MA-516 Balance of State



Massachusetts Balance of State
Continuum of Care

Balance of State Advisory Board

Governance Charter

Updated 7/15/2024

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##

## Article 1. Governance Charter Purpose

To fulfill its roles and responsibilities as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in CFR, Part 578, the Massachusetts Balance of State Continuum of Care MA-516 (BoS CoC) will follow the structure outlined in this Governance Charter which includes:

* BoS CoC Purpose
* CoC Membership
* Role of Persons with Lived Experience and Expertise of Homelessness (PLEE)
* Advisory Board
* CoC Standing Committees
* HMIS Lead
* Coordinated Entry Lead

This Charter will be updated annually or by emergency session if needed.

It may be amended or repealed at any MA BoS CoC Advisory Board meeting.

## Article 2. BoS CoC Purpose

The overarching purpose of the BoS CoC is to make homelessness within its [115-community geography](#_Map_of_CoC) brief, rare, and non-reoccurring. The BoS CoC also seeks to actively participate in efforts to prevent homelessness within its boundaries and recognizes the importance of partnering with all members of the communities being served.

Housing and service projects within the BoS CoC geography are funded by HUD as well as various other sources. The BoS CoC works in partnership with community partners, member organizations and those with lived experience and expertise of homelessness (PLEE) to maximize and leverage all resources in support of those being served.

## Article 3. Balance of State CoC Membership

Membership is open to all interested parties involved in ending homelessness within the Balance of State’s geographic area. Working with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) staff, the BoS CoC welcomes all participants, particularly engagement with homeless or formerly homeless persons, non-profit homeless assistance providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, municipalities, businesses, advocates, public housing authorities and agencies, school districts, social service providers,  mental health agencies, health care organizations, institutions of higher education, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve Veterans, and other state agencies.

## Article 4. BoS CoC Values and Principles

The BoS CoC operates with a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This is achieved through:

* A focus on membership in the CoC, Advisory Board, and committees that reflects the population served, with specific efforts to include those who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ+), and persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness ([PLEE](#_PLEE_Partnership));
* Strategic project development to serve those identified as most in need of housing and services in the BoS CoC geography through an annual gaps analysis as well as a needs assessments undertaken every three years;
* Use of a [Coordinated Entry system](#_Coordinated_Entry) that prioritizes those within the BoS CoC who are most vulnerable; and
* Advisory Board oversight and committee work.

### Non-Discrimination

It is the policy of the BoS CoC Advisory Board that no person shall be discriminated against because of their race, sex, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or because they have minor children, or receive public assistance. The BoS CoC Advisory Board shall be operated in an open and democratic fashion and shall not discriminate against anyone because they are a member of one of the above groups.

#### Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Requirements

The BoS CoC complies fully with all applicable fair housing and civil rights requirements in 24 CFR § 5.105(a), including, but not limited to, the Fair Housing Act; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act; and Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

Under federal and state law, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, creed, age, disability, familial status, children, marital status, military/veteran status, receipt of public assistance/housing subsidy, ancestry, and genetic information. To file a complaint of discrimination, any person may contact the Associate Director, Division of Housing Stabilization, EOHLC, 100 Cambridge St., 3rd Floor, Boston, MA 02114, tel. (617) 573-1137, TTY (617) 573-1140 for the deaf or hard-of-hearing.

The Continuum and its projects will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, handicap, disability, or national origin in participating in and accessing housing through the Coordinated Entry System.  In accordance with the citations above, and in an effort to achieve that ideal, it will not:

* Deny any applicant the opportunity to apply for housing, nor deny any eligible applicant the opportunity to lease housing suitable to their needs;
* Provide housing which is different from that provided by others;
* Subject a person to segregation or disparate treatment;
* Restrict a person’s access to any benefit enjoyed by others in connection with the housing program;
* Treat a person differently in determining eligibility or other requirements for admission;
* Deny a person access to the same level of services;
* Deny a person the opportunity to participate in a planning or advisory group that is an integral part of the Coordinated Entry system; or
* Steer a person toward any particular program for reasons related to race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, handicap, disability, or national origin.

The BoS CoC and its projects shall not automatically deny admission to a particular group or category of otherwise eligible applicants. Each applicant in a particular group or category will be treated on an individual basis.

The BoS CoC prioritizes use of the Housing First approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals before permanent housing entry.

### PLEE Partnership

The BoS CoC prioritizes and encourages the participation and partnership of those who identify as Persons with Lived Experience and Expertise of Homelessness (PLEE). Each [committee](#_Article_7._Committees) and the Advisory Board will seek out PLEE partnership as they fulfill their obligations defined below.

