Formalize & Monitor for Continuous Improvement

customizable templates

* [Assessment Report](#_Sample_Assessment_Report)
* [Sample System Diagram](#_Sample_system_diagram)
* [Action Step Tracker](#_BLANK_sample_action)
* [Written Policies and Procedures Template](#_Sample_Policies_&)

# Blank Assessment Report

| Federal Criteria and Benchmarks | Assessment Findings |
| --- | --- |
| Criteria 1: Has community identified all Veterans experiencing homelessness?   1. Does the community have a By Name/Master List ? 2. Is the list updated at least monthly? 3. Does the community conduct comprehensive and coordinated outreach? 4. Are Veterans in TH (GPD and other TH) included on the list? 5. Does the list include chronically homeless, long-term homeless and non-chronically homeless Veterans? 6. Does the list include all Veterans who served in the armed forces regardless of how long they served or the type of discharge they received? |  |
| Criteria 2: Does your community provide shelter immediately to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it?   1. How are unsheltered Veterans engaged and offered immediate shelter while also being assisted to swiftly achieve permanent housing? 2. Is access to shelter is contingent on sobriety, minimum income, criminal records, or other unnecessary conditions? |  |
| Criteria 3: Does your community only provide service-intensive transitional housing in limited instances?   1. Is priority placed on using TH as a short-term bridge to permanent housing?   Is service intensive TH only provided to those Veterans who have been offered and declined permanent housing before they were offered service intensive TH? |  |
| Criteria 4: Does your community have the capacity to assist Veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing?   1. Has the community identified permanent housing so all Veterans on the list, including those in TH, can move into PH quickly? 2. Is PH assistance is available without entry barriers using Housing First principles and practices? |  |
| Criteria 5: Does the community have the resources, plans and system capacity in place should any Veteran become homeless or at risk of homelessness in the future?   1. Is the community routinely using multiple data sources and conducting comprehensive outreach to identify all such Veterans? 2. Does the community have an adequate level of resources and the capacity to provide appropriate services to prevent homelessness for at-risk Veterans? 3. Does the community have an adequate level of resources and appropriate plans and services in place to promote the long-term housing stability of all Veterans who have entered PH? |  |

# Sample system diagram



# action step tracking tool (BLANK)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goal: Criteria #1 The community has identified all Veterans experiencing homelessness. | | | | | |
| This includes the use of outreach, multiple data sources and the use of a by name /master to identify and enumerate all homeless Veterans, including those who are chronic, and all who served in the armed forces, regardless of how long they served or the type of discharge they received. | | | | | |
| Action Step | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Person(s) Responsible** | **Measure that Action is Complete** | **Notes & Status Updates** |
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| Goal: Criteria #2 The community provides shelter immediately to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it. | | | | | | | | | | |
| This includes having the capacity to immediately offer a form of shelter to any unsheltered Veteran who wants it, while swiftly assisting the Veteran to also access permanent housing. Access to shelter is not contingent on sobriety, minimum income requirements, criminal records, etc. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Action Step | **Start Date** | | **End Date** | | **Person(s) Responsible** | | **Measure that Action is Complete** | | | **Notes & Status Updates** |
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| Goal: Criteria #3 The community only provides service-intensive transitional housing in limited instances | | | | | | | | | | |
| Priority is placed on the use of transitional housing (TH)/Grant and Per Diem (GPD) as a short term bridge to permanent housing. Service-intensive TH/GPD is only provided those Veterans who have indicated a preference prior to entering the TH/GPD program.   * Benchmark D: # of Veterans experiencing homeless who enter service-intensive TH is less than # of Veterans entering homelessness | | | | | | | | | | |
| Action Step | **Start Date** | | **End Date** | | **Person(s) Responsible** | | **Measure that Action is Complete** | | | **Notes & Status Updates** |
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| Goal: Criteria #4 The community has the capacity to assist Veterans to swiftly move into permanent housing. | | | | | | | | | | |
| The community has identified permanent housing for all Veterans know to be experiencing homelessness, including those Veterans who have to enter TH. The community can assist Veterans to move into their housing quickly and without barriers to entry, using Housing First practices.   * Benchmark A: Chronic and long term homelessness among Veterans has ended. * Benchmark B: Average time from the identification of Veterans’ homelessness to permanent housing entry is 90 days or less * Benchmark C: The #of Veterans exiting homelessness to permanent housing is greater than or equal to # of Veterans entering homelessness | | | | | | | | | | |
| Action Step | | **Start Date** | | **End Date** | | **Person(s) Responsible** | | **Measure that Action is Complete** | **Notes & Status Updates** | |
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| Goal: Criteria #5 The community has resources, plans and system capacity in place should any Veteran become homeless or be at risk of homelessness in the future. | | | | | |
| The community can identify Veterans entering or returning to homelessness and those at risk of homelessness using multiple data sources, outreach and engagement. The community also has adequate resources to prevent homelessness for at-risk Veterans and promote the long-term housing stability of all Veterans who have entered permanent housing. | | | | | |
| Action Step | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Person(s) Responsible** | **Measure that Action is Complete** | **Notes & Status Updates** |
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| Goal, Sustainability: Build Infrastructure to Promote the Sustainability of The System | | | | | |
| The community has built a sustainable system by creating infrastructure such as dependable staffing patterns, written policies and procedures, and a system evaluation mechanism. | | | | | |
| Action Step | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Person(s) Responsible** | **Measure that Action is Complete** | **Notes & Status Updates** | |
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# Sample Policies & Procedures Template

### ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS IN [COC NAME]:

### POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM RESPONSE

**Introduction and Background**

In 2010, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) introduced the first comprehensive federal strategy to prevent and end homelessness. This plan, called Opening Doors, outlined a number of goals related to ending homelessness in the U.S. – the first of these committed to ending Veteran homelessness by 2016.

In 2015, the USICH, along with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), adopted a vision of what it means to end homelessness and shared specific criteria and benchmarks for ending Veteran homelessness in order to help guide communities as they take action to achieve the goal, with a focus on long-term, lasting solutions.

In line with the federal goals outlined in Opening Doors, the [CoC name] Continuum of Care has committed to a goal of effectively ending Veteran homelessness in the CoC by 2017. To that end, the [CoC name] has focused recent efforts on...[additional local context/priorities]

The [CoC name] has determined that ending Veteran homelessness in our CoC means the following:

*[SAMPLE LANGUAGE]*

*Where Veteran homelessness does occur, it is rare, brief, and non-recurring. More specifically, every identified homeless Veteran who is unsheltered is immediately offered access to low-barrier shelter, and every Veteran who is unsheltered or in emergency shelter, Safe Havens, or Transitional Housing in the [CoC name] is immediately offered access to low-barrier permanent housing placement and stabilization assistance. Veterans who accept assistance will be re-housed within an average of [90 days or other CoC goal]. To achieve this, the [CoC name] is committed to the principles of Housing First, which means our system is primarily focused on quick placement into permanent housing, respecting Veteran choice, and targeting our resources to those with greatest needs.*

Using the federal criteria and benchmarks as our guide, this document includes policies and procedures for a coordinated and standardized response to Veteran homelessness across our entire community.

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

**Applicability**

All homeless assistance projects in the [CoC name], regardless of funding source, are expected to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined here.

*[Option: include list of providers by system component: outreach, coordinated entry point(s), emergency shelter/Safe Havens, transitional housing, rapid re-housing/navigation, permanent supportive housing, homelessness prevention]*

**Responsibility for Oversight**

The [CoC name] [CoC Veterans leadership group name], with support from [e.g., CoC staff], is charged with managing the [CoC name] [local name for By Name/Master List] (described below), ensuring that the policies and procedures outlined in this document are implemented appropriately at the system, provider, and client level, and regularly monitoring progress towards the ending Veteran homelessness goal.

[CoC name] [CoC Veterans leadership group name] membership includes:

* *[List members]*
* *[Describe how often group meets and basic oversight responsibilities]*

**Common Terms**

Veteran  
A Veteran is someone who, regardless of discharge status, has served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.

