



July 2, 2013

## SNAPS Weekly Focus: Changing the Way We Do Business

The SNAPS Office has traditionally used the annual Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the Homeless Assistance Competition to communicate and implement our policy priorities in a given year. For example, if one of our major policy priorities in a year was to end chronic homelessness, funding was prioritized for that population with bonus and other new funds. In a year where the Administration's policy priority was to address rural homelessness, funding for projects serving rural areas were prioritized through our selection criteria.

The implementation of the new programs authorized under the HEARTH Act has given us an opportunity to review our past practices and identify what we have done well in the past, and what we need to improve going forward. As we look back on the NOFA process, I can see that we have not always clearly communicated our expectations to our grantees or provided sufficient guidance around how to implement our policy priorities locally. We know that you all are busy serving persons experiencing homelessness, running important programs, and trying to keep up with all the changes happening at the national level.

We should not make you look for "clues" in the NOFA to know what we are trying to accomplish. So, we are changing the way we communicate our policy priorities and expectations – including an explanation of why we have made these decisions.

For the first time in 2013, HUD will precede the release of the NOFA with a 10-week communication strategy in which we focus on a particular topic or priority each week. These messages and related materials are intended to provide you with insight about our policy priorities as well as key information to help CoCs and project applicants prepare for the FY2013 CoC Program competition. This message is the first in the series.

We all, from time to time, need to take a critical look at the way we do business. Just as SNAPS is reviewing our policies and practices in light of the HEARTH Act, CoCs and homeless services providers should take time to reflect on what changes you need to make to be most effective. Some CoCs have been in place for many years and may be working well in many ways. Perhaps you've scored highly each competition or your annual Point-in-Time count has shown slight decreases each year. You may already have an HMIS in place and use it regularly to generate reports and assess performance and progress. You meet regularly and have an inclusive CoC membership. While all of these elements are essential, we are still a long way from meeting the goal of ending homelessness. We have to ask ourselves if there is more that can be done.

Some of the critical questions that homeless services providers and CoC leadership need to start asking themselves include:

- Is permanent supportive housing being used in a strategic manner that prioritizes those that need it most (as opposed to first come, first serve)?
- Is permanent supportive housing being implemented using a housing first model?
- Is rapid re-housing being used as effectively as possible?
- Is the CoC taking all necessary steps to implement a coordinated assessment system?
- Are project recipients using all funding sources as efficiently as possible?



The topics covered over the next nine weeks are intended to help CoCs and homeless service providers consider the questions above as well as prepare for the decisions they will have to make for the FY2013 CoC Program competition. Specifically, we will cover the following:

- Prioritizing chronically homeless persons in PSH
- Evidence Based Practice: Adopting a Housing First approach for PSH
- Evidence Based Practice: Rapid Re-Housing and HUD's Stance on Transitional Housing
- Family and Youth Homelessness
- Utilizing Mainstream Resources
- Importance of Centralized and Coordinated Assessment
- Building Public and Private Partnerships
- Importance of Data
- How to Strategically Analyze Homeless Service System and Grant Portfolio

In May, I sent a letter via the listserv to provide an update on key initiatives and issues that impact the programs administered by SNAPS. If you have not yet had an opportunity to read it, I would encourage you to do so now. [Read the message.](#)

As always, thank you for your service to people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness.

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