

# Office of Special Needs COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions: Continuum of Care (CoC)

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*For information specifically relating to the CARES Act eviction moratorium for CoC, see:*

<https://www.hud.gov/coronavirus/renters> For information specifically related to the CDC eviction moratorium, see:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-eviction-declaration.html>

## Office of Special Needs General CARES Act and COVID-19 Questions

### Question 1: When will CARES Act supplemental funds be distributed?

A.: The CARES Act allocated \$3.96 billion for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program and \$40 million for technical assistance providers with experience in providing health care services to homeless populations in order to provide an immediate increase in capacity building and technical assistance available to ESG program recipients. These funds will be awarded quickly by using existing grant formulas; they will also be accompanied by new guidance that cuts red tape so grantees can quickly help their communities. HOPWA issued \$63.7 million for competitive and formula grants and \$1.3 million for technical assistance. On April 2, 2020, \$1 billion was allocated for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG). The remaining \$2.96 billion of ESG funds were awarded on June 9, 2020. Upon submission of the grantee's action and implementation plans, grant agreements will be executed if the funding is available in LOCCS.

### Question 2: How does HUD plan to notify communities of their CARES Act funding?

A.: CPD has sent grant notification letters to grantees, which are also available on HUD.gov.

### Question 3: Will HUD update guidance for communities on how it can deploy ESG CARES Act funds?

A.: Yes, current guidance is available at <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/OCHCO/documents/20-08cpdn.pdf>.

### Question 4: What waivers are available due to COVID-19?

A.: HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) issued general waivers relating to COVID-19 on March 31, 2020, May 22, 2020, September 30, 2020, and December 29, 2020. Additionally, CPD published CPD-20-08: Waivers and Alternative Requirements for the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program Under the CARES Act on September 1, 2020.

March 31, 2020 Waiver: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/Availability-of-Waivers-of-CPD-Grant-Program-and-Consolidated-Plan-Requirements-to-Prevent-the-Spread-of-COVID-19-and-Mitigate-Economic-Impacts-Caused-by-COVID-19.pdf>

May 22, 2020 Waiver:

[https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/Additional Waivers for CPD Grant Programs to Prevent COVID-19 Spread and Mitigate COVID-19 Economic Impacts.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/Additional_Waivers_for_CPD_Grant_Programs_to_Prevent_COVID-19_Spread_and_Mitigate_COVID-19_Economic_Impacts.pdf)

CPD-20-08: Waivers and Alternative Requirements for the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program Under the CARES Act:

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/OCHCO/documents/20-08cpdn.pdf>

September 30, 2020 Waiver:

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/CPD-COVID-19-Waiver-3-Final-Clean.pdf>

December 29, 2020 Waiver:

[https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/Waiver-4\\_CoC-and-YHDP\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/Waiver-4_CoC-and-YHDP_FINAL.pdf)

### **Continuum of Care Program (CoC) CARES Act and COVID-19 Questions**

**Question 1: The 3/31/2020 COVID-19 waiver addresses going above FMR for leasing funds, does it also apply to rental assistance?**

A.: No, the waiver does not address rental assistance requirements.

*For additional information, please go to:*

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/Availability-of-Waivers-of-CPD-Grant-Program-and-Consolidated-Plan-Requirements-to-Prevent-the-Spread-of-COVID-19-and-Mitigate-Economic-Impacts-Caused-by-COVID-19.pdf>

**Question 2: If a lease is executed above the FMR using the 3/31/2020 COVID-19 waiver, the 9/30/2020 COVID-19 waiver, or the December 29, 2020 COVID-19 waiver, how long can the over-FMR assistance be provided?**

A.: When the lease for an individual unit (24 CFR 578.49) is executed during the applicable waiver period, the over-FMR assistance may be provided for the term of the lease and any subsequent automatic lease extensions that are executed as follows:

- For the 3/31/2020 waiver before September 30, 2020,
- For the 9/30/2020 waiver before December 31, 2020, and
- For the 12/29/2020 waiver before March 31, 2021.