Compensation – PLEE members will receive financial compensation for sharing their expertise on BoS CoC committees and other CoC activities.

## Article 5. Advisory Board

#### Purpose and Responsibilities

The purpose of the BoS CoC Advisory Board is to provide oversight to ensure the fulfillment of all responsibilities specified in HUD’s Continuum of Care Program statutory and regulatory requirements. The Advisory Board acts based upon the needs identified by the BoS CoC, and as needed to address challenges that arise. Its responsibilities are listed below.

* Designate a Collaborative Applicant consistent with 24 CFR § 578.9
* Vote on policy changes that significantly impact access to resources
* Review recommendations from the Administrative Committee regarding funding priorities for the CoC
* Approve the Balance of State Strategic Plan developed through CoC-wide engagement
* Establish and oversee committees to support the functioning of the CoC, as well as special subcommittees or working groups as needed
* Solicit regular updates from committees to understand the current operation of the CoC and its greatest needs
* Update committees when CoC priorities change to assist in committee goal development
* Finalize project ranking referred from the Project Evaluation Committee through a majority vote
* Approve applications to join the advisory board by majority vote
* Conduct at least 6 committee meetings each year, more if necessary
* Provide orientation and onboarding for new members of the Advisory Board
* Comply with mandatory participation of all meetings annually (Members can request permission to miss a meeting if necessary; to be approved by the Collaborative Applicant)

A vote is achieved through majority agreement of the membership in attendance when a vote is taken.

Continued membership by voting members of the Advisory Board is contingent upon active participation defined as: Advisory Board Members will attend each bi-monthly Advisory Board meeting. They will attend the monthly Planning Meeting on the months when there is not an Advisory Board meeting.Advisory Board Members are encouraged to participate in a monthly committee meeting.  (Members can request permission to miss a meeting if necessary; to be approved by the Collaborative Applicant)

Attendance at Advisory Board meetings is open to all, unless it is a closed session.

#### Membership and Composition

The Advisory Board includes those who engage with and/or serve people experiencing homelessness or have significant knowledge of homelessness.  An agency can hold only one seat. The Board is selected from the full membership of the BoS CoC and includes 15 permanent seats and two subject matter expert seats representing the following categories:

The Collaborative Applicant, EOHLC

Two persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness

One person from each CE Navigator Agency

A housing provider

An ESG provider without CoC funding

An individual shelter

An Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter

A street outreach provider

A DV provider

A Youth and Young Adult (YYA) provider

A Veterans provider

Subject Matter Expert Seats will be invited as needed. Examples of categories may include:

A Public Housing Authority (PHA)

An Advocate or Advocacy Agency

Affordable Housing Developer

Higher Education Representative

Faith-Based person or organization

Municipality

#### Advisory Board Membership Process

The Advisory Board will create a standing Outreach Committee to specifically:

* Invite new attendees and members who represent the demographic composition of the population served in the CoC;
* Encourage participation from all historically marginalized populations;
* Develop a list of prospective members as openings occur; and
* Work with the PLEE Committee to recruit members to fill Advisory Board positions.

Every effort will be made to include representatives from all regions of the BoS geography to ensure a balanced perspective.

#### Terms

All Board positions are for 3 years\*. When a 3-year term expires, the Advisory Board will evaluate letters of interest to fill the seat and vote on which agency will fill the seat moving forward. The existing seat-holder may also submit a letter of interest.

\*Regional Navigator Agencies - Current Navigator Agencies each have a permanent seat without a time limit. If a Navigator Agency changes, the seat will go to the new agency immediately upon contract signing.

\*The Collaborative Applicant has a permanent seat on the Advisory Board without a time limit.

Announcements for open permanent and subject matter expert seats will be made during the monthly planning meeting, via an email invitation to all CoC members, and through targeted outreach by EOHLC, the Advisory Board, and the Advisory Board Outreach Committee.

Agencies applying for a seat must have a minimum of one year of active engagement in either the monthly planning meeting or a CoC Committee. Interested persons will submit a letter of interest in response to the [Advisory Board position description](#_Advisory_Board_Position). The Advisory Board will choose from the applicants via majority vote.

If another CoC merges with the BoS CoC, a seat will be provided for one 3-year term.

A majority vote from the Advisory Board may remove a member of the Advisory Board. An Advisory Board member may also resign their membership on the Board by providing written notice to the Advisory Board co-chairs.

