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Emergency Solutions Grant Program Plan Purpose

This document provides a summary of The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Emergency Solution Grant (ESG) rules and agreed upon procedural guidelines for program implementation in DuPage County. The intent of this document is to provide a framework through which ESG funds will be used in DuPage County and how DuPage County Continuum of Care agencies including emergency shelter, outreach programs, rapid rehousing, homelessness prevention and other targeted homeless programs coordinate services to meet continuum objectives of making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring in DuPage County.

This document, in no manner, should be seen as an alternative to or replacement of HUD rules and guidance which can be found at www.hudexchange.info. ESG specific information is maintained at: www.hudexchange.info/programs/esg/. This website is updated regularly by HUD and it is the responsibility of each Sub Grantee to keep apprised of any and all new and revised guidance. Community Planning and Development (CPD) listserv help stakeholders stay informed about programs, competitions, awards, policy updates and more. Sign up for the CPD listserv and select the topics for which you would like to receive more information.

Federal Impacts on Provision of ESG Assistance

HUD issued the 09/21/16 final rule entitled “Equal Access in Accordance with an Individual’s Gender Identity in Community Planning and Development Programs” The final rule, effective October 21, 2016, requires that recipients and subrecipients of HUD CPD funding, as well as owners, operators, and managers of shelters, and other buildings and facilities and providers of services funded in whole or in part by any HUD CPD program to grant equal access to such facilities, and other buildings and facilities, benefits, accommodations and services to individuals in accordance with the individual's gender identity, and in a manner that affords equal access to the individual's family.

DuPage County Continuum of Care housing and service providers have reviewed and considered the final rule and the impact the requirements will have on operations and best practices. Each provider has or is currently refining policies and procedures to ensure that equal access is available to all eligible individuals and families regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

In the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 ("PR WORA" or "the Act"), Congress restricted immigrant access to certain public benefits, but also established a set of exceptions to these restrictions. In 2001, after consulting with other Federal agencies, including HUD and HHS, the Attorney General issued an Order reiterating the three-prong test established in PRWORA and specifying the types of programs, services, or assistance determined to be necessary for the protection of life or safety. Specifically included is, “short-term shelter or housing assistance for the homeless, for victims of domestic violence, or for runaway, abused, or abandoned children”.

HUD has determined Street Outreach Services, Emergency Shelter, and Rapid Re-Housing are not subject to the Act’s immigration-based restrictions. As such, DuPage County CoC ESG program resources will provide these programs without regard to immigration or US residency status. ESG Homeless Prevention Assistance, however, is subject to the Act as the program does condition the provision of assistance on the potential program participant’s income or
**Components of The Emergency Solutions Grant**

In DuPage County, the Consolidated Planning Process and Citizen and Agency Participation are organized and conducted in close coordination with the DuPage County Continuum of Care. This process includes ESG as well as non-ESG funded programs. The Consolidated Planning process assesses the community’s homeless assistance and housing needs, examines available resources, sets 3-5 year strategies, and develops an annual action plan to meet priority needs with citizen’s participation and consultation with various organizations, including the DuPage County CoC.

The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) provides a variety of supports (See Eligible Supports for Emergency Solutions Grant) to achieve the following five assistive elements: 1) engaging homeless individuals and families living on the street; 2) improving the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families; 3) helping operate these shelters while providing essential services to shelter residents; 4) rapidly re-housing homeless individuals and families; and 5) preventing individuals and families from becoming homeless.

DuPage County’s ESG programs consist of: Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, Homelessness Prevention, Rapid Rehousing and the Homeless Management Information System.

**Street Outreach**

Street outreach is currently provided through emergency shelter providers with established targeting and essential services procedures. Street outreach teams reach out to unsheltered homeless persons to connect them with emergency shelter, housing, and/or critical services, and provide them with urgent, non-facility-based care. One shelter provider has an active street outreach program, funded by ESG; one shelter provider has an active outreach program for unsheltered veterans referred and engaged during site visits to veterans service facilities; two domestic violence shelters are in the process of developing outreach programs. Street and site outreach providers participate on the CoC Homeless Prevention Providers Committee, establishing best practices for meeting the needs of the homeless in DuPage County.

Standards for targeting unsheltered persons and providing essential services related to street outreach are maintained by the providers according to the program scope of services in the following ways:

Street outreach teams target and locate unsheltered persons through leads that may include concerned citizens; community businesses; community-based organizations; local authorities including police, schools, heating and cooling centers, government agencies; veterans’ facilities and services; and by observation of persons at local areas known to attract homeless persons and seen sleeping in vehicles overnight or in other places not meant for human habitation. Street outreach is mapping the sites where persons have been contacted or observed and collecting information from community sources toward refined targeting.

Street outreach teams initiate contact with referred or observed persons, determining eligibility (unsheltered homeless persons) through self-report or direct observation by outreach teams. Activities include: initial assessment of needs and eligibility; providing or obtaining immediate crisis counseling; addressing urgent physical needs such as, meals, blankets, clothing, and toiletries; and actively referring/connecting to homeless assistance, mainstream social services, veteran services.
housing. Housing programs may include emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing programs. Transportation is provided as needed.

Street outreach contacts are entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) adding client information if and as it becomes available. Contact information in HMIS and case notes will at minimum include eligibility, referral source, service transactions with specific provisions of basic needs, information and referrals, direct connection to housing, and outcome of each contact. Clients are exited from street outreach programs when engaged with homeless assistance providers in temporary or permanent housing, or a period of time after contact is lost.

Essential services and activities related to street outreach include the case management process of using the Coordinated Entry System (CES). The street outreach entry in HMIS is not prioritized for housing interventions until sufficient assessment information is obtained. Verifying and documenting eligibility; counseling; developing, securing, and coordinating services; obtaining public mainstream benefits; monitoring and evaluating program participant progress; providing information and referrals to other providers; and developing an individualized housing and service plan, including planning for permanent housing stability will be provided by street outreach teams directly or referred to appropriate homeless assistance providers, according to the street outreach program scope of service.

Street outreach teams will directly connect willing unsheltered homeless persons to homeless assistance providers and social service providers in accordance with the accepted CoC coordination of services plan, providing transportation to the resource as needed. Persons of special populations will be connected to providers according to program specific guidelines. In situations of immediate crisis needs such as, severe mental illness and behavioral episodes that may result in harm to the individual or others, substance abuse induced episodes, and/or physical health crisis, the street outreach teams will directly contact DuPage County Health Department crisis line, local police, or emergency medical providers, on behalf of the individual. Street outreach teams encountering unaccompanied youth will contact local police and or IL Department of Children and Family Services for appropriate intervention.

Site outreach teams directly connect willing unsheltered homeless persons to the appropriate homeless assistance and social service providers according to program specific guidelines and the accepted CoC coordination of services plan, providing transportation to resources as needed. Immediate crisis needs (as above) will be met by the team if qualified, or connected directly to appropriate emergency assessment and treatment providers.

Follow up contacts between street and site outreach teams toward relationship building, assessment, and referral to services, will be conducted in public places as selected or agreed on by the homeless persons, for the safety of the homeless persons and the street outreach and site outreach teams.