**Question 3: For the 3/31/2020 COVID-19 waiver on disability documentation for PSH and the 9/30/2020 COVID-19 waiver on disability documentation for PSH, can we backdate the application of these provision to accommodate people in the middle of their 45-day period? This would align with CARES.**

A.: No. The 3/31/2020 waiver applies to any participant entering PSH for the 6-month period beginning on March 31, 2020. The 9/30/2020 waiver applies to any participant entering PSH from September 30, 2020 until public health officials determine no additional special measures are necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**Question 4: Can the “written certification” by the individual seeking assistance that they have a qualifying disability be a picture or an email of a signed certification?**

A.: Yes, a picture or email of a signed certification are examples of acceptable written self-certification.

**Question 5: Do we have to go back and try to obtain disability documentation from affected clients once the 3/31/2020 COVID-19 waiver period ends/crisis abates?**

A.: If the recipient has followed the Notification Process and is able to use the 9/30/2020 COVID-19 waiver on disability documentation for PSH, no. Originally, the 3/31/2020 COVID-19 waiver suspended the requirement to obtain third-party documentation of disability for 6 months, but the 9/30/2020 COVID-19 waiver eliminated the requirement to collect third-party documentation of disability. After public health officials determine no additional special measures are necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19 third-party documentation will again be required of program participants admitted to permanent supportive housing. Recipients, must still follow coordinated entry and make sure they're prioritizing those that rank highest by CE.

**Question 6: The 3/31/2020 COVID-19 waiver states that the limit on eligible housing search and counseling applies “when those arrears make it difficult to obtain housing.” How do we document this?**

A.: Each CoC should establish standards for what constitutes sufficient documentation to demonstrate difficulty in obtaining housing. Examples could include but are not limited to: written notice from a landlord or property manager rejecting a client's application due to utility and or rental arrears, or utilities have been or are soon-to-be cut due to lack of payment and is a barrier to obtaining or maintaining housing.

**Question 7: The requirement for Rapid Rehousing participants to meet for case management at least monthly is waived, but none of the COVID-19 waivers speak to how we can meet with program participants, at any frequency. Can telephone calls count as a case management session? The case management session does not have to be face to face necessarily, correct?**

A.: Yes, telephone calls and other options to meet that are not face-to-face are good mechanisms for continuing case management while social distancing.

**Question 8: On initial inspections on HQS standards, the 3/31/2020 COVID-19 waiver states that “The recipient [must be] able to visually inspect the unit using technology, such as video streaming...” Given the phrase “such as” and the wireless service in remote areas, does this mean that it need not be “live” but could be a recording?**

A.: Yes, recordings and real-time video are examples of acceptable documentation (e.g. date is acknowledged verbally or video is date-stamped). Date-stamped photo documentation may also be accepted if all applicable HQS areas are covered.

Note, the 9/30/2020 COVID-19 waiver further waived the requirement that the recipient or subrecipient physically inspect a unit to determine if it meets HQS until 12/31/2020, and the 12/29/2020 COVID-19 waiver further waived the requirement until 3/31/2021, where the following criteria are met:

- The owner certifies that they have no reasonable basis to have knowledge that life-threatening conditions exist in the unit or units in question; and
- The recipient or subrecipient has written policies to physically inspect the unit within 3 months after the health officials determine special measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are no longer necessary.

**Question 9: Does the one-year lease requirement apply to all forms of permanent housing, including Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Rapid Rehousing (RRH) under the 3/31/2020 COVID- 19, 9/30/2020 COVID-19 waiver, and the 12/29/2020 COVID-19 waiver?**

A.: Yes, the waivers of the one-year lease requirement applies to all CoC-funded permanent housing, which includes both permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing. (24 CFR 578.3 and 578.37(a)(1)).

