

PA-504 Montgomery County Pennsylvania Continuum of Care Governance Charter

Adopted by the PA-504 Continuum of Care: December 16, 2014

Amended by the Continuum of Care Governing Board: September 18, 2018

Second Amendment Approved by the Continuum of Care Governing Board:
June 11, 2021

Third Amendment Approved by the Continuum of Care Governing Board:
February 25, 2022

Fourth Amendment Approved by the Continuum of Care Governing Board:
June 30, 2023

Fifth Amendment Approved by the Continuum of Care Governing Board:
October 27, 2023

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Article I. Montgomery County Pennsylvania Continuum of Care Overview

Section 1. Name.

The entity designated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the PA-504 Lower Merion/Abington/Norristown/Montgomery County Continuum of Care (CoC) is a public-private partnership known locally as Your Way Home Montgomery County.

Section 2. Mission.

The mission of the CoC is to ensure that everyone who lives, works, learns, and invests in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania has equal opportunity to live in an affordable home and a thriving community.

Section 3. Purpose.

The CoC is a partnership consisting of community residents, people with lived experience, and public, private, and nonprofit organizations whose shared purpose is to make the experience of homelessness rare, brief, and a one-time experience for all Montgomery County residents. The CoC complies with all of the responsibilities defined in the federal Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH Act) and the HUD Continuum of Care grant program.

Section 4. Guiding Principles.

The CoC is committed to the following principles:

- Housing is a human right.
- Homelessness and poor-quality housing can negatively affect health and well-being.
- Families and individuals experiencing homelessness should be provided stable, permanent housing with a standard lease agreement and rights of tenancy, but without preconditions or barriers.
- Housing is a major driver of economic growth and essential to community development.
- People should be able to live near their places of work, worship, and social networks.
- Health, homeless, and human services that promote housing stability should be equitable, responsive, and trauma informed.

Section 5. Geographic Service Area.

The geographic service area of the CoC is the entirety of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

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Section 6. Cost of membership.

The CoC does not charge organizations or individuals with any membership dues/fees.

Article II. CoC Governance Structure

Section 1. Name.

The governing body of the CoC is named the CoC Governing Board.

Section 2. Governing Board Roles and Responsibilities.

The roles and responsibilities of the CoC Governing Board include the following:

- Amplify diverse community voices and perspectives about the causes and solutions for ending and preventing homelessness.
- Advocate for policy, funding, and housing opportunities to meet the needs of residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Designate, periodically review, and every five years re-authorize or re-assign a Lead Agency tasked with the responsibility to manage the CoC's HUD-required Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) used for the secure collection, analysis, and reporting on HUD and related publicly funded programs that end and prevent homelessness, including client data. This responsibility includes the co-creation and approval of the CoC's HMIS Governance Charter. The Montgomery County Office of Housing and Community Development is currently designated as the HMIS Lead Agency.
- Designate, periodically review, and every five years re-authorize or re-assign a Lead Agency to serve as the Collaborative Applicant for the HUD Continuum of Care Grant program. The Montgomery County Office of Housing and Community Development is currently designated as the Collaborative Applicant.
- Review, score, and approve grant applications submitted by the Collaborative Applicant for the HUD Continuum of Care Grant program, the HUD Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), and other federal and state grant programs to which the CoC is eligible to apply that fund services to end and prevent homelessness.
- Co-create, periodically review, help revise, and approve CoC Written Standards and policies for organizations funded through the HUD Continuum of Care grant program, ESG, EFSP, and other federal and state grant programs to which the CoC is eligible to apply that fund services to end and prevent homelessness.
- Establish and guide multi-sector, volunteer Advisory Teams focused on one or more of the long-term goals in the CoC Strategic Plan and Action Teams that may meet up to three times to provide specific community input on an urgent policy matter or strategic objective.

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- Review and approve the CoC's Point-In-Time Count methodology.
- Actively participate in the creation of the Your Way Home Montgomery County strategic plan and related planning activities.
- Monitor and evaluate the performance of CoC grantees.
- Review and, if necessary, revise the CoC Governance Charter at least once every three years.
- Oversee the recruitment, election, and orientation of new CoC Governing Board members.

