



## Statement of Intent to Merge Continuums of Care

This Statement of Intent to Merge two adjoining Continuums of Care (CoCs) is intended to memorialize the mutual interest expressed by the leadership and members of both the Greater Bristol County/Attleboro/Taunton Continuum of Care and the New Bedford Continuum of Care along with their membership entities GBCATCH and the Homeless Services Provider Network (HSPN), respectively, and to articulate operational and governance aspects each CoC agrees to evaluate, discuss and consider both independent of one another and mutually as a merged and integrated CoC.

**The GBCATCH CoC** is recognized by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) as MA-519 under its CoC program is an unincorporated organization carrying out activities throughout a portion of Bristol County, Massachusetts including Acushnet, Attleboro, Berkley, Dartmouth Dighton, Easton, Fairhaven, Freetown, Mansfield, Norton, North Attleboro, Raynham, Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, Swansea, Taunton and Westport.

GBCATCH's Governance Charter articulates its purpose as being the:

- Promotion of a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness;
- Provision of funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and local governments to re-house homeless individuals and families rapidly while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness;
- Coordination of a region-wide systematic approach to helping vulnerable residents move from homelessness to permanent housing.
- Promotion of access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and
- Optimization of self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

**The New Bedford CoC** is similarly recognized by HUD as MA-505 under its CoC program and encompasses the entire municipal boundary of the City of New Bedford. It's by-laws present the HSPN's purpose as being the membership component of the New Bedford CoC for outreach to vulnerable populations and to ensure the movement of those individuals and families through a compassionate system of housing and support into permanent independent housing. In so doing, the purpose is stated as being:

- Provision of a network sharing ideas, concerns and resources applicable to homeless issues and to foster collaboration in addressing the needs of those experiencing homelessness.
- Increasing community awareness and dialogue as to precipitators of homelessness, the needs of those experiencing homelessness and ways to strategically end homelessness within the community, and

- Participation actively in state and local advocacy for homeless issues by adhering to its mission statement that speaks, in part, to the commitment that “each person is entitled to live in dignity.”

In light of their respective purposes and shared commitment to preventing and ending homelessness, both CoCs agree that multiple conditions exist whereby merging with each other has the potential of providing greater benefits than would exist were they to remain independent of one another. Despite the shared understanding that mergers between CoCs can result in improved coordination of services, effective Homeless Management Information System Implementation, more efficient resource allocation and planning and improved competitiveness for new resources, it is agreed that serious consideration must be given to the consequences of a potential merger particularly as relates to governance, resource allocation, coordinated entry and HMIS implementation.

With this in mind, both GBCATCH and the New Bedford CoC agree to formally review and consider the consequences of a merger following questions recommended by HUD<sup>1</sup> as relates to:

- **Governance**, including the concerns of existing stakeholders, the potential for yielding power to reflect a merged CoC structure, and the creation of a new governance structure. Both individual CoCs must carefully consider the potential benefits and potential challenges related to governance. A new CoC Board with committees bearing decision-making authority should be defined and a collaborative applicant representing the merged CoC should be named. The future arrangement should articulate how New Bedford and GBCATCH’s unique interests and needs are met through a new structure, whether through individual committees or otherwise.
- **Homeless Assistance System and Resource Allocation** speaks to the need to realign resources over the newly defined geographic area of the merged CoC. Consideration must be made to identify the housing and service needs of those experiencing homelessness in the newly defined CoC and articulate a cohesive strategy to address the housing and service needs throughout the merged area. This aspect of exploration necessitates clarity as to how GBCATCH and the New Bedford CoC would reach agreement on project reviews and in particular, establishing its combined funding priority-setting process for the new CoC. Neither CoC should experience a diminished level or proportion of resources as an immediate result of the merger.
- **Coordinated Entry System** considerations during mergers often present challenges as process, policy and procedure for both CoCs must reconcile into a single system. In the case of GBCATCH and the New Bedford CoC, Coordinated Entry is already undertaken by the same entity following similar procedures and processes. Despite this, the two CoCs must review and come to agreement as to the specific prioritization scores assigned as part of the common Comprehensive Housing Assessment Tool (CHAT) which differs. Given the wide geographic region served by a merged Continuum, care must be taken to ensure those served by a merged CoC are located in communities in which they have connection and support.
- **HMIS implementation** is often considered the backbone of CoC operations. As is the case with its coordinated entry system, the two CoCs already share an HMIS vendor and common database. While this eases the merger of an HMIS protocol for both

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<sup>1</sup> <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CoC-Merger-Discussion-Guide.pdf>

CoCs, there remain multiple considerations which will require decision-making by the CoCs including HMIS governance and the HMIS lead, data collection considerations, reporting responsibilities, HMIS financial management and whether adequate financial resources exist to sufficiently serve all projects if the CoCs were to combine.

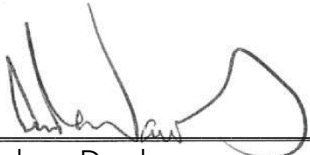
- **Other Considerations**, including interactions and representation on statewide boards such as the Mass CoC Council and the State ReHousing Data Collective (RDC) Advocacy Work, Grantee vs Subrecipient roles, vendor management, political concerns, community conditions, CoC Planning Grants, process throughout the annual Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) competition, website hosting and management and financial oversight, while not intended to be an exhaustive list, do represent additional areas requiring exploration in the consideration of such a merger.

Both CoCs agree to convene their respective leadership to work through such changes and considerations together to arrive at a mutually agreeable framework for implementation including: the execution of administrative changes, development of an updated governance charter reflecting changes to roles and responsibilities and any new policies and procedures that have been agreed to, preparation/saving/merging of data for HUD reporting as required, amending any existing planning grants to reflect the newly designated collaborative applicant and updating points of contact for government entities, funders and other relevant entities.

The newly named "collaborative applicant" shall be responsible for notifying HUD by sending an email to [CoCMerger@hud.gov](mailto:CoCMerger@hud.gov).

This Statement of Intent has been discussed by both CoCs and has been found to be acceptable to each, enabling the work described herein to begin.

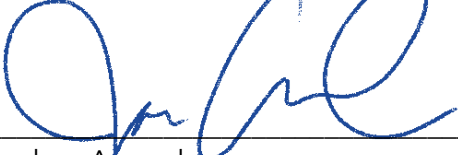
Signed on behalf of the GBCATCH CoC,



Andrew Dawley  
For the Collaborative Applicant, CCBC  
(Community Counseling of Bristol County)

1/12/24  
Date Signed

Signed on behalf of the New Bedford CoC,



Joshua Amaral  
For the Collaborative Applicant, OHCD  
(Office of Housing & Community Devt)

12/21/23  
Date Signed