

Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc.

Policies and Procedures

First Edition, September 2007

I. Vision:

The Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc., is dedicated to the alleviation of homelessness.

II. Mission:

The Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc, is a community partnership dedicated to the alleviation of homelessness, through prevention, assistance, toward self-sufficiency, the provision of housing options, and advocacy.

III. Statutory Authority:

The Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc. is a membership organization, created under the guidelines of Florida Statute 420.623 and 420.624. These statutes provide guidance as to the composition and function of the agency.

A. Composition:

As established by Statute 420.623, appropriate local groups and organizations involved in providing services for the homeless, and interested business groups and associations shall be given an opportunity to participate in such coalitions, including, but not limited to:

- (a) Organizations and agencies providing mental health and substance abuse treatment.
- (b) County health departments and community health centers.
- (c) Organizations and agencies providing food, shelter, or other services targeted to the homeless.
- (d) Local law enforcement agencies.
- (e) Regional workforce boards.
- (f) County and municipal governments.
- (g) Local public housing authorities.
- (h) Local school districts.
- (i) Local organizations and agencies serving specific subgroups of the homeless population, including, but not limited to, those serving veterans, victims of domestic violence, person with HIV/AIDS, and runaway youth.
- (j) Local community-based care alliances.

Additional requirements for composition are contained in Statute 420.624, which provides the framework for the planning function of the local coalition, otherwise known as the Continuum of Care, to wit:

“Continuum of care plans must promote participation by all interested individuals and organizations and may not exclude individuals and organizations on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, familial status, or religion. Faith-based organizations must be encouraged to participate. To the extent possible, these components should be coordinated and integrated with other mainstream health, social services, and employment programs for which homeless populations may be eligible, including Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food Stamps, and services funded through the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Block Grant, the Workforce Investment Act, and the welfare-to-work grant program.”

B. Function

The major functions of a state-designated local coalition/ Continuum of Care are outlined in Florida Statute 420.623:

(2) FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL COALITIONS.--Major functions of the local coalitions are to:

(a) Develop or assist with the development of the local homeless continuum of care plan, as described in s. [420.624](#), for the catchment area containing the county or region served by the local homeless coalition. Unless otherwise specified in the plan or as a result of an agreement with another coalition in the same catchment area, the local coalition shall serve as the lead agency for the local homeless assistance continuum of care.

(b) Discuss local issues related to homelessness and the needs of the homeless.

(c) Inventory all local resources for the homeless, including, but not limited to, food assistance, clothing, emergency shelter, low-cost housing, emergency medical care, counseling, training, and employment.

(d) Review and assess all services and programs in support of the homeless and identify unmet needs of the homeless.

(e) Facilitate the delivery of multiagency services for the homeless to eliminate duplication of services and to maximize the use of limited existing resources for the homeless.

(f) Develop new programs and services to fill critical service gaps, if necessary, through reallocation of existing resources for the homeless.

(g) Develop a community resource directory of services available to the homeless for use by agencies, volunteers, information and referral systems, and homeless persons.

(h) Develop public education and outreach initiatives to make homeless persons aware of the services available to them through community agencies and organizations.

(i) Identify and explore new approaches to shelter care for the homeless.

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(j) Monitor and evaluate local homeless initiatives to assess their impact, to determine the adequacy of services available through such initiatives, and to identify additional unmet needs of homeless persons.

(k) Collect and compile information relating to the homeless population served and report on a regular basis, but at least annually, such information to the department, as directed by the department.

(l) Develop an annual report detailing the coalition's goals and activities.

(m) Develop spending plans pursuant to the grant-in-aid program created under s. [420.625](#). Spending plans shall include a competitive ranking of applications from local agencies eligible for funding pursuant to the provisions of s. [420.625](#).

(n) Develop a strategy for increasing support and participation from local businesses in the coalition's programs and activities.

Continuums of Care are defined in Florida Statute 420.624, as follows:

(1) A local homeless assistance continuum of care is a framework for a comprehensive and seamless array of emergency, transitional, and permanent housing, and services to address the various needs of homeless persons and persons at risk for homelessness. The nature and configuration of housing and services may be unique to each community or region, depending on local needs, assets, and preferences.

(2) The purpose of a local homeless assistance continuum of care is to help communities or regions envision, plan, and implement comprehensive and long-term solutions to the problem of homelessness in a community or region.

(3) Communities or regions seeking to implement a local homeless assistance continuum of care are encouraged to develop and annually update a written plan that includes a vision for the continuum of care, an assessment of the supply of and demand for housing and services for the homeless population, and specific strategies and processes for providing the components of the continuum of care. The State Office on Homelessness shall supply a standardized format for written plans.

(4) Each local homeless assistance continuum of care plan must designate a lead agency that will serve as the point of contact and accountability to the State Office on Homelessness. The lead agency may be a local homeless coalition, municipal or county government, or other public agency or private, not-for-profit corporation.

