



City of Binghamton

Emergency Solutions Grants Program

Written Standards

Federal Administrative Agency

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
CFDA # 14.231: Emergency Solutions Grants Program

Local Program Administrator

City of Binghamton
Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development

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Written Standards for Provision of Emergency Solutions Grant Assistance

The City of Binghamton has developed its ESG written standards based upon standards established under its Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP). The City has proposed to work with the CoC to develop common forms, recordkeeping policies, and evaluation tools in order to – 1)enhance compliance amongst all HUD homeless funding streams; 2)facilitate audits of ESG/CoC funded programs; and 3)provide common outcome data and measurable results.

ESG standards have been scaled down in comparison to HPRP since ESG funding is significantly less than HPRP and requires enhanced targeting of homeless populations and services. These standards are not static and will be changed to address the current conditions of our community. It will be imperative for the City and CoC partners to work together to establish policies, develop creative programming and pursue funding sources that will address the needs to transition populations from vulnerability to self sufficiency.

- a. Standard policies and procedures for evaluating individuals' and families' eligibility for assistance under Emergency Solutions Grant

Individuals and families may access ESG funding through one of three entry points:

1. By calling the United Way's 211 service to be referred to the City's designated housing support service provider;
2. By making an appointment with a case manager at the City's designated housing support service provider; or
3. By receiving a third party referral to the City's designated housing support service provider from an emergency shelter, transitional living program, or other CoC participating agency serving persons residing in the City of Binghamton.

The City's designated housing support service provider will complete a pre-screening form with the client. If potential eligibility is established, then the case manager will ask if the client has access to any other support networks or mainstream benefits (i.e., public assistance, social security, unemployment, etc.). Clients who have not accessed these mainstream benefits will be required to go to the mainstream provider first to determine eligibility for benefits prior to meeting with the case manager. Upon meeting with the case manager, clients will be required to complete a comprehensive client intake form, bring proof of benefits documentation, and other supporting documentation (i.e., income, lease, eviction notices, etc.) to verify housing status and client eligibility. A common client intake form will be developed in coordination with CoC.

The initial screening will determine:

1. Client has no other support networks or resources to obtain/retain permanent housing.
2. If the combined household income is below 30% AMI of HUD's annual income limits and if the household has assets that exceed the program's asset limit;
3. If the household's living situation qualifies as either literally homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness;
4. If households that qualify as at-risk of homelessness have one or more additional risk factors which make shelter entry more likely if not assisted. These factors include persons with eviction notices, living currently in a place in which they do not hold a lease, such as doubled up with family or friends, in a hotel/motel or in an institutional setting.

The initial screening also collects certain basic demographic information on the household (HMIS universal data elements) and is used to help qualify the household for other services and to gather information on those seeking assistance for analysis and program refinement.

Households determined initially eligible will receive a full assessment of housing barriers and household resources. Households may be screened out at this point if: 1) the household appears to have other resources/housing opportunities that it can access to avoid homelessness, or 2) the household has very high or multiple barriers to re-housing and can be referred to another program that would better suit client's housing situation over the long-term.

b. Policies and procedures for coordination among providers

1. The primary coordinative body for implementation of the ESG program will begin with the Broome County Continuum of Care/Homeless Coalition. The Coalition typically meets monthly and has a diverse membership of housing service providers, support service providers, government agencies, and private/public organizations. The Coalition also hosts guest speakers to discuss new initiatives or to address concerns raised by the Continuum and/or program participants. The Continuum also has subcommittees to spearhead special initiatives such as drafting policies, forms and evaluation tools for review by the membership and approval of the Board. The Continuum will be consulted to identify annual ESG funding

priorities, recommend programs that meet funding priorities, and participate in audits to help evaluate ESG agency performance.

2. The City's designated housing support service provider(s) will coordinate with referral agencies, such as the United Way, to link clients in need of housing assistance to other services and shelters.
3. The City will maintain its working relationship with the Broome County Department of Social Services. This agency provides a major mainstream benefit resource for long-term housing stability.
4. The City's designated housing support service provider(s) must have a strong knowledge and working relationship with local social service agencies, employment centers, shelter providers and supportive service programs (i.e., food pantries, transportation, health care, daycare, medical, legal, credit counseling, etc.).
5. The designated housing support service provider(s) must have a strong knowledge and working relationship with other agencies targeting housing services for homeless/low-income families including but not limited to Shelter Plus Care, Supportive Housing Program, Homeless Housing and Assistance Program, Veterans Assistance and Supportive Housing Program, Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects, Community Housing Development Organizations, and Section 8.

c. Policies and procedures for which families will receive prevention or rapid re-housing

Homeless Prevention

Eligible clients for homeless prevention services are individuals or families meeting the definition of at-risk of homeless under 24 CFR576.2 with household incomes below 30% AMI of HUD's annual income limits. Clients receiving homeless prevention assistance must provide case managers with information and/or documentation in order to demonstrate that they have no other persons/support systems to help them with maintaining their current home, or prevent them from entering a shelter. Case managers must maintain documentation that demonstrates they connected the client with other mainstream programs to help client sustain permanent housing. Clients receiving more than one month of financial assistance must develop an individual service plan in consultation with the case manager. The case manager must maintain documentation of efforts to help obtain employment and/or employment readiness training for client and/or persons living in client's household who are able to enter the workforce.

The City has established the following priority populations of homeless prevention clients. These priorities have been established because the population is deemed to have a higher probability of being successfully served, or there is a clear systems delivery gap for a particular population. It should be noted that these priorities are not meant to preclude other eligible persons from receiving assistance.

