Introduction

The CSH Quality Supportive Housing Certification process evaluates existing supportive housing developments to determine if they meet or exceed CSH Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing standards. Projects that do will receive CSH's Quality Stamp of Approval and stand out in the industry as having the highest quality supportive housing. The certification process itself will provide immediate feedback on project operations to use for continuous quality improvement and/or in long-term planning. Additionally, CSH will highlight certified projects in our communications materials including our *Homefront* newsletter, the CSH website and in other print and digital communications. Recipients of the Quality Stamp of Approval will receive a Certification Package for promotional and fundraising materials.

Is Certification Right for My Supportive Housing Project?

Receiving CSH's Quality Stamp of Approval comes with many benefits, including knowing that your single- or scattered-site project has been identified as among the best nationwide in the supportive housing industry..

Eligibility: CSH evaluates projects based on our Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing standards, which require projects to:

- Maintain affordability, meaning the tenant household ideally pays no more than 30% of its income toward rent
- Provide tenant households with a lease or sublease identical to non-supportive housing — with no limits on length of tenancy, as long as lease terms and conditions are met
- Proactively engage members of the tenant household in a flexible and comprehensive array of supportive services, without requiring participation in services as a condition of ongoing tenancy
- Effectively coordinate with key partners to address issues resulting from substance use, mental health and other crises, with a focus on fostering housing stability
- Support tenants in connecting with community-based resources and activities, interacting with diverse individuals including those without disabilities, and building strong social support networks.
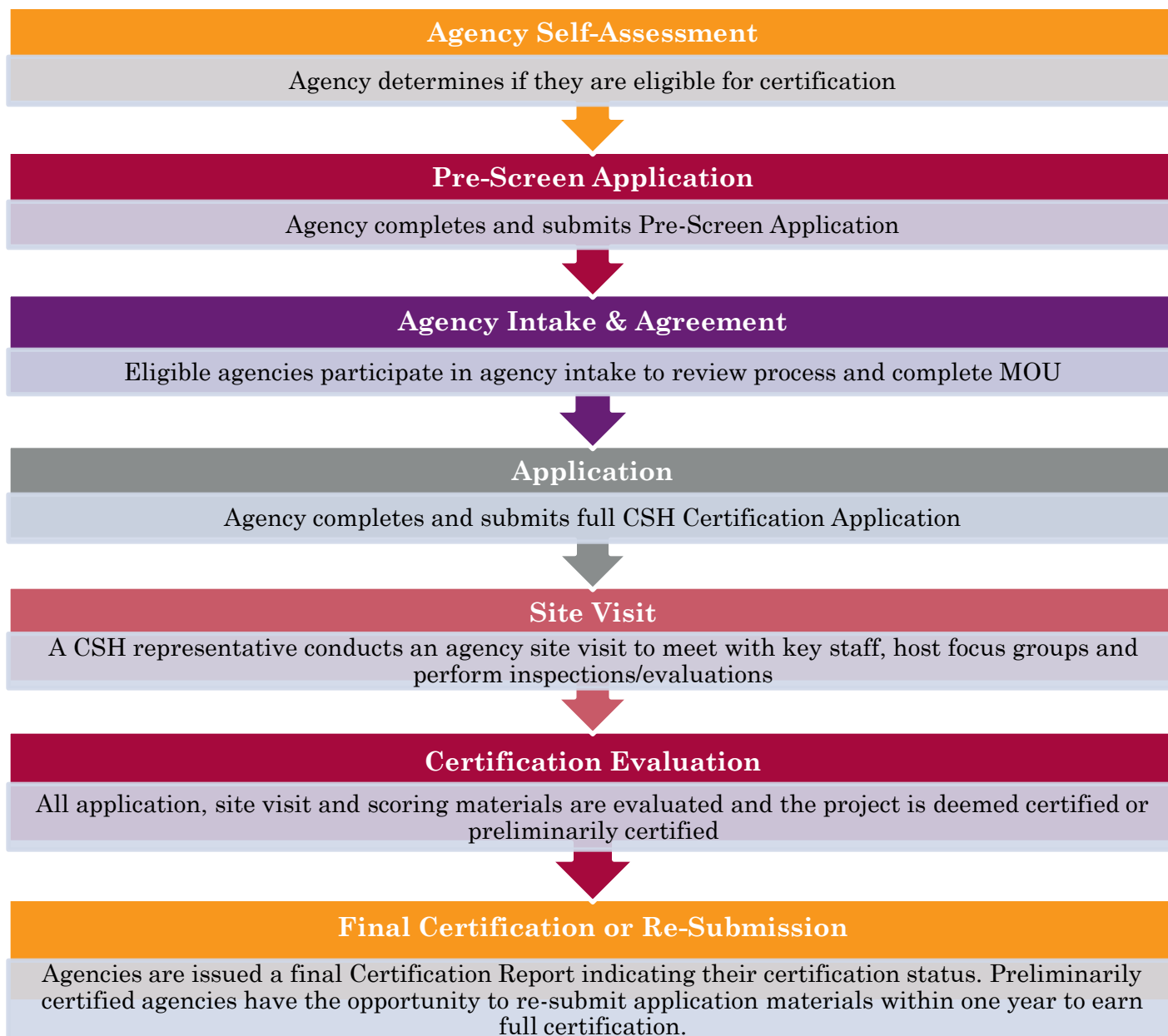
Projects should be operational for at least **one full year** prior to being certified. This means tenants will have lived in the housing project or scattered site program for at least one full year (365 days), as many standards related to tenant outcomes require data from one full year of resident operations. Please see the attached Quality Supportive Housing Certification Pre-Screening document for a glimpse at initial information required to determine whether your project is eligible for certification.