**Emergency Shelter**

Emergency shelter is currently provided in DuPage County, funded with ESG and/or other funding sources, to meet the needs of homeless persons/families including veterans, victims of domestic violence, and unaccompanied youth. A transitional housing program in DuPage also meets the criteria for ESG shelter funding. There are seven active shelter providers within DuPage County at this time. The shelter providers conform to the CoC coordination of services plan, participate in CoC planning, and use the CES in HMIS unless using a comparable database for domestic violence shelters. All shelter providers have written or verbal Release of Information to assist in referrals to...
other providers. Shelter providers will ensure that all clients are aware of their adopted Privacy Policy, have access to it, and are notified of their rights regarding data sharing. Shelter providers meet the local health and safety inspection requirements for the particular facilities and services offered, and meet minimum safety, sanitation, and privacy standards as specified in 24 CFR 576.403(a)(b) when funded by ESG for shelter operations or renovations. Emergency shelter providers participate on the CoC Homeless Prevention Providers Committee, establishing best practices for meeting the needs of the homeless in DuPage County.

ESG funded emergency shelter activities include: provision of essential services to individuals and families in shelter; renovation of shelter facilities; and shelter operations.

**Essential services** are provided by the DuPage County shelters whether funded by ESG and/or other funding sources. Essential services may include: case management, child care, education services, employment services and job training, outpatient health services, legal services, life skills training, mental health services, substance abuse treatment services, and transportation. Services for special populations include homeless youth, victims of domestic violence, and services for people living with HIV/AIDS. Program/provider specific policies may require participation in the essential services offered.

*Case management* is provided by all shelter providers and includes: an initial assessment of needs with continuous program/specific reassessment points throughout the shelter stay; counseling; assistance with obtaining public benefits – completing applications, accompanying clients to offices, or providing transportation to the offices, obtaining needed documentation to complete the application process; monitoring participant progress toward self-sufficiency; prioritizing needs as circumstances change during the program participation; establishing a housing stability plan; and providing information, referral, and connection to housing providers.

*Education services* are provided directly by shelter providers or referrals and connections to these services are made available to program participants, as needed, especially to remove barriers to sustained housing. These may include: instruction or training in consumer education, health education, substance abuse prevention, literacy, ESL, GED, and tenant/landlord issues. Shelter providers coordinate with the IL State Board of Education, Homeless Liaisons, to ensure that the educational needs are met for school-age youth participating in the program, in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

*Employment assistance*, in the form of job seeking skills at minimum, is provided directly by shelter providers and referrals and connections to other resources are made available to program participants for specific needs identified beyond those provided at the shelter.

*Legal services* are made available by all shelter providers to participants through referral and connection to Prairie State Legal Services primarily, and other resources for legal services as needed.

*Life skills training* are provided by all shelter providers and may include: budgeting, money management, household management, conflict resolution, shopping practices, nutrition guidance, use of public transportation, and parenting, as appropriate to the participant.

*Transportation* is provided by all shelter providers in the form of vouchers, gas cards, bus/train passes, taxi vouchers, staff transport, and donated cars. Limits on amounts, types, and uses are
program/provider specific.

Entry into the shelter system is coordinated through self-referral, walk-in, referral from other shelter and homeless prevention providers, and referral through community based homeless assistance providers, social service agencies, public-benefit providers, and other resources throughout DuPage County.

Shelter providers have written procedures for admission, diversion, referral, voluntary and involuntary discharge, and coordination with homeless assistance providers within the CoC.

Admission policies are program/provider specific; all shelter providers use an intake process by phone or walk-in, and three will send staff out to meet with potential participants in public places. An initial evaluation is conducted that includes verifying and documenting eligibility for the program. Homeless persons found to be ineligible for the program are referred to other appropriate resources and provided transportation to those resources where the individual/family is willing to accept that referral. Persons admitted to shelter are assessed for entry into the CES in accordance with current CES procedures. Length of stay standards are program/provider specific and detailed within the provider policy/procedures manuals. Safeguards to meet the safety and shelter needs of special populations – victims of domestic and other violence, are program/provider specific. In instances where the shelter is unable to provide safeguards for the safety of program participants already in the shelter, or those requesting admission, referrals and connection to the domestic violence shelter providers for appropriate alternatives are provided.

Diversion practices are program/provider specific; all shelter providers refer and connect appropriate homeless individuals/families to housing assistance providers for permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and tenant rental assistance, and/or develop a temporary housing situation with family or friends to avoid entry into the homeless services system as possible.

Discharge practices are program/provider specific; all shelter providers post and/or provide participants with written notice of required behaviors, rules, or expected conduct for all participants while in the shelter program and consequences of disregard. Where possible, voluntary and involuntary discharges include planned next steps for the participant, referrals and information to housing assistance providers and community based agencies for social services, follow up procedures, and the shelter provider’s policy for continued assistance in the case of return to homelessness or the participant’s inability or unwillingness to remain within the program. Unplanned discharges are experienced by all shelter providers and there are program/provider specific practices for these instances. All shelter providers are continually assessing participants’ needs and progress, providing information and guidance on next steps throughout the shelter stay. Should the participant become unable or unwilling to continue in the program, some knowledge has been provided.

Shelter Renovation is an ESG funded activity for buildings owned by government entities or non-profit organizations. The renovation may include rehabilitation or conversion of a building into an emergency shelter. DuPage County ESG funds are not used for this purpose, State ESG funds may be.

Shelter Operations are funded by ESG for the cost of maintenance, rent, security, fuel, equipment, insurance, utilities, food, furnishings, and supplies necessary for the operation of the emergency shelter. Where no appropriate emergency shelter is available for a homeless individual or family a
hotel or motel voucher for that individual or family is included. DuPage County ESG funds are not used for shelter operations, State ESG funds are available for that purpose.

**Homelessness Prevention**
Homelessness Prevention under ESG may include assistance in the form of: short-term and medium-term rental assistance, rental arrears, rental application fees, security deposits, and other housing needs to prevent them from moving into an emergency shelter or place not intended for human habitation. Written policies and procedures are found in the Consistent Procedures and Policies, Outreach and Coordination of Services, and Procedural Guidance, sections below.

**Rapid Re-Housing**
Rapid Re-Housing under ESG may include assistance in the form of: short-term and medium-term rental assistance as needed to help persons living in an emergency shelter or other place not meant for human habitation. Written policies and procedures are found in the Consistent Procedures and Policies, Outreach and Coordination of Services, and Procedural Guidance, sections below.

**Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is our local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. All funded provider agencies within the Continuum of Care Homeless Provider Program, with the exception of domestic violence shelter and service providers, are required to complete client level data entry into HMIS and follow other procedures outlined in the Standard Operating Procedures, which can be found here: DuPage HMIS Standard Operating Procedures. The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides the policies, procedures, guidelines, and standards that govern the DuPage County Continuum HMIS operations, and the roles and responsibilities for participating agency staff.

**HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE ESG PROGRAM:**
The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing (HP-RRH) components of ESG are intended to have a meaningful impact on homelessness and housing stability for participating households by: preventing people from becoming homeless; diverting people into housing if they are currently applying for shelter; and helping people who become homeless to quickly return to permanent housing (See Eligible Supports for Emergency Solutions Grant). ESG consists of a Rapid Re-housing (RRH) component for those who are currently literally homeless and a Homelessness Prevention (HP) component for those who meet homeless criteria categories 2 & 4 (Imminent Risk of Homelessness, Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence) or those who meet HUD’s at risk of homeless criteria (see Homeless Eligibility & Verification Form). Eligible households under HP will be those with extremely low incomes, (below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI)) who lack resources and support networks for housing and who are at risk of homelessness. Participating households must agree to allow household demographic and service information to be shared between the participating agencies of the Homelessness Prevention Providers Committee of the DuPage Continuum of Care as well as those participating in the Northeast Illinois HMIS system as defined in the Baseline Privacy Notice and the DuPage County Continuum of Care – Authorization to Exchange Information for the Homelessness Prevention Provider Network. Agencies will enter client level information into the DuPage County’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) (See Confidentiality & HMIS Standards). Participating households must complete a case management assessment to determine eligibility and to develop goals toward housing stability. Agreeing to and participating toward achieving these goals are a requirement of both one time and continued assistance. Goals may be outlined in a Personal Recovery Plan, Housing Stability Plan or comparable document. The DuPage
County Continuum of Care (CoC) will target and prioritize households that have a demonstrated housing crisis, and that are assessed as likely to remain stably housed after this assistance. Eligibility must be re-assessed every 90 days (or less) for all HP participating households and annually (or less) for RRH participating households (See Eligibility Criteria). Households receiving any type of rent assistance under this program must reside or plan to reside in an eligible unit (See Eligible Units). ESG is not a mortgage assistance program and it is not intended to serve persons who need long-term and or intensive supports. ESG assistance is intended to stabilize housing. Maximum assistance under this program is 24 months in any 3-year period.

**Consistent Procedures and Practices:**

ESG – Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Providers (HP-RRH) agree to actively participate in the Homelessness Prevention Provider (HPP) Committee of the DuPage County Continuum and to follow this plan and all HUD rules, to make certain that households meet the eligibility criteria of the program, to eliminate duplication, and to ensure seamless homelessness prevention coverage in the county. All HP-RRH providers must enter client and service level data into the HMIS system in accordance with HUD rules, operating standards set by the DuPage Continuum of Care (CoC) and confidentiality laws. (See Confidentiality & HMIS Standards)

All eligible supports are outlined in the ESG Notice dated December 5, 2011. These supports are intentionally focused on housing – financial assistance to help pay for housing services designed to keep people in housing, or services to locate housing. DuPage HP-RRH provider agencies are required to follow the ESG Notice, HUD’s guidance, and the policies and procedure’s within this program plan. An agency may not develop more strict guidelines for screening eligibility and service provision without approval of the DuPage County CoC.

**Outreach & Coordination of Services**

Other available resources will be used before ESG funds are used in homeless prevention. In addition, the HPP Committee will collaborate with other agencies to ensure that all households at risk will have full access to the HP-RRH program, including people who are unsheltered, or residing in area shelters, transitional housing programs, residing in temporary housing assisted by townships and other human service entities.

The Homelessness Prevention Providers Committee has developed a uniform brochure on all Homelessness Prevention and Rehousing Programs including HP-RRH.

Agency providers will comply with all Fair Housing and Civil Rights requirements.

The HPP Committee has developed a referral system between shelter providers and providers of homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing. Written referrals with authorizations to share information are sent to a central location, assessed and sent to the most appropriate ESG provider based on the household’s needs, and the agencies’ budgets, services and capacity at the time of the referral. Agencies promptly reach out to the household to facilitate the assistance.

The DuPage County Continuum of Care is utilizing a CES to prioritize placements in DuPage County Continuum of Care Programs and to achieve better outcomes for those experiencing a housing crisis. The CES policy aims to minimize the time one experiences a housing crisis; link clients to the most appropriate housing intervention; target Permanent Supportive Housing resources to those who are the most vulnerable with the most intensive needs; and provide system level outcomes and reporting. Contained in this policy are expectations of community-wide standardization of

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assessment, placement, and prioritization resulting in the ability to target HUD funded programs most effectively to those with the highest needs and the greatest barriers. The policy addresses success, standard processes for assessment and recording of eligibility factors within HMIS, outreach, application, and prioritization. The CoC agencies work together under the direction of the CoC Needs Assessment Committee, to develop policies and procedures following HUD’s most recent guidance. The most recent CES policy reflects the new definition of chronically homeless as defined in CoC Program interim rule as amended by the Final Rule on Defining “Chronically Homeless” and accepts the orders of priority established in prior notice CPD-16-011. The agencies continue to work toward the development of prioritization processes for the Transitional Housing, Rapid Re-Housing, and Homelessness Prevention for the homeless and at-risk populations, including youth and victims of domestic violence.

Continuum agencies will provide quality services and appropriate referral linkages to assist homeless individuals and those who are at risk of homelessness obtain appropriate support services. This includes referrals and linkages to permanent housing, medical and mental health treatment, counseling, and similar type services essential to achieve independent living.

**ELIGIBLE SUPPORTS FOR EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT**

**Procedural Guidance**

- HP- ESG will only provide assistance to households residing in, homeless within or moving to DuPage County.
- HP- ESG will utilize geographic boundaries as outlined in the Agency List and Community Served for all services other than Financial Education and Legal Services which will be provided by DuPage County Community Services Family Self-Sufficiency Program and Prairie State Legal Services respectively. Exceptions may be made for clients who have an ongoing relationship with any ESG agency. However, exceptions must be decided in coordination with the agency responsible for that geographical area & the agency providing the service. The Agency List and Community Served document is updated as necessary at the discretion of the HPP Committee, HPP Executive Committee or Leadership Committee of the DuPage County Continuum of Care. Geographic boundaries are not applicable to clients who are homeless. *(see Outreach and)*

ESG assistance cannot be provided to eligible individuals or families for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided through another federal, state, or local housing program. There are two cost types: Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services (Includes: Moving costs, rental application fees, security deposit, last month’s rent, utility deposit and utility payment) and Tenant Based Rental Assistance (includes arrears, short and medium term rent). Eligible households may be served using these two cost types in the categories of Rapid Rehousing assistance or Homelessness Prevention assistance. If a participant is receiving rental assistance under another program, ESG funds may not be used for rental assistance during that same time period. However, it could be used to pay for another cost type such as security deposit or utility payments. For example, a homeless veteran entering a HUD-VASH project that will assist him with his monthly rent may receive security deposit assistance through ESG funds.

- When providing rental assistance and security deposit, the lease must be in the client’s name and signed by the tenant and the landlord. The assistance (voucher and payment) is made to
the property owner/property complex only, and is not to exceed the amount owed to the owner for rent and/or security deposit.

