**Introduction**

The Iowa Council on Homelessness is a 38-member governor-appointed planning and advisory board. As a volunteer-driven board, it relies on the active participation of committed members to fulfill its duties.

**About this Guide**

The purpose of this guide is to provide a brief orientation to the Iowa Council on Homelessness and to its many available resources.

The Iowa Finance Authority provides staff assistance and administrative support to the Iowa Council on Homelessness. Information regarding all aspects of the Council is available online from the Iowa Finance Authority web site.

**The main page for the Council may be found here:**

* [***Iowa Council on Homelessness***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Public/Pages/PC46LN13)

This guide will provide brief introductory information, plus the locations of more detailed information from this main page above.

**Board Meetings**

Regular Council board meetings are typically held every other month. Meetings may usually be joined either in person from the Iowa Finance Authority in Des Moines or by conference call.

**Meeting agendas, resources, and minutes are available here:**

* [***Council Agendas and Minutes***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Public/Pages/PC46LN13) ***(click on link at the right of page)***

Members of the public are always welcome and encouraged to join Council meetings as non-voting participants.

**Duties of the Council**

The Council was first codified in 2008. By Iowa Statute and Administrative Code, the duties of the Council are as follows:

1. Develop a process for evaluating state policies, programs, statutes, and rules to determine whether any state policies, programs, statutes, or rules should be revised to help prevent and alleviate homelessness.
2. Evaluate whether state agency resources could be more efficiently coordinated with other state agencies to prevent and alleviate homelessness.
3. Work to develop a coordinated and seamless service delivery system to prevent and alleviate homelessness.
4. Use existing resources to identify and prioritize efforts to prevent persons from becoming homeless and to eliminate factors that keep people homeless.
5. Identify and use federal and other funding opportunities to address and reduce homelessness within the state.
6. Work to identify causes and effects of homelessness and increase awareness among policymakers and the general public.
7. Advise the governor’s office, the Iowa finance authority, state agencies, and private organizations on strategies to prevent and eliminate homelessness.
8. Make annual recommendations to the governor regarding matters which impact homelessness on or before September 15.
9. Prepare and file with the governor and the general assembly on or before the first day of December in each odd-numbered year a report on homelessness in Iowa.
10. Assist in the completion of the state’s continuum of care application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Member Information**

**Information regarding Applications, Membership, Governance, and Planning is available here:**

* [***Board Member Information***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/110)
* Applications: There are 38 total members on the Council: 26 members of the general public and 12 representatives (or alternates) of state agencies. The Council recommends new members for the governor’s review and approval. The Council strives to maintain a balanced membership (geographic representation, gender, political affiliation, etc.), according to its governing code and rules, as well as the expectations of HUD for the Continuum of Care governing body (more information above). Members serve renewable two-year staggered terms.

Interested general public applicants submit an application through the governor’s OpenUp system; additional information is requested through the ICH Nomination Form. State agency representatives (and alternates) are designated by their agency directors.

* [***Open Up Iowa System***](https://openup.iowa.gov/)
* Membership Information:
	+ A current member roster with contact information and committee membership is available online in this section of the Board Member Information page.
	+ The *Iowa Gubernatorial Appointee Handbook* is also available; this is the packet that the governor’s office mails to new appointed members of the general public. It contains generic information common to boards and committees of all types in Iowa, such as conflict of interest provisions, equal opportunity policies, open meetings laws, and a brief guide to parliamentary procedure.
	+ The State of Iowa travel rules and travel reimbursement form are available here. Members may be reimbursed for travel necessary to perform Council duties at the state rate of 39 cents per mile.
* Governance: There are several documents that govern how the Council conducts its business. These include, in this section:
	+ *Iowa Code Chapter 16.100A:* The basic law or statute that governs the Council.
	+ *ICH Administrative Rules:* The rules adopted by the Iowa Finance Authority on the Council’s behalf that detail how the basic law will be carried out.
	+ *Chapter 21 Open Meeting Law:* The Council must follow open meetings and open records laws, such as posting agendas in advance, publishing minutes, and more.
	+ *Iowa Balance of State Continuum of Care Governance Charter:* Details the responsibility of the Council to act as decision-making authority for the Iowa Balance of State Continuum of Care, for HUD’s Continuum of Care Program.
	+ *Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement:* All Council members should submit a completed statement at the beginning of their term, and any time there are material changes.
* Planning: This section includes various planning documents adopted by the Council.

