

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program Homelessness Prevention Initial Evaluation COMPANION GUIDE

The **ESG Homelessness Prevention (HP) Initial Evaluation** is designed to help staff assess, document, and determine whether a household applying for ESG homelessness prevention assistance is eligible for assistance.

This companion guide describes the screening required for all persons applying for ESG homelessness prevention assistance. The screening form must be completed by ESG subrecipient staff for each applicant household, using information obtained from the head of household. Questions included on the form are intended to be a starting point for a conversation between program staff and the applicant household regarding program eligibility, available resources and targeting criteria for homelessness prevention assistance. Subrecipients must obtain proof of eligibility and maintain documents in the program participant files.

ESG HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for ESG homelessness prevention assistance, a household must be screened for and meet each of the eligibility conditions described below.

Condition 1. Very Low-Income Status: Applicant household gross annual income must be less than 30% of area median income based on the income limits most recently published at: <http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il.html>.

Condition 2. At Risk, or Imminent Risk of Literal Homelessness: Applicant household must (1) be imminently losing their primary nighttime residence, (2) have no other residence, and (3) not have sufficient resources or support networks (e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks) immediately available to prevent them from becoming literally homeless.

Determining Risk of Literal Homelessness: Apart from being a qualified household with very low-income, applicants must also meet the criteria under the “at risk of homelessness” definition, or who meet the criteria in paragraph (2), (3), or (4) of the “homeless” definition in § 576.2. This means that every household who meets eligibility are at the highest risk to become homeless in 21 days or less “but for” ESG assistance (i.e., an applicant has no other housing options and resources and there are no other community resources available to prevent homelessness).

ESG is not just an eviction prevention program. It is intended to prevent individuals and their families from losing all housing and ending up in emergency shelter or on the street. Some households who apply for ESG Homelessness Prevention assistance may be losing their housing, but they have another safe and appropriate housing option – including temporary options – where they can stay while they work to obtain their own housing. Or, an applicant may have another resource they can use to maintain current housing or obtain new housing. Such households would not be considered at immediate risk of homelessness and would not be eligible for ESG Homelessness Prevention assistance.

Sections 2A through 2C of the screening form include questions to determine whether a household is at imminent risk of homelessness within 21 days of applying for assistance and is, therefore, eligible for

ESG homelessness prevention services. Staff should use these questions as a starting point and ask additional questions to better understand an applicant's current circumstances and options. ESG staff should seek to determine whether the household has safe, viable, immediate housing options and resources to keep them from becoming literally homeless.

2A: Imminent Housing Loss. This section explores whether a household has a place to stay tonight and whether they are losing their right to occupy housing within 21 days, or must in fact leave their current housing arrangement within 14 days. Staff should explore whether the household could avoid literal homelessness by negotiating directly with their landlord. Staff should also seek to determine if the household is in immediate need of assistance to ensure they have a safe and appropriate place to stay in the near term.

2B: Other Housing Options & Resources. This section explores whether the household has other friends, family or close support networks that could assist them in avoiding literal homelessness. ESG staff should engage in a conversation with the household regarding potential support and use this information to determine whether the household has other housing options and resources available to them. Staff should be particularly mindful of any inappropriate, unsafe, or otherwise unhealthy relationships the household is reluctant or refuses to pursue and not assume such options are viable to prevent the household's homelessness.

2C: Financial Resources. This section explores whether the household has financial resources to pay for their immediate housing costs. This may include their own resources, community resources, or financial assistance they are eligible for and is available in time to prevent literal homelessness. This section should still be discussed for planning purposes even if the primary reason for the household losing their current housing is not related to financial need.

Understanding ESG HP Eligibility Disposition:

Households who do not meet eligibility requirements should be identified as "**NOT ELIGIBLE**" on the form and offered information and referral, including a "warm hand off" referral, to other assistance as needed and desired.

A household that meets all of the ESG eligibility conditions listed should be identified as "**ELIGIBLE**" on the form. Households that meet eligibility requirements may receive ESG Homelessness Prevention services. These households should be enrolled in the ESG program and tracked within HMIS. The SCCDC expects subrecipients to use a progressive approach to the delivery of services. This means that even if a household meets eligibility requirements of a given ESG program, *financial assistance should not automatically be offered*. Subrecipients should aim to provide the least intensive and costly intervention possible and only use more intensive services or the provision of financial assistance when necessary to prevent a household from becoming literally homeless.