

Eligible Program Participants

D. Eligible Program Participants

1. **General.** HUD allows grantees significant discretion in program design and operation while targeting those who are most in need of temporary homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance. When establishing local programs, grantees should consider how their programs will identify eligible program participants and meet their needs as intended by the Recovery Act. Grantees should consider serving two eligible populations with HPRP funds: persons who are still housed but at risk of becoming homeless and persons who are already homeless. Although persons in both target populations are eligible to receive financial assistance and services under HPRP, creating this distinction can help communities serve households most in need of temporary assistance, as well as track the funds used for rapid re-housing and prevention. Since not all program participants in either of the target populations will have the same level of need, it is not expected that all persons in each target population will receive identical levels of assistance. For example, the scope and intensity of assistance provided to a homeless family may be greater than that provided to a homeless individual. Likewise, a family on the verge of becoming homeless within a few days may require more services or a higher level of assistance than a family whose risk of homelessness is not as imminent or one who may only need a shorter period of financial assistance. Grantees are responsible for verifying and documenting the individuals' risk of homelessness that qualifies them for receiving rental assistance. HUD requires grantees and/or subgrantees to evaluate and certify the eligibility of program participants at least once every 3 months for all persons receiving medium-term rental assistance. Similarly, grantees and subgrantees should carefully assess a household's need and appropriateness for HPRP. If the household needs more intensive supportive services or long-term assistance, or if a household is not at risk of homelessness, grantees and subgrantees should work to link them to other appropriate available resources.

2. **Requirements for All Program Participants.** In order to receive financial assistance or services funded by HPRP, individuals and families-whether homeless or housed-must at least meet the following minimum criteria: 1) Any individual or family provided with financial assistance through HPRP must have at least an initial consultation with a case manager or other authorized representative who can determine the appropriate type of assistance to meet their needs. HUD encourages communities to have a process in place to refer persons ineligible for HPRP to the appropriate resources or service provider that can assist them. 2) The household must be at or below 50 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). Income limits are available on HUD's web site at: <http://www.huduser.org/DATASETS/il.html>

Grantees should use HUD's Section 8 income eligibility standards for HPRP. 3) The household must be either homeless or at risk of losing its housing and meet both of the following circumstances: (1) no appropriate subsequent housing options have been identified; AND (2) the household lacks the financial resources and support networks needed to obtain immediate housing or remain in its existing housing.

3. **Prevention Assistance.** While HUD's definition of homelessness is well-understood, it can be more challenging to identify persons who are housed but who have a very high risk of becoming homeless. There are many people who are housed and have great need but would not become homeless if they did not receive assistance. HUD strongly encourages grantees and subgrantees to target prevention

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assistance to those individuals and families at the greatest risk of becoming homeless. It is helpful to remember that the defining question to ask is: "Would this individual or family be homeless *but* for this assistance?"

The requirements set forth in paragraph 2 of this section establish HUD's minimum conditions that an individual or family must meet in order to receive assistance through HPRP. However, HUD strongly encourages communities to consider more factors when designing their local programs and determining a household's level of need for receiving assistance through HPRP. To aid grantees and subgrantees in targeting HPRP funds toward persons most at risk of becoming homeless, a number of potential "risk factors" are listed below that could indicate that a person or family is at a higher risk of becoming homeless. This list represents examples of some commonly identified risk factors for homelessness from scholarly research and practical experience drawn from existing homelessness prevention programs. One way a grantee or subgrantee could use these factors would be to consider the first four criteria on this list as indicative of the most urgent need, and could require that a program participant meet one of these criteria in order to receive the most expensive benefit, "medium-term" rental assistance. Likewise, a grantee might require that a program participant have at least two or more of the risk factors to qualify for any assistance. Grantees and subgrantees should note, however, that this list is optional and not exhaustive; grantees and subgrantees may consider other risk factors or other ways to target persons at risk of homelessness when developing local programs and requirements. Grantees and subgrantees may also consider the expected ability of the program participant to achieve stable housing, unsubsidized or subsidized, outside of HPRP. HUD will provide technical assistance to communities to assist them in developing local programs.

The risk factors for homelessness for consideration by grantees and subgrantees in developing their programs are as follows:

- Eviction within 2 weeks from a private dwelling (including housing provided by family or friends);
- Discharge within 2 weeks from an institution in which the person has been a resident for more than 180 days (including prisons, mental health institutions, hospitals);
- Residency in housing that has been condemned by housing officials and is no longer meant for human habitation;
- Sudden and significant loss of income;
- Sudden and significant increase in utility costs;
- Mental health and substance abuse issues;
- Physical disabilities and other chronic health issues, including HIV/AIDS;
- Severe housing cost burden (greater than 50 percent of income for housing costs);

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- Homeless in last 12 months;

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- Severe housing cost burden (greater than 50 percent of income for housing costs);
- Homeless in last 12 months;
- Young head of household (under 25 with children or pregnant);
- Current or past involvement with child welfare, including foster care;
- Pending foreclosure of rental housing;
- Extremely low income (less than 30 percent of Area Median Income);
- High overcrowding (the number of persons exceeds health and/or safety standards for the housing unit size);
- Past institutional care (prison, treatment facility, hospital);
- Recent traumatic life event, such as death of a spouse or primary care provider, or recent health crisis that prevented the household from meeting its financial responsibilities;
- Credit problems that preclude obtaining of housing; or
- Significant amount of medical debt.

4. **Rapid Re-Housing Assistance.** Rapid re-housing assistance is available for persons who are homeless according to HUD's definition. Individuals and families who meet one of the following criteria, along with the minimum requirements established in paragraph 2 of this section, are eligible under the rapid re-housing portion of HPRP:

- Sleeping in an emergency shelter;
- Sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, abandoned buildings, streets/sidewalks;
- Staying in a hospital or other institution for up to 180 days but was sleeping in an emergency shelter or other place not meant for human habitation (cars, parks, streets, etc.) immediately prior to entry into the hospital or institution;
- Graduating from, or timing out of a transitional housing program; and
- Victims of domestic violence.

Generally, rapid re-housing program models include short-or medium-term rental assistance and services for households who have barriers to housing, but who are likely to sustain housing after the subsidy ends. The purpose of HPRP rapid re-housing funds is to assist eligible program participants to quickly obtain and sustain stable housing. Therefore, organizations providing assistance should utilize a

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process to assess, for all potential program participants, their level of service need, other resources available to them, and the appropriateness of their participation in the rapid re-housing assistance portion of HPRP. Program participants who require longer-term housing assistance and services should be directed to programs that can provide the requisite services and financial assistance.

Persons familiar with the Rapid Re-Housing Demonstration Program in the 2008 Continuum of Care competition should note that these funds are not subject to the same requirements as under that demonstration program. HPRP provides flexibility to grantees to use these funds in a way that meets the needs of the community, as long as grantees, subgrantees, and program participants meet the requirements established in this Notice.