Miami Right at Home Operations Guide

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Overview

Miami-Dade County, through its Homeless Trust, has developed a Homelessness Prevention (HP) program for eligible households in municipalities and unincorporated Miami-Dade County. The approved *Homeless Prevention* standards and a *HP Crosswalk,* which show the different activities provided through the various funding sources can be found on the Homeless Trust website under the Standards of Care tab. **This document provides additional guidance to agencies, participants, and interested parties on Right at Home (RAH), a particular Homeless Prevention project within the HP portfolio.**
RAH has been developed in coordination with numerous stakeholders in Miami-Dade, including service providers, service recipients, and policymakers and researchers at the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunity (LEO) at the University of Notre Dame where there is a conflict between guidance contained within this document and the HP Program policies of the Homeless Trust, the HP policies prevail.

RAH provides cash, service connections, ongoing case management, and other ongoing or one-time assistance to households that are attempting to avoid homelessness in Miami-Dade County. Households that are not matched with RAH remain eligible for all relevant public resources in Miami-Dade.

Close consultation with agencies was vital to transparently design a methodology for distribution of RAH assistance. The project will have designated organizations serve as the community's RAH 1) Coordinated Entry, 2) Fiscal Agent, 3) Supportive Service Provider(s), and 4) Legal Services. This Operations Guide establishes RAH criteria to consistently administer the RAH project county-wide.

1. Eligibility Criteria

Based on interviews with agencies and RAH leads, the criteria reflect the current understanding of priorities of service for households with increased vulnerability to homelessness. These eligibility criteria allow households to receive access to services and funds based on the specific needs of their household. While broad criteria for eligibility are consistent with the Homeless Trust's HP Policy, to enroll in RAH households must agree to the procedures contained here.

I. Qualification: To participate in RAH, household must:

a. Have contacted the helpline and been determined eligible for either existing HP resources or RAH resources; -OR-
b. Have responded, via email or phone, to an outreach effort and been verified as eligible for either existing HP resources or RAH resources.
   -AND-
c. Consent to the RAH procedure, which is consistent with the Homeless Trust HP Standards and approved by the Continuum of Care Board. Specific approval was

required given the project design includes the use of Randomized Control Trial (RCT) protocols.

d. Households who qualify for RAH will be randomly assigned to the Treatment group and receive services from providers funded through the RAH initiative. The control group will receive services from providers funded through the local Homeless Prevention network funded through ESG, HOME and other local funding streams. Participants randomized into the Treatment group must:
    1. provide evidence consistent with the HP Standards of Care demonstrating their current income places them at or below 50% of the Area Median Income, and
    2. not have sufficient resources or support networks immediately available to prevent them from becoming homeless, and
    3. demonstrate one the following categories are met:
        a. third party verification the property is not habitable,
        b. a copy of a court summons,
        c. report issued by the Clerk of Courts,
        d. court writ of possession,
        e. notice to vacate provided by the landlord,
        f. has moved for economic reasons 2 or more times during the last 60 days,
        g. discharge documentation by an institution, or
        h. fleeing/attempting to flee Domestic Violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other dangerous or life-threatening conditions

II. Priority: Our first prioritization group will be households who are eligible for HP and have a history of homelessness in the past two years. Should we not be able to identify enough program participants meeting the first priority, we will prioritize eligible households led by:

- households who are rent burdened due to a rent increase, loss of income or victim of financial abuse or scam that resulted in the household owing more than $5,000 in arrears.
- households with high utilization of public health services, criminal legal systems or other institutional stay.
- households led by a single pregnant or parenting adult.
- household is led by a youth (ages 18-24).
- households led by a senior who is 62 or older.
- households led by a person(s) fleeing Domestic Violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or family member that either takes place in, or him or her afraid to return to, their primary nighttime residence (including human trafficking).

- households led by a person diagnosed by a licensed health professional with a terminal illness, severe/unstable chronic conditions (i.e., AIDS, COPD, ESRD), or severe mental illness or substance abuse disorder who is being discharged from institutions (jails, hospitals); and
- households with a major change in household composition (i.e., death of family member, divorce by head of household, new child) in the last 6 months that directly affects ability to secure or maintain housing.

