

Guiding Principles of the Halifax Regional Municipality Coordinated Access System

Introduction:

The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Coordinated Access System (CAS) follows four guiding principles in their work.

1. Adherence to the principles of Housing First
2. Equity and inclusivity in our work
3. Inclusion of the first voice perspectives of marginalized demographic groups and supports self determination for Indigenous and Black voices in our work
4. Work within the tenets of local capacity and scope

Guiding Principle 1:

The Halifax Regional Municipality Coordinated Access System adheres to the principles of Housing First.¹

Housing First operates on five core principles: immediate access to permanent housing with no preconditions, client choice and self-determination, a harm reduction/trauma informed approach to recovery, individualized and client-driven supports, and social and community integration. These principles guide Housing First programs in providing stable housing and support services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Here's a more detailed breakdown of each principle:

1. Immediate Access to Permanent Housing with No Housing Readiness Requirements:

- Housing is provided immediately, regardless of whether someone is considered "ready" for housing.
- This means individuals are not required to complete treatment, sobriety, or other programs before accessing housing.
- The focus is on providing a stable, permanent home, rather than requiring individuals to meet specific criteria before receiving housing.

2. Client Choice and Self-Determination:

- Individuals are given choices regarding their housing, including location, type of housing, and services they wish to access.

¹ <https://homelesshub.ca/collection/programs-that-work/housing-first/>

- This empowers individuals to make decisions about their housing and life, promoting a sense of control and agency.
- Client choice is often enabled through the provision of rent supplements or other financial assistance.

3. Harm Reduction/Trauma Informed Approach to Recovery:

- Housing First programs are designed to support individuals in their recovery from homelessness and other challenges, such as mental health conditions and substance abuse.
- This includes providing access to mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and other supports that can help individuals achieve their recovery goals.
- Recovery is seen as a process of self-discovery, finding meaning and purpose, and managing mental health and/or addictions.

4. Individualized and Client-Driven Supports:

- Support services are tailored to the specific needs and goals of each individual or family.
- This ensures that services are relevant and effective, helping individuals to achieve their desired outcomes.
- Support teams are flexible and responsive to the needs of clients, adjusting their approach as necessary.

5. Social and Community Integration:

- Housing First programs promote social and community integration, helping individuals to build relationships, participate in community activities, and feel connected to their surroundings.
- This can involve facilitating access to community resources, helping individuals connect with social networks, and fostering a sense of belonging.
- The goal is to ensure that individuals are not isolated from their communities but rather are actively participating in and contributing to them.

Guiding Principle 2:

The Halifax Regional Municipality Coordinated Access System believes in equity and inclusivity in our work. Equity ensures fair treatment and opportunities for all, addressing historic and/or systemic barriers that have disadvantaged certain demographics. Inclusivity creates a welcoming and supportive environment where everyone is valued and respected, regardless of their background. Working from this lens, the HRM CAS promotes the fair treatment and full participation of all people, particularly groups that have been historically underrepresented or discriminated/disadvantaged due to biases and/or stereotypes about their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, socioeconomic status, immigration status, etc. The HRM CAS does not tolerate any forms of oppression or discrimination.

Guiding Principle 3:

The Halifax Regional Municipality's Coordinated Access System is committed to centering the lived experiences of marginalized populations, particularly Indigenous and Black communities, who are disproportionately represented in homelessness. This commitment includes upholding the principle of self-determination, defined as the right of individuals and communities to freely pursue their social, economic, and cultural development.

HRM CAS aims to amplify these voices through meaningful allyship, advocacy, and inclusive engagement practices. Recognizing that listening and learning from marginalized perspectives is an ongoing and relational process, this work is approached with patience, respect, curiosity, and a genuine commitment to learning. By fostering a culture of equity, inclusion, and solidarity, HRM CAS strives to deliver services that are responsive to the needs of clients experiencing homelessness while actively working to dismantle the systemic barriers that contribute to housing insecurity.

As part of its commitment to equity, HRM CAS follows the principles of OCAP® – Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession² – to respect Indigenous data sovereignty. These principles ensure that Indigenous communities have authority over how their data is collected, used, and shared. Any aggregate data collected through HRM CAS is considered to be under stewardship rather than ownership and is managed in accordance with OCAP® guidelines.

Guiding Principle 4:

The Halifax Regional Municipality Coordinated Access System asserts that participating agencies must work within the following tenets of local capacity and scope.

- Participating agencies in receipt of funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Opportunities and Social Development (OSD), Violence Against Women (VAW), Reaching Home, municipal or another funder for access points, day centres, outreach, supportive housing, and who participate in our HRM CAS must state in their policies that they are participating in Coordinated Access.
- Agencies as employers must support staff to work within the capacity of their project and role/position.
- Should a group not currently in receipt of funding from one of the above-mentioned housing and homelessness sector funders in Nova Scotia, a Community Partner's mandate, policies, and goals must align with all guiding principles and act in good faith to support agencies.
- Should questions arise that a current agency's processes are not working within these guiding principles, AHANS as Community Entity will approach to ensure alignment with Reaching Home directives, OSD and their directives, speak to applicable governance tables

² <https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>

for suggested corrective action, and then the respective advisory board for final decision making.

Conclusion:

If your organization is interested in joining the Halifax Regional Municipality Coordinated Access System, it is an expectation of participation that your organization's mandate, core values and/or guiding principles align with the HRM CAS guiding principles to ensure an equitable system of care for all individuals and families experiencing homelessness in our community.