A puzzle pieces of a house and a family

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**Housing Solutions Fund Disbursal Process (CHNs)**

**Fund Purpose:** The Housing Solutions Fund (HSF) is for breaking down barriers to achieving long-term sustainable housing for **families** experiencing **homelessness**. This not only includes support for housing costs like rent, utilities, fees etc. but also for wraparound support expenses such as, but not limited to, transportation costs, food, childcare, etc.

**Process for Accessing Funds:** Excluding unusual requests, funds will always be disbursed within 2-4 weeks of being approved with the goal of approving funds the same week the United Way of Yellowstone County (UWYC) receives them. Funds will abide by the restrictions below and be disbursed through the process outlined.

Agencies who have signed a Partner Agreement with the UWYC will receive a lump sum payment ($15,000) allocated every 6 months for small dollar, (<$1,000) immediate disbursements to solve client barriers. Following these disbursements agencies will need to submit an HSF Access form for data collection and compliance review. These lump sums can be refilled through a simple report and request process if they run out before the 6-month mark.

For larger client expenses (>$1,000), agencies will need to request approval through an HSF Access form before disbursement and if approved may disburse through their lump-sum or wait for the UWYC to allocate the requested funds.

**Restrictions on Funding:**

* Funds can only be used for clients that are currently meeting the definition of “**homeless”** & “**family”** in the definitions section below.
* Funds must not be disbursed for an expense that:
  + Does not meet the HSF fund purpose and restrictions
  + That could be obtained in a **timely manner** and to the degree necessary through another service or agency program
  + Has not completed the request and review process (if applicable)
* Expenses may only be paid to third parties and may not be given to the client. (*Exceptions may occur)*

**Definitions:**

* **Family:** A family consists of any group that includes at least one dependent child under age 18 and the person/people providing for their care and well-being. This could include minors who are in their care currently, **or** who are temporarily separated from them *(e.g. staying with friends or family or with CPS)*, **or** someone who is pregnant.

1. *Clients need only meet the Family definition at the time of intake, if life circumstances change during the case-management period they are still eligible for funds and support from a CHN.*
2. *Additional eligibility will be considered on a case-by-case basis.*

* **Homeless:** Currently living (any amount of time that includes currently) in a housing situation they do not directly own or have a lease for including but not limited to: couch surfing, at a shelter, in a car, in a transitional housing facility, in sober living, or outside.
  1. Clients are also eligible 14 days prior to their eviction move-out date.
* **“Timely Manner”:** Referring to the time it would take for a client to receive services that would not cause the client an articulable additional hardship or cause them to miss an articulable opportunity to advance towards sustainable housing due to the delay in receiving funds.

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**Housing Solutions Fund Disbursal Process (CHNs)**

**Process steps for CHNs & Caseworkers**

1. The client will request support, and the CHN/Caseworker at an agency with a signed Partner Agreement will determine if they believe the expense would be appropriate for the HSF fund.
   1. The CHN/Caseworker will explore If there is already a service that provides the support needed and if client can access that service in a **timely manner** instead of utilizing the HSF.
2. If the CHN/Caseworker determines there is no other reasonable support available and that the request meets the HSF purpose and restrictions, they will fill out an HSF Access Form.
   1. *If the request is less than $1,000,* ***and*** *the client has not met the limits outlined in* ***the HSF Partner Agreement****,* ***and*** *the request meets HSF fund restrictions & purpose, the request is automatically allowed and can be disbursed by the agency’s pre-allocated pool of money in their* ***Agency Housing Solutions Fund (AHSF).***
   2. *Once disbursed, the CHN/Caseworker will still submit the HSF request form prior to the fifth day of the month after payment was disbursed with the “AHSF Funds Spent” box marked showing that funds have been disbursed so it can be reviewed monthly for data tracking and compliance.*
3. The CHN/Caseworker will submit the HSF Access form for review for all requests. If the request requires UWYC review committee approval, the CHN/caseworker should submit the form immediately. Access forms can be sent to: [commimpactcoord@uwyellowstone.org](mailto:commimpactcoord@uwyellowstone.org)
4. Once submitted, the HSF request will be reviewed by a UWYC review committee to determine the following:
   * 1. Eligibility under grant restrictions, fund purpose, and fund restrictions
     2. Equitability of request based on current HSF fund balance, history of specific client requests and expected client specific expenses throughout the fiscal year
     3. Priority of expense based on client case, degree of immediacy of expense, other pending requests and/ or expected requests through end of fiscal year
   1. The HSF request will either be denied, approved, tabled, or guidance will be provided. The UWYC review committee will work to have requests approved the same week they are received.
      1. If denied, the review committee will provide reasoning and give guidance on what requests are permissible underneath the HSF restrictions.
      2. If approved, the funds will be disbursed/reimbursed within 4 weeks to your agency.
      3. If tabled, the review committee will contact the CHN/Caseworker and ask for clarification or if there is a way to tweak the request so that it does fit into the HSF restrictions *(This may require a new HSF Access Form submission)*. A request may also be tabled if the total amount disbursed for a singular client is approaching inequity.
      4. If the request is post-disbursement but the committee deems it an inappropriate payment the agency will be given guidance and informed, they can’t make such a payment again.
5. The CHN will record all disbursals in the client’s profile in HMIS as service transactions. Guidance does not need to be recorded in client files or HMIS. Agencies will refer to the **HSF Reporting Requirements document** and **HSF Partner Agreement** to ensure they are tracking everything they are required to.