

Slide 1

Placeholder for 5-10 seconds. – DO NOT READ

Slide 2 – Continuum of Care Program Funding

- Welcome and thank you for joining us for Part five of Violence Free Minnesota's Housing 101 for Victim Service Providers Series, entitled Continuum of Care Program Funding. My name is Bree Adams Bill. I am a Program Director for Praxis International and I will be your host for this session.
- This session will be most relevant for agency leaders, grant writers, and others involved with funding and programmatic decisions for your victim service provider agency, although advocates and direct service providers interested in this topic will also find it to be helpful. A lot of the information in this session has been pulled directly from publicly available resources which will be noted in our resource page for this series on our website.
- In the last session of this series, we discussed the Continuum of Care, or CoC, who is involved, what they do, and their role in providing affordable housing. In this session we will outline CoC Program Funding and the annual competitive application process.

This overview will:

- Provide foundational knowledge on the CoC funding opportunities.
- Provide information that will help victim service providers, VSPs, consider whether CoC Program funding may be a good match for their agency;
- And introduce some basic vocabulary and concepts that will help programs more easily engage with their CoC about funding opportunities and CoC requirements.
- If you are unfamiliar with the CoC, you might want to first view the previous session on the Continuum of Care Overview.

Slide 3 - Continuum of Care Program Funding: Process, Parameters and

Requirements

Let's begin with a brief overview of the Continuum of Care funding process and parameters.

Slide 4 - Continuum of Care (CoC) Program Funding

- As we have learned, the Continuum of Care Program, otherwise referred to as the CoC Program, is a federal program of the U.S. Department of Housing &

Urban Development, or HUD. It is a regional or local planning group to coordinate housing and services funding for unhoused families and individuals.

- According to HUD, the CoC is designed to promote community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. It promotes access to and effects utilization of mainstream programs by unhoused individuals and families with the intention to optimize self-sufficiency.
- The program is one of the main sources of HUD funding for local providers. HUD says its goal is to provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and state and local governments to quickly rehouse individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation connected with the experience of being unhoused.

Slide 5 -Continuum of Care (CoC) Program Funding Competition

HUD allocates a substantial amount of grant funding each year through Continuum of Care Program, or CoC Program, via a competitive application process.

- There are two main parts to the annual CoC Program funding competitive application process: a local competition and a national application process.
- The local competition is administered by each CoC, and
- The national application process is overseen by HUD directly.

The broad scope and basic requirements for this two-part application process are laid out in federal statute and regulations. HUD releases an annual Notice of Funding Opportunity, referred to as the NOFO, that provides specific guidance for that year's funding competition.

The NOFO includes detailed information such as that year's funding priorities, eligible activities, requirements for funding, the application submission process, and so on.

- HUD announces its funding priorities in the NOFO each year. These priorities shape HUD's decisions around where funding will be focused and how project applications will be scored.

In Fiscal Year 2023, the priorities included:

- Ending homelessness for all persons

- Using a Housing First approach
- Reducing unsheltered homelessness
- Improving System Performance
- Partnering with Housing, Health, and Service Agencies
- Racial Equity
- Improving Assistance to LGBTQ+ Individuals
- Inclusion and Engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness in local planning processes; and
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing

Slide 6 - Funding Allocation

Each year Congress appropriates money for Continuum of Care Program, or CoC Program, funding. In Fiscal Year 2023 the allocation was \$3.134 billion dollars.

This amount is allocated to cover all areas of CoC Program funding, including new projects, renewal projects, and project reallocations.

Minnesota's formula allocation is about \$38 million annually. Each CoC is eligible for an amount of funding based on factors such as CoC size and population,

specific need in each area, and so on. Funding levels for each CoC can vary considerably. In 2022 funding levels for CoCs in Minnesota varied from around \$500,000 to over \$14 million.

The funding allocation also includes certain areas of targeted funding called bonus funding, one of which is Domestic Violence Bonus funding. This is money set aside to support projects that specifically serve survivors.

