

Continuum of Care Policies and Guidelines

The Policies and Guidelines of the
Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County

Adopted 2013; Revised 2017

Continuum of Care Policies and Procedures

I. History of the Continuum of Care

In 1987, Congress passed the Stewart B. McKinney Act (Public Law 100-77) to address the growing problem of homelessness in the United States. One purpose of the Act was to authorize funding for homeless assistance programs administered by federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

These resources (collectively referred to as McKinney Homeless Assistance funds) and the programs funded by them have formed the backbone of systems designed to address the many needs of homeless individuals and families in states and communities across the nation.

When first introduced, McKinney Homeless Assistance funds were distributed directly to governments and community agencies through a national competition. Through this funding scheme, individual nonprofit agencies and local governments applied individually to HUD for homeless assistance funding to implement and manage their own specific housing and service programs for people who were homeless.

No strategic planning was required to receive these funds, leading to duplication and fragmentation of homeless services in many communities. For example, two separate nonprofit organizations in the same community could receive HUD Homeless Assistance funding to implement transitional housing programs for people with serious mental illnesses without any requirement that they coordinate their efforts. The resulting array of shelter and services available was often the result of an individual provider taking the initiative to meet a need independent of, or in isolation from, other providers.

A. Continuum of Care

Launched in 1994, HUD's Continuum of Care (CoC) approach helped communities across America address the problems of homelessness in a coordinated, comprehensive and strategic fashion. A CoC is a community's plan to organize and deliver housing and services that meet the specific needs of homeless individuals and families as they move toward stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency:

1. Outreach, intake and assessment to identify an individual's or family's service and housing needs and link them to appropriate housing or service resources.
2. Emergency shelter and safe, decent alternatives to the streets.
3. Transitional housing with supportive services to help people develop the skills necessary to live in permanent housing.
4. Permanent housing and permanent supportive housing.
5. Every CoC should also feature homelessness prevention strategies and services, which can range from one-time emergency funds that keep a roof over a family's head to crisis intervention services for people with mental illness. Overcoming the myriad of problems associated with homelessness also requires long-range commitments of time and effort. In fact, the CoC plan calls for specific steps:
 - a. Establish a planning process to develop a CoC strategy that will identify the core working group, roles and responsibilities, the desired outcomes and the geographic area.

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- b. Collect needs data and inventory system capacity, a process that will outline a community's existing capacity to serve homeless people
- c. Determine and prioritize gaps in the CoC, by organization data, conducting a gaps analysis and establishing a community process for determining relative priorities.
- d. Develop short-term and long-term strategic goals, which will include linking gaps to possible resources, assigning responsibilities to specific participants and adopting a written CoC plan.
- e. Implement Action Steps to complete the goals of the CoC plan, including an evaluation and monitoring process.

B. Continuum of Care Purpose

1. The Continuum of Care serves two primary purposes

- a. A strategic plan to address the use of HUD resources and their interface with other funding sources developed through a community-based process to address homelessness based on: the identified needs of homeless individuals and families; the availability and accessibility of existing housing and services; and the opportunities for linkages with non-homeless mainstream housing and service resources. Through the CoC planning process, a community can:
 - i. Identify the size and scope of the homeless problem;
 - ii. Inventory the resources available in the community to address the problem of homelessness, including both homeless resources and non-homeless targeted housing and service resources (referred to as “mainstream” resources);
 - iii. Rank the community’s need in order of priority;
 - iv. Strategically plan the range of services and housing that should be implemented to address homelessness; and
 - v. Identify available leveraging resources that can be used to address homelessness.
- b. Submits an application to HUD for McKinney Homeless Assistance resources; this is called the Collaborative Application. These resources are invaluable in providing housing and supportive services for people who are homeless. These funds are made available through a national competition announced each year in HUD’s notice of Funding Availability (known as the HUD NOFA).

