

CONTINUUM OF CARE MEMBERSHIP MEETING Minutes

June 17, 2026 9:00am

By Paiton Beckner

Our mission: Teaming up to make homelessness rare, non-recurring, and short-lived.

Roll Call – **Please sign in the chat for attendance.**

Motion to approve minutes – Stephen Powers; John Quirk

Old Business

- 1090 Total **Households**; 2,812**ndividuals** (Literally Homeless, At Risk, DV, Vet)
- 381 **Households** Literally Homeless; 752 **Individuals**
- 17 **Households** Fleeing Domestic Violence; 38 **Individuals**
- 692 **Households** At Risk; 2,022 **Individuals**
- **Veterans: 14 households**
- Referrals sent to providers in May: 82 (including Housing referrals, ELC, Griffin Lofts and Jersey Commons)
- 157 Total CE Assessments taken last month. (May)
- 98 Total CE Assessments taken to date so far for this month (June)

New Business

- **Peace River CE Event Recap**
 - **Total CE - 55**
 - **Total Clients signed in- 157**
 - **Total added to CE list – 58**
- **Discussion**
 - Bridget described the event as filling a major service gap in the community.
 - Commissioner **Guy LaLonde** attended for approximately four and a half hours.
 - The Commissioner spoke directly with clients and even assisted with Coordinated Entry assessments.
 - Bridget thanked Peace River staff, her Coordinated Entry team, volunteers, and community partners for making the event successful.
- **Community Education**
 - Bridget noted many attendees expected immediate housing or rental assistance. Staff used the opportunity to educate participants on:
 - How Coordinated Entry works.
 - Housing prioritization.
 - Available community resources.
 - The importance of remaining engaged in the process.
- **Future Outreach**
 - Bridget encouraged agencies interested in hosting Coordinated Entry

events to contact Katrina so additional outreach events can be scheduled throughout the community.

- **HUD Funding NOFO (Notice of Funding Opportunity) 2026**

Key updates included:

- NOFO released **June 1st**.
- Distributed to CoC members **June 2nd**.
- HUD released an update on **June 9th**.
- Application due in e-snaps by **5PM EST July 20th**
- Applications sent to selection committee **July 30th**
- Scored applications due to HCPC by **12PM EST** from selection committee **August 13th**
- Emails sent to agencies w/application status **August 20th**
- Federal submission due to HUD **August 26th**
- Timeline dates remain estimates pending HUD guidance.
- **NOFO PowerPoint** presentation will be sent out to everyone following the meeting
- The NOFO application consists of **three main components**:
- The **Collaborative Application** submitted by the CoC.
- The **Project Priority Listing (PPL)**, which ranks all local project applications.
- The individual **project applications** submitted by agencies through e-snaps.
- Bridget explained that the CoC submits both the collaborative application and the ranked project applications to HUD. Projects receiving the highest local scores are included in the submission to HUD.
- **HCPC serves as the Lead Continuum of Care (FL-503)** and is responsible for submitting the collaborative application on behalf of participating agencies.
- Bridget emphasized the importance of consistency between the collaborative application and each agency's project application. Both should demonstrate strong collaboration among partners and present a unified story showing how the community works together to serve people experiencing homelessness.
- She reviewed several key funding terms:
- **Annual Renewal Demand (ARD)**: Polk County's ARD is approximately **\$2.2 million**.
- While the national NOFO references approximately **\$430 million** in available funding, Polk County's funding is based on its own **Grant Inventory Worksheet (GIW)**, which totals about **\$2.2 million**.
- Bridget clarified **who is eligible to apply** for CoC funding:
- Nonprofit organizations
- Units of local government
- Publicly controlled entities
- Federally recognized Native American tribal governments
- Public housing authorities
- Individuals and for-profit entities are **not eligible**.
- She also reminded attendees that, based on a decision made in **November**, the CoC agreed **not to submit renewal projects** during this competition. Instead, **all**

applications would be submitted as new projects, meaning there would not be automatic renewal applications in this funding cycle.