Slide 7 - Eligible Fund Recipients

Eligible recipients for CoC program funding include Non-Profits, States, Local Governments, Public Housing Authorities, Tribes, and Tribally Designated Housing Entities. Victim service providers are obviously included in the list of eligible recipients.

Slide 8 - Eligible Project Types

- Although there are several eligible project types for Continuum of Care, or CoC, funding, HUD can choose to prioritize certain categories in its annual Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO. Each CoC can choose to further limit the types of programs they wish to prioritize in their local application process. These

models were described in more detail in Part 2 of this series, so I will only briefly touch on them here.

- The eligible project types most commonly included in the NOFO are:
- Permanent Supportive Housing, which is not time-limited and includes supportive services. These programs are for households in which at least one adult or child has a disability.
- Rapid Rehousing projects provide support services and rental assistance to help program participants move as rapidly as possible into permanent housing. Rental assistance and supportive services are time-limited, usually between 3-6 months, although some can be up to 24 months. Frequently, program supports taper off over the duration of the person's involvement in the program.
- Transitional housing is time-limited and intended to be a bridge from homelessness to permanent housing. HUD transitional housing is available for a maximum of 24 months, but the Minnesota Transitional Housing program is now available for up to 36 months. Transitional housing is generally paired with rapid rehousing in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and focused in areas of

the state lacking shelter resources, where people might need an immediate place to go and transition as quickly as possible to Rapid Rehousing.

- Supportive Services Only, or SSO, funding focuses on services and systems that facilitate housing. It is generally included in the NOFO to fund Support Services Only Coordinated Entry funding, referred to as SSO-CE, to help improve the Coordinated Entry system. Coordinated Entry, as we'll cover more fully in a later segment, can be intimidating, ineffective and unsafe for survivors to navigate. Victim service providers can apply for this funding to overcome these barriers.
- CoC funding also supports the Homeless Management Information System, or HMIS, which we have already described. Only the HMIS lead can apply for these funds. Victim services programs, or VSPs, would not apply for this funding because they are required to use a comparable database, which must be funded through the VSPs individual project category, rather than the HMIS funding category. We'll learn more about comparable databases in Part 7 of this series.

Domestic Violence Bonus funding is a specific amount of money, allocated by Congress as part of the overall Continuum of Care program application, and set aside for projects that directly assist survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and/or human trafficking.

Although DV Bonus projects must specifically assist survivors, the provider does not have to be a victim services program, or VSP. Most often the applicant for DV Bonus funds will be a VSP, but sometimes a mainstream service provider is the applicant. In some cases, a VSP and a mainstream program providing services to the larger community of unhoused people may partner as grant applicants, or a VSP could be a sub-recipient on a grant that is awarded to a mainstream provider.

Eligible programs include Rapid Rehousing, Joint Transitional Housing and Rapid Rehousing, and Supportive Services Only—Coordinated Entry. A CoC can only apply for one Supportive Services Only—Coordinated Entry project under DV Bonus each year. DV Bonus funds cannot cover Permanent supportive housing projects.

DV Bonus funding can also only cover new projects. It cannot be used to fund renewal projects, although it can be used to expand an existing renewal project.

These funds are frequently unspent, partly because sometimes victim service providers do not realize they might be eligible, or because the grantee requirements can be substantial. But we encourage you to explore whether this funding might be a good fit for your organization by talking with your CoC.

Technical assistance is also available from the CoC, the coalition or national TA providers to help you navigate the requirements.

Slide 10 - Competitive Application Process

The Continuum of Care program funding application process has two parts: a local competition and a national application. Here we will go over a general framework for those two processes. We will be specifically focusing on the process for *new* projects. Applications for renewal projects might vary slightly, but procedures will be specified in the Notice Of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO.

Step 1: First, Congress appropriates money and specifies the maximum amount of funding that will be available to HUD for distribution.

Step 2: The collaborative applicant then registers with HUD to participate in the CoC Competition. The collaborative applicant is an entity designated by the CoC

administrator to prepare and submit the final application to HUD. The CoC can choose to designate itself as the collaborative applicant if it wishes.

