



# A Guide to Reviewing Domestic Violence Transitional Housing Projects within the CoC Competition

Housing programs for victims of domestic violence are a critical component of a comprehensive homelessness service system. As outlined in a recent [HUD In Focus](#) message, projects serving victims and survivors of domestic violence, including transitional housing projects, should have a place in a community's system, as long as they meet a need in the community, can show positive safety- and housing-related outcomes, and allow for participant choice in electing to participate in the project.

This guide was designed to help Continuums of Care (CoCs) review domestic violence transitional housing project applications during the CoC program competition. While CoCs have full discretion in designing their ranking processes, the guide can help CoCs:

- Understand the outcomes, structure, and services of domestic violence transitional housing projects
- Make decisions on how to rank these projects in the CoC program competition
- Navigate and overcome challenges in the ranking process

Please note that while this guide is useful for the CoC competition, it is insufficient to fully evaluate the efficacy of domestic violence transitional housing projects. Other evaluation tools are available through the [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#). This guide was also not designed to assess emergency domestic violence shelters, rapid re-housing projects, or other types of housing projects. CoCs with questions regarding those types of projects are encouraged to contact HUD through the [Ask A Question](#) section on the HUD Exchange.

## Guide to Reviewing Domestic Violence Transitional Housing Projects

Transitional housing projects for victims of domestic violence are designed to accommodate the unique safety concerns and barriers to housing stability that victims often face. As CoCs engage these projects, they should consider how the projects contribute to the homelessness service system's overall response to their community's needs. CoCs are also encouraged to consider how these projects contribute to ensuring they have good geographic coverage and whether they offer services that are not otherwise readily available in the geographic area.

It is important to note that domestic violence transitional housing projects may have rates of recidivism that are higher than average, as well as longer-than-average lengths of stay. This does not necessarily reflect the quality or efficacy of the services provided, but rather reflects the dynamics of domestic violence and the scope of the challenges victims may face.

### Assessing Outcomes

The questions below are designed to help CoCs assess the performance of transitional housing projects for victims of domestic violence, based on outcomes related to safety and housing stability. These metrics do not correspond to application questions, but are intended to help inform CoCs' ranking processes. They are tailored to this population and aren't appropriate for projects that serve other types of households.

### **1. What percentage of participants report a lower perceived risk of violence upon exit from the program?**

This can be measured through exit surveys conducted by the project. An average of 88% of participants indicate a lower perceived risk of violence upon exiting transitional housing projects funded under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) by the Department of Justice. If CoCs are not satisfied with a project's data, they are encouraged to ask projects for comprehensive plans to improve this metric. If this metric is not measured, CoCs are encouraged to integrate it (or other appropriate measures of participant safety) into future planning. This information can be integrated into responses related to project and decision-making processes in the CoC application.

### **2. What percentage of participants exit to the permanent housing of their choice?**

On average, transitional housing projects funded through VAWA have a 74% rate of exit to permanent housing of the participants' choice. If CoCs are not satisfied with a project's data, they are encouraged to request comprehensive plans to improve this metric. This information can be integrated into responses to section 5.d. in the CoC application.

CoCs should recognize local challenges or obstacles to connecting participants to the permanent housing of their choice. It may be helpful to explore these metrics to understand how projects are measuring this outcome: whether they are indicating the percentage of participants who exited to their first choice of permanent housing; or whether they are only indicating that participants were able to make a choice in selecting permanent housing.

### **3. What percentage of participants report that they are stably housed in permanent housing one year after exit from the program?**

CoCs may want to request information on the project's safety and confidentiality practices to meet the requirements outlined in the Violence Against Women Act, which can be integrated into responses to section 5.d. in the CoC application. CoCs should note that most projects will not collect this data due to safety and anonymity concerns. Domestic violence programs are statutorily prohibited from participating in HMIS; therefore, collecting this data requires following up directly with participants who may not be in a situation where it is safe or feasible for project staff to contact them. These challenges can also be articulated in section 5.d in the CoC application.

