

Guidance for Improving Racial Equity and Housing Access

This document provides further clarity on key terms used in the monitoring tool and criteria the Funding Review Committee consider at when reviewing Agency responses to the Monitoring Questionnaire.

IMPROVING RACIAL EQUITY:

Agencies identifying steps taken to improve racial equity shall be monitored on the frequency and extent to which the agency self-evaluates their program policies and operations, data, staff diversity and representation of population(s) served, and engagement of persons of color in decision making and planning efforts. The Funding Review Committee will assess the following:

Standard	Definition/Evidence
Program Policies and Operations	The Agency's program policies and operations does not create, or have the potential to create, a disproportionate negative impact, or pose undue barriers, to any particular group(s) (e.g., individuals of a particular racial/ethnic group, sexual orientation, gender, ability status, etc.). There is a process in place to assess existing and new policies to ensure do not create a disproportionate negative impact or pose undue barriers to equity and inclusion, on at least an annual basis.
Data Collection and Analysis	The Agency collects and reviews data and/or HMIS to better understand the pattern of program use for people of different races& ethnicities in its program, on at least an annual basis.
Staff and Board Diversity and Representation	The Agency has a process in place to assess whether agency staff and executive boards are racially, ethnically, culturally, and experientially, reflective of population(s) served on at least an annual basis. The Agency has a plan to hire staff that is culturally, ethnically, experientially, and linguistically reflective of the population served.
Decision Making and Engagement	Population(s) served by the Agency are reflected in decision making and planning bodies within the Agency.

Additional Resources on Racial Equity and Homelessness

- National Alliance to End Homelessness Racial Equity Network Toolkit
<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/the-alliances-racial-equity-network-toolkit/>
- HUD Exchange – Racial Equity Toolkit: Applying A Racial Equity Lens to Your Organization

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<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/racial-equity/#policies-culture-and-community>

- HUD Exchange - Data Equity
<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/racial-equity/#data>

HOUSING FIRST

The following items are designed to monitor each projects' adherence to the housing first philosophy. Projects identifying the use of a Housing First framework in their HUD CoC application shall be monitored on how the project integrates Housing First principles into project operation. All programs are strongly encouraged to review the materials referenced below to ensure a full understanding of housing first principles and to assess program standards in relation to those principles.

Additional Resources on Housing First:

- HUD Exchange – Housing First in Permanent Supportive Housing Brief
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-First-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Brief.pdf>
- United States Interagency Council on Homelessness – Housing First Checklist
https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Housing_First_Checklist_FINAL.pdf
- HUD Exchange – Housing First Assessment Tool
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5294/housing-first-assessment-tool/>

Housing First in Project Access

Standard	Definition/Evidence
Projects are low barrier	Admission to projects is not contingent on pre-requisites such as abstinence of substances, minimum income requirements, health or mental health history, medication adherence, age, criminal justice history, financial history, completion of treatment, participation in services, "housing readiness", history or occurrence of victimization, survivor of sexual assault or an affiliated person of such a survivor or other unnecessary condition unless required by law or funding source

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Access regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status	Equal access is provided in accordance with the 2012 and 2016 Equal Access Rules, meaning that any project funded by HUD must ensure equal access for person regardless of one's sexual orientation or marital status, and in accordance with one's gender identify. Adult only households, regardless of marital status, should have equal access to projects (if these project types are not available within a CoC, the CoC should conduct an assessment to determine if these project types are needed and work with providers to accommodate the need.)
Admission process is expedited with speed and efficiency	Projects have expedited admission process, to the greatest extent possible, including helping participants obtain documentation required by funding sources, as well as process to admit participants regardless of the status of their eligibility documentation whenever applicable

Housing First in Project Input

Standard	Definition/Evidence
Projects create regular, formal opportunities for participants offer input	Input is welcomed regarding the project's policies, processes, procedures, and practices. Opportunities include involvement in: quality assurance and evaluation processes, a participant leadership/advisory board, processes to formally communicate with landlords, the design of and participation in surveys and focus groups, planning social gatherings, integrating peer specialists and peer facilitated support groups to compliment professional services

