



## PHA GUIDE TO PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTINUUM OF CARE AND OTHER COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

### Background

A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a local planning body for a defined geographic area that is responsible for establishing and operating a system to prevent and end homelessness for that area and to apply for grants under HUD’s CoC Program annual grant competition.

CoC planning is a critical component of a community’s efforts to end homelessness and provides communities with an opportunity to step back, critically assess capacity, and develop solutions to move homeless people toward permanent housing. It is also a tool for communities to develop a common vision and a set of common goals around ending homelessness.

CoC planning ideally involves stakeholders outside of the traditional homeless system. CoCs help educate these stakeholders and get them to “buy-in” and become part of the solution. A CoC is composed of representatives from various types of organizations including nonprofit homeless service providers, faith-based organizations, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, and school districts.

Planning and decision making are driven by a review of Homelessness Management Information Systems (HMIS) data, which provide information on the prevalence, characteristics, and patterns of homelessness in a local community. Each CoC designates an organization, known as the “HMIS Lead,” to oversee and manage HMIS data. PHAs are strongly encouraged to participate in CoC planning processes and stakeholder meetings.

PHAs should also participate in other forms of collaborative planning, such as in implementation of local plans to end homelessness and in the development of the local consolidated plan, which is designed to help states and local jurisdictions assess their affordable housing and community development needs and market conditions, and to make data-driven, place-based investment

decisions. The consolidated planning process serves as the framework for a community-wide dialogue to identify housing and community development priorities.

Active participation in these collaborative planning processes can help PHAs better assess the housing needs within the community and can help PHAs develop community [partnerships](#) that will assist with implementing housing assistance for people experiencing homelessness.

### Where Can PHAs Do This?

All PHAs are encouraged to participate in collaborative planning efforts and to explore partnership opportunities with their local CoC. To find contact information for the CoC in which your PHA is located please visit the [Continuum of Care Contacts page](#).

### Who Can PHAs Assist?

Collaborative planning is applicable to all populations, families with children, Veterans, youth, and other individuals who are chronically homeless, homeless, or at risk of homelessness in any community.

### Additional Resource

[HUD's Homelessness Resource Exchange](#) has contact information for the lead CoC agency in each community.

#### Examples

- **The Fresno (CA) Housing Authority** is the Collaborative Applicant designee for the local Continuum of Care, the Homeless Management Information System Administrator, the lead agency for Project P4 (the local 100,000 Homes campaign) and an active partner to [Fresno First Steps Home](#), the city-sponsored non-profit organization that has been formed to raise money and provide funding to support implementation of best practices and coordinated efforts to address homelessness. Through this participation the housing authority has committed its own resources and leveraged other funding opportunities and service partnerships to house hundreds of people who had been living in city encampments. Three new permanent supportive housing developments highlight a developer/ property management/ support services partnership between the Housing Authority and the Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health.

### Examples (continued)

- The **Loudoun County Virginia PHA** is part of the county's continuum of care. The PHA provides the CoC with space and facilitation for monthly meetings, a coordinator, and administrative support. Through the CoC, the PHA has strengthened working relationships with nonprofit organizations that serve people experiencing homelessness. The PHA has also established a waiting list preference for homeless applicants as a direct result of its collaboration with community organizations.
- **MaineHousing** provides funding for staff to convene and support the Continuum of Care. The housing authority is the collaborative applicant and administrative arm of the CoC, and also the lead agency for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Housing authority staff provide leadership and support to engage community partners in using HMIS and participating in the Point in Time (PIT) Count. MaineHousing also administers other sources of funding for housing programs. For more than a decade, the agency has been making significant investments in permanent supportive housing for people who are experiencing homelessness. These investments are aligned with the goals and priorities established by the CoC and *Maine's Plan to End & Prevent Homelessness*.
- The executive director of the **Housing Authority of the City of Dallas, Texas** is on the board of the metro Dallas CoC, and she participates in regional planning efforts related to ending homelessness. Participation in collaborative planning with other community organizations has informed the housing authority's decisions to expand programs and partnerships to facilitate access to permanent housing for homeless people, and to modify tenant screening policies to reduce barriers to housing assistance for persons experiencing homelessness. The housing authority's board has agreed to dedicate project-based housing vouchers to help develop permanent supportive housing for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness.