2024 Updates to the Montgomery County Written Standards

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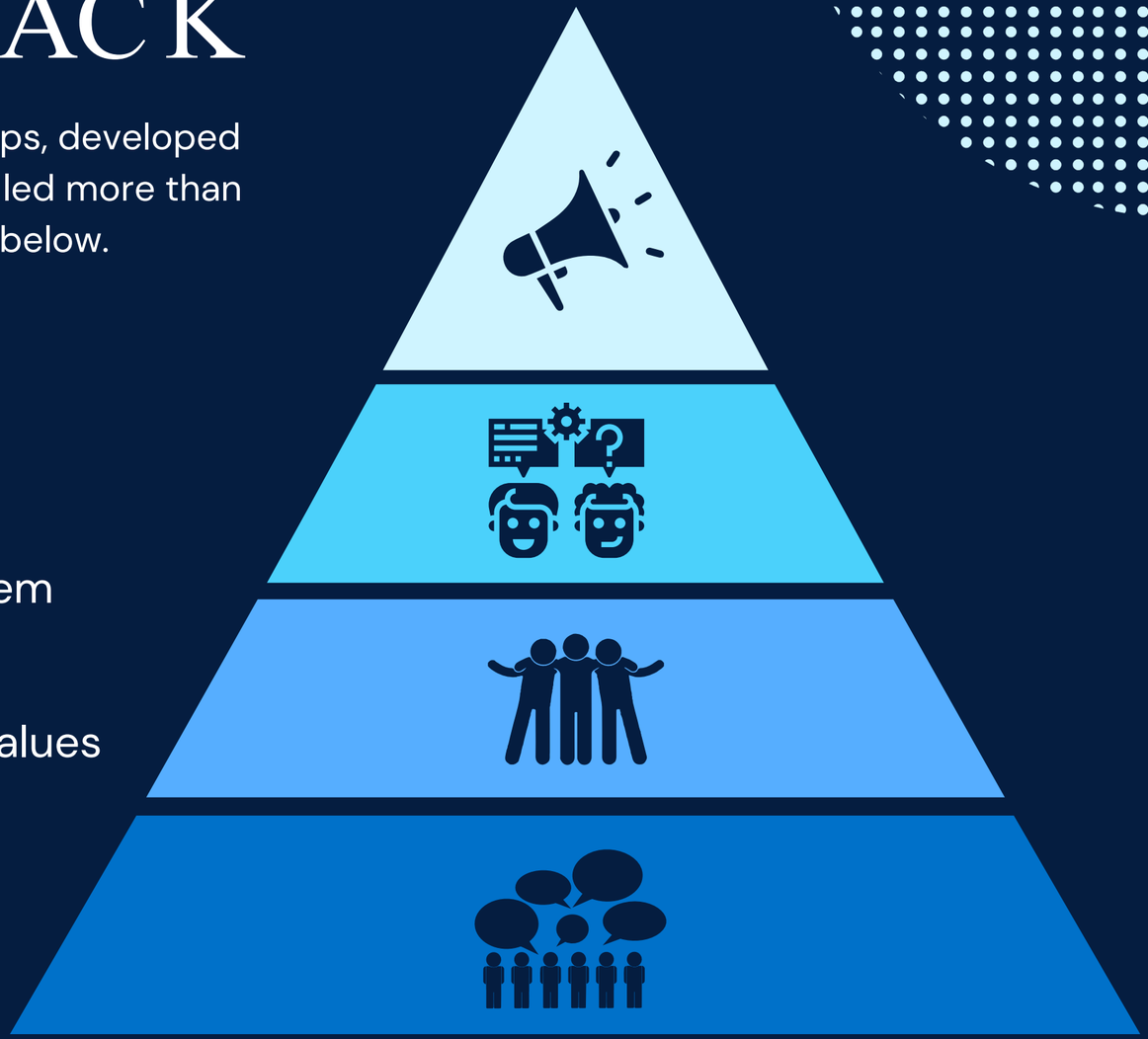
SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Over the last six months CSH and DHHS conducted four focus groups, developed and distributed a survey, held five informational presentations, and led more than 10 meetings with key partners. The major themes are listed below.