#### Advisory Board Leadership

There will be two co-chairs. One will be from EOHLC which will retain a permanent position, and the other from the Advisory Board membership. The member chosen must have at least one year of service on the Advisory Board prior to being selected as the co-chair. They will be nominated during an Advisory Board meeting and chosen via majority vote.

## Article 6. Code of Conduct

BoS CoC Advisory Board members and State employees that support the operation of the BoS CoC shall abide by all sections of the code of conduct below. Failure to act in accordance with the code of conduct may result in removal from the membership of the Advisory Board.

Conflict of Interest
The necessity for the fair and impartial administration of state and federal funds and the enforcement of the funders’ program requirements makes the avoidance of any conflict of interest of primary importance. A conflict of interest is a situation in which an employee or Advisory Board member’s private interest, usually financial, conflicts or raises a reasonable question of conflict with his or her official duties and responsibilities.

When an Advisory Board member’s interests compete with the Commonwealth’s or the Public’s interests, the Commonwealth’s or the Public’s interests take precedence, even if that means the member might be disadvantaged or inconvenienced. Advisory Board members must not use their office for personal gain in any manner.

Chapter 268A of the Massachusetts General Laws provides criminal and civil penalties for conflict-of-interest violations. The following two general categories of prohibitions are to be used as guidelines. (Chapter 268A of the General Laws contains specific details).

(a) No Advisory Board member may request or receive, in any manner whatsoever, compensation or anything else of value: (i) for performance of his or her duties; or (ii) for influencing or appearing to influence such performance.

Advisory Board members must not accept money or anything of value from anyone, or the promise of money or anything of value, for the performance of their duties within the CoC or for the failure to perform their duties. This is basic public policy, and every CoC Advisory Board member should be on his or her guard to recognize an attempt to influence the performance of his or her duties by the giving of money or gifts.

(b) No Advisory Board member may participate in any matter relating to any entity in which, to his or her knowledge, the Advisory Board member, or a member of his or her immediate family, or his or her business partner or any business organization in which he serves as an officer, director, trustee, or employee, or any person or organization with whom he or she is negotiating or has any arrangement concerning prospective employment, has a financial interest.

Advisory Board members have an obligation to avoid the potential conflicts of interest which exist in their role as a member of the Advisory Board. If their duties require them to participate in a particular matter in which they have a financial interest, they have a duty to disclose and report promptly the existence or possible existence of a conflict of interest to their appointing authority. The appointing authority has the responsibility to determine whether there should be a transfer to another member of a vote which involves them, their immediate family, or any person with whom or entity in which they have some personal or financial involvement, or whether the appointing authority should assume responsibility for the particular matter, or whether to issue a written determination that the interest is not so substantial as to affect the integrity of the member.

Advisory Board members shall recuse themselves from all discussions or voting that is or could be perceived to be an organizational conflict of interest. Per the US Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care Regulations (24 CFR § 578.95), an organizational conflict of interest arises when, because of activities or relationships with other persons or organizations, the recipient or sub-recipient is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance in the provision of any type or amount of assistance under HUD’s Continuum of Care Program, objectively in performing work with respect to any activity assisted under this part.

#### Standards of Conduct

These Rules with respect to conflicts of interest are in addition to, and supplement, state policies and agency/departmental rules, regulations and operating procedures that may otherwise apply to the official acts of CoC Advisory Board members.

M.G.L. Chapter 268A, Section 23 also prescribes and describes certain “Standards of Conduct.” Violations of these standards are subject to termination of membership on the CoC Advisory Board. All Advisory Board members are required to abide by the spirit as well as the letter of these standards, which are summarized in the document Code of Conduct for Public Employees, and can also be located online: https://www.mass.gov/doc/code-of-conduct-for-public-employees/download

#### Duty to Report Violations of Law and Code of Conduct

(a) Generally. Every Advisory Board Member is expected to maintain and uphold the integrity of the Commonwealth. In satisfying this requirement, it shall be the duty of every member to report to EOHLC promptly and accurately, any violations of law and/or this Code that affect the BoS CoC and how it reflects on the Commonwealth. To the fullest extent possible, any such reports will be treated confidentially. A member who makes a good-faith report of a violation of law or the Code shall not be subject to retaliation of any kind, threat of retaliation, or pressure, as a result of making a good-faith report of violation and shall be entitled to the protection of any present or future legislation which permits or encourages persons to report violations of laws or regulations.

(b) Attempts to Bribe. Bribery and attempted bribery are claims which strike at the core of state government. Advisory Board members should be constantly alert to solicitations to accept money, consideration, or anything of value in return for acts or commissions involving their official functions within the CoC. Such solicitations may be indirect and subtle. Any attempt to bribe an Advisory Board member shall be reported immediately to EOHLC.