Step 3: HUD sends out the Grant Inventory Worksheet, or GIW, which is used to verify all renewal projects, including the amount the CoC is applying for.

Step 4: Following these early stages of the process, HUD releases the NOFO. The NOFO describes the application process, guidelines, project requirements, deadlines, funding priorities, scoring process, and so on for that year. The amount of available funding will be released shortly afterward. Timing of the NOFO release changes each year, though for the past several years it's been released in the summer.

Step 5: The CoC carries out the local competition process.

- CoCs organize their local competitions in different ways, but here's an example of how the local process can look:
- The CoC releases information about the local competition process for providers.

- Local providers who are interested in applying for the funds submit a letter of intent to apply.
- Providers submit their application to the CoC requesting funding for their project.
- The CoC scores projects based on criteria such as: the need for the project, if the projected outcomes of the project addresses those needs, if the project aligns with HUD and the CoC's funding priorities, if the provider has the capacity to be successful, if the provider has experience working with the population they will be serving, and if the provider involved individuals with lived experience in the planning of their project.
- Following this review, the CoC ranks each accepted project.

Step 6: The collaborative applicant then submits the consolidated application to HUD. The consolidated application consists of the CoC application and the Priority Listing, including all new and renewal CoC project applications, the CoC Planning Grant application, and required attachments.

Step 7: HUD reviews the CoC's application. HUD scores the CoC's application generally, and also reviews each individual project that the CoC ranked. Based on that scoring, HUD makes its final determination about funding.

Step 8: Then HUD announces final grant awards, and contracts are signed with grant recipients.

Slide 11 - Program Threshold Requirements

Continuum of Care, or CoC, funding has several threshold eligibility requirements which must be met before a provider can apply. Here is a list of some of the requirements.

The applicant must:

- Be an eligible entity for CoC program funding and must be applying for an eligible project type,
- Have a unique entity ID, which is a number assigned to each entity applying for federal funding,
- Have a System Award Management Registration, or SAM,

- Be in compliance with federal fair housing laws and other federal housing protections,
- Not be delinquent or have outstanding federal debt, debarments, or suspensions,
- Meet the financial system and infrastructure requirements for federal grantees,
- And provide 25% cash or in-kind match.
- Applicant labs are held to help projects understand and walk through the application process through E-SNAPS, the electronic Continuum of Care Program Application and Grants Management System that HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, or SNAPS, uses to support the CoC Program funding application and grant awards process.
- Contact the coalition if you need support in establishing a federally-compliant financial infrastructure. It can be challenging to locate this support, and there might be a financial cost. But we'll do our best to help.

Slide 12 - Threshold Requirements, Continued

Providers must also include the following in their programming after they are awarded funding.

All funded applicants must agree to participate in the Coordinated Entry System.

This will be a new and potentially challenging requirement for some programs because they may have to use a new intake, assessment, and referral process. We will learn more about the coordinated entry process in Part 8 of this series.

When funded, grantees will be required to gather certain information and documentation about program participants and services provided, and must formalize the policies and procedures used to comply with these requirements.

Victim service providers might find that the nature and amount of information that must be gathered is different and more extensive than under other grants.

Special attention to confidentiality and privacy of program participants must be given to ensure that survivor safety, privacy and confidentiality are protected.

In a previous session we referenced the comparable database requirement for victim service providers who are awarded Continuum of Care funding. A comparable database is a separate database, under the control of the victim service provider. We'll cover this more thoroughly in a later session.

These are just a few of the CoC program requirements. Since many of these requirements are complex, it is important for agency leaders to understand them

before applying for funding. Providers will need to determine if they have the capacity to meet the requirements and consider the impact on their ability to provide survivor centered and trauma informed services.

Slide 13 - Potential Benefits of Continuum of Care Funding

Let's close by talking about the potential benefits of Continuum of Care funding.

