

CHG - Homelessness Prevention: Repeat Requests, Prioritization, and Financial Assistance Guidance

Spokane County & City of Spokane
Lead Grantees / System Administrators

Purpose

This policy establishes systemwide expectations for homelessness prevention programs funded by Spokane County and the City of Spokane. The intent is to promote consistent, compliant, and effective use of prevention resources while preserving provider discretion and client-centered practice.

This policy aligns with Washington State Department of Commerce Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG) requirements, including Coordinated Entry (CE), the Targeted Prevention Eligibility Screening Tool, and Progressive Engagement.

Scope

Applies to all City/County CHG-funded homelessness prevention programs

Definitions

Episode of Assistance: a distinct enrollment where a household receives any financial assistance (rent, arrears, utilities, or related fees).

- Multiple payments addressing the same housing crisis during a single enrollment count as one episode
- A new enrollment for a new housing crisis constitutes a separate episode
- Case-management-only enrollments with no financial assistance are not considered episodes

Systemwide Prioritization Guidance

To support equitable access to limited prevention resources:

Households that have received more than two (2) episodes of homelessness prevention financial assistance within a rolling twenty-four (24) month period will be considered lower priority for new assistance

- This is a prioritization and sequencing standard, not an eligibility rule
- Prior assistance does not negatively impact eligibility, consistent with CHG requirements
- This threshold serves as a decision-support flag prompting enhanced assessment and review
- Exceptions are permitted when justified and documented

Coordinated Entry (CE) Referral Requirements

Consistent with CHG guidelines:

- All CHG-funded homelessness prevention programs must receive referrals through Coordinated Entry, unless the provider is a By-and-For organization or has an approved Commerce opt-out
- This policy does not modify CE eligibility screening criteria

Order of Operations: Prevention Referral and Prioritization

Step 1: Household Seeks Prevention Support

A household seeks homelessness prevention assistance through Coordinated Entry or through a By-and-For organization not participating in CE. No prioritization or eligibility determination occurs at this stage

Step 2: CE HMIS Review and Referral Pull Process

When a homelessness prevention provider requests referrals from CE:

- CE staff review HMIS to identify eligible households
- When selecting among multiple eligible households and demand exceeds available referral slots, CE filters the prioritization pool so that households who have not received prior homelessness prevention financial assistance within the past twenty-four months are prioritized for referral
- Households with prior assistance remain eligible and are not excluded, but may be sequenced lower
 - This process affects referral sequencing only and does not constitute denial or eligibility determination

Application of Repeat-Request Guidance:

If a household has received more than two (2) episodes of prevention assistance within the past twenty-four (24) months:

- The household is flagged for enhanced Progressive Engagement review
- The provider assesses whether financial assistance remains appropriate or whether alternative or lower-cost interventions are more stabilizing

Step 3: By-and-For Organization Intake (Non-CE Referrals)

By-and-For organizations not participating in CE must maintain written policies and procedures that:

- Require review of HMIS to identify prior prevention assistance
- Apply similar prioritization logic when demand exceeds capacity
- Use prior assistance solely as a prioritization factor and not as a basis for denial

Step 4: Referral to Prevention Provider

The household is referred to a homelessness prevention provider

Step 5: Provider Intake and Eligibility

Upon referral, the provider:

- Confirms basic program eligibility
- Completes the CHG Targeted Prevention Eligibility Screening Tool
- Reviews HMIS to confirm the number and timing of prior assistance episodes

No automatic denial occurs.

Step 6: Progressive Engagement Assessment

Providers apply the Progressive Engagement model, including:

- Individualized assessment

- Problem-solving and diversion strategies first
- Provision of the least amount necessary to resolve the immediate housing crisis
- Reassessment of household stability and sustainability

Step 7: Financial Assistance Determination

Providers determine assistance amounts consistent with:

- Progressive Engagement requirements
- Internal financial assistance guidelines
- The provider’s awarded scope of work, including average cost per household, number of households served, and approved budget
- Outcomes of landlord negotiation and problem-solving efforts

Supervisory review is applied when required by provider policy

Step 8: Exception Review

When assistance exceeds typical provider parameters or involves households with multiple prior episodes:

- The provider documents the rationale
- Updates the Housing Stability Plan
- Engages City/County to facilitate case conferencing when appropriate

Step 9: Documentation

Providers document HMIS review, screening results, Progressive Engagement rationale, financial determinations, negotiations, and any exceptions granted.

Financial Assistance Standards

The City of Spokane and Spokane County do not impose universal caps on financial assistance. Each provider must maintain written internal financial assistance guidelines that:

- Establish flexible parameters rather than rigid limits
- Support Progressive Engagement and least-amount-necessary decision-making
- Include supervisory review for atypical or higher-cost cases
- Reflect the provider’s scope of work and budget assumptions
- Ensure financial assistance is entered into HMIS including all housing-related subsidies and flexible funding

Case Management Expectations

Providers must ensure case managers:

- Prioritize problem-solving and diversion strategies when appropriate
- Engage landlords in negotiation when feasible, including partial payments, settlements, fee waivers, or mutual termination agreements
- Evaluate whether lower-cost or alternative interventions can resolve the housing crisis
- Align assistance decisions with the provider’s contracted service model and scope of work

- Develop and maintain a Housing Stability Plan reflecting assistance provided and follow-up actions
- Document all case management activities, follow-up reviews, and decisions in client file, and enter all financial assistance including flexible funding in HMIS

City and County Responsibilities

The City of Spokane and Spokane County will:

- Establish and maintain systemwide expectations for homelessness prevention practice
- Ensure alignment with CHG requirements, including Coordinated Entry, Progressive Engagement, and Targeted Prevention screening
- Provide technical assistance and facilitate case conferencing as needed
- Support consistent implementation across funded programs