Permanent Housing Assistance (i.e., “permanent housing intervention”)  
A subsidy or other form of rental assistance, with appropriate services and supports. Interventions can include HUD-VASH, SSVF, and CoC Program-funded rapid re-housing (where rental assistance is included), CoC Program-funded permanent supportive housing, Housing Choice voucher (HCV), or other form of permanent housing subsidy or rental assistance.

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

**[CoC name] Homeless Veterans [list name – e.g., ‘Active List’, ‘By-Name List’, or other term used by CoC]**

The [CoC name] Homeless Veterans [list name] is the primary means used to identify and track all currently homeless Veterans (in shelters, Safe Havens, transitional housing, or unsheltered) in the CoC’s area and to report on current housing plans and movement towards permanent housing. The [CoC name] HMIS is the primary data source for the [list name] and includes multiple data fields necessary to identify and track assistance and outcomes for individual Veterans.

*[Option: describe how list is used, how personally identifying information is protected, etc.]*

Identifying Homeless Veterans

1. **Policy** – All literally homeless Veterans in the [CoC name] geographic area are immediately identified

*[Sample Language]*

**Procedure** – [provider(s)] engage in street outreach in the communities within their service areas on a weekly basis, as appropriate, for purposes of identifying all unsheltered homeless Veterans.

* In communities where there are dedicated street outreach teams, SSVF staff coordinate with the local street outreach teams to ensure comprehensive coverage and efficient provision of services
  + SSVF and street outreach must put into place an agreement wherein the street outreach team immediately refers all homeless Veterans to SSVF for housing assistance
    - All identified unsheltered homeless Veterans are either entered into HMIS once they become SSVF clients, or are added to the Homeless Vets Report by the SSVF provider using a unique identifier, if they are not yet a client

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

Identifying Homeless Veterans *(continued)*

**Procedure** – [provider(s)] identify all homeless Veterans residing in local non-HMIS participating ES and TH projects, including victim services provider agencies

* SSVF grantees engage in weekly in-reach to non-HMIS participating ES and TH projects in their service area for purposes of identifying homeless Veterans
  + SSVF grantees may develop formal referral relationships and protocol with local non-HMIS participating ES and TH providers. But if local ES/TH providers cannot maintain regular referrals, weekly in-reach to those projects should happen.
  + All identified sheltered homeless Veterans are either entered into HMIS once they become SSVF clients, or are added to the Homeless Vets Report by the SSVF provider using a unique identifier, if they are not yet a client

**Procedure** – CoC staff will run the [CoC name] Homeless Veterans Report on a bi-weekly basis and share the report, with newly homeless Veterans clearly identified, with SSVF grantees for purposes of identifying any newly homeless Veterans

* SSVF grantees conduct outreach to the newly homeless Veterans appearing on the Homeless Vets Report as appropriate

**Procedure** – VA staff identifying and/or assisting literally homeless Veterans may ensure those Veterans get added to the Homeless Vets Report in one of the following ways:

* VA staff refer the homeless Veteran to the local SSVF provider who, in turn, enters the client data into HMIS (that client-level data is then pulled into the Homeless Vets Report), in cases where the Veteran becomes an SSVF client
* VA staff with [CoC name] HMIS licenses may check HMIS to see if the homeless Veteran is already in HMIS
  + If so, the Veteran is already on the Homeless Vets Report
  + If not, VA staff may follow steps outlined above to make a referral to the local SSVF provider.
  + If the Veteran declines SSVF assistance or cannot be located, VA staff add the Veteran to the Homeless Vets Report using a unique identifier

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

Identifying Homeless Veterans *(continued)*

1. **Policy** – All literally homeless Veterans identified in the [CoC name] are tracked on the [CoC name] [list name]

