**Policy on Gender Inclusion and Non-Discrimination with Respect to Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity**

Central Florida Continuum of Care, Inc

All programs funded or regulated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) must comply with regulations that guarantee equal access to housing in HUD programs regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.[[1]](#footnote-1)[[2]](#footnote-2) In an effort to achieve full compliance, the Central Florida Continuum of Care (CoC FL-507) adopts the following policy:

1. **Definitions.**

For purposes of this policy:

1. *Sexual orientation* means one’s emotional or physical attraction to the same and/or opposite sex (e.g. homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality).
2. *Perceived gender identity* means the gender with which a person is perceived to identify, based on that person’s appearance, behavior, expression, other gender related characteristics, or the sex assigned to the individual at birth or identified in documents.
3. *Gender identity* means the gender with which a person identifies, if any, regardless of the sex assigned to that person at birth and regardless of that person’s perceived gender identity.
4. *Equal access* means housing programs are open to all eligible individuals and families regardless of sexual orientation or, gender identity, and individuals will not be discriminated against based on actual or perceived gender identity, and where legitimate consideration of sex or gender is appropriate, such as in a facility providing temporary, or short term shelter that is not covered by the Fair Housing Act and which is legally permitted to operate as a single sex facility, the individual’s own self-identified gender identity will govern. [[3]](#footnote-3)
5. **Intent and Applicability.**
6. The CoC FL-507 is directed by HUD to facilitate the development of a comprehensive system of housing and services for persons experiencing homelessness in Central Florida, specifically including the use of funding made available under the HUD Continuum of Care Program and other homelessness assistance programs. Accordingly, it is the intent of CoC FL-507 to guarantee equal access to housing and services in homelessness assistance programs regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity (Equal Access).
7. The adoption of this Equal Access policy is a direct reflection of CoC FL-507’s commitment to Housing First and to low-barrier access to housing and services.
8. All agencies receiving funding through HUD or that is otherwise made available through CoC FL-507 must promote and ensure Equal Access.
9. Although not required, all non-HUD/CoC-funded member agencies are strongly encouraged to adopt internal policies and best practices that promote and ensure Equal Access.
10. **Equal Access Standard.**

CoC FL-507 will assess whether an agency and its programs and services promote and ensure Equal Access by the extent to which it:

1. Determines client eligibility for housing, programs and services regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, perceived gender identity, or marital status, and will not discriminate against anyone because they do not conform to gender or sex stereotypes;
2. Grants clients equal access to housing, programs and services in a manner consistent with their gender identity;
3. Declines to ask clients to provide anatomical information, documentation of (including ID), or physical or medical evidence of their gender identity;
4. Whenever necessary, takes steps to address privacy concerns raised by any residents or occupants, including persons in question, in an appropriate and non-discriminatory way;
5. Ensures that individuals are made aware of their right to Equal Access by providing notice of such rights, using methods such as by posting in public spaces, amending program forms and documentation; and *rights and responsibilities*
6. Participates in annual CoC training on service inclusion and non-discrimination (which many be incorporated into Housing First training).

**4 Implementation Timeline.**

CoC FL-507 will implement this policy with the following actions:

1. Add an additional non-scoring question to the 2018 NOFA application asking if the applicant has adopted internal policies and practices that indicate adherence to the above CoC policy on gender inclusion and non-discrimination.
2. Contracts associated with the 2017 NOVA awards will include six month timeline for adoption of policy and implementation plan.
3. 2019 NOFA application will make compliance with regards to this policy a scoring element
4. CoC FL-507 will continue to offer training opportunities for providers building towards full compliance with regard to the above policy.

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1. https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/EqualAccess\_FinalRule\_2.3.12.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Equal-Access-Message-from-PDAS-Tregoning.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Equal-Access-Final-Rule-2016.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)