

Open session for questions regarding the
Request for Expression of Interest from Qualified Agencies
For the 2020 COVID CARES Housing Program (CCHP)
Monday, July 6, 2020
2-3:30 p.m.

Application available on the City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department's website (<https://houstontx.gov/housing/rfp.html>) and on the Harris County Community Services Department's website (<https://csd.harriscountytexas.gov/Pages/FundingOpportunities.aspx>).

- Panelists:
 - Melody Barr, City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department
 - Jared Briggs, Harris County Community Services Department
 - Ana Rausch, Coalition for the Homeless
 - Michael Nichols, Coalition for the Homeless
- Ana: Review of 3 Main Components (i.e., Bridge to Permanent Supportive Housing [PSH], Rapid Rehousing [RRH], and Diversion)
- Question: **Nonprofit youth program**, if I work with young adults, aging out of CPS, can I participate in the diversion program?
 - Answer: Yes, diversion is intended to serve all populations and programs.
- Question: Do I need to be **registered with The Way Home** to receive funding?
 - Answer: Any organization awarded funding must coordinate with The Way Home CoC.
 - An agency does not have to currently be a Way Home partner to apply. Funds awarded are submit to agency becoming a HMIS user and Way Home partner.
- Question: I have a **group home/halfway house**, will I qualify for funding?
 - Answer: Transitional housing will not be considered for funding, as part of this initiative.
- What about **jailed inmates who are unhoused**?
 - A person is considered homeless if he or she is being discharged from an institution where he or she has been a resident for 90 days or less and the person resided in a shelter (but not transitional housing) or place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entering that institution.
 - Those who are homeless would be eligible for assistance under this program.
- What is considered a **Qualified Agency**?
 - Nonprofit organization, agrees to become a partner with the Way Home, participates in HMIS and coordinated entry system (when applicable).
- **Family reunification** related to diversion, since The Way Home only works with those over 18, can this be used for youth under 18 who have been kicked out of home?
 - Referrals must be made via coordinated access (CA), which does not assess minors.
- **Domestic Violence Agencies**, is there a possibility to collaborate in application process?
 - We encourage collaboration and when an agency decides to do so, lead agency puts forth the letter of interest. Collaborative partners should be clearly identified and their role/contributions to the proposed project stated. Include a project organizational chart as an attachment.

- How were the **needs of DV providers** incorporated into this? Clients don't quite meet the definition of chronically homeless. Was the need for PSH inclusive of DV survivors?
 - The system mapping (i.e., evaluation of available resources and gap identification) before COVID incorporated data from the DV system as well as the general CoC system. Resources gaps for families fall into the RRH category.
 - The CCHP doesn't specifically call out sub populations, but sub populations are not excluded from applying but must meet the definition of homelessness and be referred by coordinated access.
 - For people actively fleeing DV, it is recommended that they work through a DV program for safety; however, anyone can be accessed for these programs.
- **RRH – will recipients have to follow RRH business rules** or will each agency make own rules?
 - Yes, business rules and Policies and Procedures must be followed for the RRH program; there will be temporary addendums regarding COVID-19/CARES activities.
- Will there be a CMI?
 - Not for this program.
- Does the COVID CARES Housing Plan (CCHP) include funding for transitional housing?
 - No, these funds are not for transitional housing
- **Can applicants expend funds for Ft. Bend County?**
 - Only City of Houston funds can be used for that portion of Fort Bend within the City of Houston. Harris County funding is restricted to within Harris County. Funds are specific to each jurisdiction per federal grant agreement.
- **Will a mental health (MH) component be authorized?**
 - Harris Center is developing a MH component for those participating in the CCHP – discussions are underway and being mapped out.
 - Applicants can include licensed clinicians in their budgets as part of case management.
- If we have **not received funds before**, can this be opened to us?
 - There is no requirement that an agency must have received funding previously. We encourage all to apply. Organizations should meet eligibility and service area requirements.
- How does the **reimbursement process** work, and how long will it take?
 - County asks for 120 days of operating capital – from invoice to payment is 30 to 60 days, Court approval is required for payment.
 - City asks for 90 days of working capital or line of credit (25% of grant funds applied for), and the organization's board needs to certify this funding is available.
- How will **prioritization** work (e.g., how decide who gets housed first)?
 - All participants must go through coordinated access. During the assessment, there is housing prioritization tool that gauges vulnerability. That tool assigns a vulnerability score. They are assigned to next opening based on that score, regardless of family size (i.e., individual, family, youth).
- **Wait lists and vulnerability factor:** How will we determine who gets rapid rehousing vs. bridge to permanent supportive housing?
 - Based on vulnerability index score. Those who score 10-17 are eligible for RRH; anyone above that will go to Bridge (with chronically homeless scoring the highest, at the top of the list).