2. Fundamental Components of the Continuum of Care System’s Purpose

- a. Prevention: Stabilization services and activities that assist homeless individuals and families.
- b. Outreach, intake and assessment: Services to identify and address a person’s immediate needs such as food, clothing, shelter and to provide a link for the individual to ongoing support (often involving going out to streets, cars, etc.) These services target the most vulnerable of the homeless population who are unable or unwilling to accept emergency shelter services.
- c. Emergency shelter: A safe, secure and temporary place for individuals with disabilities and/or co-occurring disorders and their families to reside while they seek other more permanent housing or supportive services in order to facilitate access to more permanent housing options.

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- d. Transitional housing: Longer-term (generally up to 24 months) supportive housing with varying degrees of supportive services that provide a needed period of stability to enable people who are homeless to successfully transition to and maintain permanent housing.
- e. Permanent Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing: Long-term, safe, decent and affordable housing for individuals and families.
- f. Supportive Services: Support services are needed for a person to move towards self-sufficiency and independent living.

II. Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County (HARC)

- A. In Tennessee, there are ten HUD Continuum of Care groups representing four single-county groups and six regions with up to 23 counties each. The Murfreesboro/Rutherford Continuum of Care is made up of the cities of Murfreesboro, LaVergne, Eagleville, Town of Smyrna and unincorporated Rutherford County. The Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County Homeless Task Force is the primary decision making body for the Continuum of Care.

The mission of the Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County:

- 1. Promote community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; Provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers to re-house homeless individuals and families rapidly while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and the community as a consequence of homelessness;
 - 2. Promote access to and effective use of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families;
 - 3. Optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness;
 - 4. Provide assistance to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless.
- B. HARC members assist in the development of the regional plan and in making decisions that affect the Continuum of Care. HARC welcomes anyone who is interested in becoming a participant and the role of the Membership and Advocacy Working Group is to diversify participation and public awareness of the issues addressed by HARC A general list of those who may be interested in participating in the CoC includes:

- Local homeless coalitions and networks
- Homeless and formerly homeless people
- Homeless service providers, agencies, and advocates
- Nonprofit groups for homeless persons
- Local and state, governments
- Employment programs and job councils
- Public Housing Authorities and developers
- For-profit and business communities
- Faith-based organizations
- Mental Health service providers
- Local job councils
- Veterans service agencies
- Law enforcement agencies
- Middle Tennessee State University
- Key civic leaders
- And many more...

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C. The general membership of the Homeless Task Force meets the third Thursday of January, April, July and October at 2:00 p.m., and regular attendance of (75%) at these meetings annually is required to apply for CoC project funding. The Project Review and Ranking Working Group considers attendance in determining funding scores.

D. Murfreesboro Housing Authority (MHA) is the lead agency for HUD's Continuum of Care housing programs and is the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead agency. The Continuum's HMIS is managed by the Chattanooga Homeless Coalition through a memorandum of understanding with MHA. The HARC Executive Committee and working groups are responsible for coordinating Continuum of Care meetings; coordinating annual Point-In-Time Counts; completing an annual Housing Inventory Chart; implementing a community plan to prevent and end homelessness; managing; writing and submitting the Exhibit One application; monitoring community programs; selecting programs for inclusion into Exhibit One; providing technical assistance for community agencies and ensuring that community programs generate acceptable outcomes.

III. HARC/Continuum of Care Governance and Structure

The Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County shall be governed by a Board of Directors (herein after called the Executive Committee). The Executive Committee shall have up to 12 members. The Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Executive Committee shall be elected by the Executive Committee from among its members for a term of one year.

Executive Committee

The membership of the Executive Committee shall include up to 13 members. Eight members shall be elected at-large by the general membership. The Mayor of Murfreesboro or designee; the Mayor of Rutherford County or designee; the Executive Director of Murfreesboro Housing Authority (MHA) or designee; and the chair of the Consumer Council shall be members of the Executive Committee by virtue of office and shall be voting members of the Executive Committee. The Chair of the Consumer Working Group must be a person who is currently homeless or has been homeless.