01 Lack of system coordination

02 Lack of Access/Difficulty Navigating the System

03 Differences in Alignment & Interpretation of Values



VISION AND FOCUS

Vision

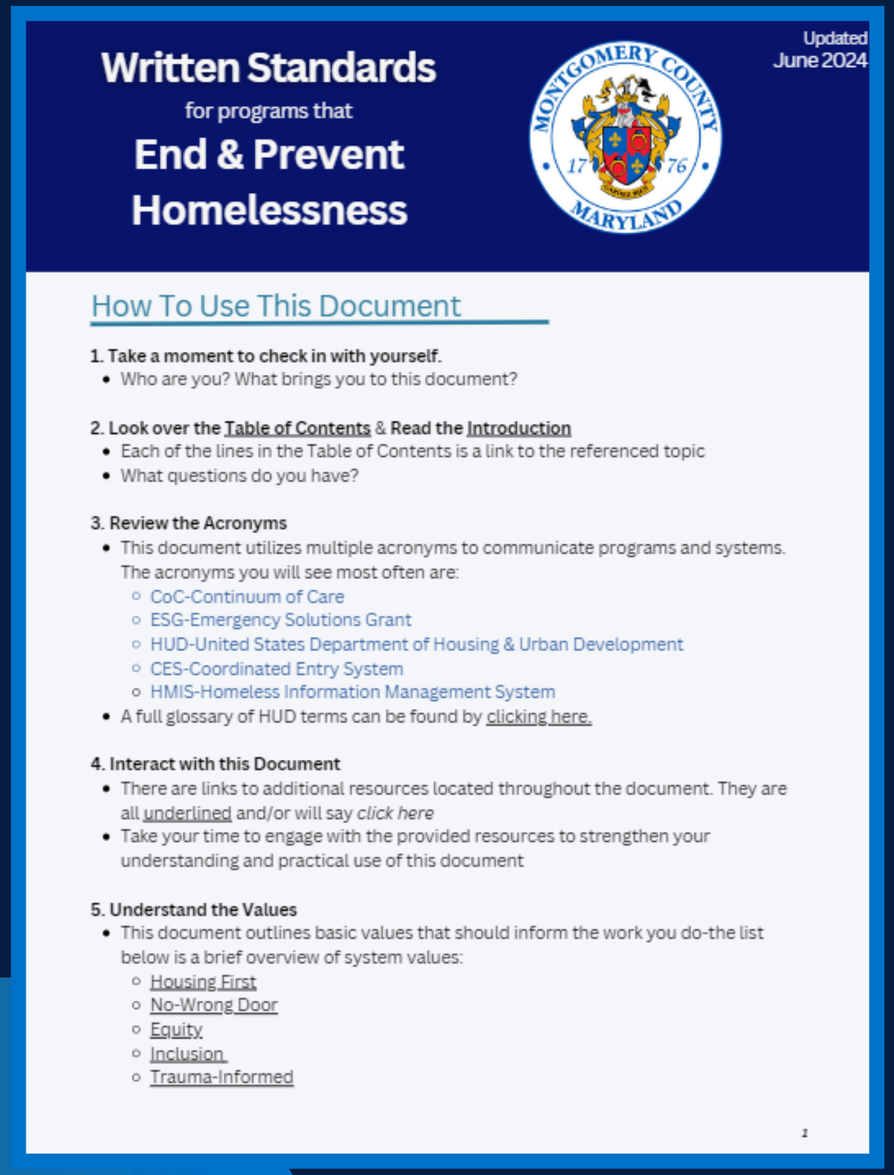
Providers, utilizers, and the community all spoke to wanting to create a system that was inclusive, safe, and welcoming for all persons

Focus

The new Standards prioritize safety, accessibility, and transparency. All requirements and program standards are clearly outlined.

KEY UPDATES

- Increased Usability
- Inclusion Centered
- Values Focused
- Improved Understanding



Written Standards

for programs that

End & Prevent Homelessness

Updated June 2024

How To Use This Document

1. Take a moment to check in with yourself.

- Who are you? What brings you to this document?

