

# CONNECTICUT

## RAPID RE-HOUSING PROGRAM (CT RRH)

### POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



*Program funded by State of CT-Homeless Housing Account, U.S. Health and Human Services-Social Services Block Grant and U.S. Housing and Urban Development – Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG)-Financial Assistance*

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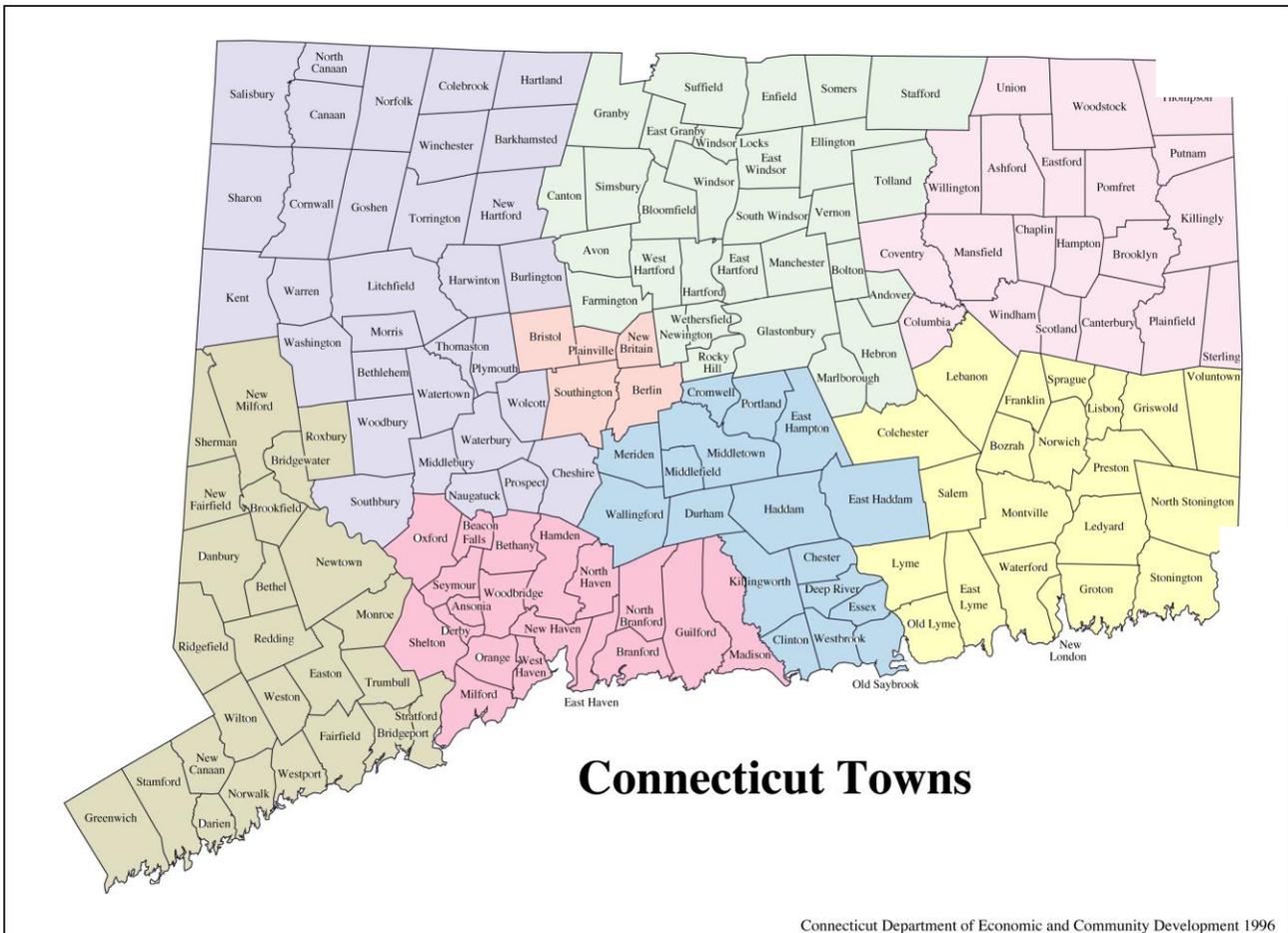
# Overview

The Connecticut Rapid Re-Housing Program (CT RRH) is designed to assist 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. CT 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.