#### Other Standards of Conduct

(a) False Statement. Proper functioning of the government requires that the agency/department, the courts, other state agencies, and the public be able to rely fully on the truthfulness of government related organizations in matters of official interest. Advisory Board members will be terminated from their position within the CoC for intentionally making false or misleading verbal or written statements in their capacity as Advisory Board members.

(b) Public Records. All requests for public records should be directed to EOHLC who shall determine whether the requested documents are public records in accordance with G.L. Chapter 4, Section 7, Clause 26.

Advisory Board members and Commonwealth employees must refer all requests for public records regarding the CoC or its activities to EOHLC for response. Advisory Board members and Commonwealth employees are not permitted to make decisions on their own as to whether a record is a “public record” as defined by law, unless they are authorized to do so by the appointing authority.

 (c) Drugs and Alcohol Use. While on duty, no Advisory Board member shall consume or use alcohol, intoxicants, narcotics, or controlled substances in any form. Similarly, no Advisory Board member shall report for work under the influence of intoxicants, narcotics or controlled substances in any form. The only exception to this Rule is the use of medication when prescribed for the treatment of the member by a registered physician, dentist, or other person legally authorized to prescribe controlled substances.

When performing his or her official functions, it is imperative that his or her judgment not be impaired by any substance. Unless an Advisory Board member has a medical reason to use a prescription medication, the use of any controlled substance, alcohol, or any kind of chemical which affects behavior or judgment is forbidden when working. Such use is also prohibited if the person works under the influence of these substances, even if the substances were taken before reporting for duty. The consumption of alcohol at agency-sponsored or Commonwealth-sponsored social occasions is permitted, as long as the individual is not performing a mandatory duty, as recorded in his or her job description.

(d) Weapons. No Advisory Board member, while in the performance of his or her duties, is permitted to carry, wear, possess, or keep within his or her control any weapon, as defined by law, with the intent of displaying or using said weapon to intimidate or assault another person or for any other unlawful purpose.

Advisory Board members are not permitted to utilize any object for the purpose of attacking, assaulting, intimidating, or in any other way affecting another person to act against the other person’s will. Advisory Board members or employees should be aware that the law treats almost any object, depending upon its use or intended use, as a “dangerous” weapon, including a “shod foot”. Advisory Board members or employees must keep in mind that even the display of a weapon or any object of any kind in a threatening manner may indicate a willingness or intent to use the object as a weapon; in some cases, the very display of an object, such as a knife, gun, bat, or other inherently dangerous object, may be considered threatening.

 (e) Political Activities. Advisory Board members and Commonwealth employees are prohibited from using their offices, titles, or any public resources, or performing their official duties to interfere with, affect, or influence the results of a nomination or election for public office.

(f) Legislative Requests and Inquiries. All requests or inquiries from legislators or their staff regarding the CoC or its activities must be referred to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Division of Housing Stabilization.

## Article 7. Committees

### Committee Responsibilities

Each BoS CoC Committee is focused on a particular aspect of the work being undertaken to address homelessness within the BoS CoC geography. The membership of each committee will be comprised of EOHLC staff members, interested parties, and experts. Committees meet monthly and make a report of current activities in the monthly BoS CoC Planning meeting. Committees are responsible for the following tasks.

* Develop policies and procedures
* Provide input related to new projects
* Provide input related to the accessibility and relevance of existing CoC processes
* Periodically report to the Advisory Board on issues of concern

Each committee will be co-chaired by a member of the BoS CoC and a representative from the Collaborative Applicant agency.

### Coordinated Entry Committee

This Committee is responsible for the development and oversight of the Balance of State Continuum of Care’s Coordinated Entry system. Committee membership includes representatives from each CE region within the BoS CoC. The Committee develops, reviews, and modifies any necessary policies and procedures related to the Coordinated Entry System.

### PLEE (Persons with Lived Experience and Expertise) Committee

The Persons with Lived Experience and Expertise (PLEE) Committee is comprised of individuals who have personally experienced homelessness. Members of the committee draw upon their lived experience and knowledge of homelessness to inform BoS CoC policy, project, and program development. The PLEE Committee also acts as a support network for individuals and families currently experiencing homelessness through mentorship and guidance based on shared experiences. The Committee is also tasked with educating CoC members, service providers, and community members to gain a better understanding of the experiences and needs of homeless individuals and families. Committee members who are participating independently and not being compensated for their time may be eligible for an hourly stipend.

