

## Close to Home Family Referral Program

### PURPOSE

The purpose of a Family Referral is to utilize Project Based Vouchers (PBV) issued by the local Public Housing Authority (PHA) to transition clients who are currently experiencing homelessness into permanent housing with the PHA. This process will be for households experiencing homelessness, thereby reducing the homeless population in our community. The ideal candidates for a PBV through Family Referral are families who have been assessed for stability, financial capacity, and overall needs.

### DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are included in the pre-screening, referral, application and review process for the Family Referral Program:

- **Family Homelessness Workgroup** – This workgroup operates with the support of Close to Home staff and designs community-wide solutions to end Family Homelessness. The Family Homelessness Workgroup discusses and creates strategies within programs, such as the Family Referral Program, for effective client service delivery. This Workgroup will also monitor after-care service delivery and track outcomes for program
- **Family Referral Review Panel** – This Panel is a sub-group of the Family Homelessness Workgroup and consists of Family housing experts with experience in assessing program participant families for eligible services. One of the individuals identified as a Family expert must be a consumer who can advocate for the participant family needs through a lens of lived experience. In addition to local Family experts, the Chair and Co-Chair of the Family Homelessness Workgroup will sit on this Panel alongside the Close to Home Support Staff assigned to support the Family Homelessness Workgroup. SAHA may participate in this Panel upon availability but is not required.
- **Case Manager** – The Case Manager is the case manager assigned to the family program participant family through the project in which the family program participant family is currently enrolled. The Case Manager will also provide after-care services to the family program participant family once the family program participant family exits the project.
- **Family Program participants** – The program participant families are those families who have met the HUD literal homelessness definition and who are currently enrolled in a project. For the purposes of this Family Referral Program, program participant families who meet the definition of literal homelessness are eligible for the Family Referral Program. Program participant families enrolled in a project funded by sources other than the CoC that have met eligibility for that project are also eligible candidates.
- **Public Housing Authority** – The PHA issues PBVs to Family Referral Program eligible program participant families. Close to Home currently has a partnership with the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) to allocate PBVs towards the Family Referral Program.
- **Close to Home** – Close to Home (CTH) supports the Family Homelessness Workgroup by recruiting and retaining membership, holding meeting space, creating agendas, and assigning action items created and delegated by the Workgroup. CTH has executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SAHA to oversee the issuance of the PBVs allocated to the Family Referral Program to ensure that the vouchers are being utilized. CTH reports performance outcomes to SAHA and advocates for additional vouchers to be added to the Family Referral Program using performance data to support the request.

- **Assessment** – The “Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix” is used to assess the independent living skills and functioning of a Family Referral Program Participant family.

## PROGRAM CAPACITY

As of the FY19 SAHA Administrative Plan, 20 PBVs are allocated to the Family Referral Program. Upon launching the initial program, CTH will publicize the 20 vacancies available for referral to family program staff.

If the program is at capacity and a vacancy occurs, SAHA will notify CTH of the vacancy. CTH will then notify the Family Homelessness Workgroup of the vacancy during the next scheduled Family Homelessness Workgroup meeting. CTH will send an email notification of the vacancy to the Family program staff with information about the vacancy and a reminder of the application process.

## PRESCREENING

In order to be considered for referral to an PBV through the Family Referral program, the program participant family must be pre-screened by the Case Manager and meet each of the following pre-screening eligibility criteria:

- **Family composition** – Family must have minor child in the household and the household can be no larger than four persons in any combination.
- **Income** – Family will be required to pay for utilities as the apartment complex does not include all bills paid. Therefore, a minimum of 10% AMI is required to be referred.
- **Voluntary tenant participation** – the participant family voluntarily expresses his/her interest in pursuing the PBV option for housing.
- **Housing stability Assessment** – the participant family has completed the “Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix” and meets eligibility thresholds outlined in the referral requirements.
- **Referral** – the service provider must assess and recommend the client for Family Referral.
- **PHA screening** – the participant family meets PHA eligibility for a voucher (no outstanding debt to PHA + meets criminal background requirements)

## HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL / REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

If the program participant family meets each of the pre-screening criteria, the Case Manager may then refer the program participant family to the Family Referral Program. The referral is sent to CTH, and then provided to the Family Referral Review Board for consideration. The following items must be included in the referral packet:

- **Letter of support** – this letter must be completed by the Case Manager and must indicate that the interested program participant family has met pre-screening eligibility requirements. Specifically, the letter must include:
  - Documentation of housing stability – the participant family has been assessed for their ability to remain stably housed (e.g., lease violations, etc.) and has the capacity to pay their portion of the monthly rent in a timely manner (if applicable).