- Rent may not exceed Fair Market Rents for that unit size AND must meet rent reasonableness standards for that specific unit (see Fair Market Rent Limits and the Rent Reasonableness Standard).
- Total rent assistance is not to exceed 24 months in any 3-year period.
- Other ESG assistance must also be reasonable. ESG documentation should demonstrate that the ESG provider completed due diligence to ensure reasonable costs.
- Financial assistance under HP-RRH is provided in voucher form only, and no payments are made directly to participating households.
- ESG providers must track ESG services separately from other funds. Likewise, services provided under the components of Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing must be tracked independently of each other. ESG funds provided via the State of Illinois must be tracked separately from ESG funds received by the County. Finally, funds must be tracked separately by grant Fiscal Year.

**Tenant Based Rental Assistance**

HUD advises that ESG assistance should be “need-based”, meaning that providing agencies should determine the amount of assistance based on the amount necessary to prevent the program participant from becoming homeless or returning to homelessness in the near future. In no case is the ESG assistance provided to exceed 24 months in any 3-year period.

The goals for housing stabilization set by the case managers with the adult household members will include an assessment of income, expenses and the basic necessities required to maintain housing and stability. A budget will be developed and agreed upon prior to the approval of rental assistance. If ongoing rent assistance is projected, the budget will be monitored by the case manager. Rent assistance may be planned and approved in advance, but approvals are not to exceed the 90 day eligibility period for households receiving homeless prevention or one-year for households receiving rapid-re-housing assistance. Rent payments to the landlord will not be paid significantly in advance.

To ensure a consistent application of standards in determining rent amounts for ESG participating households the ESG provider will be responsible for determining and communicating the amount of rent to be provided, as well as empowering the participating household to assume graduating levels of financial responsibility. All ESG Providers will determine assistance based on identified variables, including income, rent, other financial issues, etc. Client rental payment for tenant based rent assistance will be determined based on the amount of assistance required to meet their monthly expenses (i.e. total monthly income (-) minus total monthly expenses monthly = rent assistance amount). A lesser amount of rent may be required of the client in accordance with the program plan (such as establishing savings for housing stability or planned debt payments - i.e., client has a garnishment, pay day loan, huge child support arrearage or is working with legal or credit repair for debt reduction, etc.).

ESG providers will obtain new income verification for the household as planned on a quarterly or annual basis. All households must meet income and risk criteria for continued assistance. The family’s rent portion will be recalculated accordingly and will be reflected in the assistance. Agencies have the option of reviewing income and rent assistance prior to the planned recertification date when such a recertification would impact assistance needed for housing stability.
Agencies will provide assistance with the expectation that households will be able to sustain housing independently in the foreseeable future.

Tenant Based Rental Assistance is available to both HP and RR households. It consists of the following cost types:

**Short-term Assistance:**
Short-term assistance is provided for up to a maximum of 3 months. A housing stability plan will be developed with the household with the expectation that the household will be stable after assistance. A household that initially qualifies for short-term (1-3 months) assistance can transition into medium term assistance at the discretion of the case manager.

**Medium-term Assistance**
Medium-term assistance can be provided from 4 months up to a maximum of 24 months.

**Rent Arrears**
Rent arrearage assistance is not to exceed a one-time payment of up to 6 months. Rent arrearage is counted toward the 24 month maximum. When providing rental arrearage assistance, the ESG agency must ensure and document that the payment will enable the eligible household to remain in the housing unit for which the arrears are being paid or enable the household to move to another unit. ESG funds cannot be used to pay for rental arrearage assistance in which there was no written lease in place at the time unless an oral lease is enforceable by State law.

**Late Payment Fees**
Payment of late fees is only allowed with one-time rent arrears assistance.

**Housing Relocation & Stabilization Services (HRSS)**
Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services consist of Financial Assistance and Stabilization Services and are available to both HP and RR households.

**Financial Assistance**
Eligible financial assistance costs covered under housing relocation & stabilization services are listed below (HRSS)

**Rental Application Fee**
ESG providers may assist program participants with rental applications fees as long as they are only fees charged by the property owner/manager to all applicants.

**Security Deposit**
There is no expectation that security deposits be returned to the ESG provider agency. Security deposits may be used for damages as defined in the lease or returned to the tenant for use on the next unit should the tenant move in the future.

Security Deposits are to be used for permanent housing only. Clients that are moving into a halfway house or need “program fees” are not eligible.
Per HUD guidelines, ESG agencies will only provide the equivalent of 2 months’ rent maximum for security deposit to eligible households. Exceptions are not allowed.

**Last month’s rent**
If necessary, an ESG provider agency may assist with last month’s rent payment at the time the owner is paid the security deposit and first month’s rent. The payment must not exceed one month’s rent.

**Utility Deposits**
There is no expectation that utility deposits be returned to the ESG provider agency. ESG provider agencies may only assist program participants with the standard deposit required by utility companies for gas, electric, water and sewage service.

**Utility Payment and Arrearage Assistance**
To receive assistance with utility deposit or utility arrearage a household must meet applicable housing risk and income eligibility. Agencies will document that utilities cannot be maintained or connected without assistance.

ESG agencies will only provide eligible individuals or households with up to 24 months of utility payments within any 3-year period, including up to 6 months of arrears per service, provided that the client or a member of his/her household has an account in his/her name with a utility company. ESG funds can only be utilized for provision of gas, electric, water, sewer, and garbage collection services; not phone or cable.

As with rent assistance, utility assistance cannot be provided to eligible individuals or families for the same period of time and for the same cost types that are being provided through another federal or state subsidy program (LIHEAP). When assisting with utility arrearages, ESG Providers must complete due diligence to determine monthly costs and document the method used.

**Moving & Storage Costs**
Reasonable moving costs, such as truck rental, hiring a moving company, or temporary storage fees can only be provided to eligible households for a maximum of 3 months, provided that fees are accrued after participant is deemed eligible and before the participant moves into permanent housing. Storage fee arrears are not eligible. ESG agencies must ensure moving costs are reasonable and document the due diligence in finding a reasonable cost.

**Stabilization Services**

**Housing Search and Placement**
ESG providers may provide services or activities necessary to assist program participants in locating, obtaining, and retaining suitable permanent housing. Housing should be mutually agreed upon by both the Case Manager and the participants Head of Household. At a minimum, housing should be clean, decent, well-maintained, affordable, and in a neighborhood that meets the needs of the family. Locating adequate housing is the responsibility of the family with assistance from a Case Manager as needed. The Case Manager may contact landlords directly if advocacy is needed. If needed, financial assistance with application fees is available. The Case Manager should keep abreast of current rental markets, landlords to avoid, and appropriately refer families to partnering
landlords. Referrals will not be made to landlords that have repeatedly proven uncooperative with the ESG provider or a partner agency, have refused to reimburse due funds, do not adequately maintain properties, or have otherwise abused tenants’ rights.

Per HUD, costs under Housing Stability Case Managements include: assessing (initial and periodic re-evaluations), arranging, coordinating, and monitoring the delivery of services to facilitate housing stability for participants. Services cannot exceed 30 days during the period participant is seeking permanent housing and 24 month’s during the period participant is living in permanent housing.

During short-term assistance, case management includes: assessment; housing stability planning; and referrals. The household is expected to achieve stability goals in 90 days or less. Suggestions may be made for goals to be completed by the ESG participants without case management support. However, per HUD Guidelines, each household receiving ongoing assistance must meet with the case manager on a monthly basis, unless prohibited by Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) or Family Violence and Prevention Services Act (FVSPA).