### Project Evaluation Committee

This Committee is responsible for creating ranking criteria in accordance with HUD guidelines and uses an objective data-driven rating process to review and rank CoC projects to be included in the CoC NOFO response. The Committee approves the scoring tool with the rating factors to be used for new and renewal project ranking and this helps the CoC earn crucial points during the annual CoC competition application.

#### Performance Outcomes

This Committee develops the Ranking and Review tool used during the HUD NOFO process to ensure that projects are being measured for regulatory compliance and for outcomes that reflect the priorities of HUD and the BoS CoC. This tool uses primarily objective criteria including information from the current project application and APR results for renewal applicants.

Project Ranking

This Committee uses the scoring criteria developed in committee to review and rank new and renewal CoC projects to be included in the CoC NOFO response. After developing and testing a scoring tool, the Committee creates smaller teams of CoC members to review and score assigned CoC applications. Every team submits a report to the Committee of the scores reached in consensus for each project application assigned to that team. The Committee then convenes to review all scores, rank the projects, and make recommendations to the Advisory Board for final ranking.

### Racial Equity Committee

The Racial Equity Committee aims to ensure those from historically marginalized and underrepresented groups receive the housing and services they need in a just and equitable fashion. The Racial Equity Committee is responsible for analyzing data and feedback to produce actionable solutions to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across the CoC. The Committee seeks to establish a culture of acceptance and inclusion by continuous monitoring and evaluation of BoS CoC services through an equitable lens.

### Veterans’ Committee

This committee maintains a by-name list of homeless veterans who are active in the BoS CoC’s Coordinated Entry system. The Committee meets to review and update each client’s housing status during this meeting.  Membership is comprised of a variety of stakeholders including the Veterans Administration, Massachusetts Executive Office of Veterans’ Services, and EOHLC as well as the BoS CoC Coordinated Entry Regional Housing Navigators and representatives from organizations that provide Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) services, or street outreach.  All members must sign and abide by the client confidentiality agreement.

### YYA (Youth and Young Adult) Committee

This Committee is responsible for providing a strategic framework for coordinating housing and services for at-risk and homeless youth and young adults (YYA) throughout the BoS geographic area. The committee works in partnership with YHDP (Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program) projects to ensure full access to housing and services for YYA within the BoS CoC.

### Ad Hoc Committees

The Advisory Board may create Ad Hoc Committees in response to emerging planning needs or requirements within the CoC. The Advisory Board provides direction to these committees to guide their efforts. These committees will typically be organized on a time-limited basis.

### Collaborative Applicant Administrative Committee

This Committee serves as a problem-solving group to identify and address issues that must be addressed expediently, have complex regulatory or statutory implications, or are too complex to be efficiently resolved in discussion with the Advisory Board. The Administrative (Admin) Committee works together to clarify and define problems, to determine additional information required to better understand the problem, to propose possible solutions, and to project the impact of each course of action. The Administrative Committee addresses these issues primarily related to ensuring HUD compliance and effective monitoring of both CoC and ESG projects and makes recommendations to the Advisory Board for their review and input. The Collaborative Applicant may invite Advisory Board members, subject matter experts, or others as needed to address the topic being reviewed.

## Article 8. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

#### HMIS Purpose

A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is an information system used to record, analyze, and transmit client and activity data with regards to the provision of shelter, housing, and services to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. HUD funded CoC projects are required to use an HMIS to capture and report upon this data.

#### HMIS Lead

The Balance of State Continuum of Care’s lead agency, EOHLC, agrees to serve as the HMIS Lead Agency for the Balance of State CoC. The HMIS Lead ensures that the HMIS is established, supported, and managed in a manner that meets HUD’s standards for data quality, privacy, and security, as well as other HUD requirements for organizations participating in an HMIS.

EOHLC, as the HMIS Lead, coordinates the CoC’s implementation of the HMIS software; provides assistance and guidance to all CoC project applicants; leads the CoC’s efforts to assess and improve HMIS implementation, compliance, and data quality; informs CoC members of training opportunities; and develops a Data Quality Plan, a Privacy Plan and a Security Plan.

The full responsibilities of the HMIS Lead can be found in the BoS HMIS Lead Governance Charter.

#### HMIS Software Selection

The CoC Lead directs the procurement of HMIS software and designates the software as the official HMIS to be utilized for CoC purposes within the Balance of State geography. If the HMIS Lead is an Agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, state procurement laws must be followed, in which case the CoC Advisory Board will authorize the CoC’s HMIS Lead to procure HMIS software which meets all requirements and standards set forth by HUD in law and in notice but will not directly participate (excepting Advisory Board members that are also employees of the HMIS Lead Agency).