**Question 10: Can CoC program grant funds be used to support communities' public health outbreak preparedness and response efforts?**

A.: CoC program grant funds may only be used to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness. To the extent that CoC funds are used for the preparedness and response of the public health outbreak for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, then yes CoC funds may be used to support preparedness and response efforts. The following are eligible costs to support infectious disease preparedness and response activities and the program component or line item that may be charged:

- Planning Grant: Conduct local planning to ensure that homeless service providers are prepared to respond rapidly and effectively to emergencies and infectious disease outbreaks in their programs. Establish partnerships with public health departments, develop and deliver trainings related to preventing or responding to infectious disease, and create disaster response plan for the CoC.
- Coordinated Entry System Grant(s): Review and modify workflow, intake, assessment and service approaches that may impact participant program access to services and housing and establishing new or different locations to access CoC services.
- HMIS Grant(s): Customize HMIS workflows and assessments to track exposure, diagnosis, and clearance in shelters and housing programs.
- Supportive Services (all grant types): Help households living in supportive housing acquire essential supplies (food, water, medications, transportation, information) during crises. Recipients whose program budgets already include street outreach may engage and help people living in unsheltered locations acquire essential supplies (including food, water, medications, toiletries, transportation, information) during crises.

- Operations (all grant types except PH:RRH): Furniture, maintenance, and equipment that support operating housing during crises. Hiring more staff on a temporary or permanent basis to help operating housing may be required to support infectious disease preparedness. (Keep in mind, operating funds cannot be used in the same structure as rental assistance funds.)

**Question 11: Can CoC project administrative funds be used to train recipient staff to safely deliver assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

A: Yes. 24 CFR 578.59(a)(2) permits the use of project administrative costs for training on Continuum of Care (CoC) requirements and attending HUD-sponsored CoC trainings. If CoCs have established standards or recommended procedures on how to deliver services during the COVID-19 pandemic (including how to recognize symptoms, how to protect recipient staff from infection, and how to protect against spreading the virus while providing assistance to program participants) recipients may use administrative cost funds for training on those standards and/or recommended procedures. If HUD sponsors CoC training on the subject, recipients may also use program administrative cost funds to register and attend that training.

**Question 12: May recipients and subrecipients of CoC Program funds purchase cell phones and wireless service plans for program participants to use when receiving supportive services?**

A.: Yes, under certain conditions. 24 CFR 578.53(e)(17) makes the costs of supplies and materials incurred by the recipient or subrecipient when directly providing supportive services to program participants an eligible supportive service cost. To qualify as an eligible supply and material cost the cell phone must be owned by the recipient/subrecipient and the wireless service plan must be the recipient/subrecipient's, but the phone may be loaned to program participants as needed to enable provision of supportive services necessary to obtain and retain housing, such as case management, mental health services, and outpatient health services. The phone and phone service may be loaned to the participant while stay-at-home or social distancing orders are in effect in the community in which the program participant resides, and must be returned to the recipient/subrecipient when those orders are lifted.

**Question 13: How does a CoC design and implement a Symptom Screening Tool?**

A.: See CDC: Screening Clients for Respiratory Infection Symptoms at Entry to Homeless Shelters:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/screening-clients-respiratory-infection-symptoms.html>

**Question 14.Q. How does a CoC implement HUD and CDC recommendations for homeless service providers to limit the spread of COVID-19?**

A.: The link below provides CDC recommendations to protect the health of people in congregate sites and encampments.

- CDC: Interim Guidance for Homeless Service Providers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/plan-prepare->

[respond.html](#)

The links below provide Technical Assistance resources for CoCs:

- COVID-19: Shelter Management During an Infectious Disease Outbreak:

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/COVID-19-Shelter-Management-During-an->

[Infectious-Disease-Outbreak.pdf](#)

- Protecting Health and Well-being of People in Encampments During an Infectious Disease Outbreak: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/COVID-19-Essential-Services-for-Encampments-During-an-Infectious-Disease-Outbreak.pdf>