Housing First in Project Lease arrangements

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Standard	Definition/Evidence
Leases are the same for participants as for other tenants	Leases do not have any provisions that would not be found in leases held by any other tenant in the property or building and is renewal per the participants' and owner's choice. People experiencing homelessness who receive help moving into permanent housing should have leases that confer the full rights, responsibilities, and legal protections under Federal, state and local housing laws. For transitional housing, there may be limitations on length of stay, but a lease/occupancy agreement should look like a lease that a person would have in the normal rental market
Measures are used to prevent eviction	Property or building management, with services support, incorporates a culture of eviction avoidance, reinforced through practices and policies that prevent lease violations and evictions amount participants, and evict participants only when they are a threat to self or others. Clear eviction appeal processes and due process is provided for all participants. Lease bifurcation is allowed so that a tenant or lawful occupant who is a victim of a criminal act of physical violence committed against them by another tenant or lawful occupant is not evicted, removed, or penalized if the other is evicted
Rent payment policies respond to tenants' needs	While tenants are accountable to the rental agreement, adjustments may be needed on a case by case basis. As necessary, participants are given special payment arrangements for arrears and/or assistance with financial management, including representative payee arrangements.

Housing First in Services

Standard	Definition/Evidence

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Projects promote participants choice in services	Participants are able to choose from an array of services. Services offered are housing focused and include the following areas of support: employment and income, childhood and education, community connection, and stabilization to maintain housing. These should be provided by linking to community-based services
Person Centered Planning is a guiding principle of service planning process	Person-centered planning is a guiding principle of the service planning process
Participant engagement is a core component of service delivery	Staff provide effective services by developing relationships with participants that provide immediate needs and safety, develop trust and common ground, making warm hand-offs to other mainstream service providers, and clearly explain staff roles. Engagement is regular, and relationships are developed over time.
Services are culturally appropriate with translation services available as needed	Project staff are sensitive to and support the cultural aspects of diverse households. Wherever possible, staff demographics reflect the participant population they service in order to provide appropriate, culturally-specific services. Transition services are provided when needed to ensure full comprehension of the project. Projects that serve families with children should have family-friendly rules that allow for different schedules based on work and school hours and have services that allow parents to participate in activities without having to constantly supervise their children themselves (i.e. can use the bathroom or take a shower without their children being in the bathroom with them)
Staff are training in clinical and nonclinical strategies	Services support a participant's ability to obtain and retain housing regardless of changes in behavior. Services are informed by a harm-reduction philosophy, such as recognizing that substance use and addiction are a part

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(including harm reduction, motivational interviewing, traumainformed approaches, strength-based)	of some participants' lives. Participants are engaged in non-judgmental communication regarding their behavior and are offered education regarding how to avoid risky behaviors and engage in safer practices.
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Housing First in Housing Provision

Standard	Definition/Evidence
Housing is not dependent on participation in services	Participation in permanent and temporary housing settings, as well as crisis settings such as emergency shelter, is not contingent on participating in supportive services or demonstration of progress made on a service plan. Services must be offered by staff, but are voluntary for participants

Substance use is not a reason for termination	Participants are only terminated from the project for violations of the lease or occupancy agreements, as applicable. Occupancy agreements or an addendum to the lease do not include conditions around substance use or participation in services. If the project is a recovery housing model focused on people who are in early recovery from drugs or alcohol (as outlined in HUD's Recovery housing brief), different standards related to use and subsequent offer of treatment may apply.
The rules and regulations of the project are	Project staff have realistic expectations and policies. Rules and regulations are designed to support safe and stable communities and should never interfere with life in the community. Participants have access to the project at all hours (except for nightly in and out shelter) and accommodation is made for pets

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centered on
participants' rights