

Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust

Continuum of Care (CoC) Mainstream Benefits and Resources

Policy and Procedures

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure mechanisms are in place to rapidly facilitate homeless persons' acquisition of needed government documentation and to connect them to mainstream programs for which they are entitled and eligible with the goal of assisting individuals and families in obtaining and retaining permanent housing.

Specific objectives are:

- Endure all providers have ESS Partner Network (fka. ACCESS) training and have the capacity to enroll their clients online for Medicaid, Food Stamps and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- Educating and assisting all people experiencing homelessness with access to and use of mainstream benefits and resources (i.e. Medicare, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), employment assistance programs, early childhood education, health and behavioral health services, substance abuse programs).
- Ensuring all CoC funded providers working with people experiencing homelessness have written policies and procedures governing their role in assisting their clients in accessing mainstream benefits and resources.
- Ensuring the CoC funded providers are effective in their efforts to assist their clients to access mainstream benefits and resources.
- Ensuring that a CoC-wide approach is applied and that the work of connecting clients to mainstream programs is not the work of a single agency or CoC-funded program.

Role of HMIS

The HMIS or comparable database must be used to ensure a system-wide method of tracking (a) assessment of need for mainstream benefits, resources and services ("mainstream benefits"); (b) current receipt of such mainstream benefits; (c) application or enrollment for mainstream benefits; (c) and status of provider efforts to ensure commencement of mainstream benefits.

Provider Responsibility

1. The measures below must be initiated by the first program in which the client is placed through CoC Coordinated Entry (specialized Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, RRH or PSH provider):
 - a. Assist the client in securing government documents as described below.

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- b. Review the HMIS record of mainstream benefits to determine which benefits, resources or services the client is currently receiving, the status of application for or enrollment in mainstream benefits and the efforts of other CoC providers to assist the client in accessing such mainstream benefits.
- c. Perform an assessment of need for mainstream benefits.
- d. Initiate application or enrollment for clients in need of mainstream benefits and coordinate efforts of other CoC providers who initiated such application or enrollment.

2. Schedule of Activities

The above measures must take place in accordance with the following schedule to ensure timely assessment and application and/or enrollment for mainstream benefits:

| | |
|--|---|
| Assessment of Need for Benefits | Assessment must take place no later than 10 days of Program placement. |
| Government Documents | Within 60 days of placement, provider will attempt to have the necessary documents in hand. |
| Application or Enrollment: | Within 30 days of Assessment, provider has submitted application(s) for the client or enrolled the client in benefits identified in the Assessment. The date of submission or enrollment must be recorded in the client's HMIS Benefits record. |
| Follow-Up on Applications: | Provider must conduct frequent follow-up efforts on behalf of the client to determine status of benefit application(s). Such efforts must be documented in the client's HMIS Benefits record. |
| Follow-Up on Start of Benefits | Upon notice of approval for benefits or confirmation of enrollment, provider must monitor the actual receipt of the benefit and record date that such benefit commenced in the client's HMIS Benefits record. Provider must include a copy of the HMIS Benefits record reporting commencement of benefits in the client's case management file. |

Government Documents

The provider must ensure that the client applies for the following government documents no later than thirty (30) days of placement:

- Birth Certificate
- Social Security Card
- Government-issued Photo Identification

- Medicaid or Medicare Card (if approved or eligible)
- Veteran Specific Documentation and Benefits (veterans' disability, veterans' pension)
- Immigration Documents (Alien Registration Card, Naturalization Papers)

In addition, the provider must refer client for assistance with sealing and expungement of criminal history records and/or juvenile records in order to remove barriers to housing and employment.

Financial Services

Client should be assisted as soon as possible in securing a bank account or reputable alternative banking service by which to receive cash assistance or employment earnings.

Mainstream Benefits and Resources

The list found in **Attachment A** highlights the most common mainstream benefits or resources, including basic services, cash benefits, health coverage and services, education and employment programs and mainstream housing options. It is not a comprehensive list. Providers are expected to be familiar with the mainstream benefits, resources and programs that available at a federal, state and local level, the program administrators or providers and the application or enrollment process. Any individual whose public benefits are reduced, terminated, or denied should be referred for free legal assistance.