- **Bridge to PSH and turnover:** We have a lot of project-based properties. If someone is in an apartment in the community, would they have to physically relocate when a PSH slot becomes available?
 - Referrals will be made into PSH slots directly, if available, on day 1.
 - Actual physical move is last resort; move/transfer should be on-paper/HMIS only so that participants can remain in place.
- **Could we apply to do move-in kits:** every time somebody moves, there is a cost even though we have the units in our inventory.
 - Part of the budget includes move-in baskets and furniture.
 - The Coalition will have to apply for those funds; they have not committed yet.
 - Funding for move-in kits and furniture will be from CFTH. The process for applying for those will be outlined once funds have been raised.
- We've developed an **org chart**. Would you like to see it? Would it count toward the page limitation or as an attachment?
 - Yes, please share as an attachment. It will not count toward your page limit.
- Our budget includes some **clinicians** – now it seems like another entity would provide system-wide services, should we include or are they provided separately?
 - We would like to see what is offered in your proposal. If not needed, that would not be funded. Current plan includes mental health services to be provided by the Harris Center for IDD.
 - We will examine everything in terms of what best meets need of the plan/system.
- We will include **navigators**, is there any thought to a systemwide navigation entity?
 - It is something that has been talked about but has been difficult in system to roll out.
 - This initial request for expression of interest is just to 'get the ball rolling' and there will be additional negotiations and documents needed as part of the contracting.
- Is this the **last opportunity** to turn in paperwork?
 - No. Initial deadline is Friday, July 10, but this is a rolling application. We will continue to receive applications, and City and County websites will be updated regarding next deadline. Process will continue until system/plan needs met and/or available funding allocated.
- Have any of the **funds already been allocated**?
 - No.
- We do **street outreach**. Would we qualify to serve families?
 - There is not a line item for street outreach in the CCHP; there is funding for navigation which will help when they exit streets.
 - Street outreach will be broadened to unincorporated areas of Harris County. Coalition will make sure outreach teams are going to hotspots that have been made known to us. Will make sure individuals will be assessed for housing.
 - All eligible households must be served with these funds, not just families.
- Where is **new housing coming from to house 5,000**?
 - We are creating several new positions at the Coalition to foster connections with landlords.
 - These contacts will be shared directly with whoever is contracted to provide services.
- Will any funds look at **something new for housing instead of just rental**?

- All rentals. No new construction. We will have a landlord recruitment strategy including incentive fees.
- We are a small nonprofit; we do case management. I know you are **hiring more staff to do landlord engagement**, would each agency be paired with staff at CFTH, or do we apply for those funds ourselves?
 - Landlord engagement is for the system. Navigation will be for entire program, not specific to the entity providing rent and case management.
- Can we add **move-in kits**?
 - Funding for move-in kits and furniture will be from CFTH. The process for applying for those will be outlined once funds have been raised.
- Where do we find the **applications**?
 - On the City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department's website (<https://houstontx.gov/housing/rfp.html>) and on the Harris County Community Services Department's website (<https://csd.harriscountytexas.gov/Pages/FundingOpportunities.aspx>).
- **12 months of rent paid and then what happens?** Do we help them get a job?
 - That is part of case management; this funding is short-lived, only 12 months. Looking to serve those we have not traditionally served in the past.
 - It's not an automatic 12 months: provided in 3-month intervals based on a housing plan.
 - Expectation is that they will be able to self-sustain after 12 months.
- Will **diversion** be funded for 24 months?
 - Diversion for households is as short as possible (generally no more than 3 months).
 - However, intent is to have diversion option open for 24 months of the CCRH program.
- **Vacancies at congregate site projects now** – how does the CCHP help us to fill the vacant units we have in SROs (single room occupancies) in a faster way? There isn't a lack of clients or navigation.
 - If we can go through some of the high-barrier chronically homeless, we may have folks on the list who will have greater interest in the units.
- Can an agency **change some of its transitional housing (TH) temporarily**?
 - No. If a client is placed and wants to remain, they should be able to permanently stay.
 - Units would need to remain RRH or PSH indefinitely to continue to house those clients who want to stay.
- Was there a separate NOFA for domestic violence agencies? **Should DV agencies still apply for this money?**
 - Reference was to the \$3.1 M awarded to DV as part of the regular annual NOFA from HUD.
 - DV agencies may apply for CCHP funds.
- How does **DV status affect vulnerability score**?
 - Those who are fleeing DV go through a separate coordinated access process.
- How will **RRH locations** be found for each program applicant?
 - Navigators will help clients find units that are available to that client.
- Will **virtual CM** be allowed, to help prevent the spread of Covid-19?
 - Homeless populations do not have a lot of access to streaming technology. It is expected case management will occur however it can.

- We are open to unique proposals that will give a unique access option.
 - We are hoping to enhance phone assessment, as well.
- What will happen for someone who **has been on the waitlist** for six months?
 - If they are on CE waitlist, they probably will be housed through the CCHP.
 - You may check with Scot Moore at the CFTH for their status.
- How is it determined if **funding comes from city or county?**
 - Based on geographic service area.
 - Some funding is divided up by category.
- Does this apply for **rental and utility deposits?**
 - CFTH is looking to apply for private funds, for rental deposits to allow for more flexibility.
 - Utility deposits would not be covered.
- Who's working on **housing stock?**
 - Landlord engagement teams. We're hoping to secure landlord engagement fees as an incentive.
- Are there **average rental rates for different housing types?**
 - This information is available on the HUD website:
https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2020_code/select_Geography.ondn
- How will we **prioritize families for diversion?**
 - Through coordinated access and vulnerability scores. We have convened a Diversion Workgroup to determine how it will be used for our community and define the scope.
 - Note: Diversion is different than homelessness prevention. ESG funds are meant to transition people out of homelessness specifically.
- **Navigation:** can we serve only our clients, or do we have to do systemwide?
 - This is a system-wide project, so it will all go through coordinated access. If it is your client, they would still need to be referred from coordinated access waitlist.