What Do We Certify?

CSH certifies housing projects, not agencies. The housing projects we certify can be either single-site or scattered-site supportive housing projects/programs. Projects that are determined eligible for certification based on pre-screening results will have an assigned CSH evaluator who will guide organizations throughout the certification process that is outlined below:

Certification Process Overview

The CSH Certification process is outlined below. A detailed process checklist, containing additional information, can be found in Exhibit A.

Agency Self-Assessment
Agency determines if they are eligible for certification

Pre-Screen Application
Agency completes and submits Pre-Screen Application

Agency Intake & Agreement
Eligible agencies participate in agency intake to review process and complete MOU

Application
Agency completes and submits full CSH Certification Application

Site Visit
A CSH representative conducts an agency site visit to meet with key staff, host focus groups and perform inspections/evaluations

Certification Evaluation
All application, site visit and scoring materials are evaluated and the project is deemed certified or preliminarily certified

Final Certification or Re-Submission
Agencies are issued a final Certification Report indicating their certification status. Preliminarily certified agencies have the opportunity to re-submit application materials within one year to earn full certification.

Certification Standards, Review and Scoring

Background on the CSH Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing, Second Edition

Over its 20-year history, CSH has worked to promote the development of supportive housing throughout the country at the highest levels of quality. Based on its knowledge, and following more than two years of focused conversations with supportive housing tenants, providers, funders and stakeholders, CSH in 2009 created a comprehensive set of resources describing quality in supportive housing — the Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing (DOQ).

Since that time, CSH has provided training and technical assistance to numerous organizations using the DOQ as a framework. Many organizations have accessed and used the DOQ to plan or strengthen their projects. Based on these experiences, CSH identified aspects of the DOQ that have been most valuable to communities, as well as opportunities to strengthen them. This second edition of the Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing reflects our work with communities to identify the aspects of high-quality supportive housing projects, and it includes updates to align with best practices in the field.

In creating and sharing the CSH Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing, CSH strives to:

- o Build the capacity of the supportive and affordable housing industries to create and operate high quality, effective, and sustainable supportive housing units.
- o Encourage the investment of adequate resources, especially from public systems, to support that capacity
- o Ensure that existing resources for supportive housing are being used efficiently and effectively, and support the allocation of new resources
- o Create better outcomes for supportive housing tenants, especially those with multiple barriers to housing stability

Scoring

After the evaluator conducts site visits and collects the necessary information, that information, along with application data and supportive documentation are compiled into a score report. Based on this information, the project will either meet, exceed or will not meet the standards of the scoring indicators outlined below.