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

All agencies with a DOH contract are required to follow state and federal guidelines in the implementation and subsequent operation of CT RRH. The State of Connecticut, Department of Housing, have written the following policies and procedures to assist with operationalization of CT RRH and Emergency Solution Grant (ESG)-rapid rehousing financial assistance activities as set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Services will be provided in coordinated access networks:



## **Eligibility**

CT RRH eligible participants are literally homeless households. Household annual income cannot exceed 30% of the median income for the area they are renting in. 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.*

CT RRH is targeted to serve literally homeless families with children and adult-only households. A “family” is defined as one or two adults with at least one dependent child under the age of 18. This includes a homeless single adult or couple who is reuniting with a dependent child upon entry into permanent housing.

CT 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 CT RRH ESG 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.

## **Key Principles of Program Operation**

CT 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**

CT 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 CT RRH will 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 CT 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.*

CT 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** shall be developed by CT RRH program staff and the household, and will include actions to overcome or minimize recurrent, significant barriers to retaining housing. Development of this plan will occur after the household has been housed. 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. CT 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, but **will not** exceed 12 months.

Home visits will be essential to the delivery of services, enabling CT RRH program staff to connect with the individuals or families where they live. **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.

CT 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 CT RRH program staff shall obtain financial assistance to help CT RRH 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 ACT;
2. Municipal (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury) ESG funds, as appropriate;
3. other privately funded resources in the coordinated access networks.

Eligible costs may include first and last month's rent; security deposits, rental application fees; moving costs; utility deposits, payments, and arrears; and other costs depending on the needs of the household. For households that will need longer-term assistance to retain housing, the contractor may provide time-limited rental assistance. This rental assistance can be structured as a shallow flat or declining subsidy that will be determined based on need and rental unit size, and may be adjusted for each CAN. The length of the assistance may be shorter or longer depending on the needs of the household, but must not exceed 12 months. Levels of financial assistance will be determined by CT RRH staff and approved by the Department's Program Rapid Re-housing Financial Assistance fund administrator (ACT) to ensure compliance with Federal and State regulations and fund availability.

CTRRH programs submit financial assistance request to ACT with applicable supporting documentation for assistance.

CT RRH shall review request for completeness. If complete, ACT will process within 3 – 5 days. If incomplete, ACT will advise CTRRH 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.

## **CT RRH Process Flow**

*Process flow if the CAN determines there is a need and the referral is made directly to the regional 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 housed in HMIS.
5. The Housing Sustainability Coordinator (or equivalent) shall continue with housing stabilization assistance as noted under “Rapid Re-housing Coordination” above, after the 60<sup>th</sup> day or when the household is placed into housing; whichever comes first. The “Date Housed” field must be completed in HMIS. 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.
6. CT 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.

The CT RRH shall utilize CTHMIS for data entry, housing date and exit purposes.

### **Lead Inspection Visual Assessment, Rent Reasonableness and Habitability Standards**

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

## **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 identify: proof of social security numbers and documentation of birth dates for all household members
  - For income verification, any or all of the following as applicable:
    - 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
  - CTHMIS Client Consent (enter information into CTHMIS & share with agencies)
  - Agency Client Release of Information
  - Lease – once housed, a copy of the household’s signed lease will be included in the file.

## **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 CT 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 CT RRH programs must have a Grievance and Appeal Process that is written and documented.

**Maintenance of Records.** CT 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.

Use the following attachments  
to implement your  
CT RRH program