The planning function of the Continuum of Care under Statute 420.624, must provide for:

(a) Outreach, intake, and assessment procedures in order to identify the service and housing needs of an individual or family and to link them with appropriate housing, services, resources, and opportunities;

(b) Emergency shelter, in order to provide a safe, decent alternative to living in the streets;

(c) Transitional housing;

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(d) Supportive services, designed to assist with the development of the skills necessary to secure and retain permanent housing;

(e) Permanent supportive housing;

(f) Permanent housing;

(g) Linkages and referral mechanisms among all components to facilitate the movement of individuals and families toward permanent housing and self-sufficiency;

(h) Services and resources to prevent housed persons from becoming or returning to homelessness;

(i) An ongoing planning mechanism to address the needs of all subgroups of the homeless population, including but not limited to:

1. Single adult males;
2. Single adult females;
3. Families with children;
4. Families with no children;
5. Unaccompanied children and youth;
6. Elderly persons;
7. Persons with drug or alcohol addictions;
8. Persons with mental illness;
9. Persons with dual or multiple physical or mental disorders;
10. Victims of domestic violence; and
11. Persons living with HIV/AIDS.

The Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc. is organized to follow the dictates of the state statutes, and apply them to the needs of Okaloosa and Walton Counties. The membership is drawn from all public and private agencies and organizations as listed in the statutes, as well as from private citizenry, homeless and formerly homeless persons living in the area.

IV. Governance

The Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc. is governed by: a membership body, an Executive Board, and an Executive Committee, each with separate and distinct responsibilities, but coordinated through the Executive Committee.

A. Membership Body

The Membership consists of all interested parties who have either paid a membership fee as set by the membership itself, or who have attended at least three meetings within a six month period of time. The membership is open to the full array of community stakeholders as enumerated in the Florida Statutes. All stakeholders so included are to be informed on a regular basis of the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc.'s purpose, responsibilities and calendar of events, so as to enhance participation on as broad a basis as possible.

The Membership is responsible for the implementation of the duties as delineated in Statute 420.623, and other functions essential to the performance of high quality services for the homeless, which include but are not limited to:

- Coordinating services among public and private providers,
- Conducting the point-in-time survey;
- Implementing the Homeless Management Information Service,
- Setting standards of care,
- Assigning committees to oversee needs analysis and service prevention in each of the major components of the Continuum of Care,
- Development of new programs and services to fill critical service gaps.

The Membership elects the Executive Board, both directly in filling specific persons to fill open positions, and indirectly, by setting aside positions to be filled by named organizations, to include county and municipal governments, law enforcement, the Department of Children and Families, and the Workforce Development Board.

B. The Executive Board

The Executive Board shall consist of no more than eighteen (18) members, and no less than eleven (11) members, as written in the By-laws on file with the Florida Secretary of State. The Executive Board sets policy for the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc., and is specifically charged the functions pursuant to Florida Statute 420.624, and with the development and oversight of the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness. Members of the Executive Board are to be drawn from persons holding decision-making authority with major stakeholders, and must represent a diversity of stakeholder interests, including but not limited to county and municipal governments, law enforcement, state offices, service providers, and faith-based organizations. The majority of Executive Board members will be drawn from public and private agencies not eligible for funding through grants managed through the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc.

Each member of the Executive Board is elected for a two-year term. Members are eligible for re-election without restriction for a second two-year term, but then must take be absent at least one year before applying for reappointment.

The Executive Board elects the Executive Committee, which is drawn from the Executive Board membership. The Executive Board, with guidance from the Executive Committee, is charged with setting policy for the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc., and to provide fiscal and programmatic oversight. The Executive Board is responsible for the appointment of the Executive Director when appropriate, upon receiving the recommendation from the Executive Committee.

C. The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall be composed of a Chairman, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. At least one of the officers must represent Walton County exclusively. All officers are elected to serve a two year term. The chairmanship shall rotate between public and private officers every two years, as set forth in the Federal Register guidelines dictating eligibility for federal funds.

The Executive Committee is responsible for on-going oversight of the fiscal and programmatic functions of the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc., and for ensuring that policy set by the Executive Board is being properly implemented. The Executive Committee as a body will be responsible for performance reviews of the Executive Director, and will recommend persons for appointment to that position when vacancies occur.

The functions of individual officers shall follow those as delineated in the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care by-laws.

V. Conflict of Interest

No employee, officer, agent, or member of the Board of Directors shall participate in the selection, award or administration of a contract involving any agency with which they are associated if a real or apparent conflict of interest would be involved. Such a conflict would arise when the employee, officer, agent, or member of the Board of Directors, or any member of her or his immediate family, her or his partner, or an organization that employs or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein, has a financial or other interest in the firm selected.