## **Additional Metrics**

### **4. What is the average length of stay in the program?**

Although many domestic violence survivors can exit transitional housing in 6 months or less, others may need up to 24 months to safely access permanent housing and achieve stability. Projects should not be penalized for longer lengths of stay.<sup>1</sup>

These increased lengths of stay may impact the CoC's overall metrics on "length of time homeless," but CoCs are encouraged to articulate this in their application and demonstrate that these numbers are based on an identified need in the community, the unique safety concerns and other needs of survivors, and the project's

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<sup>1</sup> CoCs should note that projects that receive funding as grantees under the Violence Against Women Act through the Department of Justice are required to offer at least six months of housing or housing assistance.

ability to connect participants to the safe, permanent housing of their choice. It can also be helpful to note that while individuals in transitional housing are classified as “homeless,” they may be living in housing environments that are similar to the environments provided through permanent housing or rapid re-housing programs, and may also be able to transition in place. This information can be integrated into responses to section 5.c. in the CoC application.

**5. What is the average time needed to connect participants to permanent housing?**

Responses will vary greatly but should reflect strategies and processes that account for safety and security concerns, as well as community-specific factors. CoCs may inquire as to how the program works to reduce this length of time. It should be noted that permanent housing is defined by HUD as community-based housing without a designated length of stay, and includes both permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing. This information can be integrated into responses to section 6.b(2) in the CoC application.

**6. What percentage of participants are children, and what services are offered for children?**

Services can include child care, children’s support groups, educational advocacy, parenting supports, child therapy, etc. This information can be integrated into responses to section 6.b(1) in the CoC application.

**Project Structure and Services**

**7. What services and programs does the project provide that are specific to the needs of survivors of domestic violence?**

This information should be included in narrative responses in the CoC application.

**8. What, if any, supportive services are offered after the survivor has entered permanent housing and/or exited the program?**

This information can be integrated into responses to section 5.c. in the CoC application.

**9. How does the program seek to ensure rapid placement into permanent housing for families and individuals while addressing their safety concerns?**

This information can be integrated into responses to section 1.g. in the CoC application.

**10. How does the program ensure participants have autonomy and agency in decision-making?**

This is primarily demonstrated by not requiring participation in services and not requiring additional rules beyond what would be included in rapid re-housing or other housing subsidy programs or rental agreements. This information can be integrated into narrative components of the CoC’s application, especially those detailing the CoC’s adoption of a Housing First approach.

**11. Has the project adopted a Housing First orientation and does it have a low barrier to entry?**

This is primarily demonstrated by entry and intake processes that do not screen applicants out due to factors such as employment, income, drug or alcohol use, criminal history, or other factors. This information can be integrated into narrative components of the CoC’s application, particularly in sections 1.g and 6.b.(2).

**12. How does the project implement trauma-informed practices?**

This information can be integrated into responses to section 1.g. in the CoC application.

**13. What services or programs are offered to increase participants' access to employment and benefits?**

This can include services offered through partnerships with other organizations. CoCs may also ask what strategies and services are tailored to the needs of survivors of domestic violence and address issues or dangers posed by abusers. This information can be integrated into narrative responses throughout the application and specifically in response to section 5.f.

**14. What, if any, outreach and prevention strategies does the project leverage to prevent households from experiencing homelessness for the first time?**

Examples of such strategies include, but are not limited to, connecting individuals and families to mainstream supports like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, conducting domestic violence safety planning, providing housing counseling and resources such as moving expenses or first-month's rent, offering court and legal advocacy, including assistance securing orders of protection, participating in lethality assessment projects and implementing processes to protect victims from abusers, and other tailored or mainstream prevention efforts.

The project may provide information about partnerships with other domestic violence programs, including emergency shelters, to conduct outreach and prevention. This information can be integrated into narrative responses throughout the application and specifically in response to section 5.b.

**15. How does the project meet the diverse needs of marginalized populations<sup>2</sup> in the community?**

Projects should have a plan to meet the diverse needs of the community to the best of their ability. This information can be integrated into narrative responses throughout the application.

**Data****16. How does the project share aggregate data from its database with the CoC, and what is the project's process to attain participants' informed consent to be included in this database?**

This information can be integrated into responses to section 3.d. Note that some projects have not been able to secure funding for a database comparable to HMIS and that CoC funding could be used to build such a database.

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<sup>2</sup> "Marginalized populations" refers to populations who face barriers in accessing and using community supports and services, including but not limited to populations who are marginalized because of religion, ability or disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, racial and ethnic populations, and populations underserved because of special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, citizenship status, or age).