The term for all elected members of the Executive Committee shall be three years, serving staggered terms.

The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the general membership and the Executive Committee and have such other powers and duties consistent with these bylaws. The Chair shall be an *ex officio* member of all working groups.

The Vice Chair shall preside at meetings of the general membership and the Executive Committee when the Chair is unable to attend. The Vice Chair shall succeed to the office of Chair upon resignation or removal from office of the Chair during the Chair's elected term.

The Secretary shall record attendance and minutes for all meetings of the General Membership and the Executive Committee. The Secretary will append reports from working group chairs to the Executive Committee minutes. The Secretary or designee will distribute information to the general membership as directed by Executive Committee.

The Treasurer shall be accountable for oversight of the banking and financial transactions of the organization and for funding not otherwise directed to an individual member agency. The

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Treasurer will provide financial reporting to the Executive Committee and to the Secretary for distribution to the General Membership.

Working group chairs shall provide the Executive Committee written reports of their group's activities. These reports will be appended to the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting at which they are tendered. Working group chairs shall be responsible for establishing meeting schedules and agendas for their group.

A member of the Executive Committee may resign at any time by submitting a letter of resignation to the Chair of the Executive Committee.

Should vacancies in elected positions on the Executive Committee occur, the Executive Committee shall vote to appoint a representative from an existing member organization to fulfill the duration of the unexpired term. This person shall be elected by a simple majority of the Executive Committee members present at a scheduled or called meeting where a quorum is present and business is conducted. Should the Chair become vacant, the Vice Chair shall succeed to the position; a new Vice Chair shall be selected by the Executive Committee from its members.

Any member of the Executive Committee may be removed from office, with or without cause, by a two-thirds majority of the remaining Executive Committee members. Removal can only be considered if it occurs at a meeting called for the purpose of considering removal. A special meeting may be called by the Chair or by a minimum of four members of the Executive Committee. Written notice must be sent to all Executive Committee members stating that the proposed removal is the reason for the meeting and business at the meeting is restricted to consideration of removal. Written notice of such a meeting must be sent at least seven days before the meeting. The person recommended for removal shall have the opportunity to speak on his/her behalf prior to a vote of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee may from time to time appoint and approve the appointment of such ad hoc committees as may be needed. The Executive Committee shall determine the responsibilities, selection and terms of such committees.

The general membership shall meet in January of each year to elect Executive Committee members. Terms shall begin upon election. The Executive Committee shall meet immediately following the January general membership meeting to elect its officers. Elected Executive Committee members shall serve three-year terms and no more than one consecutive full term. Any member of the Executive Committee elected to fill an unexpired term shall be eligible for re-election to a full term.

Working Groups

The Homeless Task Force shall have five standing working groups: Service Delivery; Planning; Membership and Advocacy; Project Review and Ranking; and Consumer Council. Each working group except the Consumer Council shall have a Chair selected by the Executive Committee from among the Executive Committee members. The Chair of the Consumer Council shall be a member of the Consumer Council and selected by the membership of the Consumer Council.

A working group may, as it deems necessary, subdivide to deal with specific issues and tasks. Specific assignments for each working group are designated in the HARC Bylaws.

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IV. Educational Requirements for Homeless Families

The Rutherford County Schools and the Murfreesboro City Schools work with local shelters and housing providers to best meet the needs of children in the Continuum of Care geographic area as required by Federal and State of Tennessee regulations related to children in homeless families living in shelters or transitional housing. HARC supports the local schools in meeting the educational needs of homeless children.

