

Western Pennsylvania Continuum of Care Emergency Transfer Plan for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking

Emergency Transfers

The Western PA CoC is concerned about the safety of participants in homeless assistance programs, and such concern extends to participants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

In accordance with the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA),¹ Western PA CoC homeless assistance programs providing housing or rental assistance must allow participants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to request an emergency transfer from the participant's current unit to another unit. This requirement applies to programs receiving Continuum of Care (CoC) funding, as well as DCED Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding, in accordance with DCED policies and requirements.

The ability to request a transfer is available regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.² CoC/ESG providers will work with the Western PA CoC's Coordinated Entry System to enact an emergency transfer through resources beyond those available within the provider's own organization. The ability of the Western PA CoC's Coordinated Entry System to honor such request for participants currently receiving assistance, however, may depend upon a preliminary determination that the participant is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and on whether another dwelling unit is available and is safe to offer the participant for temporary or more permanent occupancy.

This plan identifies participants who are eligible for an emergency transfer, the documentation needed to request an emergency transfer, confidentiality protections, how an emergency transfer may occur, and guidance to participants on safety and security. This plan is based on a model emergency transfer plan published by HUD, which is the Federal agency that oversees VAWA compliance of CoC/ESG-funded programs.

Eligibility for Emergency Transfers

A participant is eligible for an emergency transfer when any member of the household is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and reasonably believes

¹ Despite the name of this law, VAWA protection is available to all victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

² Housing providers cannot discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic, including race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability, or age. HUD-assisted and HUD-insured housing must be made available to all otherwise eligible individuals regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.

that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the participant remains within the same unit. If the participant is a victim of sexual assault, the participant may also be eligible to transfer if the sexual assault occurred on the premises within the 90-calendar-day period preceding a request for an emergency transfer.

A participant requesting an emergency transfer must expressly request the transfer in accordance with the procedures described in this plan. Participants who are not in good standing may still request an emergency transfer if they meet the eligibility requirements in this section.

Emergency Transfer Request Documentation

To request an emergency transfer, the participant shall notify their housing provider/ case manager and submit a written request for a transfer to that provider. The provider must provide reasonable accommodations to this policy for individuals with disabilities. The participant's written request for an emergency transfer should include either:

1. A statement expressing that the participant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the participant were to remain in the same dwelling unit assisted under the provider's program; OR
2. A statement that the participant, or a member of the participant's household was a sexual assault victim and that the sexual assault occurred on the premises during the 90-calendar-day period preceding the participant's request for an emergency transfer.

Confidentiality

The housing provider and the Western PA CoC's Coordinated Entry System will keep confidential any information that the participant submits in requesting an emergency transfer, and information about the emergency transfer, unless the participant gives the housing provider written permission to release the information on a time limited basis, or disclosure of the information is required by law or required for use in an eviction proceeding or hearing regarding termination of assistance from the program. This includes keeping confidential the new location of the dwelling unit of the participant, if one is provided, from the person(s) that committed an act(s) of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking against the participant. See the Notice of Occupancy Rights under the Violence Against Women Act For All Participants for more information about the provider's responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of information related to incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Emergency Transfer Timing and Availability

While the provider cannot guarantee that a transfer request will be approved or how long it will take to process a transfer request, the provider must act as quickly as possible to move a participant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to another unit, subject to availability and safety of a unit, either within the provider's own

inventory or through a transfer facilitated through the Western PA CoC's Coordinated Entry System.

If a participant reasonably believes a proposed transfer would not be safe, the participant may request a transfer to a different unit. If a unit is available, the transferred participant must agree to abide by the terms and conditions that govern occupancy in the unit to which the participant has been transferred. Neither the provider, nor the the Western PA CoC's Coordinated Entry System Liaison may be able to transfer a participant to a particular unit if the participant has not or cannot establish eligibility for that unit.

At the participant's request, the housing provider will also assist participants in contacting the local organizations offering assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking that are attached to this plan.

Protocol for transfer request

If the provider cannot transfer the participant through resources operated by/ available through their own organization, the housing provider or case manager will need to contact the Coordinated Entry Liaison to request assistance. The Coordinated Entry Liaison will work quickly, following the protocol outlined in the Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures manual in order to assist the housing provider to identify an alternate safe unit.

Safety and Security of Participants

Pending processing of the transfer and the actual transfer, if it is approved and occurs, the participant is urged to take all reasonable precautions to be safe.

Participants who are or have been victims of domestic violence are encouraged to contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, or a local domestic violence shelter, for assistance in creating a safety plan. For persons with hearing impairments, that hotline can be accessed by calling 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).

Participants who have been victims of sexual assault may call the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network's National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE, or visit the online hotline at <https://ohl.rainn.org/online/>.

Participants who are or have been victims of stalking seeking help may visit the National Center for Victims of Crime's Stalking Resource Center at <https://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center>.

Attachment: Local organizations offering assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

List of Domestic Violence organizations in each county of the Western PA CoC

County	Hotline	Domestic Violence Program Name
Armstrong	800-841-8881	HAVIN, Inc.
Butler	800-400-8551	Victim Outreach Intervention Center
Cameron	800-226-4759	C.A.P.S.E.A
Clarion	800-992-3039	SAFE (Stop Abuse For Everyone)
Clearfield	800-598-3998	Community Action, Inc./Crossroads Project
Crawford	888-881-0189	Women's Services, Inc.
Elk	800-226-4759	C.A.P.S.E.A
Fayette	800-791-4000	Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA, Inc.
Forest	800-338-3460	A Safe Place, Inc.
Greene	800-791-4000	Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA, Inc.
Indiana	800-435-7249	Alice Paul House
Jefferson	800-598-3998	Community Action, Inc./Crossroads Project
Lawrence	724-652-9036	Crisis Shelter of Lawrence County
McKean	888-822-6325	YWCA Victims' Resource Center
Mercer	888-981-1457	AWARE
Potter	877-334-3136	A Way Out
Venango	800-243-4944	PPC Violence Free Network
Warren	800-338-3460	A Safe Place, Inc.
Washington	800-791-4000	Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA, Inc.
Westmoreland	888-832-2272	Blackburn Center

Sexual Assault organizations in PA

For a list of organizations/locations that can provide assistance to victims of sexual assault, visit online -

<http://www.pcar.org/help-pa/locations>