



## Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness Grand Rapids/Wyoming/Kent County Continuum of Care – MI 506 Emergency Shelter Service Standards

### Definition

Emergency shelter means any program, the primary purpose of which is to provide a temporary shelter for persons experiencing homelessness in general or for specific populations of persons experiencing homelessness and which does not require occupants to sign leases. Victim Service Providers (VSPs) provide shelter to households fleeing intimate partner violence; in some instances, VSPs may follow different guidelines in this policy as indicated by asterisks.

### Goals of Emergency Shelter

- Provide safety and shelter to households with no other place to go.
- Limit shelter stays to the shortest time necessary to help participants regain permanent housing.
- Maintain low-barrier admission criteria and high thresholds for expulsion.
- Ensure the coordination and/or provision of services to all persons seeking or utilizing shelter to ensure their housing crises are rare, brief, and one-time.
- Complete appropriate assessment to link household to Coordinated Entry system\*
  - VSPs will complete assessment with participant permission
- Create a housing stabilization plan with the participant
- Provide housing case management

### Access & Intake

Individuals and families can access shelter at any time based on resource availability. Upon intake at shelter, if not previously completed, staff will administer the appropriate Coordinated Entry assessment to determine prioritization for permanent housing. \*

### Diversion/Problem-Solving

Diversion is practiced whenever possible, including at intake and throughout shelter stay. Providers will practice diversion/problem-solving to assist clients in identifying alternatives to entering or remaining in the shelter system. This includes, but is not limited to, assisting households to stay with friends or family.

### Shelter Provider Expectations

All emergency shelter providers adhere to a standard of ethics and practices that ensure all persons in housing crisis are treated with dignity and respect. All emergency shelter programs shall incorporate the following practices into their policies and procedures:

- All persons in housing crisis shall be treated with dignity and respect.
- All households shall be treated fairly and shall have all rules implemented consistently.
- No persons seeking shelter shall face discrimination, in accordance with Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Title II of the American Disabilities Act, and the Elliott-Larsen Civil Right Act (Public Act 453).
- All persons utilizing emergency shelter have the right to safe shelter, adequate food, and sanitary conditions.
- All households utilizing the emergency shelter system have the right to privacy and confidentiality.

- All households utilizing the emergency shelter system have the right to make their own choices, and those choices should be respected. It is the role of emergency shelter staff to assist households to identify possible consequences of those choices.
- All households in housing crisis shall have access and assistance in obtaining community supports to end their housing crisis, including linkage to mainstream benefits (SSI/SSDI, SNAP, TANF, etc.), vital documents, case management, medical and mental health, financial, legal, education, and employment services as appropriate.
- Low-barrier services, which place a minimum number of expectations on people requesting assistance, shall be provided to all persons:
  - Sobriety is not a condition for entry, stay, or access to services. Rules address behaviors, not the cause of behaviors, to ensure safety and security of guests and the facility
  - Participation in religious-affiliated activities as a condition of entry, stay, or access to emergency shelter is not permitted.
  - Participants will not be denied access due to not having identification documents.
  - Low-barrier facilities follow a harm reduction philosophy.
- Staff (including contractors) shall use de-escalation practices in any tense or escalating situation. Procedures shall outline shelter protocol for both de-escalation practices and for when a situation escalates to an unsafe environment.
- Projects that serve families in housing crisis with children and/or unaccompanied youth must have policies and practices in place that are consistent with laws related to providing education services to children and youth. Households must be informed of their eligibility for McKinney-Vento education services and other available resources.