The CoC will review an annual report produced by the HMIS Lead assessing the HMIS software’s compliance with HMIS requirements put forth by HUD, as well as the HMIS Vendor’s compliance with the contract with the HMIS Lead. If deficiencies or noncompliance are found, the CoC will work with the HMIS Lead to identify and implement remedies.

If identified HMIS deficiencies cannot be remedied to the satisfaction of the CoC, the CoC will direct the HMIS Lead to conduct a procurement for new HMIS software.

## Article 9. Coordinated Entry

Coordinated Entry (CE) is a consistent, streamlined process for accessing the resources available in the homeless crisis response system. Through coordinated entry, the BoS CoC ensures that the highest need, most vulnerable households are prioritized for services and that the housing and supportive services in the system are used as efficiently and effectively as possible. The BoS CoC Coordinated Entry system is integrated with the BoS CoC HMIS, and has four focus areas:

**Access** – A crucial component of CE is to set up an infrastructure for how homeless households can access the system and the programs that are a part of it.

For the BoS CoC, homeless households engaged with HMIS-participating Street Outreach (SO) projects and Emergency Shelters (ES) in the BoS can complete the CE process with that provider. For households not engaged with an SO or ES project, they can enter by going through one of the Regional Navigators.

**Assessment** – Each household completes the same standardized assessment to gather required HUD data points in addition to other data meant to ascertain a household’s relative vulnerability through an equity lens. It is the information captured in the assessment process that makes it possible to prioritize households and determine who is eligible for certain housing projects.

The Assessment component in the BoS CoC is comprised of the CE Quick Screen, CE project intake, Coordinated Entry Assessment, and Housing Preferences form. These are all completed virtually in our HMIS database.

**Prioritization** – Given that CoC resources are scarce, it’s important to have a method of prioritization in place so households that are “most vulnerable”/most in need at a given time are considered first.

The CE Assessment form is the main tool that BoS uses to prioritize households. The assessment gauges a range of factors from substance use and mental health conditions to discrimination and domestic violence. Answers have different point allocations, and once a household is done with an assessment, they are placed on the Coordinated Entry list in order of their total score.

**Referral** – Given the large need of housing supports for homeless households, and that the supply is less than the demand, it’s vital to have an efficient referral system so that vacancies are referred for quickly and accurately (i.e. with households that are eligible).

Regional Navigators are tasked with referring for vacancies that open in their region. The goal is to use all of the information captured in HMIS to make referrals as quickly and efficiently as possible. Information in HMIS is used to determine which households meet eligibility criteria for programs, as well as factor in preferences and housing needs specific to the household.

#### Balance of State regions

The BoS CoC is defined by four regions – Metro, North Middlesex, North Shore, and West.

Each of those regions has a Regional Navigator who works at a homeless provider agency located in that region. EOHLC contracts with those agencies to employ a Regional Navigator to be the point person for Coordinated Entry within that area.

The Regional Navigator agencies are:

* Metro Region – Somerville Homeless Coalition
* North Middlesex – Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI)
* North Shore – Emmaus, Inc.
* West – South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC)

#### Domestic Violence Coordinated Entry

The Domestic Violence Coordinated Entry (DV CE) system is set up to fill domestic violence housing projects within the Balance of the State CoC while prioritizing the safety of survivors by allowing them to enter limited personal identifiable information (PII) into HMIS.

These DV housing projects serve individuals or families who are experiencing trauma or a lack of safety related to, or fleeing or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous, traumatic, or life-threatening conditions related to the violence against the individual or a family member in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized.

There is a DV CE project in HMIS that is managed by the DV Specialist. DV Households are added to this project anonymously.

## Appendices

[Written Standards and Policies and Procedures for ESG and CoC Funded Programs](https://www.mass.gov/doc/written-standards-and-policies-and-procedures-for-esg-and-coc-funded-programs/download)

Policies and Procedures may be found on the CoC Webpage [Continuum of Care Programs (CoC) | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/continuum-of-care-programs-coc)

### Advisory Board Position Description

**Purpose of Advisory Board –**

The MA Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoS CoC) is a HUD program designed to promote communitywide commitment to ending homelessness by providing funding to support the efforts of nonprofit providers and State and local governments. The BoS CoC promotes access to, and effective utilization of, mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families.

The purpose of the BoS CoC Advisory Board is to provide oversight of the BoS CoC to ensure the fulfillment of all HUD Continuum of Care Program statutory and regulatory responsibilities. The Advisory Board acts based upon the needs identified by the BoS CoC in gaps analyses, needs assessments, and through committee work, and when necessary, to address challenges that arise outside of these activities.

