

# GOVERNANCE CHARTER OF THE ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY: CONTINUUM OF CARE

## I. Overview

This governance charter (Charter) establishes the Athens-Clarke County: Continuum of Care (CoC) as the Athens-Clarke County Continuum of Care (GA-503) in accordance with the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. The Athens Homeless Coalition (AHC) is recognized as a partner of the broader Continuum of Care that collaboratively fulfills the purposes of identifying the needs of homeless individuals and families, planning for resources to end and prevent homelessness, and advocating for additional solutions to address homelessness in Athens-Clarke County.

This Charter describes the Continuum of Care roles of Governing Board, Collaborative Applicant, and HMIS Lead and designates the responsibilities of the Continuum of Care listed in 24 CFR 578.7.

## II. Duration

This Charter shall be adopted on the day it is approved by the Athens-Clarke County: Continuum of Care Governing Board. Thereafter, the Charter shall be updated and affirmed annually by the Governing Board in consultation with the collaborative applicant. The Charter shall be reviewed and approved in full every five years by the full CoC membership.

## III. Purpose

The Athens-Clarke County: Continuum of Care includes all organizations and individuals actively engaged in Continuum of Care activities and in pursuit of preventing and ending homelessness in Athens-Clarke County. CoC membership is open to the public. Ending and preventing homelessness requires a regional approach and full participation from the range of stakeholders in the homeless continuum of service provision. The CoC, in collaboration with the AHC, will identify key issues to address homelessness and will mobilize stakeholders to achieve the goals of ending and preventing homelessness.

## IV. Membership and Selection Process

1. Members of the Continuum of Care shall be those relevant organizations and individuals who are interested in, and supportive of, the community's goals to end and prevent homelessness.
2. Voting members shall be relevant organizations and individuals who apply and are selected for membership on the CoC Governance Board.

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Revised 03/14/2024

3. The membership and selection process for members of the CoC's governing board is outlined in the following sections.

Relevant organizations include, but are not limited to:

- Homeless and formerly homeless individuals
- Nonprofit homeless service providers
- Local governments
- Social service providers
- Victim service providers
- Universities
- School districts
- Businesses
- Advocates
- Elected officials
- Law Enforcement
- Affordable housing providers
- Healthcare providers

## **V. CoC Meetings**

The full CoC shall meet quarterly for general meetings. Committees shall meet once monthly, or otherwise as needed, at a date and time that is determined by each committee. The CoC Governing Board shall meet as many times as needed and no less than 6 times per year.

## **VI. Structure**

The CoC is composed of a governing board, collaborative applicant, HMIS Lead, and advisory committees addressing key issues in Athens-Clarke County. The CoC Governance Board serves as the governing board. The Department of Housing and Community Development of the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government serves as the collaborative applicant. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs serves as the HMIS lead.

### Governing Body

**The CoC Governing Board** Provides oversight and leadership for the Continuum of Care. Designated as the CoC board as defined in the CoC interim rule section 578.5(b):

1. Be representative of the relevant organizations and of projects serving homeless subpopulations; and
2. Include at least one homeless or formerly homeless individual.

### Committees

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Revised 02/09/2023  
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**Committees** The governing board delegates tasks to committees specific to their interest and expertise. Committees may determine a member limit, if necessary, to equally disperse tasks and responsibilities. The governing board may add, remove, or adapt committees as needed. The below committees are examples of some committees that have existed in the past and may continue to meet in the future as determined necessary by the governing board.

- **Landlord Engagement and Retention** Engages landlords to work with service providers to house low-income clients through various housing programs including but not limited to Rapid Rehousing and Shelter Plus Care.
- **Housing Management Information System (HMIS)** Monitors performance of CoC projects through HMIS data, coordinates required CoC reporting (PIT, HIC, AHAR), and provides training to HMIS users. The HMIS Committee overlaps and collaborates strongly with the AHC's efforts to improve Coordinated Entry and data collection efforts in Athens-Clarke County.
- **Communications** Monitors and updates the CoC communication streams including announcements, meeting reminders, room reservations, and other tasks as designated by the committee.
- **Camp Crisis Response Team (CCRT)** Collaboratively engages various stakeholders and property owners with a compassionate, reasonable, and supportive response to unsanctioned encampments in Athens-Clarke County
- **Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Homelessness (DV/SA)** A collaboration with the Athens Domestic Violence Task Force, to work towards bringing awareness, education and policy for domestic violence and sexual assault in the homeless population. Creates and updates VAWA Emergency Transfer Plan.

#### Collaborative Applicant

**Athens-Clarke County Government: Housing and Community Development Department (HCD)** HCD is the designated Collaborative Applicant for the Athens-Clarke County (GA-503) Continuum of Care and performs the following tasks:

- Submits the annual consolidated CoC application to HUD on behalf of the CoC
- Serves as fiscal agent and administrative entity for the CoC
- Serves as local HMIS System Administrator

#### HMIS Lead

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The Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) Georgia Housing and Finance Authority (GHFA) serves as HMIS Lead in the state of Georgia's HMIS implementation. DCA's responsibilities as HMIS Lead include:

### **Project Management**

- Oversee the operation and management of the GHMIS including continual monitoring of data system (not system user) compliance with all HUD Data and Technical Standards.
- Maintain GHMIS Participation Agreements with all participating agencies and users.
- Administer HUD HMIS awards for Continuum jurisdictions within the GHMIS implementation.