Section 3. Governing Board Composition.

The CoC Governing Board shall have at any given time no fewer than seventeen (17) and no more than twenty-five (25) members. The Board will be composed of a majority of members elected by the CoC membership and a minority of members appointed by their position as noted in Article 2 Sections 5 and 7 of this Charter.

Section 4. Individual Governing Board Member Responsibilities.

Elected and appointed members of the CoC Governing Board are expected to:

- Participate in at least 75% of Governing Board meetings per year unless you are granted a Board-approved leave of absence.
- Vote in at least 75% of Governing Board votes per year unless recused due to a conflict of interest.
- Serve on at least one Advisory or Action Team per year.
- Be actively involved in helping to increase the CoC's membership, influence, networks, and resources as best as possible.
- Disclose any known Conflicts of Interest.

To request a Board-approved leave of absence, please submit a request in advance to the Board Co-Chairs. Members are required to comply with the Governing Board meeting participation requirement or be automatically removed from their position at the end of that year.

Section 5. Composition and Election of Elected Governing Board Members.

Elected Governing Board members shall be composed of a diverse and inclusive group of CoC members in good standing who collectively represent the following stakeholders:

- Persons with the lived experience of homelessness
- Homeless service providers
- Community-based organizations that serve the health and human service needs of families and individuals experiencing homelessness

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- Public and private housing providers
- Public and philanthropic funders of homeless services
- Faith-based organizations
- Representatives from public systems of care, possibly to include child welfare, education, food security, health, housing, mental/behavioral health systems, veterans' affairs, and victims services, among others.

Election of new Governing Board members shall be conducted annually as follows:

- The Collaborative Applicant will maintain a Governing Board composition matrix annotating the following characteristics for each member: Stakeholder group representation, professional or lived expertise, demographic information, and term start and end dates.
- The Board will use the composition matrix to prioritize the election of new members to fill gaps in these characteristics.
- The Board will solicit nominations from the entire CoC membership.
- A slate of candidates will be determined by the Governing Board and presented to the membership via an email announcement.
- An election will be held online and open to all CoC members.
- Candidates will be elected by a majority vote of CoC members participating in the election.

Section 6. Term Limits for Elected Governing Board Members.

Elected Governing Board members will serve a three-year term of office. Members may serve one additional three-year term if reelected by a majority vote of CoC members participating in the election process. Members may not serve more than two three-year terms of office without taking a one-year break after the end of their second term.

Existing Board members elected before the amendment of these term limits who have already served more than two three-year terms are eligible to serve one additional year for a total of seven consecutive years.

If an elected member resigns or is removed from office for violating either the Conflict of Interest policy or fails to attend at least 50% of Governing Board meetings each year may be replaced by another CoC member appointed by a majority vote of the current Governing Board to complete that member's term. If the appointed person serves more than one year as a mid-term replacement, that person will be considered to have already served their first term of office.

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Section 7. Composition of Appointed Governing Board Members

Section 7A. Appointed Representatives from Public Systems of Care

The chief executive of the following organizations will be asked to assign an appropriate current member of their organization to serve as an appointed member of the Governing Board (one representative only unless otherwise noted below). The Collaborative Applicant may be asked by the Governing Board to consult with the chief executive to ensure that the assigned staff member has the expertise and experience to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a Governing Board member.

- Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Office of Housing and Community Development (2 representatives representing OHCD as the HUD and FEMA Collaborative Applicants and the HUD HMIS Lead Agency)
- Montgomery County Department of Commerce
- Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Office of Community Connections
- Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Office of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Early Intervention
- Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Office of Veteran Affairs
- Montgomery County Housing Authority
- Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Regional McKinney-Vento Act Intermediate Unit Homeless Liaison
- Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA) Funder or Service Provider

7B. Appointed Representatives with Local Homeless Crisis Response System Experience

- Lived Experience Advisory Board (one representative chosen by current LEAD members)
- Housing Resource Centers (one representative selected by the Board from among the current Housing Resource Center Service Providers contracted with the Montgomery County Office of Housing and Community Development to deliver Rapid Re-Housing services through other non-HUD CoC Grant Program state and local public funding sources).

