



# Turning Point Rural Housing Project Operating Manual

Updated January 2015

## 1. Project Purpose

- A. The Supportive Housing program is authorized by Title IV of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (the McKinney Act) (42 U.S.C. 11381-11389). The Supportive Housing Program is designed to accomplish the following:
  - 1. Promote the development of supportive housing and supportive services, including innovative approaches to assist homeless persons in the transition from homelessness.
  - 2. Promote the provision of supportive housing to homeless persons to enable them to live as independently as possible.
- B. Title IV funds may be used for transitional housing projects which facilitate the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing and self-sufficiency.
- C. The Title IV funds have been awarded to Cedar Valley Friends of the Family to administer the Turning Point Rural Housing Project to serve homeless persons from the Iowa Counties of Allamakee, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek.

## 2. Definition of Transitional Housing

- A. Turning Point Rural Housing Project is a transitional housing program which may be defined as time limited, temporary housing that will facilitate the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing and self sufficiency.
- B. The project name Turning Point Rural Housing Project may be shortened to Turning Point or TPRHP.
- C. The key factors related to transitional housing are as follows:
  - 1. The Housing Review Team will determine participant eligibility based upon intake information and documentation. Priority will go to individuals with higher numbers of barriers to maintaining housing.
  - 2. The Housing Review Team will establish an entry date into the project for all eligible participants.
  - 3. The Turning Point caseworker will monitor the participation of each participant to assure ongoing program compliance.
  - 4. Participant goals and responsibilities, as well as program supportive services will be outlined for each participant in an Individual Case Plan. The Individual Case Plan may be revised at any time based on the participant's needs.
  - 5. A full explanation of the services Turning Point offers must be communicated in writing to all approved program participants prior to signing the program Participation Agreement.

## 3. Domestic Violence Confidentiality

- A. Cedar Valley Friends of the Family is an agency that provides family violence prevention and crisis intervention services.
- B. The primary focus of the Turning Point is to assist homeless persons affected by domestic violence. As such, HUD requires Cedar Valley Friends of the Family develop and implement procedures to ensure the following:
  - 1. The confidentiality of records pertaining to any individual provided services.
  - 2. The address or location of any shelter or transitional housing will not be made public without written authorization from the person or persons responsible for the operation of the shelter or transitional housing.
  - 3. A written release of information signed by the client will be required prior to any contact regarding that client.

## 4. Eligibility

- A. All applicants must meet all eligibility criteria in order to be accepted into the Turning Point Project.
- B. To be eligible for Turning Point participation, the homeless person or household must have been a resident of the nine county area served by the program for at least six months of the twelve months prior to the referral date (in county borderline situations, documentation of children's attendance in county school district within services area may be considered).
- C. Verification of the homeless situation, domestic abuse factors, income, a government issued ID, and proof of work eligibility in the United States must be provided in writing at the time of assessment. Additional verification may be required based on individual circumstances such as: drug/alcohol evaluations/discharge summary, medical and financial documentation or legal documents, etc. Each verification document will be maintained as a part of each participant's case file.
- D. To be eligible for the program, individuals must meet the HUD definition of homelessness. According to HUD guidelines for this grant funded project, the "homeless" or "homeless individual" or "homeless person" includes:
  1. Category 1: Literally Homeless: An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; meaning
    - a. Sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, including a car, park, abandoned building, camp ground, etc.
    - b. Living in a shelter designated to provide temporary arrangements, including congregate shelters, transitional housing, hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or federal/state/local government programs.
    - c. Exiting an institution (i.e. jail, hospital) where they resided for 90 days or less AND were residing in emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering institution
  2. Category 2: Imminent Risk of Homelessness: Individuals/families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence (which includes housing the individual/family owns, rents, shares with others without paying rent, or rooms in hotels/motels that are paid for by the individual/family seeking assistance) within 14 days AND
    - a. Have no subsequent residence identified AND
    - b. Lack the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
  3. Category 4: Fleeing/Attempting to flee DV: Individuals/families fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions related to violence, who
    - a. Have no identified subsequent residence; AND
    - b. Lack the resources and support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
- E. For purposes of this grant, HUD considers that the term "homeless" or "homeless individual" does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained under an Act of the Congress or a State Law.
- F. Persons residing in or approved for residency in any HUD subsidized individual housing unit (i.e. Section 8) at the time of acceptance into Turning Point are not eligible for project participation. In such a situation, the person or household is no longer considered to be homeless.
- G. Potential participants must be willing to complete a social history to determine ability to obtain and maintain permanent housing as well as the ability to achieve self-sufficiency.
- H. Turning Point income eligibility guidelines will be based upon the homeless household having insufficient income to secure permanent housing. The past 30 days of income for the total household must be documented during the social history stage.
- I. An approved applicant will have 30 days to find suitable housing or the person may not be considered homeless. If the applicant is unable to secure housing within this time frame, a request can be made for a 15 day extension. The request needs to be approved by the Housing Review Team.
- J. An eligible applicant may be required to have one's name placed on a waiting list pending the availability of a transitional housing rental assistance opening.