Provider Mainstream Benefits Policies and Procedures:

1. Providers that receive CoC funds must implement policies and procedures for client enrollment into mainstream benefits. This will include:
 - The provider's role and function in ensuring household mainstream benefit enrollment.
 - The manner in which clients are assessed for mainstream benefits.
 - Staff responsibility and processes in assisting clients to make appointments, arrange for transportation and access to appropriate mainstream benefits.
 - Identifying and implementing strategies for successfully enrolling persons in mainstream benefits.
 - Providing information and education on mainstream benefits to those experiencing homelessness in a clear, concise, culturally competent manner to: (a) promote client understanding of the benefits, enrollment process and requirements to maintain the benefits, (b) assess the client's ability, and the need for assistance, to navigate the enrollment process; and (c) encourage self-advocacy for benefits and other mainstream resources.
 - Recording and documenting benefits application and enrollment progress in client records. At a minimum, a current print-out of the HMIS Benefits record reporting application or enrollment dates, application follow-up and commencement date of benefits must be placed in the client's case management file on a monthly basis.

2. The policies and procedures must incorporate the schedule of activities described above to ensure timely assessment and application and/or enrollment for mainstream benefits.
3. Failure to implement such policies and procedures may result in a finding, negatively impacting the provider's standing with the Homeless Trust and/or ability to participate in upcoming CoC competition for funds. The Homeless Trust will ensure compliance through monitoring.
4. Providers' effectiveness will be measured by increases in clients' non-employment income, HMIS record audit and other methods established by the Homeless Trust to measure mainstream benefit enrollment.

SOAR Application Process for Disability Benefits

1. Providers must utilize the SOAR Application process designed to streamline SSI/SSDI eligibility determinations for persons at risk or experiencing homelessness.
2. Providers must have at least one staff person well-informed on the SOAR Model and, preferably, a staff person who has completed the Florida SOAR Online Course and deemed a SOAR-trained Case Worker with competency to process SOAR applications on behalf of clients. The Online Training can be found at <https://soarworks.samhsa.gov/course/soar-online-course-adult-curriculum>
3. If a provider does not have in-house competency to process a SOAR application, the provider must identify and coordinate with a provider with a SOAR-trained Case Worker to process a SOAR application on behalf the client.

Trainings

1. The Trust will invite mainstream benefits agencies to conduct informational and benefit enrollment training sessions for CoC providers.
2. Providers will conduct, or arrange for, internal staff trainings on available mainstream benefits, eligibility criteria and enrollment processes.

Evaluation of Systemic Effectiveness

As part of the Annual System Gaps and Needs analysis, the Homeless Trust will solicit input from providers and persons with lived experience regarding barriers experienced by clients in accessing and receiving benefits as well as the barriers faced by providers in their effort to assist their clients with benefit enrollment.

Based on such input, the Committee will propose recommendations to improve efforts within the CoC to enroll clients in mainstream benefits and recommendations to be directed toward agencies responsible for administering such benefits.

Innovation

The Homeless Trust will encourage and collaborate with providers and community partners on innovative efforts to bring mainstream benefits to bear on resolving the causes of homelessness and address the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

ATTACHMENT A

Mainstream Benefits, Resources and Services

Basic Services or Assistance

- Food Assistance (SNAP, Food Bank, Soup Kitchen, Senior Center Meal Program)
- Rental, Utility and Move-In Assistance outside of Coordinated CoC Referrals (Catholic Charities, Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), Miami-Dade Community Action Service Centers (LIHEAP, HAG)
- Domestic Violence Assistance
- Public Transportation Assistance
- Credit Counseling
- Cell Phone & Internet Connections

Cash Benefits

Unemployment Benefits:

Florid Reemployment Assistance benefits, also known as unemployment compensation, provides temporary wage replacement benefits to qualified individuals who are out of work through no fault of their own. Floridians in need of filing a claim for Reemployment Assistance benefits may do so online using the [CONNECT](#) system.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Security Disability (SSDI) Benefits: SSI and SSDI provide income, access to health coverage through Medicaid and Medicare, and help with workforce reconnection through work incentives and services.

Veteran Benefits and Pensions:

Disability Compensation is a monetary benefit paid to Veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service. Compensation may also be paid for post-service disabilities that are considered related or secondary to disabilities occurring in service and for disabilities presumed to be related to circumstances of military service, even though they may arise after service.

The Veterans Pension program provides monthly payments to wartime Veterans who meet certain age or disability requirements, and who have income and net worth within certain limits.

Retirement Benefits and Pensions

Retirement benefits through the Social Security Administration. Clients may also have retirement benefits or pensions.

Families with Children Benefits and Resources

Florida Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: SNAP, also formerly known as Food Stamps, provides low-income individuals and households with monthly cash benefits to purchase nutritional food.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Provides help to low-income families and those experiencing homelessness during transition to employment.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC): A federally funded nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children, providing healthy foods, nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding support, and referrals for health care and community services.