Medium term case management calls for regularly defined (monthly or more frequent is acceptable) face-to-face contact between household and case manager. Case management activities may include the same activities of short-term case management. Medium term case management is required during the months of medium term assistance and is appropriate when considerable barriers or need for considerable coordination and advocacy, case plan is expected to last more than 90 days.

**Mediation**

Mediation services between the participant and property owner/manager are only eligible if necessary to prevent loss of permanent housing.

**Credit Repair**

Per HUD, Credit Repair can include credit counseling and other services necessary to assist with critical skills related to household budgeting, managing money, accessing a free personal credit report, and resolving personal credit problems. ESG participants will have access to attend DuPage County Community Services Family Self-Sufficiency Money Management and Credit Repair workshops. Additional credit counseling services will be available at the discretion of ESG providers according to need and available resources.

**Legal Services**

Legal Services must be necessary to resolve a legal problem that prohibits the participant from obtaining permanent housing or will likely result in the loss of permanent housing. It may include landlord/tenant matters; child support; guardianship, paternity, emancipation, and legal separation; orders of protection and civil remedies for victims of DV; appeal of veteran’s and public benefit claim denials; and the resolution of outstanding criminal warrants. Legal services related to immigration and citizenship or mortgages are ineligible under ESG. Prairie State Legal Service (PSLS) is the ESG Legal service provider in DuPage County. Participants requiring housing related legal services will be referred to PSLS for available services and legal advice.

**Determining & Documenting ESG Eligibility**
All households must be assessed for eligibility and appropriateness of ESG services, via an initial consultation and eligibility assessment with a case manager or other authorized representative who can determine eligibility and the appropriate type of service needed, upon entry. Households receiving Rapid Re-housing services must be re-assessed at least annually and households receiving HP-RRH services must be reassessed for eligibility at least once every 90 days. Households which do not meet all eligibility criteria are not eligible to receive any ESG services - including financial assistance and housing relocation and stabilization services. Households may become ineligible for ESG services if they do not meet the terms of the Recovery Plan at any point as determined by the ESG provider, or if ESG services are no longer the most appropriate service to stabilize housing. (See Separation Guidelines)

After initial eligibility, the ESG household is determined to remain eligible until 90 days or file closure, whichever comes first. ESG providers can choose to require re-evaluation each time a program participant experiences a change in income, household composition, or need for assistance.

ESG case files must show sufficient documentation of eligibility and determination of assistance. Guidance on acceptable documentation may be found at www.hudexchange.info (Refer to HUD’s issued guidance! Homeless Status: Recordkeeping Requirements and At-Risk Status and Income: Recordkeeping Requirements). The expectation will be that documentation standards are of the highest standard reasonable. If a lower standard of documentation is used (for example, self-statement of income) the agency will document attempts made to secure documentation and proceed only when reasonable and necessary to avoid or alleviate a homeless situation of the applicant household. Based on this guidance, our continuum has developed a format to document Homeless status and define the necessary documents to verify. (See Homeless Eligibility & Verification Form.)

Eligibility criteria other than listed in HUD guidance or this program plan must be approved by DuPage County CoC, documented in written policies and procedures, and must be applied consistently.

Households must be eligible under each and all categories below:

**Eligibility Criteria:**

**Homeless Prevention (HP)**
- ESG HP assistance can be available to individuals and families that are in Homeless Categories 2, 3, and 4, but are not literally homeless (see HUD Guidance Homeless Status: Recordkeeping Requirements) OR those in At-Risk of Homelessness Categories 1, 2, and 3. (see At-a-Glance – Criteria for Definition of At Risk of Homelessness)
- At initial assessment, households must have income below 30% Area Median Income (AMI). (see www.huduser.org/DATASETS/il.html.) And must lack resources and support networks that would prevent them from moving into an emergency shelter or other place described in Category 1 of the homeless definition.
- At each 90-day re-certification, to continue receiving ESG service households must have income that is at or below 30% of AMI, and must lack sufficient resources and support networks to retain housing without ESG assistance.

**Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)**
Rapid Re-housing assistance is only available to individuals and families who meet the definition for **Literally Homeless Category 1** under the Homeless Definition Final Rule as follows (see **HUD Guidance Homeless Status: Recordkeeping Requirements**):

**Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate residence, meaning:**

a. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; OR
b. Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs) OR
C. Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution;

- There is no income threshold at initial assessment
- At annual re-certification, households must have income that is at or below 30% of AMI, AND must have no appropriate subsequent housing options AND must lack sufficient resources and support networks to retain housing.

**All Households (HP or RRH):**

- Must agree to allow household information to be shared with participating agencies of the Homelessness Prevention Provider Committee including via the HMIS reporting system; ESG funding recipients must be entered into HMIS for reporting requirements
- Must complete a comprehensive assessment of needs and service plans for housing stabilization
- ESG funding recipients must be willing to create and engage in a Recovery Plan and case management as needed to acquire and maintain stable housing (independent of this assistance within a defined time period not to exceed 24 months)
- Households may be required to complete critical goals prior to being approved for ESG financial assistance. Such goals may include obtaining a source of income in the household as ESG financial assistance for rent will not stabilize a household alone.
- If receiving assistance with utility deposit or utility arrearage, household must show, in addition to imminent risk or homelessness, financial need, valid disconnect notice or proof that utilities will not be connected without assistance. As with all activities under ESG, assistance must be sought first from other resources Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and ESG assistance cannot be for the same cost type or time period as other assistance.
- If receiving rental arrears, short-term or medium-term rent assistance, the household must be living in or planning to move to a residence which meets HUD’s Rent Reasonableness Standard, Fair Market Rent Standards and housing habitability standards. (See Eligible Units);

**Guidance for Determining & Documenting Housing Options, Resources & Support Networks**

In addition to determining homeless status and other eligibility criteria, ESG agencies are required to assess whether an applicant has alternatives to ESG assistance to obtain or maintain housing. This includes an assessment of financial resources, assets, family or support networks which may translate to alternative housing options. DuPage County COC understands, due to the diversity and complexity of our resident’s needs and resources, there is no standardized tool which will accurately predict the future housing situation for all applicants. DuPage County COC will rely on the professional judgment of our ESG agency staff to assess, during their interview, housing options, resource and support networks and whether households need ESG assistance. The conclusion of this
assessment will be documented in the file by the staff person conducting the assessment using the Housing Options, Resource & Support Networks portion of our standardized tool Homeless Eligibility & Verification Form.

To provide guidance on specific manners of assessment see below.

**Financial Resources**

Each file will contain a monthly budget which incorporates a household’s income, resources and expenses. The budget is only required to look at expenses necessary to maintain housing and basic needs. However, agencies may also include debt payment or other expenses, including savings for housing stability, if deemed appropriate by the housing stabilization plan.

When mainstream resources are available in the community, the ESG agency may require the ESG participating household to obtain or maintain these resources as a condition of assistance.