*[Sample Language]*

**Procedure** – [CoC name] staff maintain and populate the [CoC name] Homeless Vets Report

* [CoC name] staff run the Homeless Vets Report out of HMIS on a bi-weekly basis, update the Homeless Vets Report accordingly, and inform all identified [CoC name] Providers when it’s available
  + The report includes data on all literally homeless Veterans in the CoC
  + HMIS serves as the primary data source for the Homeless Vets Report, although Homeless Vets Workgroup members may add by hand identified Veterans who may not be residing in an HMIS participating shelter
  + VA staff with [CoC name] HMIS licenses will work with local SSVF providers to add literally homeless Veterans they have identified to the Homeless Vets Report
* CoC staff identify on the Homeless Vets Report an [CoC name] Provider Responsible for assisting the homeless Veteran to move into permanent housing and reporting on required Data Fields on the Homeless Vets Report
  + In most cases, the identified responsible provider is the SSVF grantee serving the county in which the Veteran is identified.
  + In cases where the homeless Veteran is residing in an ES or TH project and not dually enrolled in SSVF (or declined SSVF assistance), the provider primarily assisting the homeless Veteran must report out all required data on a bi-weekly basis

**Procedure** – [CoC name] Responsible Providers assigned to a homeless Veteran on the Homeless Vets Report provide updates on housing plans, offers of permanent housing, etc. on a bi-weekly basis

* Updates are made to the Homeless Vets Report

**Procedure** – The Homeless Vets Workgroup reviews the Homeless Vets Report on a monthly basis

* If CoC staff and/or the Homeless Vets Workgroup observe decreases in the performance of the [CoC name] system response to Veteran homelessness, such as increasing lengths of time to house, the workgroup may decide to increase the frequency of the provision of updates to the Homeless Vets Report

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

Providing Immediate Shelter to Unsheltered Homeless Veterans

1. **Policy** – The [CoC name] provides shelter immediately to any Veteran experiencing unsheltered homelessness who wants it.

*[Sample Language]*

**Procedure** – All state and federally funded [CoC name] ES projects must comply with the [CoC name] Homeless Program Standards, which require system-wide housing first orientation, by January 2017

**Procedure** – SSVF grantees and, where applicable, local dedicated street outreach teams assist in moving unsheltered homeless Veterans into local emergency shelters

* If local shelters are full, SSVF providers may pay for a temporary stay in a local hotel/motel for the unsheltered homeless Veteran, where the Veteran is eligible and following SSVF requirements,
* If unsheltered Veterans decline the shelter offer because of excessive barriers to entry (i.e., barriers that do not comply with the [CoC name] Homeless Program Standards), SSVF or other program staff working with the Veteran will contact CoC staff to report the issue and CoC and SSVF/other staff will advocate on behalf of the unsheltered homeless Veteran
  + If the issues with local shelter barriers to entry cannot be immediately resolved, SSVF grantees may pay for a temporary stay in a local hotel/motel for the unsheltered homeless Veteran, where the Veteran is eligible and following SSVF requirements

**Procedure** – If an unsheltered homeless Veteran declines a shelter offer for reasons other than excessive barriers to entry, SSVF grantees and, where applicable, local dedicated street outreach teams will make offers of shelter to the unsheltered homeless Veteran on a bi-weekly basis, at minimum.

* In extreme weather situations, shelter offers must be made on an every three-day basis, at minimum.

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

1. **Policy** – [CoC name] homeless services providers assisting unsheltered homeless Veterans will document offers of shelter

**Procedure** - SSVF grantees and, where applicable, local dedicated street outreach teams or other providers assisting unsheltered homeless Veterans, document the offers of shelter they make to Veterans

* Documentation is made on the Homeless Vets Report and includes identifying the date of the shelter offer, whether the Veteran accepted or declined, and reasons for a decline

Housing Focused System and Providers

1. **Policy** – The [CoC name] is committed to immediately providing permanent housing (PH) to all homeless Veterans who desire it, regardless of perceived needs or issues

**Procedure** – [CoC name] emergency shelter providers immediately, meaning within 2 business days, refer any presenting homeless Veteran to their local SSVF provider for assistance obtaining permanent housing

