

City of Philadelphia
OFFICE OF HOMELESS SERVICES



PREVENTION, DIVERSION & INTAKE DEPARTMENT
INTAKE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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GOAL/MISSION

The mission of the Office of Homeless Services (OHS) is to make homelessness rare, brief, and, non-recurring. The intake units provide diversion services, homeless prevention referrals, assessments, emergency housing eligibility determination and placement to individuals and families in need of emergency housing or financial assistance to maintain or regain housing.

CENTRALIZED INTAKE

The centralized intake system covers the City of Philadelphia. Intake services are accessible 24 hours/day, 365 days/year. Information detailing the centralized intake system is available on the City's website (www.phila.gov) and 311 and 211 phone systems. The primary purpose of the centralized intake system is to assess the household's immediate housing crisis, divert and provide prevention services when possible, and provide emergency housing placement if available for those who cannot be safely diverted.

STRANDED TRAVELER

Stranded traveler requests are generated by social workers at Appletree Family Center (AFC) or Roosevelt Darby Center (RDC). Participants requesting Stranded Traveler assistance must present in person at AFC or RDC and provide the following required information: name, social security number, and number of adults and/or children. The following information will be obtained, verified, and entered on the designated Greyhound Commercial Sales form by the social worker requesting the stranded traveler ticket:

Passenger Name	Service From
Service To	Departure Date
Departure Time	Memo (use this section to add additional passenger names)

The social worker requesting the Stranded Traveler assistance will email the completed Greyhound Commercial Sales form to his/her supervisor for approval. Once the Stranded Traveler request is approved, the social worker supervisor will email the Greyhound Commercial Sales form to the following OHS staff:

Accountant trainee	Budget Officer
Fiscal Office	Director, PD&I
AFC Administrator	RDC Administrator

The Fiscal Department will process Stranded Traveler request. Upon receiving approval from Greyhound the Fiscal Department will email the Stranded Traveler authorization information and/or documentation to the social worker supervisor. The participant is responsible for taking the authorization form to Greyhound on the listed departure date on the form for travel to their requested destination.

INTAKE POLICY

The intake unit serves households presenting at the “front door” as homeless. The homeless status of each household will be confirmed through our verification process. Households placed into emergency housing must follow guidelines outlined in the Emergency Housing Standards policy.

INTAKE PROCESS

INITIAL CONTACT

1. The Service Representative will enter household data into HMIS and complete the intake log sheet with the computer generated case number and household demographics, i.e., name, birth date, social security number, family composition, race, etc..
2. The Service Representative will request proof of identification and, if applicable, proof of guardianship of minor children, when each household presents at the intake site.

However, no household will be denied entrance into Emergency Housing because he or she does not have identification or proof of guardianship.

3. The social worker will attempt to divert all households from entering emergency housing. The social worker will ascertain if the household has the financial ability to pay for alternative housing (hotel or motel room) for the night. If the household is unable to pay for a hotel or motel room, the social worker in conjunction with the household, will contact the household’s relatives and/or friends to determine if the household can reside with them.
4. Homeless Prevention: When possible, households will be referred to other suitable resources, either within OHS or the community, for the purpose of exploring housing options other than emergency housing placement.
5. Households needing a Behavioral Health Evaluation: Social workers at AFC will have the ability to refer households to the on-site Crisis Specialist who meet the following criteria:
 - Behaviors (such as, but not limited to: physical violence towards self or others, sexual violence, terroristic threats, destruction of property and persistent verbal abuse) exhibited in intake office or reported via prior emergency/boarding home provider. Participant’ displaying inappropriate behaviors may be asked to leave and return to complete their intake in 24 hours if the behavior prevents or interferes with the completion of theirs or any participant’s intake.

Intake staff must complete an incident report and contact the Police Department when a participant exhibit behaviors (physical violence, sexual violence, terroristic threats or destruction of property) towards another participant or staff. Intake staff must document these incidents in the notes section of the participant's case record/file in HMIS.

- Recent discharge from psychiatric hospital or mental health residence (low demand facility, CRR, etc).
6. Referrals by Police: Staff will request a copy of the police report when a participant/household is escorted to the intake unit by a police officer. This report should indicate where the participant/household was picked up, time, and any other pertinent information (when possible), e.g. participant medical and mental status, or if participant is taking medications. Staff may request the Police to transport the participant/household to the nearest hospital for evaluation prior to completing an assessment for emergency housing placement.
 7. Referrals from Hospitals: Hospitals are required to call the OHS External Agency Referral line (215-686-5671) to make a referral for emergency housing placement. Referred participants/households requiring medical supervision will be diverted to the appropriate care setting (personal care, nursing home, hospital) to meet their needs. The OHS External Agency Referral line will be monitored by OHS staff from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. After 4:00 PM and weekends/city holiday, all referrals are to be made directly to the appropriate after-hours facility:

Families: Salvation Army, 715 N. Broad Street, 215-787-2887

Single Men: Station House, 2601 N. Broad Street, 215-225-9230

Single Women: House of Passage, 48th Street between Market Street and Haverford Avenue, 267-713-7778

Staff will attempt to divert all participants/households requiring medical supervision to an appropriate setting to meet their needs.