7C. Appointed Representatives of the FEMA EFSP Grant Program

- American Red Cross
- Catholic Social Services
- Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia
- The Salvation Army
- United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey

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Failure to be an active member in good standing will lead to a request that an organization assign a different staff member to the appointed Governing Board position. The Conflict of Interest policy applies to appointed members.

Section 8. Governing Board Officers

The Governance Board officers include a Chair and Vice Chair. Officers will be elected by a majority vote of the Board to serve a two-year term of office. Officers may be reelected for one additional two-year term. A Board member may not hold more than one officer position at any given time but may hold each Officer position during their tenure on the Board.

At any given time, the Chair and Vice Chair must represent two different stakeholder groups, and distinct groups of stakeholders who have not previously or recently been represented as officers should be selected to ensure a diversity of leadership.

The Chair is responsible for:

- Setting Board meeting agendas with the Collaborative Applicant.
- Chairing all meetings of the Board.
- Speaking on behalf of the Board upon request of the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners or the Collaborative Applicant.
- Accepting the resignation of Board members.

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair assumes the duties of the Chair. Should either the Chair or Vice Chair resign during their term, the Board may hold a special election to select a new officer to fill the rest of that term by a majority vote. An officer appointed by vacancy who serves more than half of the officer's term shall be considered to have served one term.

Section 9. Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest may exist when the interests or concerns of an interested party may be seen as competing with the interests or concerns of the CoC. To avoid any unlawful personal benefit to directors and officers, all Governing Board members must sign and submit to the Collaborative Applicant annually the CoC's current Conflict of Interest policy.

Section 10. Governing Board Rules of Order and Voting Procedures

Rules contained in the most recent version of Roberts' Rules of Order shall govern the meetings of the Governing Board in all cases to which they are applicable.

Governing Board votes are conducted if and only if a quorum is present. If a quorum is

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present, a majority vote of the elected and appointed members present shall constitute a vote of approval.

Section 11. Governing Board Confidentiality Policy

As part of the activities and responsibilities of the CoC Governing Board, it is normal for information related to an organization's financial and funding status and personal information about program participants to become known and shared. Apart from information that is public knowledge such as CoC grant amounts and project name and type, all members of the Board are expected to keep organizational and personal information confidential.

Article III. CoC Membership

Section 1. CoC Membership Eligibility.

Membership in the CoC is open to any individual or organization that is committed to the CoC's mission and guiding principles.

Section 2. Membership Registration and Renewal.

New CoC members may register online through an open application form hosted on the CoC website. Members are asked to renew their membership annually. The Collaborative Applicant is responsible for regularly inviting new members to join the CoC through email, website, and social media posts, and as well as at all CoC in-person and virtual events.

Section 3. Member Roles and Responsibilities.

CoC members are not required to but are encouraged to fulfill the following roles and responsibilities:

- Vote in the annual election and re-election of Governing Board members
- Nominate themselves for an elected position on the CoC Governing Board
- Participate in one or more Advisory or Action Teams
- Attend regularly scheduled CoC membership meetings (held at least annually)
- Provide insights, ideas, and feedback to the CoC Governing Board related to its ongoing responsibilities

Section 4. Meeting Schedule.

The CoC Governing Board will hold four quarterly CoC membership meetings per year.

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Article IV. Governance Charter Annual Review and Amendment Process

Section 1. Governance Charter Annual Review.

The Governance Charter shall be reviewed annually during the first quarter of the calendar year by the Governing Board. Any necessary changes or additions to the Governance Charter shall be made using the amendment process in Article IV above.

Section 2. Governance Charter Amendment Process.

As the elected representatives of the CoC membership, the Governing Board shall vote to approve revisions to the Charter. A copy of the most recently approved version of the Charter will be posted on the CoC webpage and made available to all members upon request.