

Northwest Minnesota Continuum of Care Housing First Policy

The Northwest Minnesota Continuum of Care (NW CoC) follows the Housing First approach. Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues.

Additionally, Housing First is based on understanding that client choice is valuable in housing selection and supportive service participation, and that exercising that choice is likely to make a client more successful in remaining housed and improving their life.

As part of our commitment to Housing First, NW CoC-funded housing providers must agree that their agency will:

- Ensure staff and board members understand and embrace the Housing First philosophy, because all people can thrive in housing, regardless of their circumstances.
- Tailor housing and services to the unique strengths and needs of each household served, because this is the most effective way to end homelessness.
- Consistently analyze program data to measure their commitment to Housing First.
- Commit to achieving equitable outcomes for all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, religions, or gender identities, and to monitor outcomes data to ensure them.
- Never insist which services a person needs before or after they have been housed, or deny a person a housing opportunity because of assumptions that they will not succeed in it.
- Make efforts to incorporate Housing First as part of their philosophy on ending homelessness; as part of policies and procedures, job descriptions, and performance evaluations; and as part of their daily efforts to end homelessness.