Child Support Assistance: When a parent or guardian has custody of a child and the other parent does not provide financial support, the Child Support Enforcement Division of [Miami-Dade County's State Attorney's Office](#) can help. If you are the custodial parent (the child lives with you), you are not alone in your efforts to get money or medical benefits for your child.

Early Childhood Education:

Early childhood education and services generally target children ages birth to 5 years old with some services for children up to 12 years old. Programs include Early Head Start and Head Start and School Readiness services. Early childhood education programming is offered through Miami-Dade County Public Schools and provider networks funded and coordinated by the Early Childhood Coalition and the Children's Trust.

Miami Dade County Public Schools Project UPSTART:

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) Project UP-START assists schools with timely identification of students in unstable housing situations, immediate school enrollment and resources in order to help ensure their successful academic achievement. Project UPSTART coordinates its efforts with the CoC, particularly the emergency shelters.

Medical Coverage

Medicaid: Health insurance coverage for low-income populations, including those with disability and/or experiencing homelessness. Youth transitioning from foster care can also access this benefit until the age of 26. This benefit covers required services like primary care, medical services and behavioral health treatment.

Medicare: Health Insurance coverage for persons who are 65 years of age or older and meet certain requirements.

Veterans Health Benefits: Qualified veterans can receive health and behavioral health services and other health-related supports through Veterans Administration (VA) medical centers, community-based outpatient clinics and vet centers. The VA also offers community living centers and other assisted living facilities.

Ryan White HIV/AIDS Part A and Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI): Provides core medical services and support services to persons living with HIV/AIDS whose income is at or below 400% of the

Federal Poverty Level. Ryan White is the payer of last resort for such services. (<http://aidsnet.org>).

Long-Term Care: Options of long-term care available in the community (ALFs, nursing homes, hospice care).

Community-Based Health and Behavioral Health Services: Health and behavioral health services offered through Community Health Centers, Federally Qualified Health Centers, county hospitals and clinics; public mental health and substance abuse service providers.

Educational and Employment Services

Employment and Workforce Programs: CareerSource South Florida, a part of the state's network of local workforce development boards, offers employment services and workforce programs. CareerSource offices are located throughout Miami-Dade County, including Camillus House.

Technical Schools

Local educational institutions offer technical training that lead to certification and employment opportunities. Institutions include MDCPS' secondary school technical programs, technical colleges, and MDCPS Adult Education Programs and Miami-Dade College. Technical schools and career pathways can be found at <https://ctemiami.net>

Youth Tuition and Fees Exemption: Provides homeless and/or current or former foster care youth an exemption from tuition and fees at state (public) universities, colleges in the Florida College System, and school district workforce education programs. Assistance applying for the exemption is provided to MDCPS homeless students through Project UPSTART assists MDCPS homeless students with assistance applying for the exemption. The local Community-Based Care Lead Agency (Citrus Family Care Network) and the Office of Continuing Care (Hope Florida) assist current or former foster care youth to access the exemption. Eligible youth may also apply for the exemption through the Florida university, college or workforce education program in which the youth is enrolling.

Mainstream Subsidized Housing

- *Federally-Funded Mainstream Housing:* Federally funded housing subsidy or properties administered by local Housing Authorities (Housing Choice Vouchers, Mainstream Vouchers, Multi-Family, Public Housing etc.). Local Entitlement Jurisdictions also invest federal HOME funds in affordable housing developments.
- *Tax Credit Housing:* Affordable housing developed with federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), including developments targeting homeless persons or having set-aside referral agreements with the Homeless Trust.
- *State and Local Subsidized Housing:* State-allocated SHIP funds administered locally that are allocated to rental assistance. Local Documentary Stamp Surtax-funded affordable housing.

Mainstream Benefits Checklist

Instructions: For each benefit write in the date of application and date of approval. When the benefit is not applicable write "N/A" on date of application. When the client already has the benefit write "Receiving Benefit" on date of application. Any individual whose public benefits are reduced, terminated, or denied should be referred to Legal Services of Greater Miami.

Client Name: _____ HMIS #: _____

| Benefit | Date of Application | Date Approved |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Medicare* | | |
| Medicaid* | | |
| Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)* | | |
| Food Stamps* | | |
| Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** | | |
| Employment assistance programs | | |
| Early childhood education | | |
| Health services | | |
| Substance abuse programs | | |
| Mental health counselling | | |
| Legal services | | |

*Update the HMIS record when benefits are received or changed.