2. Look over the Table of Contents & Read the Introduction

- Each of the lines in the Table of Contents is a link to the referenced topic
- What questions do you have?

3. Review the Acronyms

- This document utilizes multiple acronyms to communicate programs and systems. The acronyms you will see most often are:
  - CoC-Continuum of Care
  - ESG-Emergency Solutions Grant
  - HUD-United States Department of Housing & Urban Development
  - CES-Coordinated Entry System
  - HMIS-Homeless Information Management System
- A full glossary of HUD terms can be found by clicking here.

4. Interact with this Document

- There are links to additional resources located throughout the document. They are all underlined and/or will say *click here*
- Take your time to engage with the provided resources to strengthen your understanding and practical use of this document

5. Understand the Values

- This document outlines basic values that should inform the work you do-the list below is a brief overview of system values:
  - Housing First
  - No-Wrong Door
  - Equity
  - Inclusion
  - Trauma-Informed

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INCREASED USABILITY

The new document includes a “How to Use” page, uses less technical/HUD jargon, has links and resources throughout and includes tables and charts for easier resource navigation.

INCLUSION CENTERED

The new document includes specific details on how to center inclusion based on feedback from former/current utilizers

The document offers tools, links to trainings, and examples of how to structure procedures to be more inclusive

The new Standards include/highlight specific protections for historically and systemically marginalized identities

The updated Written Standards has been built utilizing the voice of the community

VALUES FOCUED

The new document reflects the current values of the system and offers practical application suggestions for many of the system values

System Standards

Person-Centered Culture

A person-centered culture ensures that communications, val
convey respect, view all persons as experts in their own li
emphasizes quality of life, wellbeing, and in

Every member of the system is expected to foster an easy-access, supportive, a
environment for all people. Providers are expected to engage system utilizers
judgment and by utilizing soft skills, such as emotional intelligence, self-awaren
listening, and empathy. To best achieve this, recipients and participating progra
expected to require and maintain regular trainings for all staff. **Mandatory train**

Annual

- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Harm Reduction
- Trauma-Informed
- Crisis De-escalation
- Mental Health Awareness
- Additional core-competency topics as identified by role requirements,
  funder