- She advised agencies to **avoid emphasizing "Housing First" language** in their applications, noting that HUD is placing greater emphasis on **housing-focused outcomes** rather than specifically referencing the Housing First model. She also shared that **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP)** projects will remain competitive.
- Bridget highlighted several additional NOFO updates:
- HUD is **not accepting new Joint Transitional Housing/Rapid Re-Housing projects**.
- HUD states it *may* conduct compliance audits for grant recipients receiving more than **\$1 million**, but Bridget cautioned attendees to expect monitoring regardless of the wording, noting that nearly all CoCs receiving awards should anticipate oversight.
- Expanded eligible uses are available for **Domestic Violence (DV) Bonus** funding, including renewals; however, Polk County currently does not have any DV projects.
- HUD has introduced a process to request waivers for housing units that do not include private kitchens or bathrooms, though Bridget noted there is still limited guidance on how this process will work.
- Although the NOFO establishes a **\$25 million funding cap per CoC**, Bridget noted that Polk County's annual allocation is only about **\$1.2–2.2 million**, making the cap irrelevant to the local community.
- Bridget also discussed **faith-based organizations** applying for CoC funding. She explained that faith-based organizations remain eligible to apply but must continue following HUD's longstanding requirements. While they may request religious accommodations in limited circumstances, they **cannot require clients to participate in religious activities**, such as Bible studies or worship services, as a condition of receiving housing or services. She stated that, from her understanding, there have been no major policy changes affecting faith-based applicants.
- A major topic of discussion centered on **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)** funding. Bridget explained that earlier draft guidance had proposed limiting PSH funding to **30%**, which would have significantly affected Polk County because approximately **80% of the community's current CoC funding supports Permanent Supportive Housing**. The finalized NOFO increased the Tier 1 limit to **60%**, which Bridget described as a significant improvement that would reduce the negative impact on the community, even though it still presents challenges.
- **S. Powers** asked for clarification about the PSH funding percentage after reading previous guidance referencing the 30% limit. Bridget confirmed that HUD had changed the policy and that **Tier 1 funding can now include up to 60% Permanent Supportive Housing**, resolving the confusion.
- Bridget also discussed new opportunities for communities to establish **project priority preferences for elderly households** through the collaborative application. She noted that the NOFO contains inconsistent age definitions—referencing ages **55+, 62+, and 65+**—and said additional HUD clarification is needed.

- She highlighted a recent partnership with **Polk County Housing and Neighborhood Development**, which funded HCPC's self-sufficiency program serving school-age families and older adults. Bridget explained that this initiative will strengthen both the collaborative application and local project applications by demonstrating that the CoC has already prioritized housing for older adults. She reported that the program has successfully housed **six elderly individuals**, along with multiple families, providing measurable outcomes that can be highlighted in the NOFO application.
- Bridget Engleman reviewed HUD's **2026 NOFO merit review process**, explaining that applications are scored on **200 total points** across three categories:
 - **Project Capacity, Review, and Ranking – 14 points**
 - **System Performance – 64 points**
 - **CoC Coordination and Engagement – 122 points**
- She noted that while the CoC performs well in project capacity, **system performance was a weak area in the previous funding cycle** due to incomplete and inconsistent data reporting in HMIS. Bridget stressed that shelters must accurately report nightly bed availability and keep HMIS data current to improve future scores.
- Bridget explained that HUD evaluates system performance based on outcomes such as reducing homelessness, decreasing encampments, and improving housing outcomes. She highlighted several local successes, including:
 - Collaboration with law enforcement agencies throughout Polk County to identify and dismantle homeless encampments.
 - Documented reductions in homelessness, including an estimated **20%+ decrease** since the 2024 Point-in-Time Count.
 - Tracking these efforts through HMIS to demonstrate measurable community impact.
- She emphasized that HUD expects **at least 20% of participants exiting CoC-funded housing to move into unsubsidized housing**. Bridget expressed concern that agencies often fail to fully document successful exits in HMIS. Rather than simply recording that a client exited the program, agencies should include details such as:
 - Employment or income obtained
 - Stable housing secured
 - Other indicators of self-sufficiency
- Without detailed documentation, the CoC cannot accurately report successful outcomes to HUD.
- Bridget also discussed HUD's updated **income growth measurement**, explaining that only **employment income** counts toward performance measures. Income increases from **Social Security or other non-employment sources are no longer counted**, even when they significantly improve a client's financial stability. Bridget expressed frustration with this policy, noting that helping clients obtain Social Security benefits is still a major achievement, despite HUD not recognizing it in scoring.
- Regarding **CoC Coordination and Engagement**, Bridget stated that the CoC has strengthened its governance by ensuring representation from:
 - Individuals with lived experience of homelessness
 - Elected officials

- Law enforcement
- Behavioral health and outpatient treatment providers
- She explained that these governance improvements will strengthen both the collaborative application and individual agency applications.
- Bridget also highlighted expanding community partnerships, noting that organizations such as **Peace River**, **Tri-County**, and **ACTS** have joined or strengthened their involvement with the CoC. She said these partnerships demonstrate coordinated service delivery and provide evidence that collaborative efforts are producing positive outcomes.
- Finally, Bridget reviewed HUD's new **risk factor assessment**. She explained that HUD will evaluate applicants not only on grant compliance but also by reviewing external information such as:
 - Inspector General reports
 - Government Accountability Office findings
 - Verified complaints
 - News articles
 - Public and social media activity
- She cautioned agencies that HUD is paying close attention to an organization's public reputation and compliance history before even reviewing the application. Bridget reminded attendees to maintain compliance with all regulations, avoid discriminatory practices, and be mindful of public communications, including social media, as these factors could influence HUD's assessment of organizational risk.

