATIONS

A. Program Rules

In keeping with the principles of participant self-determination and to ensure that programs have low barriers to participation, Shelter Programs should establish program rules that foster an environment of trust, are clear and reasonable, and are focused ensuring that all participants have a safe environment in which to live. Program rules should not mandate participation in services as a condition of remaining in the program. Rules should be enforced consistently using a transparent process.

To the extent feasible, shelter providers should involve shelter participants in shelter governance and the development of shelter rules. Rules should be reviewed regularly to ensure they support the overall goal of creating a housing-focused, participant-centered, safe environment.

B. Time Limits and Extensions.

Each shelter will establish its own rules relating to how long participants may stay in the program. The overall focus of shelter services should be to help participants exit to a permanent housing situation as quickly as possible. To the extent shelters have a fixed maximum length of stay, exceptions should be available for participants who are in the process of securing housing to ensure they are able to transition directly from shelter to housing.

C. Termination/Disenrollment

Involuntary exit from shelter should always be a last resort. Program rules and services should be designed to support participants to access the support they need to participate in the shelter program and to exit as rapidly as possible to housing. Shelter leadership and staff should strive as much as possible to avoid discharging participants who struggle to comply with rules or to participate in services, approaching these challenges through a trauma-informed lens. Staff should be trained in trauma-informed care, conflict resolution, de-escalation and motivational interviewing to equip them with the tools needed to work with clients who are challenging to engage and support. (See also section on Training)

Programs will maintain written grievance policies and procedures regarding involuntary exits/asked to leave situations. Participants will be made aware of the grievance procedures.

D. Facility Access

Shelter providers shall establish written policies regarding when and how program participants may access the shelter program facility during the course of their stay. In alignment with Housing First principles and practices, programs should maximize the ability of participants to come and go as they choose and not impose curfews or requirements that participants must leave the site during the day.

The written program policies should cover:

- Times of day when program participants may enter and leave the program
- Policies regarding any visitors (how many, when they can visit, how long they can stay)
- Policies to prevent unauthorized people from entering the facility, to protect the safety of participants and staff – such as by having a 24/7 staffed front desk, locked gate or door with

controlled access to ensure only participants are entering the building, or other method for securing access to the site.

E. Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Shelter programs should affirmatively develop and implement policies to prevent discrimination and create a welcoming environment for people regardless of their gender identity. Policies should cover, at a minimum:

- Access, intake and enrollment – gender identity or sexual orientation is not a reason to deny access to emergency shelter
- Room or bed assignments – Assignment should be made based on the gender that the client identifies with, while also taking into consideration the client’s views with respect to their personal health and safety. Participants should not be isolated based on their gender identity.
- Bathrooms – participants should be permitted to use the bathroom that corresponds to the gender they identify with. To the extent feasible, shelters should offer a gender-neutral or unisex bathroom.
- Creating a welcoming environment for people who identify as transgender, including:
 - Adopting a formal policy of respect
 - Asking participants their preferred pronouns and taking care to not misgender participants
 - Using gender neutral terms if the participant’s gender is unknown
 - Refraining from asking unnecessary questions or making remarks regarding a participant’s gender
 - Using inclusive language in program materials (posters, forms, written policies, etc.)
 - Taking reasonable steps to address participant privacy or safety concerns
- Providing training to staff on gender identity and gender expression, appropriate use of language, how to create an inclusive and respectful environment and the requirements of HUD’s Equal Access Rule.
- Providing participants with service connections and linkages to organizations and programs for the LGBTQIA community.

Shelter providers are encouraged to consult: [**Equal Access for Transgender People - Supporting Inclusive Housing and Shelters**](#) when developing operational policies.

F. Service Animals, Emotional Support Animals, and Pets

Each shelter will establish a clear written policy regarding pets. All shelters should allow service animals for people with disabilities. Shelters may establish a policy regarding what documentation or verification is required for an animal to be considered a service animal.

