



Pinellas
Continuum
of Care

Ending Homelessness Together

**Lived Experience
Advisory Committee
(LEAC) Charter**

Overview

The Pinellas County Continuum of Care (CoC) Charter establishes standing CoC Membership Committees, including Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC), to assist the CoC Board in developing and implementing strategic responses to issues impacting people experiencing homelessness.

Purpose

Provide expertise to make an impact on the CoCs policies, programs and grant applications, and to drive efforts to end homelessness using unique experiences.

Values

Mission Statement: Our mission is grounded in the belief that everyone should have a roof over their head. Following the guiding principles of "Nothing about us without us" and the "Platinum Rule" - treating others as they want to be treated – we aim to open doors for people experiencing homelessness to end homelessness in Pinellas, drawing from lived experiences by developing and applying solutions to personal challenges faced by our community.

1. Promote **comfort in communication**.
2. Institute a **time limit for input** to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak.
3. Maintain an environment that is **respectful to everyone**.
4. Ensure the space is **LGBTQIA friendly** and **ADA compliant**.
5. Establish a **safe place for members to speak** their minds and share experiences.
6. Enforce a **zero-tolerance policy for disrespect**.
7. Foster **accountability** within the committee.
8. Uphold the principle that **everyone has the right to speak and their opinion matters**.
9. Encourage **positive attitudes and smiles**.
10. Maintain a **judgment-free zone** for all participants.

Goals

The Lived Experience Advisory Committee has established numerous goals. The primary goals are:

1. Drive efforts to **change perceptions** about homelessness among our community and police.
2. Secure **additional assistance and resources** for the unhoused in Pinellas County.
3. **Collaborate** with relevant stakeholders and enforce **accountability** in programs related to homeless services and affordable housing; this includes helping ensure funds are utilized appropriately.

Additional committee goals include but are not limited to:

- Address **mental health issues** in the unhoused community.

- Advocate for **homeless housing assistance**.
- Strive for **more affordable housing** solutions.
- Create and advocate for **support groups** for the unhoused.
- **Constructively interact** with CoC staff and through them, collaborate with resource providers to implement actionable suggestions.
- Mobilize resources into the community.
- Promote LEAC's mission and **encourage more homeless individuals to get involved**.
- Work towards **tangible impacts** in housing efforts.
- Advocate for creation of social and life skills trainings and job/trade skills trainings for the unhoused and at-risk.
- Engage with cities/counties for improved solutions.
- Collaborate to devise **real solutions** for homelessness.
- Holding funders and providers **accountable** to their efforts to end homelessness.

Membership

Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC) Members will consist of those with lived experiences of homelessness or those closely associated with the unhoused community. Members will serve as representatives and advocates, driving the committee's initiatives.

LEAC Members must be members of the Pinellas Continuum of Care (CoC). CoC Membership is free for persons with lived experiences of homelessness within the last 7 years. Scholarships for CoC membership may be available for those who experienced homelessness more than 7 years ago.

Recommended members for this committee include individuals with lived experience who represent the following organizations, groups, or persons:

- 2 People who have previously experienced homelessness and are employed at a CoC member agency
- 2 People who are currently experiencing homelessness in Pinellas County
- 2 People who experienced homelessness within the last 7 years but are not currently experiencing homelessness
- 1 Person living with a physical disability
- 1 Person living with a mental/emotional disability
- 1 Survivor of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking
- 1 Person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, regardless of length of service, and who was discharged or released there from, excluding anyone who received a dishonorable discharge
- 1 Person who is a part of the LGBTQIA+ community
- 1 Person who is part of a family with minor children
- 1 Person who is a senior

Attendance

The quorum for Lived Experience Advisory Council meetings follows quorum requirements set in the CoC Charter. As of December 2023, quorum requirement is 50% + 1. Every member is asked to RSVP to the monthly meeting announcements for physical attendance. In-person attendance counts towards quorum; virtual attendance is not allowed unless an accommodation has been requested and approved. Attendance for all voting members will be tracked. LEAC follows attendance requirements as set in the CoC Charter. As of November 2023, excused absences can be granted for up to 25% of annual meetings. Members with unexcused absences for more than 25% of meetings will be asked by the Chair to step down.

Responsibilities

The CoC Charter dictates that Lived experience Advisory Committee have a Chair and Vice Chair which are to be elected by the Committee itself. The Committee may also elect a Secretary. The Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary will serve one-year terms, from January 1 to December 31. Elections will be held in December. If no Secretary is elected, the HLA Staff Liaison will serve as the Secretary.

A member of LEAC Leadership – either the Chair, Vice Chair, or Secretary – will participate in the CoC's Board of Directors meetings.

Leadership roles will be established to guide the committee's direction, ensure adherence to this charter, and liaise with external stakeholders.

Leadership within the Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC) will be structured around key positions to ensure effective governance and guidance.

