

Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness
Frequently Asked Questions: For Mental Health & Substance Abuse
Section

Question # 1

What is the purpose of this funding announcement (NOFA)?

The purpose of this initiative is to assist states and communities in ending or substantially reducing chronic homelessness. Grants can help in the following ways:

- Provide comprehensive services and treatment and link them to housing,
- Create permanent housing for persons experiencing chronic homelessness and homeless families with a disabled adult member,
- Increase the use of mainstream resources that pay for services and treatment for the target population,
- Foster the replication of effective service, treatment, and housing models,
- Support the development of infrastructures that sustain services, treatment, housing, and inter-organizational partnerships beyond this Federal initiative.

Question # 2

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

The applicant organization, referred to as the “lead organization,” must be a non-profit or public agency. Eligible entities include States, political subdivisions of States, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and community-based and faith-based providers of homeless services, health care, housing, and other closely linked services for persons experiencing chronic homelessness. The lead applicant need not be a direct provider of substance abuse treatment or mental health services. However, the agency that will use SAMHSA funds to provide substance abuse or mental health services must be licensed.

Question # 3

Who is the target population?

Under this NOFA, the target population is persons experiencing chronic homelessness, including veterans. A chronically homeless person is defined as “an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years.” A disabling condition is defined as a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. The NOFA provides that no more than 10 percent of the funds awarded will also be targeted to projects that will serve homeless families with a disabled family member. Disabled Homeless Family is defined as an adult person with a disabled condition who is accompanied by at least one dependent child. These are the only populations that may be served under this NOFA.

Question # 4

Can the applicant organization partner with other organizations under the NOFA?

Partnerships are required as few organizations are large or diverse enough to encompass the comprehensive housing, health care, mental health and/or substance abuse treatment, and veterans’ services requirements of this funding announcement.

Question # 5

May an organization apply for only mental health or substance abuse funding and not for the housing, health care, or veterans portion of the NOFA?

The answer to this question has two parts. First, to be successful, an applicant must complete all portions of the application, including the comprehensive section and the sections for each of the four core elements of housing, mental health and substance abuse treatment, primary care, and veterans’ services. Second, although all portions of the application must be completed, an applicant is not required to request funding or services from each of the four core elements. It is permissible to request funding or services from one core area. For example, an applicant could request funding only for mental health

and substance treatment and not for housing. However, the applicant will need to describe how the housing, health care, and veterans' services are being comprehensively addressed through other funding sources.

Question # 6

How much money is available and how many applications will be funded?

NOFA provides for a total of \$35 million in FY 2003. An applicant may request an award for up to \$3.5 million (with a maximum SAMHSA award of \$700,000). At this funding level, up to ten grants will be awarded.

Question # 7

Why does the amount of the SAMHSA award decrease in years two and three?

Subject to the availability of funds, SAMHSA grantees will receive additional funds in grant years two and three for substance abuse and mental health services on a declining basis: 100% for Grant Year 1; 70% in Grant Year 2; and 40% in Grant Year 3. To qualify for continuation funds in Grant Years two and three, grantees will be required to demonstrate that the difference in grant amounts in each year is being offset by increasing revenue from mainstream financing resources. The purpose of this provision is to increase long-term reliance on mainstream programs and improve program sustainability after termination of the Federal grant funds.

Question # 8

What is meant by the term "supportive services" and how do they differ from "treatment services"?

A distinction is often made between treatment services and supportive services. Treatment services are generally defined as those interventions and activities that are directly addressing an individual's mental health and/or substance abuse disorders. Supportive services have come to refer to help provided in other domains of an individual's life that address homelessness and housing stability. Examples of supportive services include: assistance in locating appropriate housing; income support and SSI applications; representative payeeships; skill development, and assistance with transportation or child care. Case management is one of those activities that,

depending on the model or strategy used, could be either part of treatment and/or a supportive service.

Question # 9

What is the meaning of the term "mainstream resources"?

Mainstream resources are those that are not specifically linked to homeless treatment and services. Rather, they are available to the general population in need. Examples of mainstream resources include the following: Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Mental Health Block Grants, and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants.

Question # 10

What are the treatment and services that can be paid for under the SAMHSA grant?

Funds must be used to provide substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and supportive services that promote entry and maintenance of permanent housing. Examples of allowable activities in each of these areas include the following (more examples are included in the SAMHSA portion of the NOFA):

- Street outreach and engagement;
- Assertive community treatment or intensive case management;
- Supportive housing;
- Substance abuse treatment, including detoxification, residential treatment, intensive outpatient treatment;
- Mental health services, including treatment for trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Integrated/coordinated treatment for co-occurring disorders;
- Medication management;
- Supportive employment;
- Discharge planning;
- Childcare and family support.

There are some funding restrictions. SAMHSA funds may not be used to pay for housing (that isn't associated with residential substance abuse treatment), services to incarcerated populations, syringe or needle exchange programs, or treatment for diseases other than substance abuse and mental health disorders.

Question # 11

Can the grant funds be used to start new programs to address chronic homelessness?

No. Any agency that will be using SAMHSA funds to provide substance abuse or mental health services must be licensed and have been providing services to a chronically homeless client or homeless families population for a minimum of two years prior to the date of the application. The reason for this requirement is to ensure that there is minimal start-up time required in providing services to the target population by experienced providers.

Question # 12

May an agency serve both chronic homeless and homeless families under its award?

One applicant may serve both chronically homeless individuals and homeless families with a disabled adult member, but must complete a separate application for each population. No one project and no one application may serve both populations.

Question # 13

Where can I find information on model programs and evidence-based practices?

Information on evidence-based and promising practices is available on the SAMHSA website at www.samhsa.gov, under "Hot Topics." The website also includes suggestions on ways to establish a comprehensive, integrated system of care. This information may be helpful in developing your application.

Question # 14

What are the GPRA requirements for this NOFA?

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) requires that Federally funded grant programs complete and submit measures of performance and effectiveness. The GPRA measures for the SAMHSA portion of this initiative are available on the SAMHSA website at www.samhsa.gov.

Question # 15

I've never completed a SAMHSA application, how do I begin?

A helpful source of information for both beginner and experienced applicants is the SAMHSA website, which can be accessed at www.samhsa.gov. Under the heading labeled "Grant Opportunities" is a section called "Help with Grant Applications." This section contains twelve basic principles for what works in preparing grant applications. If you wish further assistance, contact one of the following SAMHSA government project officers: Melissa Rael, on 301-443-8236 or mrael@samhsa.gov, or Lawrence Rickards, on 301-443-3707 or lrickard@samhsa.gov.