- Unaccompanied youth under age 18
- Client has a written eviction notice from landlord or family/friend stating client must vacate premises within 21 days from the date of application for assistance, no subsequent residence has been identified, and no other support systems are available to help client avoid homelessness.
- Client is living in a hotel or motel that is self-paid and has a lease with a move in date within 30 days from the date of application for assistance.

Rapid Re-housing

Eligible clients for rapid re-housing services are individuals or families meeting the definition of homelessness under 24 CFR576.2. In order to ensure ESG funds are the most appropriate source of funding, case managers must document client's readiness to reside in permanent housing (low demand for housing support services). Clients approved for rapid re-housing services must find a unit that meets rent reasonableness standards, does not exceed HUD's Fair Market Rent, and has a certificate of compliance from the City's Code Department within 30 days of client's approval date for services. Clients receiving more than one month of financial assistance must develop an individual service plan in consultation with the case manager. The case manager must maintain documentation of efforts to help obtain employment and/or employment readiness training for client and/or persons living in client's household who are able to enter the workforce.

The City has established the following priority populations of rapid re-housing clients. These priorities have been established because the population is deemed to have a higher probability of being successfully served, there is a clear systems delivery gap for a particular population, and it will enhance the Continuum's goal of quickly transitioning homeless persons from shelters to permanent housing. Again it should be noted that these priorities are not meant to preclude other eligible persons from receiving assistance.

- Individual or family living on the street or in an emergency shelter
- Unaccompanied youth under age 18
- Client has a written eviction notice from landlord or family/friend stating client must vacate premises within 14 days from the date of application for assistance,

no subsequent residence has been identified, and no other support systems are available to help client avoid homelessness

- Individual or family fleeing domestic violence, and no other support systems are available to help client avoid homelessness

d. Standards for determining share of rent and utilities

ESG funding will be used as last resort, least amount of assistance, least amount of time. ESG funds will neither be used to supplant other available resources to the client, nor will ESG funds be used to duplicate a resource provided in the same time period for the same cost type at the time of client requesting ESG assistance. Case managers will have to develop a household budget and identify the amount of ESG funds needed to help client maintain permanent housing. For clients receiving ongoing financial assistance, the case manager must develop a plan with the client to contribute up to 30% of household income towards ESG assisted activity. Case managers must obtain proof of payment from client and verify that client payment was received by the third party prior to paying out ESG funds.

Utility payments will be made for eligible persons with a utility shut off notice. Case managers must document that the utility provider's acceptance of payment will guarantee the client's utility service for at least one billing cycle.

e. Standards for determining how long a program participant is assisted

Due to the limited resources of the ESG program, the maximum period for which clients can receive financial services is 6 months in any given year. To maximize client potential to maintain housing, case managers are required to have monthly contact with clients to document client efforts and accomplishments. Case managers have the flexibility to schedule on-site appointments as necessary to ensure client remains accountable with program expectations.

f. Standards for the type, amount and duration of stabilization services

Due to the limited resources of the ESG program, limitations of services and financial assistance have been established that are more stringent than federal guidelines.

Security Deposits

- Limited to one month's rent
- Limited to one time assistance in any given year for clients in same household
- Agency should exercise due diligence in recovering security deposit funds owed for any active client relocating from an ESG assisted unit

Utility Payments

- Utility payments (including arrears) will be limited to three months per program participant, per utility service, within a 1 year period.

Rental Assistance

- Short-term rental assistance is limited to up to 3 months in any given year
- Medium term rental assistance is limited to up to 6 months in any given year
- Rental arrears is limited to a one-time payment not to exceed 3 months; landlord must waive late fees as a condition of accepting ESG assistance
- Rental assistance (including arrears) will be limited to six months within a 1 year period.
- Rental assistance is limited to the tenant's portion of the rent
- Rental assistance can only be provided if the rent is within fair market value and complies with rent reasonableness standard. In establishing rent reasonableness case managers will be required to determine whether client's rent is reasonable in comparison to rent for other comparable unassisted units. Factors to be considered include:

(a) The location, quality, size, unit type, and age of the assisted unit; and

(b) Any amenities, housing services, maintenance and utilities to be provided by the landlord in accordance with the lease.

Security deposits, utility payments and rental assistance cannot be paid until the case manager obtains written MOU of landlord/utility provider's acceptance of payment, a written lease/occupancy agreement clearly denoting names of tenants, move-in date, occupancy terms, expiration date and costs payable by tenant. All payments must be payable to reputable and verifiable third parties. Under no circumstances can payment be made directly to clients.

The maximum amount of financial assistance provided to persons in the same household is \$1,000 during a 1 year period.

The City reserves the right to consider cases that may require exception(s) to the above standards. Such cases will require case managers written explanation of client circumstances, and a justification regarding the amount of ESG funds requested, the duration for which ESG funds will be provided to client, and how approving the exception will help the client achieve permanent housing and stability.

Performance Standards

The City's definition of a successful outcome is:

Homeless Prevention – Client avoided homelessness and maintained permanent housing for at least six months from date of last assistance

Rapid Re-housing – Client obtained permanent housing within 30 days from the date of approval and maintained permanent housing for at least six months from date of last assistance

To this end, the following performance standards have been established for the ESG program:

- Emergency shelter documents an average length of stay of less than 30 days
- At least 60% of emergency shelter clients are successfully transitioned to permanent housing units
- At least 60% of clients receiving street outreach services will access shelter
- At least 60% of rapid re-housing clients will obtain and maintain permanent housing
- At least 60% of homeless prevention clients will maintain permanent housing
- HMIS data quality reports will achieve an accuracy reporting rate of at least 90%
- Subrecipients expend 100% of ESG award and document verifiable eligible matching source(s)