### **System Functionality**

- Enter into a formal contractual relationship with the GHMIS Vendor that outlines the requirements and responsibilities of the Vendor, including those required by HUD through its Data and Technical Standards, rules, notices, etc.
- Ensure the Vendor's software system maintains timely compliance with all Data and Technical Standards to include Privacy and Security Standards.
- Ensure software system maintains timely compliance with any other required standards set by other Federal and State programs that require HMIS use.
- Ensure the software system, within reasonable development timeframes, is capable of producing all HUD required reports, including data quality and monitoring reports.

### **Policies and Procedures**

- Develop and maintain GHMIS Policies and Procedures in accordance with HUD requirements and notices.
- Develop and maintain a privacy plan, security plan, and data quality plan for the HMIS in accordance with HUD requirements. This (or these) document must be reviewed and adopted by the HMIS Steering Committee.
- Monitor participating agency compliance with security, privacy and confidentiality policies.
- Provide Continuums with tools necessary to monitor agency compliance with HUD Data Standards including reports and access to raw agency data.
- Set minimum general participation and timeliness standards for agencies. (Continuums can set more stringent requirements if they deem necessary.)

### **Training and Technical Assistance**

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- Ensure required basic training is available to participating agency staff and accessible on a regular basis.
- Ensure technical assistance and help desk support is available and accessible to participating agencies on a regular basis.
- Ensure Continuums have access to reports, technical assistance, and training required to develop a data quality improvement plan when necessary.

#### Athens-Clarke County Continuum of Care (GA-503) HMIS Responsibilities

- Adopt and/or re-affirm adoption of GHMIS by-laws and participate in an annual review
- Appoint two voting members, in writing to serve on the GA HMIS Steering Committee to provide oversight of the implementation and represent the Continuum in GA HMIS decision-making
- Accept the HMIS software chosen by the GA HMIS Collaborative as the designated software for its Continuum (Currently, ClientTrack)
- Designate the HMIS Lead chosen by the GA HMIS Collaborative to manage the Continuum's HMIS and apply for/receive HUD HMIS funding on behalf of their CoC
- Require that all agencies and users in Athens-Clarke County comply with the GA HMIS policies and procedures of the GA HMIS Collaborative
- Ensure that service providers in Athens-Clarke County adequately meet the minimum HMIS participation requirements as established by the GA HMIS Steering Committee
- Designate at least one user in the CoC to be a CoC HMIS Administrator, who would be authorized to have administrative-level access to the data for the specific CoC for purposes of providing oversight and user support, as well as to monitor agency compliance with Federal Data Standards
- Require that participating agency users meet the minimum training requirements established by the GA HMIS Steering Committee;
- Participate in the commitment of funding the implementation of the GA HMIS project
- Ensure HMIS privacy and security protocols are integrated into agency policies and practices

- Conduct ongoing data analysis and evaluation to help drive planning and funding decisions
- Prepare, review, and submit all HUD required Continuum-level reports (i.e., Housing Inventory Count, Point in Time Count, Annual Homeless Assessment Report, and System Performance Measures) with support from the HMIS Lead.

## VII. Conflicts of Interest

All members of the CoC shall abide by the Conflict of Interest guidelines provided in the HEARTH Interim Rules 24 CFR 578.95 Conflicts of Interest. All members of the Governing Board will sign a Conflict of Interest statement at the beginning of their membership. Members who find themselves faced with a potential conflict between their business, organizational or private interests and their CoC Governing Board responsibilities shall avoid conflict of interest during the decision making process by following these guidelines:

- A. Disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest in advance of the meeting to the CoC Governing Board.
- B. Publicly disclose conflicts of interest at relevant CoC meetings.
- C. Recuse themselves at any time from involvement in any decision or discussion in which they believe they may have a conflict of interest.

## VIII. Governing Board

### A. Purpose

The purpose of the governing board is to plan and coordinate Athens-Clarke County's response to homelessness.

### B. Responsibilities

1. Define the vision and performance expectations for the CoC
2. Establish written standards (in consultation with ESG recipients) governing how parts of the homeless system (coordinated entry, emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, etc.) should operate and how assistance will be provided to different subpopulations. (HEARTH requirement)
3. Establish and oversee a coordinated entry system in consultation with recipients of ESG funds. (HEARTH requirement)
4. Directly make policy decisions related to HUD CoC funds and inform policy decisions related to HUD ESG funds, and direct funders county-wide to use policy decisions to guide funding decisions.