- K. Applicants that are fleeing domestic violence can have their name on a property deed. Applicants that are not fleeing domestic violence and have their name on a property deed are not eligible due to current ownership of housing, unless the property is being foreclosed within 14 days of the referral.
- L. Applicants/participants can have up to \$5000 worth of financial assets to remain eligible. Exclusions to assets are a car, clothing, and personal household items. If a participant is contributing to a 401K, they may be asked to suspend the contributions until their budget can support the payments. If the client can provide proof that the accrued financial assets are not accessible they may be eligible at the discretion of the Housing Review Team. Exceptions to this policy may be submitted to the Executive Director for approval.
- M. If an applicant owes money to a current landlord or HUD, a repayment agreement must be signed prior to acceptance into Turning Point.
- N. If an applicant has any felony drug/alcohol legal charges or convictions in the past 3 years, a successfully completed discharge summary from a substance abuse agency will be required to be submitted prior to acceptance into the program.
- O. If an applicant has any pending felony drug/alcohol legal charges, convictions or any other substance abuse legal charges or convictions within the last 3 years, a successfully completed discharge summary from a substance abuse agency or substance abuse assessment and verification of active participation in substance abuse treatment is required to be considered eligible.
- P. If an applicant has been convicted of any type of assault-related charges or weapons charges, or has any pending assault-related charges/convictions or weapons charges/convictions in the past 3 years, a completed certificate is required from an anger management course, BEP, or successful discharge documentation from a counseling/mental health agency, prior to approval. If the participant has not attended any sort of anger management therapy, they will be required to complete a course or therapy as a condition of acceptance into Turning Point.
- Q. Registered sex offenders are not eligible for Turning Point.

## 5. Prioritization

- A. To ensure we at CVFF are meeting the highest barrier and most vulnerable people first, and to work towards the goals of ending homelessness, an assessment will be completed to determine the number of barriers a referral has to obtaining/maintaining housing.
- B. Priority will be determined through the utilization of the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool pre-screening forms.
- C. Referrals will be prioritized as follows:
  1. People in emergency shelters or living in uninhabitable situations and/or the streets
    - a. Chronically homeless-people with longer periods of homelessness or more episodes of homeless in the last 3 years
    - b. People fleeing domestic violence, sexual abuse, or other life threatening situations
    - c. People that are homeless and not fleeing domestic violence, sexual abuse, or other life threatening situations
  2. People fleeing domestic violence, sexual abuse, or other life threatening situations
    - a. Have immediate safety risk (i.e. continuing to live with abuser)
    - b. Unstably housed-able to live with friends/family temporarily but has very limited access to resources and supports. Primarily looking at socialization and wellness numbers on the pre-screening form
  3. People getting evicted or threat of eviction will be prioritized by the date of the eviction notice.
  4. People living in doubled up situations will be referred to community resources first and foremost unless their situation falls within one of the previous 3 categories.