Slide 14 - Benefits of Continuum of Care Funding

As we have seen, Continuum of Care, or CoC, funding carries with its numerous requirements that can be challenging for victim service providers to meet, particularly in small programs. It might seem daunting to seek funding, but there are resources that can help. The local CoC can be a good source of information for victim service providers, or VSPs, who are considering applying, and HUD has numerous resources as well. The coalition and national technical assistance providers can help VSPs think through whether this funding might be something they could pursue. Please see the resource pages for more information.

The most immediate and obvious benefit to VSPs who pursue this funding is that it increases survivor centered and trauma-informed housing options in the

community. Everyone working with survivors knows there is a lack of housing for survivors in Minnesota, particularly housing that is trauma-informed, survivor centered, or culturally specific.

Survivors often have no option but to utilize mainstream housing programs, which *might* meet their needs; however, many would prefer to work directly with a VSP, and particularly a culturally specific provider, if it were available. CoC program funding can help VSPs create survivor specific housing options and services, including culturally specific options. Also, many VSPs are already doing some housing work that is unfunded or underfunded.

Also, when VSPs receive CoC funding they can advocate for system reform on behalf of survivors by integrating their work into the mainstream work of the CoC. For example:

Increased familiarity and interaction between VSPs and mainstream service providers facilitates learning about each other's services that can lead to development of better referrals and partnerships. The more community organizations know about one another's work, the more likely they are to be successful in working together to create more effective community resources.

CoC funding can support cross-training between VSPs and housing stakeholders on issues such as the dynamics of domestic violence, safety planning, and how these issues affect housing. VSPs can also receive information and training on how the CoC operates to facilitate survivor access to housing options available through the CoC.

Perhaps most importantly, CoC funding can help facilitate system reform regarding survivor confidentiality. Mainstream organizations in the CoC may be unaware of the strict confidentiality requirements VSPs must adhere to as directed by the Violence Against Women Act, or VAWA, the Victims of Crime Act, VOCA, and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, FVPSA (pronounced fip-saw). Many practitioners outside the VSP world lack understanding of the importance of victim privacy and confidentiality, and the impact on a survivor's ability to obtain and maintain safe housing. If the VSP is integrated into the functioning of the CoC, they are more likely to be able to influence how the CoC understands and protects survivor confidentiality. If you have experienced conflicts within your local CoC related to this, please visit the resource page connected to this session for technical assistance.

Slide 15 - Next Steps: Engagement and Education

If you are considering pursuing Continuum of Care funding for the first time, here are some concrete steps you might consider:

Start by articulating your goals and assessing your agency's capacity for taking this on. You might begin with internal conversations about goals, capacity, and what further information you might need.

Some questions you might explore are:

- What type of housing programming would work best for survivors in your area and is that type of programming an option under CoC funding?
- What is your internal capacity to do this type of work?
- What concerns or questions do you have about administrative responsibilities, comparable databases, funding restrictions, coordinated entry, and so on?

It is beneficial to begin communication with your CoC as early as possible before the Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO, is released. This is a good time to connect with the CoC coordinator as schedules fill up once the NOFO is released.

An application for CoC funding is far more likely to be successful if the applicant is

actively involved in the CoC, and in fact, some CoCs require this. Early engagement will also help you formulate a project that is more likely to be funded, and more likely to be a good fit for your organization and the survivors in your area. The CoC can also provide guidance and technical support with your application.

VSPs that have received CoC funding can also offer perspective and provide helpful feedback about their experiences. They can help you anticipate problems and generate solutions.

Slide 16 - Additional Resources

For more information about Continuum of Care Funding from HUD, Minnesota's Continuum of Care, and national technical assistance providers, please visit the resource page connected to this webinar, located on the Violence Free Minnesota website.

Slide 17 - Gratitude

Many thanks to the Continuum of Care contacts throughout the state and others who took the time to review and comment on this presentation. We hope it

helped to familiarize you with CoC Program funding and will spark conversations within your organization about these funding opportunities. Thank you again for joining us today.

Slide 18

Placeholder for 5-10 seconds. – DO NOT READ

END