Access Point staff will assess the immediate housing circumstances of a household and determine if they are eligible and a priority for referral, attempt to collect consent to participate in the RCT, and use HMIS to randomize applicants into the treatment or control group. Only those households that consent to participate will be shared with the LEO research group.

a. Priority Group 1
   Households meeting eligibility and determined to be a priority for referral due to their inherent risk of becoming homeless without assistance. This may include people with past entries in HMIS; people with third party verification of past homelessness from another CoC worker, law enforcement, outreach worker, shelter staff, case managers, healthcare providers, or social workers; people with more than one attempt to flee Domestic Violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other dangerous or life-threatening conditions including human trafficking; and people identified through the intake worker's observations or screening who can self-certify prior homeless history.

b. Priority Group 2
   If no one with prior homeless history is identified the second prioritization group will include:
    - households who are rent burdened due to a rent increase or loss of income that resulted in the household owing more than $5,000 in arrears,
    - households with high utilization of public health services, criminal legal systems or other institutional stay,
    - households led by a single pregnant or parenting adult,
    - household is led by a youth (ages 18-24)
    - household is led by a senior who is 62 or older
    - household led by a person(s) fleeing Domestic Violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or family member that either takes place in, or him or her afraid to return to, their primary nighttime residence (including human trafficking).
    - household is led by a person diagnosed by a licensed health professional with a terminal illness, severe/unstable chronic conditions (i.e., AIDS, COPD, ESRD), or severe mental illness or substance abuse disorder who is being discharged from institutions (jails, hospitals)

- households with a major change in household composition (i.e., death of family member, divorce by head of household, new child) in the last 6 months that directly affects ability to secure or maintain housing

Households returning for assistance who are eligible will be considered a priority for referral and will not require a new consent for participation.

2. RAH Design

I. Subsidy Determination: The below list of attributes that may be considered by **RAH** leads when determining the amount and duration of household assistance. RAH providers must utilize the Housing Stability Planning process to guide the amount of assistance needed, these attributes are a guide for consideration by providers, not intended to exclude anyone from program participation.

Attributes:

1. Receipt of critical documents (e.g., State Issued Identification, Bank Statements or Public Benefit's Award Letter, Social Security Card, Employment Authorization)
    a. Does the individual/household need to be connected to resources to increase their income?
    b. Has the individual/household obtained the documentation needed to secure employment or other public benefits?
    c. Have there been delays in receipt of employment authorization, or other documentation for reasons outside of the household/agency's control?
    d. What are the reasons for delay in receipt of documents?
2. Family size: number of adults able to work, number of adults unable to work, minor children
    a. Are one or more of the adults in the household unable to work due to disability, a health condition, lack of childcare, or cultural/religious norms?
3. Ability to access other needed services (transportation, childcare, etc.) to secure employment and other public benefits
    a. Is the household eligible for/receiving other public cash benefits?
4. Current immigration status
    a. What is the current immigration status of the individual/household?
    b. Does it allow for access to needed benefits and employment opportunities?
5. Disabling condition: a physical or mental condition that permanently impacts one or more life functions
    a. Do any of the adult household members have a disability that will prevent them from gaining employment or extend the time it will take to secure appropriate employment?

   b. Do any of the minor children have a disability that will impact the ability of an adult to obtain employment or extend the time it will take to secure appropriate employment?

6. Medical conditions: conditions that require medical intervention to prevent further disability, loss of function, or death
   a. Do any of the adult household members have a medical condition that will prevent them from gaining employment or will extend the time it will take to secure appropriate employment?
   b. Do any of the minor children have a medical condition that will impact the ability of an adult to obtain employment or extend the time it will take to secure appropriate employment?
7. English/literacy proficiency
   a. Does the individual/household have limited English proficiency that will affect the time it will take to obtain appropriate employment?
8. Social Support System
   a. Does the household have a community tie to support their stabilization?
   b. Are any individuals in the household members of a faith-community that may provide social, emotional, or financial support?
   c. Has the household received any ongoing in-kind supports for housing, transportation or food access/security needs?

II. Subsidy Duration: **Three intervals of rental subsidy may be provided based on household attributes that impact self-sufficiency. Each household will be re-evaluated using the attributes every three months to determine if the duration or amount of assistance should be adjusted.**

Type	Duration	Characteristics
Short Term	0-3 months	• Light touch services, with minimal financial and support resources. More supports are applied to those households who struggle to stabilize. • Legal Services may defend an eviction or negotiate payment arrangements. • Subsidy changes determined in collaboration with household
Medium	0-6 months	• Intensive Case Management • Supportive Employment • Legal Services may defend an eviction

		• Subsidy changes determined in collaboration with household
Extended	0-12 months	• Intensive Case Management • Supportive Employment • Legal Services may defend an eviction • More intensive service connections • Subsidy changes determined in collaboration with household

III. Housing Referrals: RAH referrals may come from helpline staff who receive leads from community service providers and other agencies, or directly from people calling the helpline or identified through the sharing of administrative data. Referral organizations must use the prescribed application provided by the Homeless Trust to enroll a household in RAH.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Homeless Trust is the lead entity for all RAH activities. The Homeless Trust may at its sole discretion choose to assign any, or all, RAH-funded activities to non-profit service providers in Miami-Dade County. Procurement methods for any delegation will be consistent with the procurement standards of Miami-Dade County.