- **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Discussion**
 - A significant portion of the meeting focused on the potential impact of HUD's revised guidance on Permanent Supportive Housing programs.
 - Sandra Newson expressed concern regarding the possibility of replacing renewal grants with new projects.
 - She explained that individuals currently living in Permanent Supportive Housing may no longer meet HUD's definition of homelessness because they are now stably housed. Without renewal funding, existing residents could potentially lose eligibility for assistance.
 - She encouraged the Continuum to reconsider previous planning decisions until HUD provides additional clarification.
 - Giffe' Gill requested clarification regarding HUD's expectations for existing Permanent Supportive Housing participants.
 - She asked several questions regarding HUD's transition guidance.
 - She sought clarification on:
 - Which residents could remain housed during a transition period.
 - Whether exceptions apply to current Permanent Supportive Housing participants.
 - How disability requirements would affect eligibility.
 - Giffe' suggested bringing all Permanent Supportive Housing

providers together for a roundtable discussion to develop a coordinated strategy before submitting applications.

- She explained that individual providers may understand their own programs but need to understand how those plans fit into the overall Continuum strategy.
 - John questioned how HUD defines homelessness for clients already residing in Permanent Supportive Housing. He explained his understanding that:
 - Clients who remain enrolled in housing programs continue to retain homeless status while receiving assistance.
 - If clients exit assistance completely, they would no longer qualify as homeless.
 - He discussed whether clients remain eligible while actively participating in housing programs and acknowledged that additional federal guidance would be needed.
 - Bridget agreed that further clarification from HUD is necessary before making funding decisions and scheduled a meeting w/PSH providers the following morning, June 18th, 2026
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- **State Budget**
 - **Contracts should be effective July 1st**
 - Have not received contracts yet
 - No decreases reported
 - **Upcoming Events**
 - **August 24-26** - FHC Affordable Housing (Rosen Centre Hotel)
 - **Sept 1st-3rd** – FCEH (Hilton Lake Buena Vista)
 - **Welcome new Members**
 - **The Forest Recovery**
 - **Mothers and Sons Community Resource Corp**
 - **Services Provided**
 - **The organization offers:**
 - Residential placement
 - Case management
 - Supported employment
 - Companion services
 - Respite care
 - Personal care
 - Meal preparation
 - Housekeeping
 - Medication management
 - Recreational programming
 - Professional development and training
 - Wellness services
 - **Populations Served**
 - **Services are available for:**
 - Veterans
 - Older adults

- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Young adults transitioning from foster care
- Families in need of supportive housing services
- **Housing Programs**
 - **The organization currently operates:**
 - Licensed adult family care homes
 - Independent living residences
 - Shared and private accommodations based on client needs
 - Immediate openings were available and emphasized that placements are individualized following an assessment.
 - During questions, members asked whether services were limited to individuals. The organization also serves families and encouraged agencies to begin making referrals.
- **Village Outreach**
 - A representative from Village Outreach introduced the organization and discussed available housing resources.
 - The agency reported:
 - Housing assistance for individuals experiencing homelessness.
 - Housing support for individuals at risk of homelessness.
 - Beds currently available for individuals receiving income or benefits.
 - Housing opportunities for individuals with no income who are experiencing homelessness.
 - Referrals accepted from community partners.
 - The representative encouraged agencies to contact Village Outreach regarding available housing placements and eligibility requirements.
- **Jessica requested that all presenters email their presentation slides so they can be distributed to the Continuum of Care membership.**

- **Open Floor - Next meeting: July 15, 2026 (Zoom)**

Motion to adjourn – Denise Harrison; Jason Saffels

Attendance: Bridget Engleman, HCPC; Brennan Sanders, HCPC; Jessica Henderson, HCPC; Cathy Golden, HCPC; Katrina Panzica, HCPC; Paiton Beckner, HCPC; Alexis Lebron-Ruiz, HCPC; Giffe Gill, ACTS; John Quirk, SVDP; Denise Harrison, TCHS; Stephen Powers, TCHS; Corina Hathaway, ACTS; Jennifer Cooper, BOCC; Marybeth Moore, BOCC; Jose Chavarria, Carrfour; Sandra Newson, Carrfour; Dr. Glynnes Smith, Cass Cares; Martha Murphy, Catholic Charities; Nancy Hurley, City of Winter Haven; Mike Carrano, COSMO; Jennifer Olivas, MCSC; Lesly Yanez, MCSC; Bobby Ramkarran, MCSC; Donna Evanecky, PCS; Charity McGough, SVDP; Kera Beard, VOA; Michelle Czelusniak, Wison House; Terri Crams, ACTS; P.J. Brooks, CASL; NeTonyah Roberson, Village Outreach; Laqawana Roberson, Mother and Sons; Jason Saffels;

*****For attendance discrepancies please email paiton@polkhomeless.org**