**Committees**

There are three official standing committees (the first three listed below) and additional informal working groups. Members of the Council generally participate on at least one committee. Committees typically meet in between full Council meetings. Committees include:

* [***Executive Committee***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/93)***:*** This committee is made up of nine members, including the chair and vice-chair of the Council (both elected by the Council), the immediate past chair of the Council, and six additional members appointed by the chair. The Executive Committee carries out the business of the Council between regular Council meetings.
* [***Nominating Committee***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/94)***:*** Made up of six members, three that are representatives of state agencies and three that are representatives of the general public, plus the chair of the Council. Reviews member applications and makes recommendations to the Council. Also reviews member attendance.
* [***Continuum of Care Committee***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/95): Most directly involved with the annual Continuum of Care (CoC) Program competition for funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Reviews new and renewal internal project applications and makes recommendations to the Council regarding which projects should be included in the joint Consolidated Application to HUD, and for what amounts of funding.
* [***Policy & Planning Committee***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/96): Considers various policy issues affecting stakeholders. Provides input on the annual statewide Emergency Solutions Grant competition. Develops CoC-wide standards on providing assistance.
* [***Public Awareness Committee***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/103)***:***Works to increase the public’s awareness about homelessness in Iowa. Coordinates with state and local organizations to promote homeless awareness events and campaigns. Promotes and encourages the use of relevant CoC planning documents and the most recent data to develop press releases, web-based information, printed materials and presentations.
* [***Research & Analysis Committee***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/97)*:* Works closely with the state lead agency for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the Institute for Community Alliances. Helps plan the annual Point In Time Count, which is a 24-hour count in January of all sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons at the state. Reviews performance of participating service agencies.
* [***Coordinated Entry Committee***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/105): The Coordinated Entry Committee provides oversight of the full CoC’s coordinated entry to ensure regional coordinated entry plans meet the standards set forth in the *Iowa Balance of State Coordinated Entry Policies & Procedures Manual*. The CEC approves significant plan changes and provides ongoing oversight of the full system to meet HUD’s priorities and mandates. Voting members of the Coordinated Entry Committee consist of representatives from each Coordinated Service Region based on the following guidelines:
* Each region would vote on 2 members to represent each region on this committee.
* Though there would be 2 representatives, a primary representative and an alternate. Each region would only have 1 vote. If the representatives from the region don’t agree on a decision, the region could abstain from the vote.
* The Balance of Counties would start with 6 representatives and 3 votes. As additional regions are developed, these votes would transfer to additional regions.
* It is strongly encouraged that the 2 representatives not be from the same agency.
* The Designated Lead Agency does not necessarily need to be one of the voting members-this may need to be changed in the Policies and Procedures.
* Regions need to vote or review their appointed representatives on an annual basis.

**Committee meeting agendas, resources, and minutes are available at these links for each committee above, or here:**

* [***Committee Agendas and Minutes***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Public/Pages/PC46LN13) ***(click on link at the right of page)***

**Continuum of Care**

Federal laws and regulations govern how states and communities must plan and coordinate homeless assistance programs and resources. These include the 2009 Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act and regulations from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

According to these sources, the Continuum of Care (CoC) is the group composed of representatives of relevant organizations that plan for and provide a system of homeless outreach, engagement, and assessment; emergency shelter; rapid re-housing; transitional housing; permanent housing; and prevention strategies.

One of the primary functions of the Council is to serve as the decision-making body for the Iowa Balance of State CoC. This CoC covers most of the state, with the exception of Polk County, Pottawattamie County, and Woodbury County, which have their own independent CoCs.

