

Iowa Quality Standards: Supporting a Statewide System of Homelessness Services

“Standard” is an element of a homelessness program’s governance, operations, services, or performance, that is necessary for a quality program and meets, at minimum, funder requirements.

Standards fall into four categories: governance, operations, services, and performance.

Refer to the Iowa Quality Standards User Handbook for additional information about the standards and how they can benefit an organization and program. Contact the Iowa Council on Homelessness for further information or questions.

Governance

1. An organization providing services to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness should...

- 1.1. have articles of incorporation and by-laws.
- 1.2. have current documentation of Board of Directors structure and activity.
- 1.3. have an employee identification number (EIN).
- 1.4. have records of filing the Biennial Report to the Iowa Secretary of State.
- 1.5. have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.
- 1.6. have written policies and procedures regarding record retention and destruction, including but not limited to:
 - Corporate records
 - Accounting and agency tax records
 - Bank records
 - Payroll and employment tax records
 - Employee records
 - Donor and grant records
 - Press releases and public filings
 - Legal, insurance, and safety records
 - Electronic documents and records
 - Documents containing protected health information
- 1.7. have written financial policies and procedures. This includes the following:
 - Document and demonstrate compliance with grant requirements and funder policies, if applicable.

- Track matched and leveraged funds, if applicable.
 - Have written procedures in place for document retention based on best practices for each specific type of document.
 - Internal controls.
- 1.8. have a budget approved by the Board of Directors.
- 1.9. complete annual federal and state tax reporting.
- 1.10. have an audit or an independent review of financial statements by a CPA.
- 1.11. have a written employee manual or personnel policy and procedure manual. The manual should include, at minimum:
- A conflict of interest policy that applies to Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers.
 - A written policy for confidentiality and informed consent that is signed by each Board member, staff, and volunteer.
 - A written policy promoting a drug free workplace for all staff and volunteers.
 - A written whistleblower policy.
 - A written policy on accident/incident reporting.
 - A written policy on the use and handling of the information from background checks conducted on employees and volunteers.
 - A written Code of Ethics for employees and volunteers.
- 1.12. comply with current human resources postings including federal, state, and other mandatory postings, including but not limited to:
- Equal opportunity employer
 - Nondiscrimination
- 1.13. comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- 1.14. provide required and/or necessary insurance coverage as determined by the Board or the Board's authorized representative. This includes but is not limited to:
- Insurance coverage commensurate with the services provided by the organization
 - Workers' compensation insurance
 - Unemployment Insurance
 - Liability insurance
 - Directors and officers coverage
 - Professional liability

Operations

2. An organization providing services to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness should...

- 2.1. comply with federal, state, and local rules and regulations regarding building codes, inspections, and certifications.
- 2.2. have a current emergency preparedness plan.
- 2.3. use Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or a comparable system approved by your Continuum of Care.
- 2.4. have written policies and procedures for client information and record confidentiality, retention, and destruction.
- 2.5. complete background checks including criminal history, child abuse, dependent-adult abuse, and sex offender registry for:
 - All employees
 - Volunteers who provide direct services
- 2.6. have written, determined minimum staffing requirements that are appropriate for the type of program and ensure a safe environment.
 - In an emergency shelter, at a minimum, one staff person or volunteer should be present during hours of operation.
 - For other programs, at minimum, one staff person or volunteer should be available during the hours of operation.
- 2.7. provide training, at minimum, for all staff and for volunteers who provide direct services, in the following topics:
 - Safety
 - Ethics
 - Confidentiality
 - First Aid (includes blood-borne pathogens), CPR, and AED training, if applicable
 - Required OSHA trainings
- 2.8. Provide additional training, as applicable, for staff and for volunteers who provide direct services.
- 2.9. provide emergency preparedness training for employees, volunteers, and clients (if applicable), which includes, at minimum:
 - Conduct regular drills
 - Maintain written, documented, posted evacuation routes
- 2.10. have written notices of client rights. Client rights include but are not limited to:
 - Grievance procedure
 - Right to informed consent

- Dignity and respect
- Review of services
- Termination policy
- Discharge
- Allow, limit, or refuse release of personal information
- Allow or refuse use of identity and images for publicity purposes
- Notification that their information will be aggregated and used for reporting purposes

Services

3. An organization providing services to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness should...

- 3.1. have regular, published and consistent hours of operation and/or a reliable point of contact.
- 3.2. clearly identify the services provided and the populations served.
- 3.3. implement a reading level standard for materials provided to clients.
- 3.4. have a written and publicly-available policy specifying that program eligibility does not discriminate by age, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, or disability.
- 3.5. Have written and publicly-available eligibility criteria for each program offered.
- 3.6. have a written policy which is shared with clients identifying the type, amount, and duration of assistance.
- 3.7. have written and publicly-available policy describing how assistance is prioritized within each program.
- 3.8. have written policy that clearly explains the appeal process for denial, removal, or termination of services.
- 3.9. make each client aware and provide client access to the appeal, denial, removal, and termination of services process. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Grievance procedure
 - Right to informed consent
 - Dignity and respect
 - Review of services
 - Termination policy
 - Discharge
 - Allow, limit, or refuse release of personal information
 - Allow or refuse use of identity and images for publicity purposes

- Notification that their information will be aggregated and used for reporting purposes
- 3.10. participate in the coordinated assessment approved by the applicable Continuum of Care.
 - 3.11. recognize diversity of culture, language, and ability, and have a plan to meet individual needs should it be necessary.
 - 3.12. work with other community resources, agencies, and networks to appropriately coordinate services and/or refer a client.

Performance

4. An organization providing services to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness should...

- 4.1. ensure that clients are offered the opportunity to choose to be off the street.
- 4.2. ensure that clients have basic needs met, e.g., food, shelter, clothing, safety.
- 4.3. ensure that clients have the opportunity to connect with non-cash resources, which includes but are not limited to: health care, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and legal services.
- 4.4. ensure that clients have the opportunity to connect with resources to increase income.
- 4.5. ensure that clients have the opportunity to pursue earned income through employment.
- 4.6. support clients in their progress toward clients' identified goals.
- 4.7. assist clients in managing identified barriers to obtaining and/or sustaining housing.
- 4.8. support clients in making progress towards housing stability.

Legal Disclaimer

The materials available in the *Iowa Quality Standards & Handbook* and in any related documents are for informational purposes only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice. You should contact your attorney to obtain advice with respect to any particular issue or problem.