8. Referrals from the Department of Human Services (DHS): When a household presents at intake accompanied by a DHS/CUA worker, staff will give the DHS worker an OHS/DHS Referral Form to complete. The referral form elicits basic questions on the family's last known address and reason(s) for becoming homeless along with the DHS/CUA worker's name and contact information. The referral form will be placed in the household's file and used by the social worker if DHS assistance is needed in placing the household into emergency housing. The social worker service manager explains to the DHS/CUA worker that the family seeking emergency housing may not receive placement immediately and may need to find alternative housing until placement can be obtained. The social worker service manager will inquire to determine if a DHS housing plan is in place for the household.

Once OHS has obtained emergency housing for the family, staff will contact the DHS/CUA worker to inform them where the family is being placed. Staff will scan and email the orientation packet to the emergency housing site for their records.

9. Fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence: If the individual or household indicates they are fleeing or attempting to flee a domestic violence situation, staff will make an immediate referral to the on-site domestic violence specialist (at AFC only). The domestic violence specialist will complete a lethality assessment and safety plan with the individual or household, and request an emergency housing placement, if appropriate, that will meet the safety needs of the household. Provide the individual or family the Philadelphia Domestic Violence Hotline phone number (1-866-723-3014).
10. Individuals or families not assessed during regular business hours will have the option to have their intake completed at our After-hours intake sites or return to AFC or RDC during regular business hours.

A. SOCIAL WORKER INTERVIEW

1. Verification of Homelessness: As part of HUD's required Declaration of Homelessness process, intake staff will determine if the individual or household is eligible for services and meets the federal definition of homelessness. HUD's definition of homelessness is as follows:
 - Literally Homeless: individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
 - Imminent Risk of Homelessness: individual or family who will imminently lose their primary residence within 14 days of their application for homeless assistance
 - Homeless under other Federal statutes
 - Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence

Staff is required to request various acceptable forms of homelessness verification during the intake process. This process involves a variety of forms of documentation. The order of priority for obtaining evidence of homelessness is:

1. Third-party documentation
2. Outreach worker observations
3. Self-certification/Self-declaration of homelessness

Households without documentation are still assessed and appropriateness and eligibility are still determined. The lack of third-party documentation will not prevent a household from being immediately admitted to emergency housing.

2. Third-party Documentation

Forms of third-party documentation can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Court-ordered eviction notices, mortgage foreclosure documentation, property tax delinquency documents or sheriff sale letters.
- b. Red Cross Referral. Documentation from Red Cross documenting the household received assistance via this program. If the household does not have this documentation from Red Cross, the social worker can contact Red Cross for verification.
- c. Licenses and Inspections (L&I) documentation. If the household does not have documentation from L&I, the social worker can contact L&I and speak to the inspector for verification.
- d. Utility Shut-off notices. If the household does not have any documentation, the social worker can contact the utility company for verification.
- e. Domestic Violence documentation from a domestic violence shelter. The referring domestic violence shelter will provide the household written documentation verifying the current residence in their shelter. If the household does not have any documentation, the social worker can contact the domestic violence shelter for verification.

If the household was not previously residing at a domestic violence shelter but is fleeing a domestic violence situation, the household may have a protection from abuse order or a police report which the social worker will accept as proof. If the household has no such documentation, the social worker will refer the participant to the on-site domestic violence specialist (at AFC only). In conjunction with the participant, the on-site domestic violence specialist will complete a lethality assessment, a safety plan, and request an emergency housing placement if appropriate to meet the safety needs of the household.

- f. Documentation from a family member, friend or acquaintance with whom the household was previously staying but can no longer stay. Every household indicating they resided with a family member, friend or acquaintance, but can no longer stay with the household is requested to provide contact information. The social worker will attempt to verify this information by telephone, email, or text. If the social worker is unable to make contact by phone or if the household reports the person does not have a phone, the social worker will provide the household with a prior residence verification letter. The social worker will ask the household to have the person whom they resided with to complete and return the form to the social worker.

C. OUTREACH WORKER OBSERVATION

The City of Philadelphia coordinates street outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness through the Outreach Coordination Center, located at Project HOME, and in collaboration with local nonprofit organizations. City-wide street outreach efforts include 24-hour, 365-day hotline and dispatch to ensure outreach presence on the streets and walk-in services. Street outreach teams locate and engage individuals and encourage them to accept services, treatment, and housing. When the street outreach team engages with an individual who expresses interest in emergency housing, the street outreach team transports the individual to an intake site.

Self-certification/Self-declaration of homelessness

1. All households seeking emergency housing assistance must complete a Declaration of Homelessness Form. This form documents the household's most recent episode of homelessness indicating that the household:
 - is unable to stay where they had previously resided;
 - has not identified a subsequent residence; and
 - household lacks the resources and support networks necessary to obtain other permanent housing.