The waitlist will be updated as needed, but at a minimum of once every 6 months to ensure the highest level of needs are being met. Exceptions to the policy can be made on a case by case basis by the Housing Director or Executive Director.

## **6. Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Requirements**

- A. Requirements of non-discrimination and equal opportunity: The Turning Point Rural Housing Project will conduct all operations assuring non-discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex/gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, familial status and disability.
- B. Turning Point will make known the availability of the supportive housing in a manner to reach persons of any particular race, color, national origin, religion, sex/gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, familial status and disability who may qualify for admission to the housing project. Specific procedures will ensure that such persons can obtain information concerning availability of the housing.

## **7. Participation on Continuum of Care Councils Reporting to Cedar Valley Friends of the Family Board of Directors**

- A. By HUD regulations, the Housing Programs must establish client participation on local continuum of care councils.
- B. The Continuum of Care Council's function is to provide the means for homeless input regarding transitional and permanent housing policies and decisions as well as homeless and housing needs in the local communities. The format of the Continuum of Care Council will include the following:
  - 1. Each council will be comprised of current or former housing participants who voluntarily agree to serve, along with other service providers and concerned community members.
  - 2. Each council will meet on a regular basis, at least on a quarterly basis.
  - 3. Recommendations from the council will be made to the Cedar Valley Friends of the Family Agency Board of Directors for action upon program policy.
  - 4. A minimum of one Cedar Valley Friends of the Family Board of Directors Member will be a member of a minimum of one of the councils.

## **8. Program Data**

- A. Turning Point will maintain records and make reports (including those pertaining to race, ethnicity, gender, and disability status data) as requested by HUD within the time frame identified by HUD.
- B. Turning Point will document and collect data verifying participant involvement and services provided to all participants on a monthly basis as a means of completing the Annual Progress Report as required by HUD.

## **9. Leased Housing Units**

- A. All leased housing units utilizing Turning Point grant funds must be leased through a written Iowa standardized lease agreement between each project participant and a community landlord not affiliated in any manner with Cedar Valley Friends of the Family. This leasing agreement and procedure is considered to be scattered site transitional housing according to HUD regulations. Copies of the leases are to be included in the participant file and given to the Housing Director to submit to HUD.
- B. HUD grant funds are used in Turning Point to assist in paying rent for individual housing units. HUD requires that rent paid must be reasonable in relation to rents being charged for comparable units, taking into account the location, size, type, quality, amenities, facilities, and management services. In addition, the rents may not exceed rents currently being charged by the same owner for comparable unassisted units.
- C. The portion of rents paid with grant funds may not exceed HUD-determined fair market rents. The Fair Market Rents for the Turning Point service area must be adjusted according to the criteria published annually in the Federal Register.
- D. The Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 prohibits the approval of applications for rent assistance for housing located in an area identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as having special flood hazards.