LEAD ENTITY	**ACTIVITY**
ACCESS PROVIDER	• Screening for Eligibility • Randomization • Housing Stability Planning • Request Arrears and Short-term Rental Assistance • Case Management • Benefits enrollment • Obtainment of critical documents (SSN, EAD, etc.) • School enrollment • RAH application completion • Initial health assessment appointment • Identification of permanent housing • Referral to Legal Services • Referral to Supportive Servies for persons who need Medium-to extended-term Rental Assistance
LEGAL SERVICES	• Legal Advice • Eviction Defense

	• Negotiating payment arrangements between tenants and landlords • Debt consolidation and defense • Application to public benefits and appeals • Family law • Tax Issues • Wage garnishment • Other civil legal assistance to support housing stability
RAH SUPPORTIVE SERVICES	• Housing Stability Planning • Service coordination for medium and extended subsidy • Housing-focused case management • Housing navigation support • Credit Repair • Employment Services, vocational training, educational material costs & technology literacy • Application for entitlement benefits • Referral to primary care inclusive of behavioral health services • Household goods
FISCAL AGENT	• Rent subsidy payments • Utility allowance payment • Hotel/Motel

4. Supportive Services

Critical to the implementation of RAH is the provision of supportive services to stabilize households. Below is a summary of the type of services that can be provided through RAH.

I. Housing Navigation Support

Housing navigation is a critical component RAH in Miami's challenging rental market.[1] RAH will take a strengths-based approach to housing navigation by investing in the solutions that are already working in communities.

Agencies funded to provide housing navigation are expected to assist in identifying units for all eligible households. Housing navigation will focus on removing any barriers that may prevent households from achieving housing stability. Housing

[1] Wildercress, Danielle et al. "Flexible Housing Subsidy Guide" Changewell Project

navigation services are solution-focused, customized supports that help residents identify and lease a rental unit that meets their needs. Key functions include:

- **Landlord engagement**: Proactively work with landlords to help overcome barriers to leasing apartments, such as credit issues, and address any issues that may arise over the course of a resident's tenure in the RAH.
- **Housing Search:** Assisting households in identifying and viewing units that meet their needs.
- **Facilitating application processes and lease signing**
- **Supporting move-in of households:** Arranging for physical moves, activation of utilities, etc.

II. Housing Focused Case Management

Ongoing support to ensure households remain connected to mainstream and culturally focused support services and are moving towards housing self-sufficiency. Housing focused case management utilizes a trauma-informed, person-centered approach focused on achieving stable housing quickly and efficiently. Services include facilitating connections to appropriate community resources for other needs.

5. Rent Subsidy Management

Rent subsidies are highly effective at reducing housing insecurity.[2] RAH provides a structured process for issuing rent subsidies that gives households time to focus on gaining stable income and identifying sustainable housing. Subsidy plans should be designed to prepare households to assume rent payments when the subsidy ends. Households for whom enrollment in a long-term support is needed, should apply to all mainstream housing programs for which they are eligible.

Structured Subsidy - Every household is provided a subsidy amount based on their needs as identified in the Housing Stability Plan. The Access Provider will complete Housing Stability Planning and attempt to resolve hardship through arrears and short-term rental assistance. Referral to Supportive Service Providers will be made for persons who need more time to achieve housing stability. The standard intervals outlined below are a guide for how payments may be structured for households with income, that need medium to extended term rental assistance. During this time of assistance, households must work with the RAH contracted supportive service agency(ies) to gain housing stabilization. Income and progress towards independence will be reassessed every three months. As stability and income increases for the household, the subsidy will decrease.

[2] Fischer, Will et al. "Research Shows Rental Assistance Reduces Hardship and Provides Platform to Expand Opportunity for Low-Income Families" Center for Budget and Policy Priorities 12/5/2019

	0-3 months	4-6 months	7-12 months	Last month
Rent in Arrears	Paid by RAH Fiscal Agent directly to landlord		N/A	N/A
Short Term Households	Paid by RAH Fiscal Agent directly to landlord	Households exit RAH or get a subsidy extension of three months		1 x rent
Medium Term Households	100% of rent paid by RAH Fiscal Agent in months 1-2. Tenants with income will pay 25% of the rent in month three, 50% of the rent in month four, 75% of the rent in month 5 and assume the full rent by month six.		Households exit RAH or get a subsidy extension for three months	1 x rent
Extended Households	100% of rent paid by RAH Fiscal Agent in months 1-3. Tenants with income will pay 25% of the rent in months 4-5, 50% of the rent in months 6-7, 75% of the rent in month 8-12 and assume the full rent by month 13.			1 x rent

6. Budget

RAH-funded agencies are provided a budget that is divided into three categories, with large majority going towards direct rental assistance and support services for clients, and ten percent (10%) allotted for administration of the RAH. Administrative fees will be split with 5% retained by the direct service provider and 5% retained by the Homeless Trust. Outlined below are the approved uses of funding.