**Assets**

Household assets are **always** to be assessed to determine income eligibility as defined by HUD. A review of assets is also a relevant piece of determining whether a household has financial resources to obtain or maintain housing.

Cash, savings and checking accounts are to be considered tangible assets available for the household budget as described above. Household reported cash, and bank accounts must be reviewed in the initial and recertification assessment process.

Tangible assets such as furnishings, automobiles, jewelry and clothing may be retained by the household and are not required to be a part of this analysis.

Assets designed by law for retirement (e.g., IRA, Roth IRA, 401K accounts) will not be a required aspect of the determination of the household’s resources for applicants younger than 59 1/2.

For financial assistance, arrears and short-term rent assistance, agencies are not required to consider other assets (e.g. retirement accounts, certificate of deposit) in their assessment of the household’s resources.

For ongoing tenant based rental assistance, agencies are required to consider available assets (e.g., Certificate of Deposits, Investments) in determining whether to include use of these assets in the housing stabilization plan. The following questions are used as guidance for assessing and documenting this decision:

- Does the household report any assets?
- Can the assets be converted to cash quickly and without excessive penalty?
- Is the asset substantial enough, in and of itself, to assist the household in independently sustaining housing without risk?
- If the answer is yes to all of the above, the agency will **require** the household to strategically use the assets to stabilize future housing. ESG funded Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services may be offered at this time.
- If the assets are not substantial, or may not be converted to cash quickly and without cost and the household would only reasonably delay homelessness, the agency may plan...
strategic use of these assets in the housing stabilization plan but use of assets is not required by the COC.

For the purpose of this guidance, ‘substantial’ refers to assets which exceed 2 months of basic household expenses as defined in financial resources above. ‘Without significant penalty’ means a loss of 25% or more of available assets, including potential tax penalties.

Social Support Networks including Family and Friends
At the time of application, ESG providers will explore housing options with all applicants. It is the clear intention of the DuPage County COC that viable housing alternatives will be safe, and adequate.

Case managers will explore current or future alternatives that participants have to ESG assistance. These alternatives include financial resources toward the monthly budget, such as family support, church contributions, or housing alternatives which may include staying with family or friends. Case managers will explore these options in their interview and document, in the file, their concluding assessment of whether these are viable alternatives now or in the future. Viable options would include those which are safe, adequate and unlikely to place the household members at future risk of homelessness (e.g. breaking a lease where the landlord will enter a financial judgment).

Non-Duplication
ESG specifies a household previously deemed ineligible, but which becomes eligible may continue to receive assistance but is not to exceed a total of 24 months of assistance within a 3 year period. Additional financial supports will be determined at the discretion of the ESG agency using geographic boundaries and criteria for Non-selection/Non-continuation.

Current HPP Committee guidelines state: “Households should not receive assistance from any homelessness prevention provider fund (IDHS, ESG, HPRP, CSBG, and EFSP) more than one time in any twelve month period. Exceptions may be considered in extraordinary circumstances, when necessary, to put a multi-month package together for the client, or when funding is near depletion.” This guideline will stand true in DPC for ESG financial assistance only. Services under ESG Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services may be provided to eligible clients regardless of previous financial assistance received by the household. Exceptions are at the discretion of the ESG providing agency. Best practices call for any exception to be made in coordination with the first providing agency.

ESG providers report on all adults receiving financial assistance for inclusion in the non-duplication list and in HMIS. ESG providers must have valid authorization to share information via the non-duplication list and HMIS. (See Confidentiality & HMIS Standards)

Non-Selection/Non-Continuation (Initial/Continuing Eligibility)
The ESG agency will make decisions regarding non-selection for participation in ESG at initial application or at recertification due to any of the reasons defined below. Criteria apply to both initial application and at time of quarterly or annual reassessment.

Please note: violent or drug related criminal activity related to a household receiving any type of rental assistance is grounds for immediate termination. Likewise, misrepresentation of eligibility by any household also provides reason for immediate separation from any program assistance.
• Household does not meet all eligibility criteria; OR
• Household does not complete all steps to establish eligibility in a timely manner; OR
• Misuse of program services by any household member; OR
• Household does not complete or refuses to engage in Recovery Plan objectives; OR
• Household non-readiness, as determined by the ESG providing agency, due to:
  o Lack of “key” services from service providers in the community or an unwillingness/inability by the household to link to such key services; AND/OR
  o Household’s misuse of resources, including personal resources such as income and benefits

| Key resources | are those resources or services that are integral to the household’s ability to achieve self-sufficiency. |
| Self-Sufficiency | is defined as the household’s ability to maintain rent and household expenses independent of the ESG within a defined period of time. |

• At the discretion of the ESG providing agency, based on the household’s use of current and past agency services - Including but not limited to: a review of the client’s previous participation in similar agency services, such as homelessness prevention services, short-term case management or some equivalent data.

The ESG providing agency will make all reasonable efforts to link clients to services or advocate for provision of services before making a decision of non-selection.

SEPARATION GUIDELINES
All assistance provided under ESG is subject to eligibility requirements and program guidelines. Final decisions regarding non-continuation will be relayed in writing, to the household, by the ESG providing agency. The ESG agency will provide, when appropriate, information about helpful outside resources and the opportunity to re-apply to the program or to enter the program at a later date. Per HUD guidelines, provider agencies must exercise judgment and examine all extenuating circumstances in determining when violations warrant termination, so that a program participant’s assistance is terminated only in the most severe cases.

A formal separation process will, at a minimum, consist of the following:
• Written notice which includes date of termination, reason for termination, opportunity for appeal, and, if appropriate, any helpful resources to assist the participating household to maintain housing stability.
• Opportunity to appeal – Participating households which are selected for non-continuation are entitled to request a review of the decision with the opportunity to present oral or written objections before a person other than the person (or a subordinate of the person) who made or approved the termination decision. Final decisions regarding the appeal will be provided promptly in writing.

ELIGIBLE UNITS
See ESG Interim Rule 24 CFR Parts 84, 85, 91\(^1\), & 576 for information regarding conflicts of interest, Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunity Requirements, Fair Housing, and Civil Rights laws.

Fair Market Rent Limits and the Rent Reasonableness Standard
All units which receive Tenant Based Rental Assistance under the Emergency Solutions Program must have a monthly gross rent which is at or below the most recently published HUD rents (see http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr.html). The monthly gross rent must also meet HUD’s rent reasonableness standard, meaning the landlord attests that the gross rent charged for a unit must be reasonable in relation to the rents being charged during the same time period for comparable units in the private, unassisted market and must not be in excess of rents being charged by the owner for comparable non-luxury unassisted units. These standards of Fair Market Rent and Reasonableness apply to arrearages as well as rent going forward. See HUD’s guidance on calculating FMR & determining Rent Reasonableness.

As the HUD Fair Market Rent is low for DuPage County and the DuPage Housing Authority has been granted an exception payment standard which exceeds the HUD rent, the DuPage County Continuum may request a waiver for this regulation. Any change in our Fair Market Standard will be added as an addendum to this plan. In the absence of an addendum, our Fair Market Rent standard is as set by HUD and may be found with the published datasets at: www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr

Fair Market Rent refers to a calculation to determine the Gross Rent. Gross rent is the sum of the rent paid to the owner plus, if the tenant pays separately for utilities, the monthly allowance for utilities established by the public housing authority for the area in which the housing is located. For purposes of calculating the FMR, utilities include electricity, gas, water and sewer, and trash removal services but not cable or satellite television service, or internet service. If the owner pays for all utilities, then gross rent equals the rent paid to the owner.