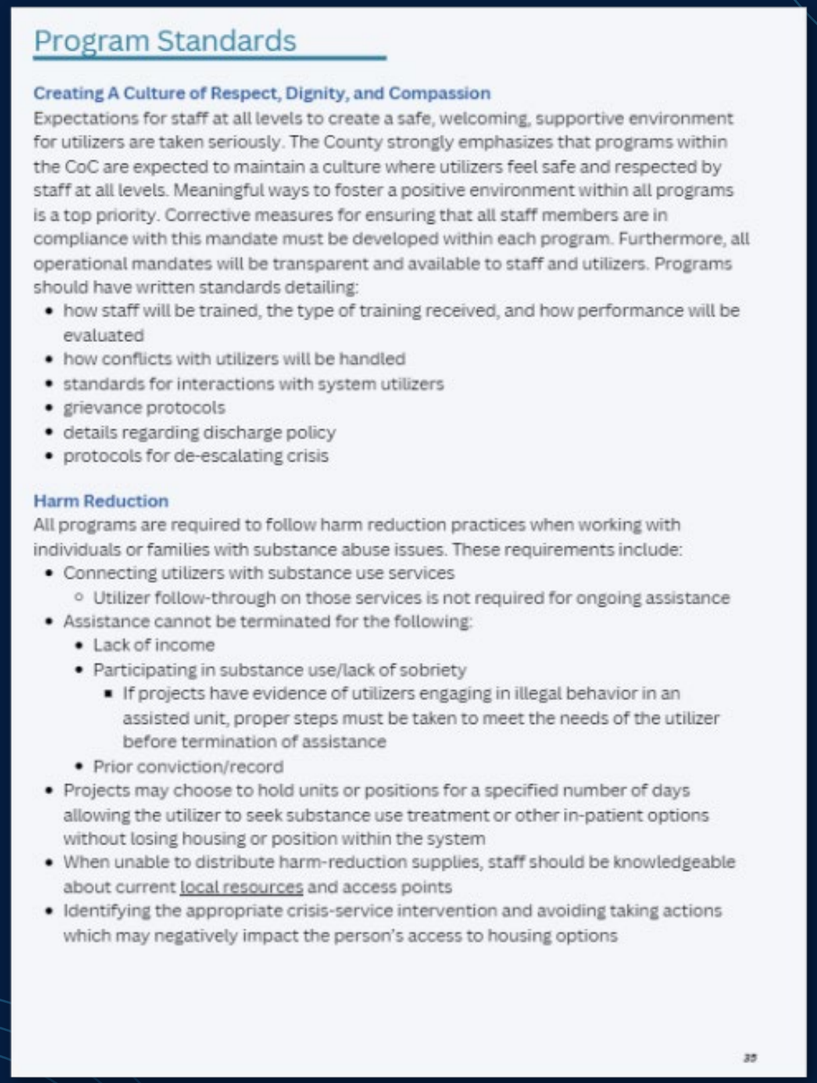
Upon Hire/As Needed

- Motivational Interviewing
- Person-Centered Engagement
- Healthy Boundaries
- Trauma-Informed Intake & Documentation
- Additional core-competency topics as identified by role requirements,
  funder

As Indicated by Facilitator/Certificate

- CPR & First Aid
- Overdose Response
- Mental Health First Aid
- Cultural Competency
- HMIS
- Housing First
- Additional core-competency topics as identified by role requirements,
  funder

ystem participants and recipients are expected to maintain records of



Program Standards

Creating A Culture of Respect, Dignity, and Compassion

Expectations for staff at all levels to create a safe, welcoming, supportive environment for utilizers are taken seriously. The County strongly emphasizes that programs within the CoC are expected to maintain a culture where utilizers feel safe and respected by staff at all levels. Meaningful ways to foster a positive environment within all programs is a top priority. Corrective measures for ensuring that all staff members are in compliance with this mandate must be developed within each program. Furthermore, all operational mandates will be transparent and available to staff and utilizers. Programs should have written standards detailing:

- how staff will be trained, the type of training received, and how performance will be evaluated
- how conflicts with utilizers will be handled
- standards for interactions with system utilizers
- grievance protocols
- details regarding discharge policy
- protocols for de-escalating crisis

Harm Reduction

All programs are required to follow harm reduction practices when working with individuals or families with substance abuse issues. These requirements include:

- Connecting utilizers with substance use services
  - Utilizer follow-through on those services is not required for ongoing assistance
- Assistance cannot be terminated for the following:
  - Lack of income
  - Participating in substance use/lack of sobriety
    - If projects have evidence of utilizers engaging in illegal behavior in an assisted unit, proper steps must be taken to meet the needs of the utilizer before termination of assistance
  - Prior conviction/record
- Projects may choose to hold units or positions for a specified number of days allowing the utilizer to seek substance use treatment or other in-patient options without losing housing or position within the system
- When unable to distribute harm-reduction supplies, staff should be knowledgeable about current local resources and access points
- Identifying the appropriate crisis-service intervention and avoiding taking actions which may negatively impact the person's access to housing options

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IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING

In addition to less technical language the updated Standards also breakdown the how behind the system values

HOW TO USE

Read Through

The 50 page document outlines all program standards and outlines the basics of how each should operate

Use the Links

The new Standards have links to resources, definitions and training tools

Put it to Work

The new Standards is a living document–the best way to keep it alive is to apply it to your work

NEXT STEPS

Now that the momentum is there-don't loose it. Here are some things the County could consider moving forward.

Intentional Case Mapping

The silos within the system were identified as one of the biggest creators of system gaps. Connect with others doing the work to overcome those barriers.

Communicate Across the Lines

County policies should be informed by the people who are responsible for implementing them. Make sure all policies are well informed and well communicated.

Include more PWLE Throughout the System

The best way to maintain an effective system that meets the needs of the community is to include the voices of those who have experience navigating the system internally.

Thank you for all YOU did to inform the 2024 Written Standards