V. Continuum of Care Grant Application

- A. It is the policy of the Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County acting as the deliberative body for the Murfreesboro/Rutherford County Continuum of Care (TN-510) to participate in the annual Continuum of Care Housing Competition and to submit the annual application in the form designated by HUD for each year's application. The City of Murfreesboro is the Collaborative Applicant for the Continuum of Care.
- B. The COC grant application consists of two types of exhibits.
 1. The Collaborative Application is the application submitted to HUD concerning the progress and structure of the continuum of care. The 2017 application has four components:
 - a. CoC Structure and Governance
 - b. CoC Data Collection and Quality
 - c. CoC Performance and Strategic Planning
 - d. Mainstream Benefits and Additional Policies
 2. The project application submitted to the Continuum of Care by area service providers. HUD has funding available for a variety of projects that serve homeless individuals and families. The projects may be part of a larger housing development with a portion of the units set aside for homeless individuals and families. They may be scattered sites through development or rental assistance. The projects may include rental, support services, new construction, acquisition of land or building and moderate or substantial rehabilitation.
- C. Following is a brief overview of what HUD's Competitively Awarded Homeless Programs (Continuum of Care) can and cannot fund:
 1. HUD's Competitively Awarded Homeless Programs **CAN** fund
 - a. Rental Assistance
 - b. Permanent Housing for disabled homeless persons
 - c. Transitional Housing
 2. HUD's Competitively Awarded Homeless Programs **CANNOT** fund
 - a. Emergency or very short term housing
 - b. Leasing projects if the grantee owns the units
 - c. Subrecipients that do not have a current 501(c)(3) letter from the IRS

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VI. HUD's Definition of Homelessness

A. Category 1 - Literally homeless individuals/families

1. An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:
 - a. Sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, including:
 - i. A car
 - ii. A park
 - iii. An abandoned building
 - iv. A bus or train station
 - v. An airport
 - vi. A camping ground
 - b. Living in a shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, including:
 - i. Congregate shelters
 - ii. Transitional housing
 - iii. Hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or federal/state/local government programs
2. Exiting an institution (e.g., jail, hospital) - where they resided for **90 days or less AND** were residing in **emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation** immediately before entering institution.

B. Category 2 - Individuals/families who will imminently (within 14 days) lose their primary nighttime residence with no subsequent residence, resources or support networks

1. Individuals/families that will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days **AND** have no subsequent residence identified **AND** lack the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

C. Category 3 - Unaccompanied youth or families with children/youth who meet the homeless definition under another federal statute and 3 additional criteria

1. Unaccompanied youth under **age 25** or families with children and youth who do not otherwise qualify as homeless, but who:
 - a. Meet homeless definition under another federal statute; **AND**
 - b. have not had lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during last 60 days; **AND**
 - c. Have experienced two or more moves during last 60 days; **AND...**
 - d. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of:
 - i. Chronic disabilities, **OR**
 - ii. Chronic physical health or mental health conditions, **OR**
 - iii. Substance addiction, **OR**
 - iv. Histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse (including neglect) **OR**
 - v. Presence of a child or youth with a disability, **OR**
 - vi. Two or more barriers to employment

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D. Category 4 – Individuals/families fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence with no subsequent residence, resources or support networks

1. Individuals/families fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life threatening conditions related to violence, who:
 - a. Have no identified subsequent residence; **AND**
 - b. Lack the resources and support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

VII. Eligible Programs and Activities through HUD CoC –

A. Supportive Housing Program

1. Purpose

The Supportive Housing Program (SHP) helps develop housing and related supportive services for people moving from homelessness to independent living. Program funds help homeless people live in a stable place, increase their skills and their income and gain more control over the decisions affecting their lives.

2. Beneficiaries

Since 2012 SHP helps two categories of homeless people; literally homeless individuals/families; and Individuals/families fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence with no subsequent residence, resources or support networks. In addition SHP may house individuals and families coming from TH that were originally from the streets or emergency shelter and the individuals and families must have an individual family member with a disability.

3. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include States, local governments, other government agencies (such as public housing agencies), private nonprofit organizations and community mental health associations that are public nonprofit organizations.