The FMRs for unit sizes larger than four bedrooms are calculated by adding 15 percent to the four bedroom FMR, for each extra bedroom. For example, the FMR for a five bedroom unit is 1.15 times the four bedroom FMR, and the FMR for a six bedroom unit is 1.30 times the four bedroom FMR.

To document rent reasonableness, the agency must determine rent reasonableness using one of the following methods:
- Reviewing comparable units advertised for rent
- Written verification from the property owner of comparability of rent charged with other units owned.

The ESG providing agency should consider the following when determining rent reasonable:
- The location, quality, age, size, and type of the unit
- Any amenities, services and utilities to be provided by the owner

Documentation of the comparable review will be retained in the participant file.

Visit www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/library/forms/rentreasonablechecklist.doc

Minimum Habitability Standard
HUD has set minimum standards for permanent housing. ESG funds may only be used to help a program participant remain or move into housing which meets these minimum habitability standards. This includes funds for Housing Stabilization Services as well as Tenant Based Rental Assistance.

As stated in the Federal Register, minimum habitability standards the housing must meet all the following criteria: (1) Structure and materials. The structures must be structurally sound to protect residents from the elements and not pose any threat to the health and safety of the residents. (2) Space

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and security. Each resident must be provided adequate space and security for themselves and their belongings. Each resident must be provided an acceptable place to sleep. (3) Interior air quality. Each room or space must have a natural or mechanical means of ventilation. The interior air must be free of pollutants at a level that might threaten or harm the health of residents. (4) Water supply. The water supply must be free from contamination. (5) Sanitary facilities. Residents must have access to sufficient sanitary facilities that are in proper operating condition, are private, and are adequate for personal cleanliness and the disposal of human waste. (6) Thermal environment. The housing must have any necessary heating/cooling facilities in proper operating condition. (7) Illumination and electricity. The structure must have adequate natural or artificial illumination to permit normal indoor activities and support health and safety. There must be sufficient electrical sources to permit the safe use of electrical appliances in the structure. (8) Food preparation. All food preparation areas must contain suitable space and equipment to store, prepare, and serve food in a safe and sanitary manner. (9) Sanitary conditions. The housing must be maintained in a sanitary condition. (10) Fire safety. (i) There must be a second means of exiting the building in the event of fire or other emergency. (ii) Each unit must include at least one battery-operated or hard-wired smoke detector, in proper working condition, on each occupied level of the unit. Smoke detectors must be located, to the extent practicable, in a hallway adjacent to a bedroom. If the unit is occupied by hearing impaired persons, smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for hearing-impaired persons in each bedroom occupied by a hearing-impaired person. (iii) The public areas of all housing must be equipped with a sufficient number, but not less than one for each area, of battery-operated or hard-wired smoke detectors. Public areas include, but are not limited to, laundry rooms, community rooms, day care centers, hallways, stairwells, and other common areas.

Inspections will include a visual lead-based paint inspection when tenants include a pregnant female, or a child under six years of age and in houses built prior to 1978. This is in compliance with HUD’s lead-based paint regulations which appear within title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations as part 35(24 CFR 35).

DuPage County’s HP-RRH program will utilize County staff members who have completed Housing Quality Standard training to perform the requisite habitability inspections. The habitability inspection forms are appended to this plan. Should an inspection be necessary outside of DuPage County, DuPage County staff will either perform the habitability inspection or contact the local participating jurisdiction or housing authority for assistance in obtaining an inspection.

Housing inspections completed by the DuPage or Aurora Housing Authorities for units that will receive a HUD-VASH or Section 8 voucher are acceptable as long as they have been completed within 60 days of the clients ESG application. Client files must contain documentation from the respective Housing Authority to confirm that the unit passed inspection prior to a provider issuing financial assistance.

**Habitability Inspection Referral Process**

The Provider will complete a written referral on the form provided, and will fax/email the completed form to DuPage County Community Services, Single Family Rehabilitation Program. A qualified inspector will coordinate and complete the housing inspection. The inspector will return the completed Habitability Standard Form, as needed, in addition to the completed referral form, to verify the inspection status. The forms will be returned to the original Provider for the participant’s file.

**Lease Requirements**
The provision of ESG rent assistance and security deposits seeks to ensure permanent housing stabilization.

- The landlord must agree to work with the ESG agency to accept vouchered rent payment and to stop eviction proceedings upon receipt of signed voucher.
- Households may be assisted at the end of their lease term, if a move to another housing unit is necessary in order to ensure future housing stabilization.
- Month-to-Month leases – month-to-month leases reflect transience, and should be avoided in general. HUD does not specifically exclude month-to-month leases. The ESG agency will attempt to engage the landlord to work on a long-term lease arrangement when this benefits the client. IF ESG assistance is used to assist a household secure new housing, HUD requires a minimum of a one-year lease.
- ESG agencies must have a copy of the valid lease to assist with rent unless financial assistance is limited solely to payment of rental arrears. Valid leases must include signatures of both the client and/or a member of the household and the owner/authorized representative, and must be dated.
  - Recipients of ESG funds must have a written lease or rental agreement, the legal right to reside in the unit and prove responsibility for paying the rent. As a general matter, if the eligible person is not named on a valid lease/rental agreement either as a tenant or an authorized occupant, the person has no legal right to reside in the unit and is therefore not eligible for rental assistance. However, if an applicant is listed as an occupant on a lease agreement and can prove through paid receipts in their name, money orders or cancelled checks that they pay rent or utility bills, even if the accounts are in the name of another household member, it is permissible to assist the applicant. The Grantee and project sponsor have responsibility for ensuring the eligibility of each household assisted with ESG funds.
  - Oral Leases, if enforceable by State law, are acceptable when assistance is solely for rental arrears.
  - A sublease is considered a legal lease. However, the grantee should be sure that the relationship between the participant/grantee/sub grantee and the landlord is not in violation of the conflict of interest provisions as stated in the ESG Notice. For example, the sublease agreement should not be between relatives or other parties where there is a potential conflict of interest. Only the owner of record or Management Company may be paid.
  - Rooms to rent and shared housing arrangements with separate leases - Applicants residing in shared housing programs (e.g. Community Housing Association of DuPage SOLO) that provide separate leases for each tenant may be eligible for assistance if they are a valid leaseholder. Single room occupancy rent reasonableness and FMR Limits apply.

**Rental Assistance Agreement**

Rental Assistance cannot be provided without an agreement between the ESG provider and the owner/property manager.