- *Meeting standards:* the project satisfied the requirement for that particular indicator (e.g. attained the baseline %, provides certain key services or has key policies in place).
- **Exceeding standards:** the project exceeded the requirement for that particular indicator (e.g. scored higher than the baseline %, provides services that are above and beyond, provides more tenant engagement opportunities than what is required)

Scoring indicators: The overall certification evaluation contains a series of criteria that must meet standards in each of the scoring categories. These scoring indicators are based on the Dimensions of Quality outcomes outlined above, and your project's application, requested documents and the evaluator site visit, inform whether the project does not meet, meets or exceeds the standard for each indicator. Example scoring indicators are as follows:

- *% of tenants report they are aware of the services provided to them*
- *A tenant satisfaction survey is administered at least annually*
- *There are documented instances in which data has been used to make changes in support of meeting/exceeding project or community goals/standards.*

Scoring categories: Scoring indicators are grouped into categories. To become certified, a project must meet standards for at least **70%** of scoring indicators in each of the five categories:

- *Core Outcomes for Tenants*: At its core, supportive housing focuses on improving the lives of its tenants. To meet standards, the project must deliver on key outcomes for tenants related to primary and behavioral health, retention of housing, engagement and satisfaction.
- *Project Design and Administration*: the process of planning and leading the supportive housing project, including key decisions about physical structure, team members and funding. TO meet standards, the project must show it has engaged in tenant-centered planning, outcomes creation and monitoring, is accessible to services and amenities and the project or program provides safe and adequate units and social spaces.
- *Property & Housing Management*: the ongoing operation of supportive housing and connection to private market landlords. To meet standards, the project or program must deliver on indicators related to information dissemination, tenant feedback, management of unit vacancies, and must have few, if any, eligibility requirements.
- *Supportive Services*: the package of support services available to help tenants use stable housing as a platform for individual health, recovery and personal growth. To meet standards, the project or program must engage tenants in service planning, consistently provide accessible effective and tailored services, train staff in best practices and secure sufficient services funding.
- *Community*: The relationship to and role of housing in the larger context in which it operates. To meet standards, the project or program must

CSH Project Certification Levels Criteria & Validation

Not Certified	*Preliminarily Certified*	*Certified*	*Certified - Silver*	*Certified - Gold*
The project did not met 70% of the scoring indicators in TWO of the five scoring categories	Project met standards for at least 70% of the scoring indicators in TWO-FOUR of the five scoring categories	Project **met standards** for at least **70%** of the scoring indicators in ALL of the five scoring categories	Project attained Certified status Project **exceeded standards** for **50%** of scoring indicators	Project attained Certified status Project **exceeded standards** for **70%** of scoring indicators
The project is not eligible to re-apply for certification for at least three years	The agency must complete additional requirements in order to be certified. They have one year to do so.	Certified status is valid for 3 years from the date of issue. Certified projects meet the standards of CSH's Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing	Certified Silver status is valid for 3 years from the date of issue. Silver projects stand out among peers in the industry and have adopted best practices	Certified Gold status is valid for 3 years from the date of issue. These projects are leading the industry with innovations and best practices.

Re-Certification & Certification Upgrades

Certified projects have the opportunity to re-validate their current certification status once it expires by completing a re-certification process. Alternatively, agencies may choose to apply for a higher-level certification status for the project. This can also be done once the current certification nears its expiration date. Interested agencies would participate in a more extensive certification "upgrade" process. Certified projects undergo re-certification at a discounted rate from initial certification.

What Do Industry Changes Mean for Your Certification?

As the supportive housing industry continues to evolve and new best practices are identified, we anticipate that our Dimensions of Quality standards will also evolve. Any new metrics and standards will be incorporated into the renewal process and agencies will be given adequate time to implement any new policies or processes prior to a new certification status being issued.

Certification Status Use and Promotion

CSH encourages all supportive housing providers to promote their rating with the public as a testament to their commitment to high quality outcomes for the tenants they serve. Certified supportive housing projects can access quality logos to be used in digital or print marketing materials and are also provided with a certificate that can be shared with funders or other stakeholders.

Once your project has been certified, CSH will provide final documents indicating your certification type, use of the certification, and communication and promotion.

For all certified projects, CSH will:

- Sign an MOU with the agency detailing the benefits, communications, and terms of the certification
- Create a profile for distribution through our website, newsletter, or CSH Training Center
- Highlight the project in trainings or communications materials as an example for other communities

CSH asks all certified projects to:

- Provide current photos of the project and/or tenants that can be utilized in the promotion of your project as a quality supportive housing project, we will furnish necessary photo release documents
- Provide a quote for use on the website and promotional materials
- Refer to the certification as the "CSH Quality Supportive Housing Certification" in any materials, proposals, or communications
- Promote their certification as appropriate to funders, board members, and key stakeholders
- Specific details related to communications/promotion of your certification and use of the Quality Stamp of Approval will be furnished to certified projects