The Declaration of Homelessness form is signed by the head of household and social worker and included in the orientation packet,

2. To help in assessing household's needs, the social worker will collect and record information about the presenting problems which may have resulted in homelessness. The problem or conditions will include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Individual/family psychological/mental health condition
 - b. Individual/family physical/medical condition
 - c. Individual/family financial condition or status
 - d. Individual/family environmental/social condition
3. The social worker will request proof of identification for each household member (birth certificates, social security cards, MA/Medical ID cards, etc.) and income verification for each household member (SSI, DPA/AFDC, employment, child support, etc.). ***However, no household will be denied entrance into Emergency Housing because he or she does not have identification or proof of income.***
4. If a household indicates they have DHS involvement, the social work will request the name and contact number of the DHS/CUA worker. If the household does not know the name or contact number of their DHS/CUA worker, the social worker can call the DHS Customer Response Line for the information. The social worker communicates either in person or phone with the DHS/CUA worker, explaining the household seeking emergency housing may not receive placement immediately and may need to find alternative housing until placement can be

obtained. The social worker will ask if the DHS/CUA worker has put any DHS housing plan in place. The social worker will discuss any concerns and possible services the household may need.

5. The social worker will review with the household the following service agreement expectations:
 - a. General placement expectations
 - b. Other areas mentioned in the service agreement.
6. The social worker will make necessary entries into the HMIS. HMIS will be updated to indicate any new information applicable to the household (e.g. address, family composition, etc).

PROCEDURE FOR PLACEMENT OF SEXUAL OFFENDERS

Process for Single Adults:

1. All heads of households and/or persons 18 years and above, requesting emergency housing placement will be asked if they have been convicted of a crime that has been categorized as a sex offense on the Megan's Law Website.
2. As part of the intake process Social Work staff will check the Megan's Law Website to verify if the individual is registered on the website. Once it is determined that a single adult is a Lifetime or 10-Year Registrant the following placement process will be implemented:

Lifetime Registrants:

1. Any single adult who has been registered under the category of Lifetime Registration will not be placed in any emergency housing site where there is a day care center or other children's services.
2. Single adult Lifetime registrants will be placed at an emergency housing site where it is permissible for her/him to be accommodated within the OHS single adult system.

10-Year Registrants:

1. Any single adult who has been registered under the category of 10-Year Registration will not be placed at any emergency housing site where there is a day care or other children's services.
2. 10-Year Registrants will be placed at emergency housing sites where it is permissible for her/him to be accommodated within the OHS single adult system.

Process for Adults with Children:

1. All heads of households and/or persons 18 years and above requesting emergency housing placement will be asked if they have been convicted for a crime that has been categorized as a sex offense on the Megan's Law Website.
2. As part of the intake process Social Work staff will check the Megan's Law Website to verify if the individual is registered on the website. Once it is determined that the adult in the family is a Lifetime or 10-Year Registrant, the following process will be implemented:

Lifetime/10 -Year Registrants

1. Any head of household with children who has been confirmed to be a Lifetime or 10-Year Registrant will not be placed in any emergency housing program that houses families.
2. Intake staff will refer the household to prevention services.

EMERGENCY HOUSING PLACEMENT

1. Case record will be forwarded to the social worker supervisor for review and once this review is completed the file will be transferred to the social worker. Intake staff will search for an appropriate emergency housing placement facility for all eligible households.
2. Each morning intake staff will contact each facility to determine where any vacant beds are in the emergency housing system. When this list is compiled, intake staff will refer to this list to place a household into an emergency housing bed. A referral is then made in HMIS to the appropriate facility.

If needed, transportation to the emergency housing facility will be provided to the household in the form of assistance to ride public transportation or staff transporting the household via an authorized transport vehicle. The household will be given 24-hours to report to the emergency housing facility.

3. The daily activity of "close down" is to track those presenting at intake who were not seen by a social worker throughout the day but still require shelter placement. Social workers will meet with each household and inform them that cannot guarantee emergency housing placement that day. Households with nowhere to reside for the night are to be provided information about after-hours intake sites.

SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY

The following is guidance from City Law and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding service animals in shelters:

The ADA applies to all programs, services, or activities of public entities including local governments by protecting the rights of people who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits their

ability to perform one or more major life activities. In this manner, the ADA attempts to provide equal treatment to persons with disabilities so that they will not be treated in a different or inferior manner. The ADA's desire for equal treatment, reasonable modifications may be made to existing services when necessary to accommodate persons with disabilities.

With respect to the use of service animals, the ADA requires the animal be under the handler's control at all times by the use of a tether, leash, or harness unless the use of those devices impede the work of the service animal or the individual's disability prevents the "safe and effective performance of work or tasks" when implementing those devices. When those devices are unable to be used, voice, signal, or other effective methods must be used to maintain control of the service animal.

Notwithstanding the permissive use of service animals, they may be excluded from a facility for two reasons. First, the service animal may be excluded if the service animal is "out of control" and the handler is unable to regain control of the service animal. Second, the service animal may be excluded if the service animal is not housebroken. If the service animal is excluded, the individual will still be entitled "to participate in the service, program, or activity without having the service animal on the premises."

OHS may ask two questions of the service animal's handler: whether the service animal is required because of a disability and what work tasks has the service animal been trained to perform. Questions about the extent or nature of the person's disability are not permitted under the ADA guidelines although they may be pertinent and permissible to meet HUD HMIS requirements.