- E. Turning Point housing rent assistance must provide housing or services that are in compliance with all applicable state and local housing codes, licensing requirements in the jurisdiction in which the project is located regarding the condition of the structure and the operation of the housing or services.
- G. All Turning Point supported rental housing units must at a minimum meet the following HUD standards.
1. Structure and materials. The structures must be structurally sound so as not to pose any threat to the health and safety of the occupants and so as to protect the residents from the elements.
  2. Access. The housing unit must be accessible and capable of being utilized without unauthorized use of other private properties. Structures must provide alternate means of egress in case of fire.
  3. Space and security. Each resident must be afforded adequate space and security for themselves and their belongings. Each resident must be provided an acceptable place to sleep.
  4. Interior air quality. Every room or space must be provided with natural or mechanical ventilation. Structures must be free of pollutants in the air at levels that threaten the health of residents.
  5. Water supply. The water supply must be free from contamination.
  6. Sanitary facilities. Residents must have access to sufficient sanitary facilities that are in proper operating condition, may be used in privacy, and are adequate for personal cleanliness and the disposal of human waste.
  7. Thermal environment. The housing must have adequate heating and/or cooling facilities in proper operating condition.
  8. Illumination and electricity. The housing must have adequate natural or artificial illumination to permit normal indoor activities and to support the health and safety of residents. Sufficient electrical sources must be provided to permit use of essential electrical appliances while assuring safety from fire.
  9. Food preparation and refuse disposal. All food preparation areas must contain suitable space and equipment to store, prepare, and serve food in a sanitary manner.
  10. Sanitary condition. The housing and any equipment must be maintained in sanitary condition.
  11. Fire Safety. The housing must meet fire safety standards as outlined:
    - a. Each unit must include at least one battery operated or hard wired smoke detector, in proper working condition, on each occupied level of the unit. Smoke detectors must be located, to the extent practicable, in a hallway adjacent to a bedroom. If hearing-impaired persons occupy the unit, smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for hearing-impaired persons in each bedroom occupied by a hearing-impaired person.
    - b. The public areas of all housing must be equipped with a sufficient number, but not less than one for each area, of battery operated or hard wired smoke detectors. Public areas include, but are not limited to, laundry rooms, community rooms, day care centers, hallways, stairwells, and other common areas.
- H. HUD requires Turning Point to provide residential supervision as necessary to facilitate the adequate provision of supportive housing. Turning Point residential supervision will include at a minimum one on-site visit of leased housing sites to verify compliance with housing standards. This visit will be completed by a Turning Point staff person from Cedar Valley Friends of the Family. Documentation of the visit will be included in each participant's case file. Yearly inspections by Turning Point staff will be completed on all leased units to maintain minimum HUD housing standards. Turning Point staff may conduct other random inspections to ensure the housing standards are being met.
- I. If any non-participant of Turning Point is suspected of living with an approved participant, proof of other residency must be submitted to Turning Point staff. Required documentation will be a signed lease and a current rent receipt or a notarized statement from landlord and 3 pieces of current mail within the past 30 days.

## **10. Participant Share of Rent**

- A. Project participants residing in transitional housing supported by the Turning Point grant funds will be required to pay a portion of the household's rent.
- B. The amount of initial rent a participating homeless household must pay will be based upon individual circumstances as reported to the Housing Review Team during the social history process.
- C. Participant share of rent may be adjusted according to caseworker recommendations. Adjustments will be made according to income changes within the household. Income earned by all adults residing in the household will be used to calculate household income.
- D. Participant share of rent will be determined by the Housing Review Team. Participant rent may not exceed amounts calculated utilizing one of the following guidelines:
  - 1. Participant will pay \$1 the first month of residency in the program, if the participant has income.
  - 2. During the second and third month, ten percent (10%) of the household's monthly income or if the household is receiving payments for welfare assistance from a public agency and part of the payments, adjusted in accordance with the household's actual housing costs, the portion of the payment that is designated.
  - 3. During the fourth and fifth month, twenty percent (20%) of the household's monthly adjusted income or if the household is receiving payments for welfare assistance from a public agency and part of the payments, adjusted in accordance with the household's actual housing costs, the portion of the payment that is designated.
  - 4. At six months, thirty percent (30%) of the household's monthly adjusted income or if the household is receiving payments for welfare assistance from a public agency and part of the payments, adjusted in accordance with the household's actual housing costs, the portion of the payment that is designated.
  - 5. Adjustments factors include the number of people in the family, age of family members, medical expenses and child care expenses.