Discuss any past negative rental history and the actions that have been taken to remedy those issues (e.g., broken leases, evictions, etc.).

- Documentation of rehabilitation from past criminal history (if applicable) – in addition to the participant family assessment for being successfully housed with minimal issues which may affect their rental history, the participant family has not incurred additional negative criminal history. Should the interested participant family have prior criminal history which may negatively impact his/her application to the PHA or to a potential landlord, the Case Manager must address any way the criminal history may be related to the program participant family’s housing eligibility, and any steps the program participant family has taken to rehabilitate (e.g., services the program participant family has completed through a program, probation, or on a voluntary basis to address behaviors linked to prior criminal history).
- Description of income – describe the program participant family’s current household income, and the program participant family’s ability to afford costs such as security deposits, utility connections, and the anticipated rental portion. If the program participant family has been connected to community resources for assistance with these costs, please describe those resources. If the program participant family is currently employed, describe the name of the employer, how long the program participant family has been employed, and their average earned income per month. If the program participant family is connected to cash benefits, please describe those benefits and the average monthly income received.
- Self-sufficiency – any supplemental information the Case Manager has available to include regarding why the program participant family is a strong candidate for the Family Referral Program, to include:
  - *Income* – the participant family has demonstrated and documented their ability to maintain income and responsibility for paying obligations such as rent and utilities.
  - *Disability* – if applicable the participant family has demonstrated independence in managing their disabling condition through making their own appointments, connecting with accessible transportation resources, and showing an overall ability to access community resources to address their disability without the help of a case manager
  - *Health* – the participant family has demonstrated an ability to regularly attend scheduled appointments and follow medical instructions according to their diagnosis
  - *Community connections* – the participant family is connected to a variety of community resources for on-going support (list those services / agencies). Include non-cash benefits here, if applicable
  - *Crisis intervention required* – the applicant family has demonstrated a minimal need for crisis intervention in the last 12 months, to include mental health crisis response, visits to the Emergency Room, and law enforcement intervention
- **Voluntary Participation Acknowledgement Form** – the program participant family must sign this form to acknowledge that their participation in the Family Referral Program is voluntary and without coercion.
- **Assessment** – the Case Manager must complete the assessment tool, the “Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix”, locally adopted to assess eligibility for the Family Referral

Program and attach it to the referral packet. Referrals are eligible within the following thresholds according to the household composition:

- Family with minor children in the home – 54-90

Case Managers will complete the full assessment and score each question for program participant families who have minor children in the home.

**AHP Referral Packet** – The Case Manager must complete and sign the “Assisted Housing Programs Referral Form” to its entirety and ensure to indicate “Close to Home – Family Homeless” on the first page.

The Case Manager will submit the referral materials through the CTH Google Form entitled “Family Referral Packet” found by [clicking here](#) or on Close to Home's website under “Family Referral Program”.

The CTH Staff assigned to support the Family Referral Program will monitor Google form submissions on a weekly basis (in conjunction with the Coordinated Entry Case Conferencing schedule) and will notify the Family Homelessness Workgroup Chair and Co-Chair when a new referral has been received. The Family Homelessness Workgroup Chair is responsible for scheduling meetings with the Family Referral Review Panel members when new referrals are received.

## REFERRAL REVIEW

When a referral has been submitted, CTH will forward the referral to the Family Workgroup Chair and will schedule a time with the Family Referral Review Panel to review the referral. Referrals are reviewed in the order that they are received. Should the Family Referral Review Panel determine that the program participant family being referred is a candidate for the Family Referral Program, the Panel will notify CTH to contact the Case Manager and ask the Case Manager to complete the Family Referral Program Application packet. CTH will forward the Family Referral Program Application packet to SAHA within 24 hours of the packet being submitted.