* Referral to SSVF does not necessarily mean that a Veteran will be assisted with SSVF resources. SSVF grantees must determine if the Veteran is eligible and if the Veteran desires to accept an offer of assistance.
  + SSVF providers will only decline to provide RRH assistance to homeless Veterans if they are not eligible per SSVF program requirements or if the Veterans decline SSVF-RRH assistance
    - For those Veterans who have higher housing barriers and may require, and choose Permanent Supportive Housing, providers (SSVF or the current shelter provider) will coordinate with PSH providers as soon as possible and potentially provide bridge housing in the short term

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

Housing Focused System and Providers *(continued)*

1. **Policy** – The [CoC name] prioritizes the use of Transitional Housing (TH), including VA Grant and Per Diem (GPD), as a short-term bridge to PH

**Procedure** – Homeless Veterans residing in emergency shelters are immediately offered assistance to move into permanent housing (PH)

* In accordance with Policy 4 above, all homeless Veterans are immediately, within two business days, referred to SSVF for eligibility determination, assessment, review of available housing options, and possible Rapid Re-housing (RRH) assistance

**Procedure** - Homeless Veterans are only assisted with TH in the following situations:

* The Veteran has explicitly declined an offer of RRH assistance because of a self-identified need for intensive services that the Veteran believes can be provided by a particular TH project
  + If a homeless Veteran requests to move into a TH bed provided by an [CoC name] GPD provider, and has declined SSVF RRH assistance, the emergency shelter provider may contact GPD providers directly for possible referral. Detailed GPD provider information can be found in the appendix of this document
* The Veteran accepted an offer of PH, either Permanent Supportive Housing or RRH, but the PH unit is not immediately available.
  + In this situation, a Veteran may be moved into a TH unit while waiting for the PH unit to become available, rather than remaining in the emergency shelter or in an unsheltered location
    - Once a PH offer has been made, accepted, and documented in the Homeless Vets Report by the appropriate [CoC name] Provider Responsible, additional offers of PH do not need to made or documented

**Procedure** – Where a homeless Veteran has chosen to move into a TH project because of the desire for intensive services, as described in procedure 2b above, the TH provider must make new offers of assisted PH to the Veteran on a bi-weekly basis. The dates of the PH offer and the Veterans’ acceptance or decline of that offer must be reported in the Homeless Vets Report

* The [CoC name] TH provider responsible for assisting the homeless Veteran will report on the status of the housing plan in the Homeless Vets Report

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

Housing Focused System and Providers *(continued)*

1. **Policy** – [CoC name] providers provide support, information, and targeted assistance to previously assisted Veterans to help minimize returns to homelessness

**Procedure** – [CoC name] housing providers, including SSVF and other RRH grantees, will provide information, including contact information, to assisted homeless Veterans to ensure they know whom to contact if they become at risk of homelessness after housing assistance ends

**Procedure** – [CoC name] providers make follow-up contact with all clients at least once after the client’s exit from the program and into housing

* Follow-up contact occurs between one and six months after the termination of financial assistance
* If initial attempts at contact are unsuccessful, [CoC name] providers make multiple attempts at contact, using multiple methods (e.g., phone, email, letter, in-person visits)

**Procedure** – [CoC name] providers will prioritize for assistance those homeless Veterans who have been assisted in the past and are eligible for assistance again.

* Coordination between the CoC and the VA at the System and Project Level

1. **Policy** – VA-funded SSVF and VASH projects and providers coordinate with non VA-funded RRH and PSH providers to ensure homeless Veterans enter permanent housing swiftly and in a way that most efficiently uses community resources

**Procedure** - When literally homeless Veterans are identified by an [CoC name] homeless assistance provider, the provider immediately, within two business days, refers to the local SSVF provider

* Local HCRP-RRH providers, in particular, only provide assistance to homeless Veterans when they are not eligible for VA-funded programs, such as SSVF

**Procedure** - In line with the [CoC name] Homeless Program Standards, [CoC name] RRH and PSH providers will prioritize for their services eligible, literally homeless Veterans who are not eligible for VA-funded assistance, such as that provided by SSVF or VASH

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

Housing Focused System and Providers *(continued)*

1. **Policy** –SSVF, GPD, and other homeless assistance providers regularly identifying and assisting homeless Veterans engage in regular community meetings with local VA and VSO staff for purposes of identifying and providing assistance to local homeless Veterans