**Advisory Board Role –**

The Advisory Board is responsible for the following activities to fulfill this role:

* Designate a Collaborative Applicant
* Vote on policy changes that significantly impact access to resources
* Review the recommendation from the Administrative Committee regarding funding priorities for the CoC
* Approve the Balance of State Strategic Plan developed through CoC-wide engagement
* Establish and oversee committees to support the CoC’s functioning, and special subcommittees or working groups, as needed.
* Solicit regular updates from committees to understand the current operation of the CoC and its most significant needs.
* Update committees when CoC priorities change to assist in committee goal development
* Finalize project rankings related to the request for funding that are referred from the Project Evaluation Committee
* Approve applications to join the advisory board
* Conduct at least 6 committee meetings a year, more if necessary
* Provide orientation and onboarding for new members of the Advisory Board
* Advisory Board members must participate in all Advisory Board meetings annually (members can request permission to miss a meeting if necessary to be approved by the Collaborative Applicant)

When decisions are needed, they are made by majority vote.

Advisory Board members will attend the monthly Planning meeting during the months when there is no Advisory Board meeting and are encouraged to participate in a monthly committee meeting.

**Board Member Composition -**

The Advisory Board is comprised of 15 permanent members and two at-large members who are invited as subject matter experts.

The permanent member seats represent the following categories:

Collaborative Applicant, EOHLC

Two persons with lived experience and expertise in homelessness

One person from each CE Navigator Agency

A housing provider

An ESG provider without CoC funding

An individual shelter

An Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter

A street outreach provider

A DV provider

A Youth and Young Adult (YYA) provider

A Veterans provider

Subject Matter Expert Seats will be invited as needed. Examples of categories may include:

A Public Housing Authority (PHA)

An Advocate or Advocacy Agency

Affordable Housing Developer

Higher Education Representative

Faith-Based person or organization

Municipality

Each board position is held for three years. When the three-year term expires, the Advisory Board will evaluate letters of interest to fill the seat and vote on which agency will fill it moving forward. The existing seat holder may also submit a letter of interest.

**Process for Membership –**

To ensure representation on the Advisory Board that is reflective of the population served, the Advisory Board has a standing Outreach Committee to specifically:

* Invite new attendees and members who represent the demographic composition of the population served in the CoC
* Encourage participation from all historically marginalized populations
* Develop a list of prospective members as openings occur

As vacancies arise, they are announced in a monthly Planning meeting, via an email to the full BoS CoC membership, and through the standing Advisory Board Outreach Committee, which includes a copy of this job description.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Advisory Board should submit a letter describing their qualifications based upon the criteria listed in this description. Prospective Advisory Board members must have at least one year of active engagement in the Planning Committee or a BoS CoC Committee.

### Acronyms and Definitions

**Acronyms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Acronym**  | **Literal Translation**  |
| **CA**  | **Collaborative Applicant**  |
| **CDBG**  | **Community Development Block Grant**  |
| **CDBG-CV**  | **Community Development Block Grant Corona Virus**  |
| **CoC**  | **Continuum of Care**  |
| **ESG**  | **Emergency Solutions Grant**  |
| **ESG-CV**  | **Emergency Solutions Grant Corona Virus**  |
| **FM**  | **Full Membership**  |
| **HEARTH**  | **Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act**  |
| **HIC**  | **Housing Inventory Count**  |
| **HMIS**  | **Homeless Management Information System**  |
| **HOME**  | **HOME Investment Partnerships Program**  |
| **HOPWA**  | **Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS**  |
| **HUD**  | **U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development**  |
| **MOU**  | **Memorandum of Understanding**  |
| **NOFA**  | **Notice of Funding Availability**  |
| **NOFO** | **Notice of Funding Opportunity** |
| **PIT**  | **Point-in-Time**  |
| **VA**  | **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**  |