1. **Chair:** The Chair will be elected by LEAC members. Their responsibilities will include setting the agenda for meetings, liaising with external stakeholders, ensuring that the committee's objectives are being met, and leading the committee in discussions and decision-making processes. The Chair will participate in the bimonthly CoC Board of Directors meetings.
2. **Vice Chair:** The Vice-Chair will also be elected by LEAC members. They will assist the Chair in their duties and will assume the role of Chair in their absence. The Vice Chair will also oversee subcommittees (if decided necessary) or working groups within LEAC and ensure smooth communication between different factions of the committee. If the Chair is unavailable, the Vice Chair will participate in the bimonthly CoC Board of Directors meetings.
3. **Secretary:** The Secretary may also be elected by LEAC members, though this position is not required. If elected, the Secretary will be responsible for taking meeting notes and leading LEAC meetings in the Chair or Vice Chair's absence. If the Chair and Vice Chair are unavailable, the Secretary will participate in the bimonthly CoC Board of Directors meetings.
4. **HLA Liaison:** The HLA Liaison will support the Committee administratively and creatively. The Liaison will assist in setting up, and breaking down meetings, preparing agendas and packets to be posted and shared, collecting relevant materials for the Committee and other administrative tasks.

The Lived Experience Advisory Committee may vote to elect a Chair and Co-Chair instead of a Chair and Vice Chair. In this circumstance the Chair and Co-Chair would share the responsibilities of the Chair and Vice Chair; responsibilities for the Secretary and HLA Staff Liaison would not change.

Meetings

1. Meetings will be held in locations that are **safe, respectful, and inclusive**.
2. Ensure **equal opportunity** for all members to voice their concerns.
3. Meetings will adhere to the guidelines set out in this charter to maintain a constructive environment.
4. Agenda items will include but are not limited to addressing the expectations, needs, compensation options, and services/programs beneficial to the unhoused community in Pinellas County.

Meeting Cancellations

Meetings may be cancelled at the discretion of Lived Experience Committee leadership or by voting decision of Committee.

Meeting Agendas

All members may request items be added to the agenda in advance of the meeting. HLA staff will email the final agenda including all attachments, information items, and reports to Council members at least one week prior to the meeting.

Meeting Accommodations

Any member may request accommodations due to a disability. Accommodations may be made for other circumstances with prior approval from the LEAC Chair, LEAC Vice or Co-Chair, and/or HLA.

Rules of Engagement

To ensure productive and respectful interactions during our meetings and collaborations, the following Rules of Engagement have been established:

1. **Active Listening:** All members are encouraged to listen attentively to each speaker without interrupting. Everyone's viewpoint is valuable.
2. **Constructive Feedback:** When providing feedback, members should do so constructively, focusing on the issue at hand and not on the individual.
3. **Maintain Confidentiality:** Personal stories, experiences, or any sensitive information shared within the committee stays within the committee unless explicit permission is given.
4. **Timeliness:** Members are encouraged to be punctual for meetings. This respects everyone's time and ensures all agenda items can be covered.
5. **Equal Participation:** All members have an equal right to voice their opinions. Dominating discussions or sidelining certain members will not be tolerated.
6. **Avoid Aggressive Behavior:** All discussions should be held in a calm and respectful manner. Aggressive behavior, whether verbal or physical, is strictly prohibited.

7. **Conflict Resolution:** Any disagreements or conflicts that arise should be addressed directly, constructively, and respectfully. If necessary, a third party or mediator can be brought in to facilitate resolution.
8. **Stay On Topic:** While diverse opinions and tangents can be valuable, members should strive to stay on the topic at hand to ensure the meeting's objectives are met.
9. **Use "I" Statements:** To avoid making generalizations or assumptions, members are encouraged to speak from personal experiences using "I" statements.
10. **No Discrimination:** Discrimination of any form, whether based on race, gender, sexuality, religion, or any other factor, is strictly prohibited.

By following these Rules of Engagement, we aim to foster a supportive, inclusive, and productive environment within the LEAC, ensuring that our initiatives and collaborations remain effective and impactful.

By adhering to this charter, LEAC aims to be a beacon of hope, solutions, and transformation for the unhoused community in Pinellas County. Through collaboration, respect, and action, we believe in paving the way towards a more inclusive and supportive future.

Reviewing and Updating the Lived Experience Advisory Committee Charter

At least once every other year, the Pinellas Continuum of Care (CoC) Lived Experience Advisory Committee (LEAC) must review this Charter in consultation with the Homeless Leadership Alliance of Pinellas (HLA), the lead agency, lead HMIS agency, and Collaborative Applicant in and for the Pinellas CoC. It is the HLA's responsibility to review HUD rules, regulations, and guidance and to suggest updates to the Charter. The updates must be presented on the agenda prior to the meeting. Updates to the Charter require a vote of the Members of the LEAC. Updated Committee Charters must also receive approval from the CoC Board of Directors. Housekeeping changes that do not change the content or intent of the Charter can be made once a year.

Review and Updating History		
Date Revision Approved	Summary	Summary of Vote