Monitoring System and Provider Capacity to End Veteran Homelessness

1. **Policy** – The [CoC name] monitors provider and system capacity to ensure the CoC maintains resources to move homeless Veterans into PH quickly

**Procedure** - On a quarterly basis at minimum, CoC staff will survey SSVF grantees to ensure ongoing ability and capacity to serve all eligible, literally homeless Veterans

**Procedure** - On a monthly basis at minimum, CoC staff will review and share data about the CoC’s progress on the federal benchmarks demonstrating ending Veteran homelessness

1. **Policy** – The [CoC name] monitors progress on the federal benchmarks for ending Veteran homelessness to ensure the sustainability of the CoC’s system response and identify any problems or issue areas

**Procedure** – On a monthly basis at minimum, CoC staff will monitor and report on the following data:

* Federal Benchmarks (per the federal specifications)
  + Number of Actively Homeless Veterans (not having declined PH)
  + Number of Chronically Homeless Veterans
  + Average length of time to house Veterans
  + Number of Veterans exiting to PH vs. number of Veterans entering homelessness
  + Number of Veterans entering TH (having declined PH offers) vs. number of Veterans entering homelessness
* HUD-VASH utilization rates
* HUD-VASH time to house homeless Veterans (average days)
* Number of homeless Veterans entering our system (per month)
* Number of homeless Veterans exiting to PH (per month)
* Permanent Supportive Housing and HUD-VASH turnover rates
* Returns to homelessness across all project types
* Number/rate of homeless Veterans served by non-VA funded programs

# Sample Policies & Procedures Template *(continued)*

IMPLEMENTATION OF AND COMPLIANCE WITH POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Upon adoption by the [CoC name] Board, CoC staff will distribute these policies and procedures to the full CoC membership (via email listserv and posting on XXXX website) and host a webinar to introduce and explain them. CoC staff will also work with regional representatives to the CoC Board, SSVF providers, and others as appropriate to develop plans for facilitating ongoing local conversations and provision of technical assistance to CoC providers related to implementation of and compliance with these policies and procedures.

[CoC name] homeless assistance providers must comply with these policies and procedures within 60 days of their release. The only exception is for the policies and procedures that …..

Initially, monitoring for provider compliance with these policies and procedures will be done primarily via check-ins and reporting in the monthly XXXXX meetings, and through informal surveys of providers across the [CoC name]. Over time, monitoring for compliance with these policies and procedures will be incorporated into a standard tool and process. Lastly, lack of compliance may be identified in the data monitoring/analysis processes outlined in the Monitoring Provider and System Capacity section above.

**Common Terminology and Definitions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Continuum of Care (CoC)** CoC refers to the both planning body that coordinates the provision of housing and services for homeless families and individuals in a defined geographic area, as well as the geographic area itself.   * + The XXXXX Continuum of Care is comprised of …. | **Rapid Re-Housing** A homeless assistance project type that quickly moves households out of homelessness and into permanent housing through the provision of case management services and limited financial assistance as needed. Homeless status is an eligibility requirement and homelessness is documented. |
| **HMIS = Homeless Management Information Systems**  The CoC’s data system that houses client-level data on all persons assisted by HMIS participating homeless assistance providers in the CoC | **Transitional Housing** A homeless assistance project type that provides households with up to 24 months of housing and services assistance. Homeless status is an eligibility requirement and homelessness is documented. |
| **Emergency Shelter** Any facility for which the primary purpose is to provide a temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless and which does not require occupants to sign leases or occupancy agreements. Homeless status is an eligibility requirement and homelessness is documented. | **Permanent Supportive Housing** Permanent supportive housing is permanent housing with indefinite leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist homeless persons with a disability or families with an adult or child member with a disability achieve housing stability. Homeless status is an eligibility requirement and homelessness is documented. |
| **Veteran**  An adult who served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States, including persons who served on active duty from the military reserves or the National Guard. For the purposes of these criteria, a Veteran is any person who served in the armed forces, regardless of how long they served or the type of discharge they received. |  |