- ESG provider will ensure that a rental assistance agreement between the provider and the owner/property manager is completed for each participant household receiving rental assistance.
- ESG providers must ensure timely rent payments are made on behalf of participant households receiving ongoing financial assistance. ESG regulations specifically prohibit late payment fees incurred by the ESG provider under Rental Assistance Agreement with the owner/property manager.
- The Agreement must contain the same rent payment due date, grace period and late payment penalty requirements as the program participant’s lease.
- A rental assistance agreement between the ESG HP Provider and property owner or property management will include a requirement that the owner copy the agency on any notice to the program participant to vacate housing or any complaint to commence an eviction. The agreement will specify the term of the anticipated assistance to be provided.
- The rental assistance agreement will terminate and no further rental assistance payments may be made under that agreement if the program participant moves out of the housing unit, the lease terminates and is not renewed, or the program participant becomes ineligible to receive ESG rental assistance.

**HMIS Standards**

The purpose of a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is to gather information about the extent and nature of homelessness to assist planners, policy makers and providers of services to the homeless to design the most effective policies and programs, to coordinate care, and better serve clients. HMIS provides an effective and usable case management tool and by collecting and analyzing client, program and system-level data to report on the extent and nature of homelessness. HMIS provides the ability to: develop unduplicated counts of clients served at the local level; analyze patterns of use of people entering and exiting the homeless system; and evaluate the effectiveness of those systems.

The DuPage County Continuum of Care participates in the “Northeast Illinois Collaborative HMIS” (NIL HMIS). The NIL HMIS is a shared, regional HMIS managed by a Technical Lead Agency. DuPage County Continuum of Care Leadership Committee oversees the DuPage County HMIS Lead and is primarily responsible for all local HMIS activity.

ALL DuPage ESG providing agencies, with the exception of domestic violence shelter and service providers, must enter client-level data into the DuPage County Continuum of Care’s HMIS system. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides the policies, procedures, guidelines, and standards that govern the DuPage County Continuum HMIS operations, and the roles and responsibilities for participating agency staff. The SOP addresses roles and responsibilities, privacy, data quality, security and offers standardized forms for agency use. The SOP is reviewed annually and updated as necessary by the HMIS Committee in coordination with other committees and approved by the Leadership Committee of the DuPage County Continuum of Care.

All DuPage ESG programs are governed by the same minimum standards of client privacy protection within HMIS. A Baseline Privacy Notice describes how client information may be used and disclosed and how clients can get access to their information. Each ESG agency will either adopt the Baseline Privacy Notice or develop a Privacy Notice which meets and exceeds all minimum requirements set forth in the Baseline Privacy Notice.

ESG funded agencies will ensure all clients are aware of the adopted Privacy Notice, have access to it and are notified of their rights regarding data sharing. ESG funded agencies will make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, language barriers or education barriers. If the agency has a website the Privacy Notice will be published on that website. Agencies review their program requirements to determine what industry privacy standards must be met that exceed the minimum standards outlined in this Privacy Plan and Baseline Privacy Notice (examples: Substance Abuse Providers covered by 24 CFR Part 2, HIPPAA Covered Agencies, Legal Service Providers) and review the most updated HUD HMIS Privacy Standards (currently: 2004 HUD HMIS Privacy Standards (69
Federal Register 45888)). Agencies assign only end users who can meet End User responsibilities and designate one user that has been trained to technologically uphold the agency’s privacy responsibilities.

HMIS End Users will uphold the client’s privacy. End Users have the responsibility to understand their agency’s Privacy Notice, be able to explain their agency’s Privacy Notice to clients, follow their agency’s Privacy Notice, know where to refer the client if they cannot answer the client’s questions, and present their agency’s Privacy Notice to the client before entering any information.

End Users will be trained to consistently enter data that is complete, timely and accurate according to approved workflows documented. Workflow documents are used for both training and reference to ensure proper understanding and use of the Homeless Management Information System. End Users are encouraged to contact the HMIS Help Desk for support as needed, HMIS@dupageco.org.

In addition to a valid authorization to release information from the head of household and each adult member, each HP-RRH agency has agreed to participate in HPP and/or RRH provider groups within HMIS to share information required for reporting purposes and to prevent duplication of services. See DuPage Homelessness Prevention Partnership Community Partnership Agreement 2015 (or most recent version).

Effective May 1, 2015, the CoC expanded data sharing for service providers who offer Rapid Rehousing (RRH) and Homelessness Prevention (HP) service type activities. Data elements shared will include: client demographics, case manager, entry exit information and service information. The purpose of this expanded data sharing is to improve service collaboration and increase effectiveness of funds through reduced duplication of data collection and improved referral linkages.

Additional information can be found at http://www.dupageco.org/HMIS; and www.hudexchange.info

TRACKING SERVICES AND OUTCOMES
Services and program outputs must be tracked according to HMIS standards. The HPP and the Leadership Committees of the Continuum of Care determined that the HMIS generated APR and the annual DuPage County COC Homelessness Prevention Reporting Tool are, together, sufficient to track outcomes. All HP-RRH agencies will complete a follow up call in 90 days from the date households were exited from HP-RRH to determine whether the household remained stably housed. Additional performance outcomes may be proposed by the Continuum of Care Leadership Committee. Consistent HMIS data entry will increase potential for continuum-wide HP-RRH performance.

CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY
Each HP-RRH providing agency must implement procedures to ensure the confidentiality of records pertaining to any individual provided with assistance and that the address or location of any assisted housing will not be made public.

To facilitate coordination, to ensure non-duplication and to aid in the consistent reporting of DPC HP-ESG services provided within the HMIS service system, all participating adults must be informed of the HMIS Privacy Policy. Participant’s information will be utilized and shared per the standards in the Privacy Plan and policy. All participating adults are required to sign an Authorization to Release Information, including household demographics, income, and service information and case plan that may be shared amongst all providers in the Homelessness Prevention Provider Committee. Participating household members may decline sharing of certain assessment information which is not
essential to coordination/non-duplication. It is the responsibility of the HP-RRH provider agency to protect the confidential nature of such information. However, participant refusal to share essential information for service coordination/non-duplication will affect eligibility for HP-RRH services.

**Recordkeeping Requirement**
Sufficient records must be established and maintained by ESG Providers to demonstrate that all ESG requirements are being met.

**Record Retention Period**
ESG providers must maintain documentation on all households seeking assistance. If determined ineligible, documentation must reflect reasons. Documentation of participant eligibility and assistance provided must be retained for 5 years after the expenditure of all funds from the grant under which the program participant was served.

**Reporting Requirements**
ESG Recipients will submit annual performance reports to HUD via Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Reporting (CAPER). DuPage HP-RRH providers will ensure necessary data is available in the required format per the grantors (State of Illinois and/or DuPage County) requests.

**Monitoring**
DuPage ESG providers have received funding from either or both state and county grantees. As with program implementation guidance, monitoring requirements are expected to be met as they are outlined by each grantor. The requirements may be included in contracts, Memorandum of Understanding, or manuals. As ESG program has been in development, some updates to procedures may be provided via email.

County guidance for direct federal allocation states the following: Sub-grantee monitoring reinforces accountability; provides for continuous improvement; and is required by the ESG Notice. Monitoring goals include the improvement of program and financial performance and ensure regulatory compliance in all areas. Monitoring ESG in the County is done through a variety of measures consisting of desk top review, which also includes evaluation of requests for payment, and on-site visits with file review.