Shelters are not required to accept pets (i.e., non-service animals), however, allowing participants to have pets is a key element of lowering barriers to shelter access. Shelter providers are encouraged to adopt policies allowing pets and providing accommodations for pets to the maximum extent possible. If pets are allowed, there must be a clear policy regarding types of pets allowed, and the respective responsibilities for shelter staff and participants for managing pets to ensure safety of all participants.

G. Participant Rights & Responsibilities

All shelters shall adopt a policy on participant rights and responsibilities. These policies must be in writing and shared with each participant upon admission. The written policy should be both person-centered and trauma informed, and should affirm:

- The right to be treated with dignity and respect
- The right to privacy within the constraints of a shelter environment
- The right to reasonable accommodations
- The right to self-determination in participation in case management and services, including the right to decline to participate in supportive services
- The right to have all records and disclosures maintained according to written standards and rules regarding confidentiality and privacy
- The right to be clearly informed, in understandable and applicable language, about the purposes of services being delivered
- The right to not be discriminated against based on categories including race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, age, disability, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, military status, and veteran status.

H. Grievance and Appeal Procedures

Shelter providers must develop a written set of policies and procedures relating to participant appeals including:

- What types of decisions are subject to appeal (e.g., denial of admission, denial of extension of stay, program termination)
- Grounds for appeal
- How to file an appeal
- Process for the shelter will follow to consider the appeal, including timeframe for each step

Shelter providers must also develop a written set of policies and procedures relating to the filing of participant grievances to address the participant's treatment in the shelter program, including how to file a grievance, the process the shelter will follow to investigate, and how grievances will be resolved, and timeframe for each step.

In accordance with requirements of the State of California, shelter providers written policies and procedures should include directions on how to file a facility complaint to the Monterey or San Benito County Department of Housing and Community Development.

Copies of both the appeal and grievance policy should be posted in the shelter and staff should make forms available to participants upon request.

I. Participant Involvement and Feedback

Shelter providers should involve shelter participants in shelter program oversight and evaluation and proactively solicit input and feedback from participants on all aspects of shelter operations. This may take the form of a resident council (either volunteer or elected), regularly scheduled meetings between participant representatives and shelter staff, having a participant sit on the organization's board of directors, or other means. Shelter providers should also use a range of tools to gather ongoing input

from participants, such as through a suggestion box, surveys, focus groups, exit interviews and other approaches. Shelters should analyze participant feedback and use it to assess program quality and performance and adjust as needed.

J. Reasonable Accommodations

Shelter providers must develop reasonable accommodation policies and ensure these policies are regularly and clearly communicated to participants.

A reasonable accommodation is a change, exception or adjustment to a program, service building or dwelling unit that will allow a qualified person with a disability to:

- Participate fully in the program
- Take advantage of a service
- Live in a dwelling

Shelter providers must provide notice to participants of their right to request reasonable accommodations and the process for making a request. A sample reasonable accommodation request form is provided in the Appendices. When a participant makes a reasonable accommodation request, the program must provide the accommodation unless doing so would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the program or would pose an undue financial or administrative burden. Providers must maintain documentation of all reasonable accommodation requests and how they were handled. If an accommodation is denied, a written explanation must be provided to the participant and documented in their program file.

K. Emergency Preparedness/Natural Disasters

Shelter providers will develop policies and procedures for emergency situations to safeguard staff and participant safety and security. Policies and procedures must include plans for the safe evacuation of shelter participants and staff in case of natural disasters and for sheltering-in-place if evacuation is not possible or safe. All staff must be fully trained on emergency procedures.

L. Data Collection, Quality Assurance, and Reporting

All emergency shelter programs must enter participant data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) managed by the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers, with the exception of shelters operated by victim service agencies. Programs must follow CHSP's HMIS policies and procedures which are detailed in a separate document. Program staff will enter complete and accurate information into HMIS in a timely manner for all participants. Participant information, including universal data elements and program-specific data elements, will be accurate, complete, and current.