## APPLICATION

Once the program participant family has met each of the pre-screening criteria and been referred to the Family Referral Review Panel, the Family Referral Review Panel recommends the program participant family to apply through the PHA for an HCV through the Family Referral Program. The CTH Support Staff assigned to the Family Referral Review Panel will notify the Case Manager of the recommendation for the referred program participant family to apply for the Family Referral Program. The Case Manager will then assist the program participant family to complete an application for the Family Referral Program. This application will consist of the following document:

- **Housing Choice Voucher Application** – the program participant family must complete the HCV Application (SAHA Form) In addition to the HCV application, the program participant family must submit copies of required documents for eligibility for the PHA. These documents include:
  - Identification – current photo ID for all household members over the age of 18 years old
  - Birth certificates – birth certificates must be provided for all household members

- Social Security cards – Social Security cards for all household members
- Bank statements – most recent bank statement for any household member who is employed dated within the last 60 days
- Proof of income – most recent pay stubs or other proof of income for all household members dated within the last 60 days
- Child custody documentation – any court documents regarding child custody.

The Case Manager will submit the application materials through the Close to Home Google Form entitled “Family Referral Program Application” found by [clicking here](#). This link will also be provided to you by CTH staff after your referral has been approved.

The CTH Staff assigned to support the Family Referral Program will monitor Google form submissions on a weekly basis (in conjunction with the Coordinated Entry Case Conferencing schedule) and will streamline completed applications by sending them directly to , the SAHA Assistance Director of Federal Housing Programs, for processing. The CTH Staff will notify the Family Homelessness Workgroup Chair that an application has been forwarded. The CTH Staff will coordinate with the Case Manager through the application process by notifying the Case Manager when the application has been sent and including the Case Manager on any electronic communications with SAHA regarding the application.

SAHA will notify CTH when an application is accepted and when an eligibility appointment is scheduled. CTH will communicate with the Case Manager via email to provide him/her with the eligibility appointment information.

SAHA will also notify CTH if an application is denied, the reason for denial, and provide CTH with information on how to appeal the denial. CTH will provide all information pertinent to an application denial to the Case Manager and the Family Homelessness Workgroup Chair.

## PRIORITIZATION

Applications are reviewed and sent to SAHA in the order that they are received by CTH until the program has reached capacity.

When the program is at capacity and CTH receives more than one application for one open vacancy, applications will be prioritized using the following information:

- **Length of Time Literal Homeless-** program participant families with a longer length of time homeless are given priority.
- **Survivors of Domestic Violence** – program participant families that are survivors of intimate partner and family violence are given priority.
- **Child Protective Services (CPS) Involvement** – program participant families that have an open case with CPS where housing stability is needed are given priority.
- **Assessment Score** – program participant families who are assessed at the higher end of the assessment scoring threshold are given priority.

## ELIGIBILITY NAVIGATION

When an application has been accepted and the program participant family has been scheduled for an eligibility appointment, the Case Manager will work with the CTH Staff to navigate the

eligibility process with the program participant family. It is expected that the Case Manager will attend the SAHA eligibility appointment with the program participant family. It is also expected that the Case Manager will communicate directly with SAHA to identify an appropriate landlord and work through the Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) process. CTH Staff can support this process by being available for technical assistance and collaborating with SAHA to ensure the process runs smoothly, if needed.

## **PROGRAM ENROLLMENT/EXIT**

CTH Staff will enroll the program participant family in HMIS under the project enrollment “SAHA Close to Home Family Referral Program” on the date of the eligibility appointment attended by the program participant family. CTH will also input the “Housing Move-In Date” into the HMIS enrollment. CTH will complete program exits at the time that the program participant family exits the program.

## **TRANSITION AND AFTER CARE**

The Case Manager will work closely with the program participant family to ensure the transition from into the Family Referral Program is seamless, trauma informed, and client centered. This includes that the Case Manager will connect the program participant family with the necessary community resources to increase likelihood for success for the program participant family. A successful outcome for the program participant family would be defined by the program participant family as part of the client-centered plan.

The Case Manager will ensure to view the lease contract executed by the program participant family when the RTA process is completed, and the program participant family establishes a move-in date to his/her unit. The Case Manager will then determine an exit date for the program participant family to officially exit the program.

The Case Manager will continue to engage with the program participant family for 90-days of “After Care” to ensure that the program participant family has successfully transitioned into the Family Referral Program and is stably housed. “After Care” will include at least 1 home visit within 15 days of the transition, and a minimum of monthly phone calls over the next 90 days. During the “After Care” period, it is the responsibility of the Case Manager to connect the program participant family to any available resources requested by the program participant family.

At the end of the 90-day After Care period, the Case Manager will complete a final exit interview with the program participant family and will provide a final report of the exit interview to the CTH Staff. CTH Staff will then provide the report to the Family Homelessness Workgroup Chair and the Family Referral Review Panel for their information. Outcomes will be tracked by the CTH Staff and will be provided in aggregate form to SAHA.