



DISCHARGE POLICY

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 5, 2011 (revised August 6, 2012)

POLICY

This policy addresses discharge planning for a variety of population in the eight continua in Missouri, including, St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles (St. Charles/Lincoln and Warren Counties), Springfield (Greene, Christian and Webster Counties), Joplin (Jasper and Newton Counties), St. Joseph (Andrew, Buchanan and DeKalb Counties), Kansas City (Jackson County) and Balance of State (101 Counties, not included in another continuum).

DEFINITIONS

I. HUD Definition of "Homeless"

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a person is considered homeless if they are living in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings or on the street. In addition, persons are also considered homeless if:

- They reside in Emergency shelters.
- They reside in Transitional or Supportive Housing for persons who are homeless and who originally came from the streets or emergency shelters.
- They came from any of the above places but are spending a short time (up to 90 consecutive days) in a hospital or other institution.
- They are being evicted within 14 days from a private dwelling unit and no subsequent residence has been identified.
- They are being discharged within a week from an institution, such as a mental health or substance abuse treatment facility or a jail/prison, in which the person has been a resident for more than 90 consecutive days and no subsequent residence has been identified.
- They are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence, and the person has no other residence and lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

II. Guiding Principles

In order to develop recommendations for this discharge policy, the following guiding principles were developed:

1. Homelessness is unacceptable in Missouri.
2. Every effort must be made through careful discharge planning to work with the client and area resources to seek adequate, permanent housing. In no instance should a person be discharged from a state or public facility with directions to seek housing or shelter in an emergency shelter without having first made every effort to secure permanent housing.
3. If "temporary" shelter placement is unavoidable, the reasons for this should be well documented.
4. If after having exhausted all efforts to engage the client in a discharge plan, if the client continues to refuse services, the efforts will be noted and the client will confirm his or her refusal with their signature.
5. If a client receiving out-patient services becomes homeless, the state or public facility should work actively with the client and community resources to locate suitable housing.

III. PROCEDURES

1. Adoption of Guiding Principles: All agencies and institutions serving the homeless population in Missouri shall adopt the guiding principles outlined in II, above.
2. Agency Adoption of Discharge Policy: All agencies and institutions within Missouri shall develop and implement a discharge policy that includes the following:
 - a. Individual Discharge Plan: Upon entry, begin planning an individual discharge plan that includes resident involvement and buy-in.
 - b. Collaboration and partnerships: A variety of forms of partnerships and collaborations are needed to achieve an effective discharge planning system. It is the responsibility of each agency to partner and collaborate with other agencies in their Continuum of Care to ensure the best outcome for Missouri residents.
 - c. Adequate information systems and tracking: All agencies shall use a relevant data tracking system. Agencies receiving McKinney-Vento HUD funding are required to participate in the Continuum of Care Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). For agencies not required, HMIS is preferred in order to improve communication, facilitate access to resources, and track completion of the discharge plan. Please note that Domestic Violence agencies are exempt from this requirement, as described in the Domestic Violence disclosure rules.
 - d. Integration of Community Resources: All agencies shall collaborate to reduce the duplication of services. Effective discharge planning procedures and policies shall

be supported by all relevant community planning documents, including, but not limited to, the Consolidated Plan, 10-year plan to end homelessness, and mental health and public housing authorities' strategic plans.

- e. Develop adequate funding strategies: In order for discharge planning to be successful, it needs adequate funding for the resources and programs deemed likely to be most successful in assisting a resident's re-entry into the community.

IV. FUTURE EFFORTS

Additional work is needed. Successful discharge planning policies to prevent homelessness are contingent upon identification of barriers and development of strategies to overcome those barriers. Some of the barriers identified by the committee include:

- Transportation
- Lack of Affordable housing
- Timely access to SSI and other benefits, particularly easier reinstatement of benefits after release from jail
- More service beds, particularly emergency shelter and transitional housing
- Money for medications
- Employment
- Time limiting TANF
- Domestic Violence Education
- Lack of Accessible Housing