4. Program Components

SHP features six components - or approaches - to help homeless people achieve independence. Applicants may choose the approach that best suits the needs of the people they intend to serve.

a. Permanent Housing for Persons with Disabilities:

This component is long-term housing with supportive services for homeless persons with disabilities. This type of supportive housing enables special needs populations to live as independently as possible in a permanent setting.

b. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

HMIS data-collectoin software designed to capture information over time on the characteristics of persons experiencing homelessness. For an SHP applicant, HMIS can be a new project or the renewal of a dedicated HMIS project.

c. Transitional Housing

Transitional housing facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing. Homeless persons may live in transitional housing for up to

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24 months and receive supportive services such as childcare, job training and home furnishings that help them live more independently.

d. Safe Haven

A Safe Haven is a form of supportive housing that serves hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illness or other debilitating behavioral conditions that are on the street and have been unable or unwilling to participate in housing or supportive services. A Safe Haven project that has characteristics of permanent supportive housing and requires clients to sign a lease may be also classified as permanent housing when applying to HUD funds. It is expected that clients will be reengaged with treatment services as they become stabilized and learn to trust service providers. There are no a Safe Haven projects in the Murfreesboro/Rutherford County Continuum of Care geographic area.

B. Permanent Supportive Housing Program (formerly Shelter + Care)

1. Purpose

The Shelter plus Care (S+C) Program provides rental assistance in connection with supportive services. The program provides a variety of permanent housing choices accompanied by a range of supportive services funded through other sources. Intensive case management is required monthly for all participants in the Shelter plus Care program.

2. Beneficiaries

S+C assists hard-to-serve homeless individuals with disabilities and their families. These individuals primarily include those with serious mental illness, chronic problems with alcohol and/or drugs and HIV/AIDS or related diseases.

3. Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants are State, local government units and public housing agencies (PHAs). Applicants must select one of the following components:

a. Project-Based Rental Assistance (PRAC) Component

Applicants must contract with a building/unit owner for the entire period of assistance. The rental assistance remains with the unit as long as an eligible tenant lives in the unit.

b. Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Component

Applicant's contract with unit owners once a tenant signs the lease and the unit passes inspection. The rental assistance remains with the tenant as long as the tenant qualifies for the assistance.

C. Moderate Rehabilitation Program Grants

1. Purpose

The Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) Program provides rental assistance for applicable properties that will, when the renovations are complete, contain ungraded single occupancy units for individuals who are homeless. As a result, it is designed to move people into the permanent housing phase within the CoC.

2. Beneficiaries

The SRO Program assists unaccompanied homeless persons.

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3. Eligible Applicants

Public Housing agencies (PHAs) and private nonprofit organizations are eligible for SRO Program. Nonprofit organizations, however must sub contract with a PHA to administer the rental assistance. There are no a Safe Haven projects in the Murfreesboro/Rutherford County Continuum of Care geographic area.

VIII. Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS)

As directed by Congress, HUD is working with COC's to improve the way information on homelessness is gathered, including reliable, unduplicated counts of homeless persons and their characteristics. HMIS is a computerized software application that captures client-level information over time relating to the characteristics and needs of men, women and children experiencing homelessness.

Agencies that receive HUD COC housing funds or Emergency Solutions Grant funding are required to enter data in HMIS. The purpose of this data collection is to improve service delivery to homeless persons. One of the major goals of this HMIS initiative is to help individual homeless service providers access the very best in computer technology. HMIS' most advanced software combines a number of functionalities to enhance individual service-provider operations and to link providers together into a broader CoC system.

HMIS software gives local providers and agencies comprehensive information on the nature of homelessness in their communities and the ability to generate reports on their programs that can provide to various funders. As participating providers share certain information, HMIS increases the capacity to generate reports on the operations of the CoC system as a whole.

