



Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness
Grand Rapids/Wyoming/Kent County Continuum of Care - MI 506

Street Outreach Policies

Purpose and Goal

- Establish shared community standards and procedures for conducting street outreach including outreach coverage and coordination. To accomplish this, street outreach practices in the Greater Grand Rapids Area are documented herein.
- Goal of community-wide outreach policy is to ensure coverage and efficiencies in outreach to meet the following benchmark: 90% or more of unsheltered people are included on the community by-name list. This will be confirmed by identifying the % of folks with current HMIS entry/exits during each year's PIT Count.

Street Outreach Performance Standard

- Street outreach programs will conduct housing-focused outreach and engagement to include locating, identifying, documenting homelessness for individuals, and building relationships with unsheltered persons living in places not meant for human habitation and assist them in accessing emergency shelter, physical and behavioral health services, obtaining documents and documentation of disability for permanent housing through linkage to the community's Coordinated Entry system, and additional supports based on individual need.

Workflow

New Active encampment or individual identified

- Outreach staff connects and documents the following: Location, approximate number of individuals and length of time the encampment has been active. Information is documented on the outreach map. If possible, outreach staff should obtain contact information (phone and/or email) and add that information to HMIS.
- Staff completes the CE assessment for households/individuals at encampment accompanied by an ROI.
- If and when appropriate, outreach teams complete the Housing Choice Voucher pre-application and provide the completed form to the HARA.
- If needed: Outreach staff communicates with other outreach team members based on identified needs and/or particular subpopulation for follow-up. Provide opportunity for "warm transfer" to most appropriate outreach provider.

Continued engagement

- Outreach teams will coordinate via phone, email, and meetings so that all persons are connected with agencies that best suit their needs

- Focus on the documentation of homelessness history in HMIS at least once a month, documentation of disability when applicable and uploading to HMIS, development of a housing plan, assist with attainment of vital documents and uploading to HMIS, and continued engagement to provide urgent, non-facility-based care and connections to emergency shelter, housing and/or other critical services
- Utilizes Housing First approaches that do not impose preconditions to make referrals to permanent housing, shelter, or other temporary housing

Roles and Responsibilities

Client's preferred outreach provider:

- Communicates with HARA contact to ensure household is added to by-name list
- Completes assessment, if needed (see above)
- Acts as liaison between household(s), HARA, and housing referral resource
- Coordinates with staff providing in-reach at local shelters and day centers to ensure all unsheltered households are connected to an outreach team
- Addresses urgent physical needs, such as providing meals, blankets, clothes, or toiletries
- Connections to emergency shelter, housing, and/or critical services
- Participate in trainings around competencies identified as mandatory by the CoC:
 - Street Outreach Basics
 - Trauma-Informed Care
 - De-Escalation
 - Harm Reduction
 - Additional trainings may include: Utilizing Coordinated Entry, Racism and Homelessness, Housing First, Mental Health First Aid, LGBTQIA+ Engagement, Strengths-based/person-centered care

Continuum of Care:

- Coordination with outreach providers to ensure common workflow and expectations
- Execute trainings around mandatory competencies
- Facilitate annual review of Street Outreach Policies, in conjunction with Outreach Workgroup
- Ensures household(s) are added to by-name list.
- Identifies if other documentation or assessments are needed and communicates with outreach contact regarding needs.

Outreach Lead Agency:

- Provide outreach services to all populations as needed

Coordination and Coverage Strategy

- Monthly coordination meetings to:

- Coordinate outreach efforts and other supplemental services to active encampments and encampments scheduled for cleanups by local municipalities
- Discuss assigning outreach teams or links to coordinated entry staff to new encampments based upon needs and demographic changes
- Document new persons and encampment locations; document inactive locations on the map (90 days of inactivity)
- Review policy in Outreach Committee following the PIT planning process and finalize any changes each April. Include evaluation of coverage and coordination.
- Case conferencing in FUSE, Built for Zero, inner-agency collaboration to identify households, discuss barriers, and develop action steps to move households into housing.