Programs will conduct ongoing training, coaching, and internal review to ensure quality and consistency of services, and adherence to policies and procedures. Providers will conduct ongoing reviews of services and documentation of services (file reviews), and data quality.

Shelter programs will implement systematic processes to review outcomes, operations, procedures, and participant experience. Programs will maintain a continuous quality improvement process including reviewing outcome data, trend data, and data on the performance measures listed above. Programs also collect, review, and utilize ongoing feedback from participants and other stakeholders.

All Shelter programs shall complete and submit reports that are required by their funding sources in a timely manner.

M. Staff Training

Emergency shelter programs shall each develop a comprehensive training program and policy for all staff that covers, at a minimum:

- Harm Reduction
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Housing First Principles and Practices
- Motivational Interviewing
- Cultural Humility/Anti Racism
- Non-Violent Crisis Intervention/De-Escalation
- Emergency Procedures
- Domestic Violence and Safety Planning
- CPR
- Mandated Reporting
- Sexual Harassment
- Conflict Resolution

5. FACILITIES, HEALTH, AND SAFETY

This section specifies some high-level policies that programs are expected to comply with, but it is not intended to provide comprehensive policies for operating a shelter facility. Each shelter program shall develop detailed policies relating to facilities management, health and safety.

A. Facility Standards

Shelter providers are responsible for ensuring that physical facilities are maintained in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations, including building and fire codes. Shelter providers must ensure the program safe provides a safe living space for participants. The program provider will work to create and maintain an environment where the safety of participants, staff, and volunteers are always prioritized.

Safety Standards and Policies

Shelter Providers are responsible for maintaining and implementing policies and following protocols to ensure shelter program's participant and staff health and safety. Policies should include, but are not limited to:

- Policies and procedures to adhere to all applicable local, state, and federal safety and health guidelines to address safe food handling, injury and burn prevention, sanitation and hygiene, participant health management, and staff health management.

- Training for staff on health and safety measures to effectively promote a desirable, safe environment for all shelter participants. This includes training on emergency situations, de-escalation, and crisis prevention.
- Training, policies, and protocol to prevent violence, theft, and other incidents that put the safety and well-being of shelter participants and/or staff at risk. Have policies and procedures in place to investigate any potential incident of violence, theft, or other incidents, including a thorough investigation and actions to address the findings.
- Complete appropriate background checks and screening for all staff and any volunteers who have frequent, direct interactions with participants or may have access to participant information.
- Maintain process to thoroughly investigate any alleged incident involving participants. If an incident occurred, identify, and address any staffing, staff training, facility improvement, policy/protocol/procedure, or other changes necessary to address the incident and prevent future incidents.
- Develop and implement policies and procedures to prevent, identify and address workplace violence and sexual harassment.
- Train staff and any volunteers who may interact with participants or participant information on participant confidentiality.
- Maintain a disaster response plan and maintain an emergency response resources, such as a fully stocked First Aid Kit and emergency supplies of food and water, are readily available and replaced as necessary. A telephone should be available always, should 911 need to be dialed.
- No weapons or illegal substances are permitted on the premises.
- Measures and policies to ensure the proper disposal of needles and syringes are in place.
- Policies and procedures for natural disasters, fires, and other emergency situations are in place and made known to shelter participants and staff. For example, fire drills should be conducted routinely.
- Shelters have procedures for preventing and controlling bed bug infestations. Bedding should be regularly changed and washed.
- Staff members must be properly immunized and encouraged to receive flu vaccines each season.
- All shelter staff are mandatory reporters of suspected neglect or abuse. Staff members must be trained on and comply with mandatory reporting statutes.