HMIS participation is required of all CoC programs. A signed HMIS confidentiality statement and user agreement must be on file in the with the HMIS lead agency in order to be considered for CoC new projects or renewals. See the HMIS Policy and Procedures manual for more information.

HMIS licenses and operational expenses are currently paid for using Emergency Solutions Grant funding through the City of Murfreesboro.

IX. HUD's Designated Funding Area

The HARC service area is as follows:

GEocode	STATE	JURISDICTION NAME
471362	Tennessee	Murfreesboro
479149	Tennessee	Rutherford County

X. HUD Scoring of the Continuum of Care Applications

HUD changes the application scoring process and point value from each year. Refer to the current year's HUD NOFA for more information.

A. Application Process

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1. The Continuum’s process for submitting and evaluating project applications is determined by the Rating and Ranking Working Group. For details, see the HARC Bylaws.

XI. Annual Progress Report

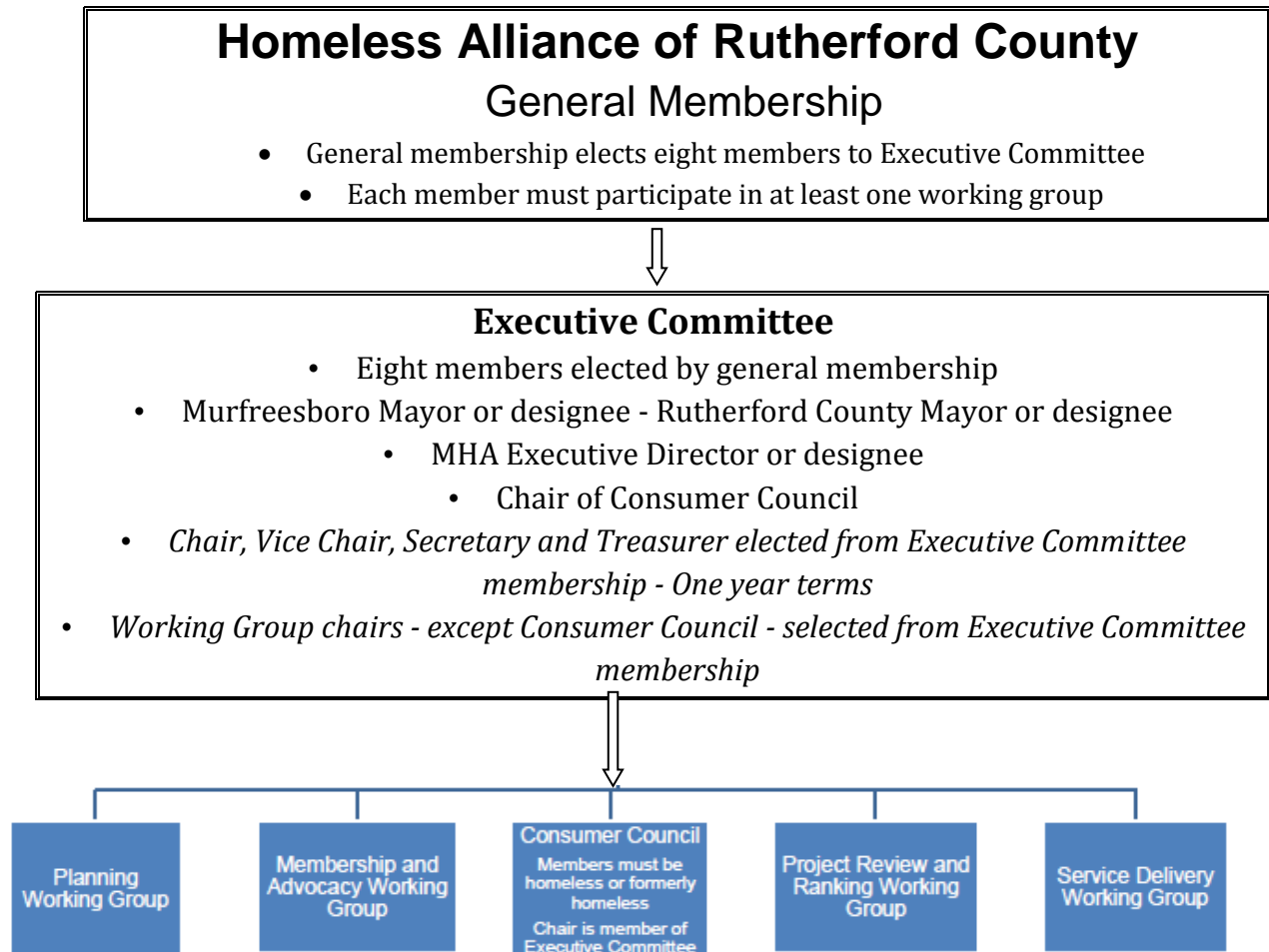
The Annual Progress Report (APR) tracks program progress and accomplishments in HUD’s competitive homeless assistance programs. Recipients of HUD’s homeless assistance grants must submit an APR to HUD no later than 90 days after the end of each operating year.