HUD typically holds a competition annually for funds through the federal Continuum of Care Program. The Council oversees the local selection process to determine which programs in the Iowa Balance of State CoC may apply for funds through this competition.

**Information about the Iowa Balance of State Continuum of Care and the annual competition is available here:**

* [***Continuum of Care Information***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/107)

**Coordinated Services Regions**

The Iowa Balance of State Continuum of Care covers 96 of Iowa’s 99 counties, excluding Polk, Pottawattamie and Woodbury counties. The population for the continuum is 2.5 million and it covers an area of 53,879 square miles. This geographic area includes urban, suburban, and rural areas. Planning regions have been identified within this larger geography. More information about these regions is available on this web page: <http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/166>. As of October 2019, regions include:

* Hope for the Homeless - covering Sioux, Carroll, Cherokee, Crawford, Ida, Lyon, Monona, O’Brien, Osceola, and Plymouth
* North Central Region- covering Winnebago, Cerro Gordo, Franklin, Floyd, Hamilton, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Worth, and Wright
* Northeast Iowa Region-covering Bremer, Allamakee, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek
* Eastern Iowa Region-covering Dubuque, Delaware, Jackson, and Clinton
* Two Rivers Region- covering Greene, Boone, Story, Marshall, and Hardin
* Linn, Benton, Jones Coordinated Services Region
* Johnson/Washington Region
* South Central West- covering Adair, Adams, Clarke, Dallas, Decatur, Guthrie, Madison, Ringgold, Taylor, and Union Counties
* Black Hawk/Tama/Grundy Region
* Southeast Iowa Coordinating Region- covering Des Moines, Henry, Lee, Louisa, and Muscatine, Cedar
* Upper Des Moines Region – covering Buena Vista, Calhoun, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Humbolt, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, and Sac, Webster
* Quad Cities Bi-State Region- covering Scott County
* Balance of Counties-covering remaining of the 24 counties
* Woodbury County- Woodbury County CoC will also participate in CE with the BoS CoC.

Each region will design and implement a Coordinated Service Region (CSR) within the parameters of the system standards provided. The standards give each region a supportive framework to use when implementing local systems as well as standardized assessment tools that will be uniform across the BoS CoC. These tools include: a Prevention/Diversion Screening Tool, and all versions of the VI-SPDAT Screening Tool. The *Iowa Balance of State Coordinated Entry Policies & Procedures Manual* describes these assessments in the definitions section and demonstrates their use throughout the document.

**Homeless Management Information System**

A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) collects client-level data and provides reporting capabilities on behalf of homeless continua of care (CoC). HMIS supports the development, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based practices whose effectiveness can be tracked through objective measures. As such, HMIS is an essential tool that helps demonstrate the scope and dynamics homelessness locally, regionally and nationally. Ultimately, HMIS positions communities to respond systemically to homelessness and improve stability for families.

The Institute for Community Alliances (ICA) is a not-for-profit organization based in Des Moines, Iowa. ICA functions as the HMIS Lead Agency and/or HMIS System Administrator in 11 states, providing technical assistance and training support for more than 2,500 programs and 3,200 database users. ICA supports data-driven solutions and community information systems that help communities address housing instability, homelessness, food insecurity and related issues.  ICA engages in research and produces reports on homelessness and related issues.  In cooperation with state and federal agencies, private research firms and others, ICA works to inform regional and national efforts to end homelessness.

**Special Projects**

The Council has at times engaged in special projects using state legislative appropriation funds. For example, during the 2013, 2014, and 2015 state fiscal years, the Council used $50,000 annual appropriations to contract with the State Public Policy Group to develop and implement “Iowa Quality Standards” for homeless programs. In more recent years, the funding has been used to support the new system developing of Coordinated Services Regions. Information and resources related to special projects such as this are available here:

* [***Special Projects***](http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/Home/DocumentSubCategory/166)

**Contacts**

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