5. Every 5 years, present the Governance Charter to the broader CoC in a general body meeting to receive feedback and consider amendments as suggested by the general body and discussed and approved by the CoC Governing Board.
6. Establish and oversee CoC committees and workgroups that oversee CoC functions.
7. Work with providers, funders, and other partners to transform local systems through system change actions and implementation of priority initiatives.
8. Bring a system-level lens to decision-making and act on behalf of the constituency represented.
9. Ensure that consumer input is included in policy development and other CoC activities.
10. Provide high-level leadership and be community champions, speak on behalf of the CoC, and assure ongoing dialogue with the community on progress, results and barriers to adopted initiatives.
11. Assure the occurrence of at least two annual meetings of the full CoC. (HEARTH requirement)
12. Issue an annual report on progress in meeting the goal of making homelessness rare, brief and one-time.

### **C. Decision-Making and Authority**

Governing Board meetings are open to the public with public input opportunities available via email and specific time allocated on the Governing Board agenda. The Governing Board will operate under the premise of consensus and will strive to operate in an open environment, with sufficient time for discussion so each person has a fair chance to be heard and issues can be understood.

1. Only seated Governing Board members may vote on CoC business. Where substantial differences of opinion exist, the final report shall make an effort to reflect the divergence of views.
2. In cases where consensus cannot be reached, the Governing Board will resort to Robert's Rules of Order, with a requirement of a super majority vote of 60 percent approval for the item on the table.
3. Decisions may be made only when a quorum, defined as 50 percent or more of the CoC Governing Board voting seats, is present.
4. Governing Board members are strongly encouraged to attend in person. Attendance by telephone conference may be permitted in extenuating circumstances.

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5. Affirm all membership nominations to the Governing Board. A super-majority vote of 60 percent of those present and voting shall be required to approve new members. Once approved, an incoming member will be given 14 days to acknowledge and accept approval of board position.
6. Approve final submission for the annual CoC application to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), including establishing annual Homeless Coalition priorities to guide tiering and developing policy regarding resources and programs for homeless people. (HEARTH requirement)
7. Review and rank CoC project applications annually.
8. Adopt revisions to the Governance Charter in compliance with HEARTH regulations. (HEARTH requirement)
9. Designate the CoC Collaborative Applicant (HEARTH requirement).
10. Designate the HMIS software and HMIS Lead, and assure compliance with HEARTH requirements (HEARTH requirement).
11. Designate an entity to complete the annual point-in-time count of homeless persons (HEARTH requirement).

#### **D. Commitment**

1. Regular personal attendance by governing board members at governing board meetings and general membership meetings is required unless excused by the Chair for good reason. This commitment is not delegated to others. Three unexcused absences in one continuous 12-month period are grounds for removal of that member from the board by a supermajority vote of 60 percent of present governing board seats.
2. Commitment to listen to, value and utilize the experience and contribution of people who are or have experienced homelessness as equal partners in ending homelessness.
3. A governing board term is three years. A board member may resign their seat at any time for any reason in writing, electronic communication or orally in a governing board meeting.
4. The CoC Governing Board may approve an applicant to serve the rest of the time of a vacant seat
5. Leadership to further the goals of the CoC, including serving as a community champion, speaking on behalf of the CoC and assuring ongoing dialogue with the community on opportunities, progress, results and barriers to ending homelessness in Athens-Clarke County.

#### **E. Membership and Selection Process**

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The Governing Board will have a maximum of 16 voting seats. An organization may only hold one voting seat and may have no more than two representatives on the governing board.

1. Applications for membership will be open to the public and will be selected by the Governing Board.

Representational categories shall be identified to ensure that membership comprises an appropriate array of committed private and public sector community leaders who reflect the diversity of people experiencing homelessness. Individuals may fulfill cross-representation of categories. In order to be approved for membership for the board, individuals need to be committed to the ongoing work of the CoC Board and submit an application to the board with at least 2 references who can speak to their work and experience in homeless services.

a. The established seats include:

(i) Athens-Clarke County: Housing and Community Development (1-2, ex-officio, and thus non-voting)

(ii) Individuals currently or formerly experiencing homelessness (at least 1)

(iii) A representative from the Athens Homeless Coalition (1, ex-officio, and thus non-voting)

2. The Governing Board shall elect chair, vice chair, and secretary.

3. New Governing Board members shall be considered and voted upon by the governing board when at least one voting seat is available and there is at least one applicant.

4. A super-majority vote of 60 percent of those present and voting shall be required to approve new members.

## **F. Terms**

1. A term is three calendar years, January through December, starting the January following approval to the board. Board members may reapply after their 3-year term, and there are no term limits established.

2. For those members who represent a government department or organization in an established seat, that person may serve as long as they continue to hold the same job/position.

3. For those members who represent a segment of the population or a named organization, terms shall be for three years.
4. Terms for Governing Board officers, including chair, vice-chair, and secretary, shall be for three years with the term starting in whichever year January 1st is nearer to the vote to be approved into the position. A Governing Board officer may resign from their position at any time by written notice, electronic communication, or orally at a Governing Board meeting. A Governing Board officer may be removed from their position by a supermajority vote of 60 percent of the CoC Governing Board.
5. A chair may resign at any time for any reason, and responsibilities will be fulfilled by the vice-chair until another chair is selected.