XII. Commonly Used Continuum of Care Acronyms

APR	Annual Performance Report
ARA	Annual Renewal Amount
CD	Chemically dependent
CH	Chronically homeless
CoC	Continuum of Care
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
DUNS#	Data Universal Numbering System
ESG	Emergency Solutions Grant
FHPAP	Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program
FMR	Fair Market Rent
FPRN	Final Pro-Rata Need
HARC	Homeless Alliance of Rutherford County
HDX	Homeless Data Exchange
HEARTH Act	Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act
HIC	Housing Inventory Counts
HMIS	Homeless Management Information System
HHN	Hold Harmless Need
HOPWA	Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
NOFA	Notice of Funding Available
PH	Permanent Housing
PITC	Point in Time Count
PPRN.	Preliminary Pro-Rata Need
PSH	Permanent Supportive Housing
RD	Rural Development Program (USDA – U.S. Department of Agriculture)
SH	Safe Haven
SHP	Supportive Housing Program
S+C	Shelter Plus Care
SRO	Single Room Occupancy
SSVF	Supportive Services for Veteran Families
TBRA	Tenant Based Rental Assistance
TCAP	Tax Credit Assistance Program
TH	Transitional Housing
THDA	Tennessee Housing Development Agency
TN-510	Murfreesboro/Rutherford County Continuum of Care
VASH	Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing

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XIII. Organizational Chart



- The **Service Delivery Working Group** shall be responsible for promoting cooperation and coordination between the organizations and agencies working with the homeless and those in danger of becoming homeless. The group is responsible for establishing and operating a centralized or coordinated system to assess the needs of individuals for housing and services. The group shall also be responsible for conducting the annual Point-In-Time Count.
- The **Planning Working Group** shall be responsible for formulating and recommending strategic goals and objectives within the Continuum of Care to meet the needs of the homeless population and subpopulations. The group is responsible for updating the 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness; preparing the Continuum of Care Action Plan; conducting an annual gaps analysis of homeless needs and services available within the Continuum of Care area; and consulting with the City of Murfreesboro concerning homelessness issues as the City prepares its Consolidated Plan, annual action plans and year-end reports.
- The **Membership and Advocacy Working Group** shall be responsible for recruiting and retaining a wide range of organizations into the Homeless Task Force. The group is responsible for conducting activities to advocate for the homeless and to educate the public about issues pertaining to the homeless and those in danger of becoming homeless.
- The **Project Review and Ranking Work Group** shall be responsible for reviewing applications and recommending priority ranking for HUD homeless housing funds. The working group shall be responsible for monitoring subrecipient performance. The working group is also responsible for certifying Homeless Task Force membership status for organizations applying to the City of Murfreesboro for Emergency Solutions Grant funding.