Outreach Teams and Scope

- Pine Rest StreetReach: multiple teams. The lead outreach position serves all persons that are experiencing homelessness in Kent County. PATH staff serve unsheltered single adults (18 and up) with co-occurring disorders in Kent County. Both programs end at the point when the individual is housed. A position funded by the City of Grand Rapids conducts outreach with individuals that are unsheltered, with mental illness and or substance use disorder within the City of Grand Rapids. This position can work with individuals for 3-6 months after being housed.
- Mel Trotter Ministries: serves individuals in Kent County
- Homeless Outreach Team (HOT): serves individuals and families in the City of Grand Rapids
- Arbor Circle: serves unaccompanied minors and youth ages 18-24 in Kent and Ottawa County

HMIS Workflow and Standards

- All outreach providers should follow the workflow and standards identified in the community's [Street Outreach HMIS Workflow](#)

Principles of Street Outreach (adopted from [USICH](#))

- Systematic, Coordinated, Comprehensive
 - Conducted on behalf of the community rather than one agency, requiring collaboration among multiple stakeholders
 - Coordinated among various providers engaged in ending homelessness and across different entities such as Federal, State, local government, and non-profit
 - Coordinated with the broader network of programs, services, or staff who are likely to encounter individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, but whose regular focus is broader than homelessness
 - Connected to coordinated entry process
 - Street outreach contacts and housing placements are documented in HMIS or another local data system, such as an active or by-name
 - Incorporates feedback from those with lived experience
- Housing Focused
 - Connections to stable housing with tailored services and supports
 - Facilitate connections to emergency shelter or temporary housing to provide safe options while individuals and families are on a pathway toward stability

- Utilizes Housing First approaches that do not impose preconditions to make referrals to permanent housing, shelter, or other temporary housing
- Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed, and Culturally Responsive
 - Utilizes a person-centered approach
 - Provides people experiencing homelessness multiple opportunities to say “no” and makes repeated offers of assistance through engagement
 - Staff receive regular training in evidence-based practices
 - Employ outreach staff with lived experience
 - Provide warm handoffs to coordinated entry or shelter, housing, and service providers
 - Respectful and responsive to the beliefs and practices, sexual orientations, disability statuses, age, gender identities, cultural preferences, and verbal needs of all individuals
 - Aspire to analyze local data regarding racial inequities and disparities among people experiencing homelessness and customize efforts to ensure equity in outreach
 - Utilize problem-solving to identify strengths and existing supports
- Emphasize Safety and Reduce Harm
 - Providers have protocols to ensure the safety of all individuals seeking assistance
 - Utilize harm reduction principles
 - Accept that some may not accept initial offers of emergency shelter or housing assistance while maintaining a focus on creating connections to permanent housing

Definitions:

- **Built for Zero:** a movement of more than 80 cities and counties working to solve homelessness, one population at a time using data-driven thinking and a system-wide approach.
- **By-Name List (BNL):** A list used to identify persons experiencing homelessness in real time.
- **Continuum of Care (CoC):** Group responsible for the implementation of the requirements of HUD’s CoC Program interim rule and the requirements set forth in this Policy. The CoC is composed of representatives of organizations, including nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons.
- **Coordinated Entry:** a process by which homeless assistance is allocated as effectively as possible and is easily accessible to all homeless persons. Coordinated Entry is a requirement of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for all Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program recipient agencies.
- **FUSE (Frequent Users Systems Engagement):** Developed by CSH, FUSE is a proven model identifying frequent users of jails, shelters, hospitals and/or other crisis public services and then improving their lives through supportive housing. Supportive housing is an evidence-based solution that leads to better health and other good outcomes for people homeless and disabled. Tenants are provided affordable housing with wraparound support services, which stabilizes

their lives and significantly reduces returns to jail and homelessness, reliance on emergency health services, and improves overall quality of life.

- **HARA:** The Housing Assessment and Resource Agency (HARA) is an agency selected and affirmed by the CoC to facilitate the prioritization and referral of households within the homeless crisis response system or Coordinated Entry System.
- **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS):** Local information technology system used by a CoC to collect participant-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and to persons at risk of homelessness. Each CoC is responsible for selecting an HMIS software solution that complies with HUD's data collection, management, and reporting standards.
- **In-reach:** initial contacts that take place with people who spent the previous night in emergency shelter, motel, doubled up, etc. locations
- **Outreach:** is a professional intervention that is structured, documented and strategic, to meet people where they are at - literally and circumstantially. It is respectfully persistent in helping people achieve housing and exit homelessness through a process of assessing, understanding and addressing both immediate and housing needs.
- **ROI:** release of information that is established to allow sharing of data within the Grand Rapids/Wyoming/Kent County CoC