1. Rental Assistance	**2. Supportive Services**	**3. Administrative**
-Rent: financial assistance paid on behalf of a household directly to a landlord to augment the direct cost of housing.	-Housing Navigation Services including Compensation provided to real estate agents that identify units for rental in RAH. -Housing Focused Case Management -Service Coordination	-Management and Oversight: supervision and leadership associated with administering the RAH.
-Damage Pool: reserved money that may be available to landlords to pay for any damages to a rental unit.	-Legal Services	-Financial Management – general financial management activities associated with administering the RAH.
-Hotel/Motel costs for up to 3 months.	-Staffing Equipment: costs incurred by the supportive service agency to provide service help to households	

	including phones, tablets and computers.	
-Security Deposit: a sum of money held in trust by the landlord that is intended to cover damage to the premises beyond normal wear and tear, and/or to be withheld if a household cannot meet the tenancy obligations of the lease.	-Moving and Storage costs.	
-Utilities: essential housing amenities required for daily life not included as a part of rent. These may include electricity, gas and internet. Utilities must be paid to the vendor.	-Housing Database Support: third party online platforms that can be used as repositories for rental units.	
-Fiscal Agent: third party contractor that may augment the RAH lead's staffing to administer rent payments or vendor payments necessary to run the housing RAH.	-Supportive Employment, Credit repair, Or other costs designed to increase household income.	
	-flexible funding to include food, household goods, car repairs, childcare and other activities designed to promote the households housing stability.	

7. Risk Management

RAH-funded service agencies will be monitored through any combination of the three strategies identified below:

1. Monthly Record Keeping Requirements: Established by the Homeless Trust to regularly review RAH and financial level data required by the Funder contract.
    a. Reimbursement requests.
    b. Month Progress Report.
    c. Evidence of payments.

2. On-site Monitoring: Review of reporting, general recordkeeping to monitor internal operations, participant interviews, file review and financial management practices in keeping with regulatory requirements established in the contract.

8. Conflict of Interest

An individual conflict of interest arises when individuals with specific relationships to a RAH lead directly or indirectly benefits financially or otherwise by the activities carried out by the RAH lead. An organizational conflict of interest arises when, because of activities or relationships with other persons or organizations, the RAH lead is unable to render impartial assistance. Four common Conflicts of Interest in housing RAHs should be avoided.

1. RAH subrecipients shall not prioritize their organizational clients in the delivery of services. All households will be triaged and prioritized following the RAH guidance.
2. RAH subrecipients shall not pay rent on units owned by individuals who work for the subrecipient organization without express disclosure and review by Funder.
3. RAH subrecipients shall not pay rent on units owned by the organization without expressed disclosure and review by Funder.
4. RAH subrecipients shall not pay rent for organization staff without expressed disclosure and review by Funder.
5. Supportive service agencies shall not serve as landlords to households in RAH with whom they are working without expressed disclosure and review by Funder.

9. Termination and Due Process

RAH is designed to serve all households who qualify for the RAH and need housing stability. Households may be terminated from the RAH if the qualifications identified in section 1 Eligibility Criteria were falsified or fraudulent.

Assistance to a household may be terminated:

- If the household vacates the unit with or without notice to the RAH Fiscal Agent.
- If the household cannot be contacted for more than 30 days and the Access Point or Service Provider has documented appropriate unsuccessful attempts to contact the household.

Households wishing to appeal an eligibility determination or termination in RAH may do so by going through the CoC's established grievance process. Grievance forms should be provided in the primary languages spoken by households. Households requiring support to complete the grievance process may request assistance from the Homeless Trust or receive support from an external agency of their choosing. Grievance processes will be reviewed by Funder to assure consistency in process across the state.

10. Expected Outcomes

RAH is designed to ensure households can move into sustainable housing that they can afford long-term. If the household needs additional assistance beyond the duration of RAH, the expectation is that these households will be enrolled in other housing assistance or social services they may qualify for during their participation in RAH to ensure housing stability. RAH subrecipients will be asked to track housing outcomes in HMIS for all households served, including placements and enrollment in other services to ensure RAH goals are met. A successful outcome is that households assisted with RAH will not enter the homeless system for at least 24 months after the assistance was rendered.

Appendices

HMIS Provider Agreement
Housing Stability Plan
HP Budget Form
Grievance Procedures
CoC Homeless Prevention Assessment (in HMIS)Housing Inspection Standards
FMR by County and Unit Size