



KY Balance of State Continuum of Care

Street Outreach Service Standards

November 2025

Defining Street Outreach

Street outreach is defined as a professional homeless services intervention that focuses primarily on supporting individuals with accessing permanent or temporary shelter by building trusting relationships and ongoing rapport. Street outreach seeks to engage individuals living unsheltered in a culturally competent and trauma informed manner, provide links to mainstream services, and use diversion and problem-solving techniques to connect people with safe housing options whenever possible.

The primary and ultimate goal of street outreach is to find affordable housing for each individual, with access to voluntary wraparound services needed to stay healthy, including employment, substance use treatment and mental health care. While this is ideally accomplished rapidly, outreach often requires time and interactions with individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness therefore should not be seen as one-time engagements. Rather, each interaction should be seen as an opportunity for outreach staff to build a relationship and help people work toward making a connection to housing and services. The key to the success of outreach and engagement efforts is regular follow-up and building trust with individuals through regular interactions, including learning about the individuals' current social network and supports.

Street outreach is a critical and necessary service to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness within the KY BoS Continuum of Care. Street outreach is an essential frontline component to the system of care for people experiencing homelessness in all communities.

Eligible Households

To be eligible for Street Outreach assistance, a household must meet the (1)(i) definition of Homeless as detailed by the Emergency Solutions Grant Interim Rule found at 24 CFR Part 576.2, specifically stated:



Homeless means:(1) An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:(i) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

KY BoS Street Outreach Values and Service Orientation Standards

1. **Housing Focused Orientation:** Outreach efforts prioritize rapid access to permanent housing without preconditions and voluntary support services. All engagement is designed to facilitate the most direct path to housing.
2. **Lower-Barrier, Person-Centered Approach:** Services are offered without requiring individuals to meet specific behavioral or treatment prerequisites.
3. **Trauma-Informed Engagement:** Staff recognize and respond to the prevalence and impact of trauma in unsheltered populations, employing approaches that foster trust and minimize re-traumatization.
4. **Culturally Competent Practices:** Outreach staff are educated on, acknowledge and respect diverse backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences while tailoring support accordingly.
5. **Strengths-Based Support:** Staff work with individuals to identify and leverage their personal strengths and resilience in addressing housing barriers.
6. **Wellness Promotion Strategies:** Engagement does not require abstinence but instead focuses on promoting wellness related to substance use, mental health challenges, and other risks.
7. **Coordinated and Data-Driven Services:** All outreach activities align with the KY BoS CES, and data is entered into KYHMIS to track outcomes and inform program improvements.
8. **Ethical Conduct and Professionalism:** Staff maintain appropriate boundaries, uphold confidentiality, and engage in continuous professional development to improve service quality.
9. **Safety Considerations:** Outreach staff work in pairs, when necessary (and never more than 4 people engaging the same person), adhere to de-escalation techniques, and assess risks prior to engagement.



10. **Progressive Engagement Model:** Support is customized based on individual needs, with additional assistance provided as needed to facilitate housing stability.

Operational Expectations for Street Outreach Staff

- **Structured Engagement:** Staff conduct outreach primarily in outdoor settings, ensuring safety while engaging with unsheltered individuals. Initial interactions occur in public spaces, with follow-up engagements potentially taking place in sheltered environments. Meetings in sheltered environments cannot be mandated by the outreach provider.
- **Transparency in Engagement:** Outreach staff clearly identify themselves, their employer, and the purpose of engagement in every new interaction.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Outreach is always voluntary. Individuals who decline services should not be coerced or penalized. Future offers of service should be made at reasonable intervals, typically within seven days.
- **Inclement Weather Protocols:** During extreme weather conditions, outreach priorities shift to notifying individuals of available emergency resources and ensuring they can access appropriate shelter.
- **Provision of Goods:** While outreach workers may distribute hygiene kits, food, blankets, and other essentials, material distribution should never overshadow the primary goal of housing-focused engagement.
- **Coordinated Entry System Participation:** Outreach staff serve as frontline access points to CES, ensuring unsheltered individuals are entered into KYHMIS and linked to housing resources.
- **Encampment Response:** Outreach staff may engage with individuals residing in encampments but should not assist in constructing encampments or provide materials that contribute to long-term habitation in unsheltered settings.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Staff must be trained in personal safety measures, as provided or facilitated by their employer, and document any situations where outreach services are refused due to perceived risks.

Responding to Encampments & Other Safety Considerations

1. When one or more unsheltered persons is occupying space on public property through a tent, tarp or other human-made structure, or the individual has occupied a building on public property for the purpose of

habitation, it is considered an encampment. The location of all encampments currently occupied shall be made known to the outreach supervisor as encountered. Similarly, the location of all encampments previously occupied over the past 12 months, but not currently occupied shall be made known to the supervisor as encountered.

