

## Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care Rapid Re-Housing Funding Collaborative

### Overview—Initiative to End Homelessness and the Need for Standardized Service Delivery

As members of the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care (CoC), the City of Houston through its Housing and Community Development Department, Harris County through its Community Services Department, and Fort Bend County through its Community Development Department are committed to the community plan, *The Way Home*, that sets a path to end all homelessness. The Way Home's Goal is to build a system in which no one has to be homeless for more than 30 days. In addition, the plan outlines a goal of ending family homelessness by 2020. One of the actions to end family homelessness while simultaneously supporting building a system to end all types of homelessness is to expand the use and effectiveness of rapid re-housing in our CoC. Our CoC has increased use of and enrollments in rapid re-housing funds over the past three years as the CoC has shifted focus to the best interventions to achieve permanent housing. This shift has been in line with both our local plan to end homelessness, *The Way Home*, as well as the Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness, *Opening Doors*.

This expansion includes aligning funds and standardization of service delivery so that funds can be used in the most effective, efficient way while reducing the administrative burden for funders and providers alike. Initial mapping of our homeless response system indicated that homeless individuals and families within our CoC could benefit from as many as 8,100 additional rapid re-housing assisted units. The most recent point in time count identified 5,351 people including about 441 families that are homeless on any given night, either in shelter or on the street. An estimated annualized number based on this data estimates around 8,100 families are homeless and in need of permanent housing every year.

To meet this need, entitlement communities within the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care<sup>1</sup> joined to create the rapid re-housing funders collaborative. This collaborative is transforming the way the Continuum will fund and deliver rapid re-housing services. Rapid re-housing programs have shown that with a modest amount of time-limited assistance, many families can return to housing and be successful tenants. This housing program reduces the length of time households stay in shelter, and minimizes the destructive impacts of housing instability and related stress. The redesign of rapid re-housing for the Houston/Harris County CoC has the potential to reach 1,000 individuals and families and rapidly place them in housing with intensive, short term assistance while linking households to long term stability resources.

---

<sup>1</sup> The City of Houston, Harris County, Fort Bend County, City of Pasadena

## Using Rapid Re-Housing

Rapid re-housing is an intervention designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid re-housing assistance is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are typically tailored to the unique needs of the household. Characteristics of a successful rapid re-housing program include:

- *Targeted services* to households with earning potential but with barriers to housing. This does not include limiting services to households with income, but directs funds to households where the long term earning potential can maintain housing in a market or affordable unit after the assistance has concluded;
- *Housing stabilization case management* where case managers are focused on housing stability for each household first and foremost
- *Housing identification* where navigators have specialized skills in building and maintaining relationships with landlords and understanding the unique housing market
- *Financial Assistance* consisting of temporary rent and associated housing costs that are short (0-3 months) to medium term (3 – 24 months); and
- *Tailored services* which are focused on the individual needs of each family or person rather than individual goals of a program, and are aimed to providing the lightest touch to secure safe, decent housing for each household receiving assistance.

The ultimate goal of rapid re-housing is to help literally homeless individuals and families quickly return to housing stability and remain stably housed. Outcomes for the continuum dictate that at least 80 percent of households that receive assistance will remain housed for at least a year. By redesigning the service delivery model for rapid re-housing, the Houston/Harris County CoC expands the reach of funding across the Continuum while simultaneously providing a simplified, standardized monitoring requirement. This will eliminate the requirement of rules specific to each jurisdiction and will allow service providers to focus on providing quality housing stability case management. The redesigned rapid rehousing program for the CoC is now separated into two separate service delivery components:

**1) Financial Assistance** – short- to medium- term rental assistance to support homeless households, rental and utility deposits and arrearages, utility payments as needed.

**2) Housing Stabilization Case Management** – specialized case management that is focused on achieving immediate housing stability and supporting long term

housing stabilization by linking households to targeted and mainstream resources available in the community.

The two program components will be managed by two distinct fiscal intermediaries. These intermediaries will be responsible for distributing, monitoring and reporting on outcomes for all funds expended.

The new housing model will include aligned resources across the Continuum from multiple sources that fund financial assistance and case management. The aligned funding will be distributed among two intermediaries who will then be responsible for the distribution, reporting and monitoring of the assistance to appropriate providers. Public funds that support this collaborative are listed below.

- **City of Houston** – pass through funds for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and Homeless Housing and Services Program (HHSP) will support both financial assistance and case management bucket for funding.
- **Harris County** – pass through funds for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) will support both financial assistance and case management pools for funding.
- **Fort Bend County** – pass through funds for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) will support the financial assistance pool.
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** – Continuum of Care Grant Program Funds will support the financial assistance pool for funding.

The collaborative envisions a system where rapid re-housing is distributed through two intermediaries for the primary funding activities of rapid re-housing: case management/housing search and financial assistance. Each of these intermediaries will fund vendors that may include, but are not limited to case management agencies or housing inspectors as well as interface directly with the coordinated assessment and placement system to ensure that appropriate placements are made into rapid re-housing.

**Timeline**

Publish RFQ	December 4, 2014
Bidders Conference	December 10, 2014 9:00 am
RFP Due	January 8, 2015
Publish Awarded Agency	January 2015
Contract Period Begins	March 1, 2015