As stipulated in the contract between the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc., setting forth the duties of the Continuum as a local coalition and lead agency, the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc. is required to serve as the applicant for funds appropriated by the state for the use of local homeless service providers. The Continuum serves the same function for funds awarded through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Because these funds are designated for use by local providers, who will almost invariably be members of the Continuum of Care per the guidelines for membership laid out in Florida Statute, the Continuum

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will structure grant application and evaluation processes in such a manner as to avoid participation in the process by members potentially eligible for grant funding.

In addition, no employee, officer, agent or member of the Board of Directors may solicit or accept gifts related to their professional duties on behalf of the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc. for personal benefit in excess of \$25.

Failure to abide by these policies is grounds for dismissal from whatever capacity served on behalf of the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc.

All employees, officers, members of the Board of Directors, or other persons to whom this policy is applicable, are required to sign a conflict of interest form stating their removal from decision-making in such instances.

VI. Grant/ Contract Selection Process

The Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc. has been designated by the Florida Department of Children and Families, Office on Homelessness, to be the applicant representing Okaloosa and Walton Counties for all state grants designated by the Florida Legislature for homeless services. At this time, such grants are: Emergency Shelter Grant; Challenge Grant; and Homeless Housing Assistance Grants. Likewise, the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care has been designated as the applicant representing Okaloosa and Walton Counties for US Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care grants. Successful grant awards are to be distributed among local service providers as determined by vote of the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/ Opportunity, Inc. Executive Board.

Because the Executive Board is designed per Florida Statute to consist of representatives of local provider agencies and faith-based organizations as well as other community stakeholders, the grant/ contract selection process must be organized to serve the interests of the community in an impartial and neutral manner.

All grants and contracts awarded by the Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care shall be subject to a request for proposal process.

Upon receipt of any grant application designated for fund distribution among local service providers and/or faith-based agencies, the Executive Director shall prepare a request for proposal in line with the state or federal request for proposal. The Executive Director shall prepare an evaluation scoring tool, parallel to the allocation of points as contained in the state or federal grant request. The request for proposal shall be advertised through the Membership monthly meetings, the e-mail listing maintained by the Continuum of Care, and through newspaper announcement. The deadline for grant application submission shall be set by the Executive Director based upon timelines set forth in the state or federal application, and be no less than three weeks prior to the state or federal grant deadline.

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To ensure a disinterested selection process, the Chairman will annually appoint a representative from the Membership Body whose agency, if any, is ineligible for grant funds to serve as Chairman of the Grant Review Committee. The committee chair will recruit at least two other persons from outside the Continuum Membership to serve on the grant selection committee. All grant applications shall be submitted to the Executive Director for a technical review to ensure all required elements are contained in each proposal. All qualifying applications shall be submitted to the chairman of the Grant Review Committee within two business days after receipt.

The Grant Review Committee shall have two weeks to review and score all grant applications submitted by local service providers and/or faith-based organizations. At the end of three weeks, the committee chairman will submit the results of the request for proposal scoring to the Executive Director, and make recommendations for award allocations. The Grant Review Committee has the discretion to consider budget needs in recommending award allocations, should the committee feel it is in the best interest of the community to do so. Should any lower-ranked proposal receive a higher percentage award recommendation than a higher-ranked proposal, the committee shall provide written documentation substantiating the reason.

The Executive Director shall review the recommendations, and pass them to the Executive Board for approval. Due to the time constraints involved in grant applications, voting may be handled via e-mail or web site communication. Any member of the Executive Board whose agency has an interest in the outcome of the grant/contract selection process shall recuse him or herself from the Executive Board deliberation process.

The Executive Director shall publish the results of the Executive Board deliberation on the first business day following the vote. Any applicant wishing to appeal the decision may do so by filing an intent to appeal with the Executive Director within 48 hours. Because timeliness is a factor in the Continuum's application, appeals may not be heard until after the state or federal grant has been submitted. Appeals will be heard by Executive Committee, absent any members whose agencies were involved in the grant application process. The decision of the Executive Committee will be final. A successful appeal will be included in a budget amendment following final grant award.

VII. Role of the Continuum of Care in Providing Direct Services

The primary work of the Continuum of Care is to coordinate, facilitate and support the work of direct service providers offering assistance to the homeless and near-homeless, and to serve as a referral network for homeless individuals, volunteers and other interested stakeholders. As a pass-through agency for governmental and private funds, the Continuum does not seek to engage in any service that could be construed as being in competition with its membership. At the same time, there may be emergencies when only the Continuum of Care staff is accessible. The following policy is meant to give guidance to Continuum of Care staff when deciding what does or does not fall under the Continuum of Care scope of work.