## **11. Participant Expectations/Compliance**

- A. Program participants may not enter Turning Point and receive only support services. Entry into the project is based upon homelessness and the first need being rental housing assistance.
- B. Costs associated with providing supportive services include salaries paid to providers of supportive services and any other costs directly associated with providing such services.
- C. Supportive services costs also include the costs of services provided to former residents of the transitional housing to assist their adjustment to self-sufficient living. Such services may be provided for up to six months after they leave the transitional housing site.
- D. HUD defines support services to mean services which are designed to address the special needs of the homeless persons to be served by the project. The generally accepted HUD supportive services include, but are not limited to:
  - 1. Establishing and operating an employment assistance program for the homeless families;
  - 2. Providing child care services for homeless families;
  - 3. Providing outpatient health services including medical, mental health and substance abuse treatment;
  - 4. Providing food;
  - 5. Providing Case Management;
  - 6. Providing assistance in obtaining permanent housing;
  - 7. Providing employment counseling;
  - 8. Providing nutritional counseling;
  - 9. Providing life skills training;
  - 10. Providing security arrangements necessary for the protection of residents of supportive housing and for homeless persons using the housing or services.
  - 11. Providing assistance in obtaining other Federal, State, and local assistance available for such residents including mental health benefits, employment counseling, Veteran's benefits, and medical assistance. But not including major medical equipment, and

- income support assistance, such as Supplemental Security Income benefits, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, general assistance, and Food Stamps.
12. Providing legal assistance to obtain permanent housing, housing subsidies and other entitlements such as income support, food and medical assistance;
  - E. Specific support services to be made available to each participant will be identified by the caseworker assigned to work with the homeless household. Determination of need for support services will be based on individual household needs.
  - F. In order for a participant to receive support services, the caseworker must submit a written request for all support services to the Housing Director. Written pre-approval from the Housing Director and Executive Director must precede any commitment for support services or any obligation of grant funds.
  - G. Participants must be informed in written form that support services assistance is based upon their individual compliance with specifically outlined expectations of Turning Point. Each participant and assigned caseworker will develop weekly participation goals. A case plan will be developed within first 30 days of housing and will be reviewed as needed but at minimum of every 3 months.
  - H. Additional support services may only be provided through written approval from the Cedar Valley Friends of the Family Executive Director who maintains final interpretation of HUD approved services and operating regulations.
  - I. Turning Point participation is contingent upon complying with the current lease signed and the participant's written agreement to program guidelines (which must be signed prior to the first month's rent payment) which include but are not limited to the following:
    1. Work at least part-time. Part-time work is defined as a minimum of 10 hours per week, if in school and 15 hours/week if not in school. Participants must complete a Self Employment Form into their caseworkers for self-employment. Employment is required within 60 days after 1<sup>st</sup> month's rent is paid or after a participant's last day of work. If employment is not secured within 60 days, the participant will be able to submit a 30 day extension request and complete 10 hours of volunteer work each month until employment is obtained. The amount of hours required may be altered according to individual needs and caseworker discretion. It is the responsibility of the participant to provide documentation of ALL income to the caseworker for the month.
    2. Pay a portion of the household's rent and all utilities according to landlord requirements. If utilities are not included in the rent, participants must provide proof that utilities are in their name. Verification of participant rent payments must be submitted by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month.
    3. Participate in community volunteer efforts through an approved community organization and have written verification of participation. During the first full month of rental assistance, participants must volunteer five hours a month. After the first month, the required hours of volunteer work may be adjusted according to the client's situation and level of employment. Written verification needs to be turned into the caseworker by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the following month. The written verification cannot be signed by a family member.
    4. Utilize support services as defined in the individual case plan.
    5. Agree to weekly in-home visits by caseworker.
    6. Agree to attend mental health or substance abuse counseling on an ongoing basis. This requirement may be waived with a letter of completion or release from a mental health counselor. Verification of attendance needs to be turned into the caseworker by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month.

Exceptions to the above must be recommended by the Housing Review Team for the Executive Director's approval.

## **12. Exiting the Program**

- A. Participants are able to withdraw from receiving rental assistance at any time. Participants will be asked to complete a "Voluntary Withdrawal" form.
- B. When a participant exits the program, either through voluntarily withdrawing, successfully completing the program, or transitioning to other subsidized housing, they may qualify for Support Services for up to six months. Every participant is eligible for 6 months maximum of

support services; despite when this service is utilized. The amount of time a participant receives Support Services will be part of the two year maximum time frame someone can receive assistance through Turning Point.

