



# COVID-19 Expedited Housing Initiative

## Brief Overview

### April 21, 2020

The [Chicago Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#) acknowledges that we can mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness by ensuring that as many Chicagoans as possible are in safe, healthy homes where they can shelter in place, ensure social distancing, and comply with isolation and quarantine guidelines. Therefore, we are launching the COVID-19 Expedited Housing Initiative.

At the April 2020 CoC Board Meeting, the Continuum of Care Board unanimously endorsed a series of adjustments to the way people access permanent housing (permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing), with the goal of expediting housing placements as much as possible, and ensuring our system remains nimble as we house our most vulnerable neighbors in light of COVID-19. To view all CoC Board Materials, visit the [CoC website](#).

All Chicago has been tasked by the CoC Board with the responsibility to facilitate the adjustments reflected in the brief outline provided below. All Chicago will release more information about each point as it becomes available.

Provider Adjustments	System Adjustments
<p><i>All Chicago will provide technical assistance, create guidance, and manage accountability for these areas.</i></p>	<p><i>All Chicago, CSH, and the Center for Housing and Health will coordinate these efforts through the <a href="#">CoC's Action Agenda Implementation Structure</a> and in conjunction with City Departments.</i></p>
<p>Providers should begin to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage available waivers to bypass regulatory requirements to house people quickly (i.e. disability documentation, FMR, etc.).</li> <li>• Waive any internal agency requirements to accessing housing units and document the changes being made.</li> <li>• Identify ways to connect to this system effort (ideas are outlined in Provider Next Steps below).</li> </ul>	<p>All Chicago and its partners will begin working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing coordinated entry prioritization and expedited matching.</li> <li>• System-wide landlord engagement with City support.</li> <li>• Increasing the usage and flexibility of bridge housing and rapid re-housing.</li> <li>• Supporting efforts to reduce system-wide barriers to housing (i.e. ID and documentation requirements).</li> </ul>

### The Expedited Housing Policy

This policy was passed at the April 15, 2020 CoC Board Meeting and will be in effect during the COVID-19 health crisis. The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) will determine the end of the COVID-19 crisis for purposes of this policy.

1. Continuum of Care homeless assistance programs will continue housing participants in permanent and transitional housing programs. Providers must actively work, and demonstrate their efforts, to expedite housing placements.

2. Housing providers must remove any barrier that impedes the rapid placement of participants in housing; housing providers must apply for applicable waivers that expedite the housing process. Barriers may include, but is not limited to, removing or waiving documentation requirements (such as identification and income verification) and background checks. Housing providers will need to implement creative solutions and utilize technology to ensure housing continues, such as live streaming or video call for intakes, case management and housing inspections and/or utilizing electronic signatures.
3. The current Coordinated Entry Prioritization can be set aside so that the system remains nimble as CDPH, the Department of Family and Supportive Services (DFSS), All Chicago and CSH determine the best course of action to keep the homeless population as safe as possible. This could potentially mean that participants of the homeless system who are placed in quarantine or isolation housing or otherwise deemed at high-risk due to the COVID-19 health crisis will be prioritized for Permanent Housing (PH) programs (including both rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing or other PH program types) to avoid moving back into shelter or other congregate living environments, and/or so they can practice self-quarantining.

### **Accountability**

The CoC Board authorized the Project Prioritization Workgroup to consider “a demonstrated willingness and best effort to continue housing people during the COVID-19 crisis” as criteria for HUD CoC NOFA Ranking. All Chicago will work diligently to support providers and the system to expeditiously house people during this initiative and beyond. HUD CoC-funded Projects will be asked to demonstrate their efforts as part of an accountability plan currently being developed.

### **Next Steps for Providers**

- CoC-funded providers should apply for HUD Waivers and implement emergency recordkeeping protocols. More information is available on All Chicago’s website:
  - [Interim Guidance on Housing Inspections](#)  
*The Chicago CoC has developed guidance regarding housing inspections in emergency situations.*
  - [Interim Recordkeeping Standard Operating Guidance](#)  
*This provides guidance for housing providers on documentation and recordkeeping standards during emergency situations. See a sample protocol document [here](#).*
- Identify any extra capacity for staff to redirect efforts to the CoC’s centralized engagement efforts or help get people housed. Notify All Chicago by emailing [CoCPrograms@allchicago.org](mailto:CoCPrograms@allchicago.org) if you can contribute to this effort.
- Convene an internal committee at your organization to outline the flow of how people get into PH (RRH and PSH). Identify ways the process can be expedited or changed.
- Start tracking and documenting the updates your agency makes to internal procedures to align with the expedited housing guidance.
- Please find a way to get involved in the [CoC Action Agenda](#) to help shape this initiative. If you have any ideas, questions or concerns, please reach out to All Chicago at [CoCPrograms@allchicago.org](mailto:CoCPrograms@allchicago.org).

### **Next Steps for All Chicago**

- Develop COVID-19 Expedited Housing Initiative Accountability outline for review by the System Performance and Evaluation Committee (SPEC) within the [System Performance, Data, and Research Line of Action](#).
- Work with CSH as the Coordinated Entry Lead, and with the Chicago Department of Public Health and Department of Family and Supportive Services, to identify if any amendments to coordinated entry

prioritization are necessary to account for vulnerability due to COVID-19. The Coordinated Entry Leadership Group within the [Coordinated Entry Line of Action](#) will be asked to review any changes.

- Work with CSH and other CoC partners to coordinate a citywide centralized landlord engagement effort including the development and implementation of a collaborative unit identification process to expedite housing placement.
- Identify regulatory barriers by funders and request waivers as necessary.