2. Street outreach staff may engage people near their encampment but **shall not enter a tent** during the provision of services. Caution must be exercised if entering an encampment.
3. If an enforcement body has identified a particular encampment for closure, and the street outreach staff has advanced notice of such, no materials shall be provided by street outreach to the unsheltered person that will exacerbate the clean-up process of the encampment.
4. Street outreach staff and their employer are responsible for promoting personal safety of street outreach staff and taking the necessary measures to decrease risks as is reasonable in the context of street outreach.
5. In the event of a real or perceived imminent risk, street outreach staff are permitted to refuse to provide street outreach services, as per their training. These instances shall be documented and reported to their supervisor. The Supervisor may request this information and the rationale for refusing service.
6. Street outreach staff will maintain appropriate attire and footwear while delivering outreach services, with attention to seasonal weather elements. Articles of clothing that are deemed inappropriate for service delivery in the field include but not limited to open-toed shoes, scarves, dangling jewelry, or any other article of clothing or jewelry that present a safety concern to the street outreach staff or prevent the provision of services for those living unsheltered.

KYHMIS Participation

All SO programs are required to enter client-level data into KYHMIS. All SO programs are required to adhere to KYHMIS policies, ensuring data is entered in a timely and complete fashion in accordance with KY BoS KYHMIS policies and procedures. Programs must submit data quality and annual performance reports as determined and requested by KHC. SO programs must complete all appropriate KYHMIS training, Coordinated Entry training and Street Outreach training prior to entering data.



KYHMIS Policy Documents: <https://kyhmis.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/sections/360006578973-KYHMIS-Processes-and-Policy-Documents>

Coordinated Entry Training:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/480380338713038350>

Street Outreach Data Entry Training:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/6153308388154103822>

HOME-ARP Program Overview

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) allocated HOME Program funds to the Commonwealth of Kentucky through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide street outreach services to literally homeless clients in the Kentucky Balance of State (KY BoS) Continuum of Care (CoC). Under the HOME-ARP Street Outreach (HOME-ARP SO) Program, Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) will provide subrecipient partner agencies throughout the KY Balance of State Continuum of Care (KY BoS CoC) HOME-ARP SO grants to provide eligible households with vital engagement services and necessary emergency financial assistance to ensure those living unsheltered are rapidly and effectively connected to permanent housing either through the KY BoS Coordinated Entry System (CES), or through program participant's own sphere of support network(s). Funds are limited to the 118 counties in the KY BoS CoC. All HOME-ARP SO programs are required to participate in CES, enter client-level data into KYHMIS and operate with a low-barrier, housing-focused service orientation. The KY BoS CoC HOME-ARP SO program has been designed to mirror the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Interim Rule and eligible SO activities as allowable under the American Rescue Plan Act.

ESG Program Overview

The Emergency Solutions Grants Program is designed to assist people with quickly regaining stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis. ESG is formula funding that is allocated from HUD to KHC annually. ESG funded projects are required to work in conjunction with CoC funded projects and the greater Continuum of Care planning system. ESG Program components that can be applied for include street outreach, emergency shelter, prevention, rapid re-housing, and HMIS. Under the ESG Program, Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) will provide subrecipient partner agencies throughout the KY



Balance of State Continuum of Care (KY BoS CoC) ESG Street Outreach grants to provide eligible households with vital engagement services and necessary emergency financial assistance to ensure those living unsheltered are rapidly and effectively connected to permanent housing either through the KY BoS Coordinated Entry System (CES), or through program participant's own sphere of support network(s). Funds are limited to the 118 counties in the KY BoS CoC. All ESG street outreach programs are required to participate in CES, enter client-level data into KYHMIS and operate with a low-barrier, housing-focused service orientation.

CoC Program Overview

The CoC program is designed to promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness, by providing funding to quickly rehouse homeless individuals, families, persons fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and youth. The CoC program involves a highly competitive application process directly with HUD among Continuum of Care nationwide and usually takes place annually. Under the CoC Program, Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) will provide subrecipient partner agencies throughout the KY Balance of State Continuum of Care (KY BoS CoC) CoC SSO (including SNOFO) grants. The purpose is to provide eligible households with vital street outreach engagement services and necessary emergency financial assistance to ensure those living unsheltered are rapidly and effectively connected to permanent housing either through the KY BoS Coordinated Entry System (CES), or through program participant's own sphere of support network(s). Directly funded projects from HUD are also strongly encouraged to use these toolkit forms. The core function of CoC SSO is to help households obtain and maintain housing. The core function of CoC SSO is to help households obtain and maintain housing. Funds are limited to the 118 counties in the KY BoS CoC. All CoC SSO programs are required to participate in CES, enter client-level data into KYHMIS and operate with a low-barrier, housing-focused service orientation.