A. Providing support for direct service providers:

- 1) The Continuum of Care serves as a vehicle for raising funds on behalf of homeless programs. This includes application for grants, contracts with private fund agencies, fund-raisers, and other such promotions. Where appropriate, as in the case with governmental grants, funds will be distributed based on the recommendations of the independent, impartial review board described in the section above. The Continuum of Care will also, wherever possible, maintain a fund composed of direct service dollars awarded by the state and proceeds from fundraisers, which may be used to help individual service providers on an emergency basis.
- 2) The Continuum of Care staff will serve as liaison between direct service providers and funding agencies, ensuring that fiscal and programmatic records are kept in good order and meet grant guidelines. Should a funding agent request an audit, a Continuum of Care staff member will meet with the auditor, review the records maintained by the Continuum, accompany the auditor to any site inspection visits, and address any questions the auditor might have.
- 3) The Continuum of Care will provide technical assistance to direct service providers regarding best practices in the field of homelessness. Services may include training in health risk reduction; emergency medical care; case management; security protocols, etc., or could include site inspection to insure that adequate health and safety measures are in place. The Continuum of Care staff will seek the highest qualified experts available for all such technical assistance and training events.
- 4) The Continuum of Care is responsible for a smooth flow of information between service providers, including hosting membership and committee meetings; maintaining a website and listserv; publishing monthly calendars and annual resource directories; and expansion of the Homeless Management Information System. Staff will maintain a list of those persons expelled from cold night shelters, meal programs and other services, so that other service providers will be aware of who is eligible to receive services. The Continuum of Care may contract out for any portion of these duties, but retains responsibility for their execution.
- 5) The Continuum of Care staff will work with direct service providers to determine minimal standards of care for the homeless, and to create community policies and procedures where appropriate.

- 6) The Continuum of Care will serve to coordinate community donations of clothes, food, bicycles, and other supplies to those agencies in need of such items.

B. Providing support for homeless

- 1) The Continuum of Care may provide services directly to the homeless, when such services in and of themselves support the work of direct service providers. For instance, the Continuum of Care may sponsor occasional health clinics for special needs, such as flu shots or AIDS testing; funding of laundry services, organization of transportation to special events held outside the immediate area; or initiation of emergency procedures in case of hurricanes or tropical storms. In all such cases, services must affect all populations of homeless, and not the clientele of a single provider.
- 2) The Continuum of Care may provide services in case of emergency, when other resources are not immediately accessible. Such cases would involve assistance to homeless families and individuals with acute medical problems, or who have been without food or shelter for a life-threatening time span. The Continuum of Care staff would seek to meet the immediate need, stabilizing the situation until a direct service provider may be recruited to provide longer-term service.
- 3) Depending upon fund availability, Continuum of Care staff may elect to assist a direct service provider with a particular client when the provider has limited funds and a small window of opportunity to provide meaningful assistance. The provider must be able to document that a one-time infusion of funds will assist the client in a long-term solution, and that the funding need is immediate. Such services will be given sparingly, as a last resort, in order to maintain the division between Continuum of Care roles and direct service provider roles.
- 4) The Continuum of Care serves as an advocate for homeless families and individuals with the community at large, but does not advocate for specific individuals or lobby for particular benefits.
- 5) The Continuum of Care, at the request of the Continuum membership, will advocate for specific needs such as a homeless shelter. In the case of a shelter, the Continuum of Care will seek financing for construction, renovation and maintenance of a building, and will help to set up a permanent funding source. However, the Continuum of Care will subcontract with a direct service provider for the administration of a shelter and related programs, following an open bidding process.

VIII. Personnel Policies

The Executive Director will draft a personnel policy manual to reflect Continuum of Care policies in the recruitment, selection, maintenance and supervision of Continuum of Care staff, and submit it for approval to the Board of Directors. The manual will also contain policies for the accrual of paid time off, holiday time, and any benefits that the Continuum is able to offer its employees.

Until such a manual is approved by the Board of Directors, the following holiday and paid time off schedule shall apply:

Employees working at least 20 hours per week for the Continuum of Care shall be eligible for holiday leave, pro-rated to reflect the hours of service rendered (i.e., full-time employees are eligible for 8 hours of paid leave per holiday; half-time workers are eligible for 4 hours of paid leave per holiday, etc.). Holidays recognized by the Continuum of Care are:

January:

New Year's Day
Martin Luther King Holiday

May:

Memorial Day

July:

Fourth of July

September:

Labor Day

November:

Veteran's Day
Thanksgiving; Day after Thanksgiving

December:

Christmas

Paid time off (to be used either as sick leave or vacation leave) shall accrue at the rate of 14 days per year for the first three years of full-time employment, and 17 days per year after the third year. Part-time personnel shall accrue paid time at a pro-rated rate based on number of hours worked. Paid time off will be accrued beginning with the first day of employment, but may not be taken until the end of the first six months.