Facility Configuration

Shelter programs may have different types of bed configurations, ranging from congregate/dormitory arrangements to private units. Whatever the configuration, the following general standards should be followed:

- Each participant should have his or her own bed.
- Cribs or Pack N Plays must be available for infants and very young children.
- Participants should be afforded privacy in their living space to the maximum extent possible given the facility configuration.
- Shelter programs should offer participants some common areas for recreation and socializing to the extent possible given the facility configuration.
- To the extent possible, shelter programs should provide safe common areas for recreation and socializing for young children and school aged children. It is further recommended that there be space for school aged children to be able to work on homework and study.
- Participants should have the ability to securely store possessions, and programs will work to maximize the secure storage space available for each participant. Programs may limit the number of possessions participants may bring to the shelter due to storage limitations and to prevent hoarding.
- Participants should have access to laundry facilities.
- Whenever possible, shelters should provide gender-neutral or unisex restrooms to make facilities more welcoming for transgender and non-binary participants.

Meals/Food Preparation Facilities

Shelter programs should provide participants with meals or should provide cooking facilities so that participants may prepare their own food. Facilities that prepare meals on-site must comply with all applicable health and safety codes relating to food preparation and handling.

B. Communicable Diseases

Shelter providers are responsible for developing written policies and procedures for preventing the transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases, in alignment with the recommendations of the CDC, State of California and county public health departments. Policies must cover social distancing, screening and testing, isolation and quarantine, and vaccination.

6. GLOSSARY

Continuum of Care (CoC) Program. The Federal grant program for targeted homeless activities, including Rapid Rehousing, and Permanent Supportive Housing. Administered federally by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and locally by a nonprofit or governmental lead agency and overseen by the Continuum of Care governing body or board. In Monterey and San Benito Counties, the Lead Me Home Leadership Council is the Continuum of Care governing body and the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers (CHSP) is the lead agency. A Continuum of Care also refers to the overall system of shelter, housing, and services available in a community to assist people experiencing homelessness.

Coordinated Entry System (CES). Coordinated Entry is a framework and process that organizes the homelessness response system through a common, population-specific assessment, centralized data system, and prioritization method that directs clients to appropriate resources and allows for data-driven decision-making and performance-based accountability. Coordinated Entry processes are divided into four parts: Access, Assessment, Prioritization, and Referral.

Diversion/Problem Solving. A strategy that prevents or diverts people from homelessness by helping identify immediate safe, indoor housing arrangements outside of the homelessness response system. Problem solving strategies operate with the goal of providing people with the appropriate level of assistance needed to resolve their homelessness and ensuring that scarce resources, especially more intensive housing supports, can serve households with higher levels of identified need.

Emergency Shelter. A facility providing shelter in a permanent location, for a limited period of time, to individuals and families having neither a home nor the means to obtain a home or other temporary lodging. Shelters provide time-limited accommodations in either a congregate or non-congregate setting.

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). A federal funding source for programs serving people experiencing homelessness with a focus on assisting people to quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness. In Monterey and San Benito Counties, the City of Salinas is the Administrative Entity (AE) for ESG funding.

Family. One or more adults with physical and legal custody of one or more minor children;

Housing First. A proven approach, applicable across all elements of systems for ending homelessness, in which people experiencing homelessness are connected to permanent housing swiftly and with few to no treatment preconditions, behavioral contingencies, or other barriers. (USICH, Housing First Checklist, 2016)

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Subsidized rental housing without time limits and with intensive on-site support services to help tenants maintain housing and meet their desired goals. Permanent Supportive Housing is designed to house those individuals with the greatest housing barriers and the highest service needs.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH). A housing program model that assists individuals and families who are homeless to move quickly into permanent housing, usually to housing in the private market. It does so by offering housing search assistance, time-limited and targeted services, and short-term rental assistance.

Transitional Housing (TH). An interim housing program model that provides persons or households with shared or private housing units for a time-limited period, during which time the person or household receives support services to help with the transition to permanent housing.

7. RESOURCES

- [CoC Program Interim Rule](#)
- [ESG Program Interim Rule](#)
- [HUD Equal Access Rule](#)

- [HUD Definitions of Homelessness](#)
- [National Alliance to End Homelessness \(NAEH\) - Emergency Shelter Learning Series](#)
- [Council on Accreditation \(COA\) - Person-Centered Logic Model](#)