**Definitions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Term**  | **Definition**  |
| **Collaborative Applicant**  | **The Collaborative Applicant is the entity that submits the annual CoC Consolidated Application for funding on behalf of the CoC and is charged with collecting and combining the application information from all applicants for all projects within the CoC's geographic area.**  |
| **tCommunity Development Block Grant (CDBG)**  | **CDBG, one of the longest-running programs of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, funds local community development activities such as affordable housing, anti-poverty programs, and infrastructure development.**  |
| **Consolidated Plan**  | **The Consolidated Plan is designed to help states and local jurisdictions to assess their affordable housing and community development needs and market conditions, and to make data-driven, place-based investment decisions. The consolidated planning process serves as the framework for a community-wide dialogue to identify housing and community development priorities that align and focus funding from the CPD formula block grant programs: CDBG, HOME, ESG, and HOPWA. The Consolidated Plan is carried out through Annual Action Plans, which provide a concise summary of the actions, activities, and the specific federal and non- federal resources that will be used each year to address the priority needs and specific goals identified by the Consolidated Plan. Grantees report on accomplishments and progress toward Consolidated Plan goals in the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).**  |
| **Continuum of Care (CoC)**  | **A CoC is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals.**  |
| **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)**  | **The ESG program provides funding to: (1) engage homeless individuals and families living on the street; (2) improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families; (3) help operate these shelters; (4) provide essential services to shelter residents,** 1. **rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families, and**

**prevent families/individuals from becoming homeless.**  |
| **Geo Code Area**  | 1. **A particular geographic location identified with a six-digit number by HUD and used for annual allocation of funds. The characterization is based on population statistics such as the average age or income of its inhabitants.**
 |
| **Geographic Boundaries**  | **Includes all geography within the Balance of State Continuum of Care** |
| **Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009**  | **On May 20, 2009, President Obama signed the HEARTH Act of 2009. The HEARTH Act amends and reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes, including a consolidation of HUD's competitive grant programs.** |
| **HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)**  | **HOME is a type of United States federal assistance provided by HUD to States in order to provide decent and affordable housing, particularly housing for low- and very low-income Americans.**  |
| **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**  | **HMIS is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness.**  |
| **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead**  | **The entity designated by the BoS CoC in accordance with HEARTH to operate the BoS CoC’s HMIS on its behalf.**  |
| **Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)**  | **To help take care of the housing needs of low-income people who are living with HIV/AIDS and their families.**  |
| **Housing Authority**  | **A housing authority is generally a governmental body that governs some aspect of a region’s housing, often providing low rent or free apartments to qualified residents.**  |
| **Housing First**  | **Housing First is an approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals before permanent housing entry.** |
| **Joint Transitional – Rapid ReHousing Project** | **As part of the 2017 CoC Program competition, HUD announced that communities could apply for a new type of project that combines the activities of a transitional housing project with those of a rapid re-housing project. This project type provides a new way to meet some of the pressing challenges that communities are facing. These projects provide a safe place for people to stay – transitional housing – with financial assistance and wrap around supportive services determined by program participants to help them move to permanent housing as quickly as possible.** |
| **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**  | **An MOU is a formal agreement between two or more parties. Companies and organizations can use MOUs to establish official partnerships. MOUs are not legally binding but they carry a degree of seriousness and mutual respect.**  |
| **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)** | **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is permanent housing in which housing assistance (e.g., long-term leasing or rental assistance) and**[**supportive services are provided**](https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-eligible-activities/supportive-services/)**to assist households with at least one member (adult or child) with a disability in achieving housing stability.** |
| **Point-in-Time Count (PIT)**  | **The PIT is a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. HUD requires that CoCs conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night and unsheltered at least biennially.**  |
| **Prevention Programs**  | **Homeless Prevention Programs provide rental assistance, utility assistance and supportive services directly related to the prevention of homelessness to eligible individuals and families who are in danger of eviction, foreclosure or homelessness.**  |
| **Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)**  | **RRH is an intervention informed by a Housing First approach that is a critical part of a community’s effective homeless crisis response system. It quickly connects families and individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through a tailored package of assistance that may include the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services.**  |
| **Recipient**  | **An eligible entity that signs a grant agreement for a specified funding source.**  |
| **Sub-population (homeless)**  | **For the purpose of the Charter, sub-populations are referring to categories of individuals with related, yet distinct, needs that can be addressed through a CoC. Representation of sub-populations as required by HEARTH must be reflected on the Board.**  |
| **Subrecipient**  | **Eligible entity that receives a sub-grant from the recipient to carry-out a project.**  |
| **Transitional Housing (TH)** | **Transitional Housing (TH) provides temporary housing with supportive services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the goal of interim stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing. TH projects can cover housing costs and accompanying supportive services for program participants for up to 24 months.** |
| **U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)**  | **A U.S. government agency created in 1965 to support community development and increase home ownership.**  |
| **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**  | **The VA is a government-run military veteran benefit system with Cabinet-level status.**  |

### Map of CoC with regions



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### Governance Charter Modification Tracking

*The BoS CoC Governance Charter was completely revised in 2024 and approved by the Advisory Board on XXXXXXXXX. Previous versions are available upon request.*

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| **Date** | **Amended by** | **Amendment** |
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