- C. If a participant has to leave their current residency for safety reasons or because the landlord does not renew the lease, and if a new place has not been secured, the participant may voluntarily withdraw from the program and sign up for Support Services in order to remain as an active participant. The participant will then have 30 days to secure alternative housing. If the participant is unable to secure housing within that time frame, a 15 day extension may be submitted. The extension request must be approved by the Housing Review Team.
- D. If a participant chooses to leave their residence, it is encouraged to finish out the current lease or speak with the landlord prior if moving before the end of the lease and have another residence secured prior to moving. If this does not happen and a client has to leave their current residence before securing a new location, the participant will need to voluntarily withdraw from the program and sign up for Support Services. The participant will then have 30 days to secure alternative housing. If the participant is unable to secure housing within that time frame, a 15 day extension may be submitted. The extension request must be approved by the Housing Review Team.

### **13. Termination of Participation**

- A. HUD regulations give Turning Point authority to terminate assistance to a participant who violates program requirements. Participants will receive and sign a written participation agreement. Reasons for termination will be clearly defined. Termination of assistance will occur after in-depth review of the individual situation by the Housing Review Team and approval of Cedar Valley Friends of the Family Housing Director. All participants sign a participation agreement, which outlines non-compliance guidelines, which may lead to termination.
- B. If a participant is struggling to follow the expectations listed in the written agreement, the participant will be given a 10-day non-compliance letter. This letter will inform the participant of the expectations that need to be completed and the time frame they have to complete these tasks. If a participant does not complete the expectations as stated in the letter, they will be given a termination letter or may be given the option to voluntarily withdraw from the program.
- C. Assistance may be reinstated for a participant whose assistance was previously terminated. Participants can reapply for the program six months following termination. The Housing Review Team, providing that the former participant's current situation complies with all project eligibility criteria, will make the decision for reinstatement. The participant may be placed at the bottom of the waitlist depending on the situation/circumstances.
- D. In terminating assistance to a participant, Cedar Valley Friends of the Family and Turning Point must guarantee that a formal process is followed which recognizes the rights of individuals receiving assistance to due process of law. This process, at a minimum, must consist of:
  1. Written notice to the participant containing a clear statement of the reasons for termination;
  2. A review of the decision, in which the participant is given the opportunity to present written or oral objections before a person other than the person (or a subordinate of that person) who made or approved the termination decision; and
  3. Prompt written notice of the final decision to the participant.
- D. Caseworkers or any other personnel working in Turning Point are required to refer participant complaints to the Housing Director.
- E. The Housing Administration will make a determination if the Cedar Valley Friends of the Family grievance procedure must be followed.
- F. Any questions regarding the grievance procedure, as it relates to Turning Point, will be considered by Cedar Valley Friends of the Family Executive Director.
- G. After acceptance into Turning Point, if a participant is not able to work due to a medical condition, the participant's level of appropriateness for the program will be reassessed after 60 days.



## **14. Meetings and Functions of Meetings**

- A. The Housing Review Team will meet as needed to review the assessment information of potential participants.
- B. The Housing Review Team will have weekly contact with individual caseworkers within the service area to monitor participant progress.
- C. The Housing Review Team will have contact with all support service providers on a regular basis to assess each participant's need for and utilization of community support services. This meeting will be referred to as a "participant progress staffing." Attendees will include service providers, the participant, Turning Point caseworker and administrative staff.
- D. Each participant's caseworker will conduct a minimum of two in-home monthly meetings with the participant to monitor progress and assess ongoing needs.
- E. Cedar Valley Friends of the Family will be a leader within the local continuum of cares and attend all meetings as scheduled. Housing Program staff will be active on the continuum of care.

SAMPLE