Exhibit A

Certification Process Checklist

☐	**Assess Your Agency for Eligibility and Capacity**	Agencies interested in becoming certified are encouraged to spend some time reviewing CSH's Dimensions of Quality standards to become familiar with whether their agency can meet our quality standards. Additionally, it may be beneficial for agencies to participate in some of CSH's online trainings to further assess whether certification is right for the agency. Finally, agencies should review the Pre-Screen Application to determine if most answers on this pre-screen would be "Yes" for the project being evaluated. **Tools to consult:** CSH's Dimensions of Quality Toolkit CSH's Dimensions of Quality Guidebook **Data/documentation that may be required throughout the process**: information from tenant files or rent roll, unit subsidy information, copy of a lease, service plan, Board of Directors meeting minutes or member list, map of community amenities, key staff roles and responsibilities, policies, copy of house rules, eligibility criteria, inspection and maintenance plan, agency partners or MOUs and descriptions of programs, services, tenant engagement, collaborations, funding and affordability preservation.
☐	**Complete and Submit a Pre-Screen Application**	CSH's Quality Certification Process begins with an agency submitting the prescreen application to CSH. 1. Access the prescreen via our website: www.csh.org/certification 2. Complete and submit it to certification@csh.org 3. A CSH staff person will be in touch with you regarding next steps.
☐	**Complete Intake Call**	The purpose of the intake call is to review the Certification process, establish a timeline that works for both CSH and the agency, and answer any questions you may have. It is also an opportunity for CSH to begin learning about your agency.
☐	**Enter into MOU Agreement and Contracting**	Next, CSH and your agency will enter into an agreement solidifying the goals of the certification, necessary fees, and requirements throughout the process.
☐	**Complete and Submit Full Application**	After the intake call, the agency will begin working on the Certification Application. This form requires the agency to complete 50 questions, and submit narratives and supporting documentation for review.
☐	**Prepare Your Project for a Site Visit**	After CSH staff review the application, we will establish an appropriate date for conducting the site visit. We may have additional questions that we will seek to have answered by staff while on-site and we will make every effort to let you know about these ahead of time. While preparing for the site visit, agencies must create a schedule for the site visit, ensuring all necessary site visit components are included.

☐		*A sample site visit schedule is provided in Exhibit B.* This schedule should be sent to your primary certification contact 1 week in advance of the scheduled site visit.
☐	**Host the Site Visit**	The project evaluator assigned to each project performs the site visit. During the visit, evaluators will inspect facilities and tenant units, will hold a focus group with tenants, will meet with key staff and will request supporting documentation. *Please see the Site Visit Verification List in Exhibit C.*
☐	**Receive & Review Your Certification Report**	After the site visit is complete and all supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed, CSH will synthesize information from the project's application, site visit and supportive documentation and the project will be evaluated and scored according to CSH's standardized scoring tool. CSH will then prepare a tailored Certification Report that indicates the project's official certification status (see scoring below) with a detailed overview of areas where the project did not meet standards and areas where the project exceeded them.
☐	**Submit any Appeals or Re-submit Data / Documentation**	Projects that obtain Preliminarily Certified status will have the opportunity to re-submit a portion of their application within one year if they have new information or documentation that would enable the project to meet standards on scoring indicators where they previously did not meet standards.
☐	**Receive Your Project's Final Certification Status**	Once the project has reviewed the Certification Report, and returned a signed copy to CSH, CSH will issue the project's final certification and will provide a Certification Package to the agency, which will include marketing and communications materials. The project will be featured on CSH's website and marketing and the agency may receive invitations to be featured in webinars and trainings, conferences and publications.

EXHIBIT B

Sample Site Visit Schedule

9-10am: Site visit to both the building and a representative sample of units (minimum of 3)

10-11am: Focus Group with Tenants

11am-12pm: Focus group with direct service staff

12-2pm: Meetings with other key staff:

- Organization executive director
- Property or Housing Management staff
- Service Provider staff
- Finance staff – review funding sources of projects
- Close external partners (if applicable)
- Other key project staff

EXHIBIT C

Site Visit Verification List

This is a list of items that are verified during the site visit as part of the CSH Quality Supportive Housing Certification Program. Any documentation related to the following can be provided electronically in advance, paper-form on site, or electronically after the site visit.

- Documented instances of how tenant feedback has been incorporated into the supportive housing project
- Evidence of capital funding sources that show presence of a mission-focused owner, to keep the property affordable
- Evidence that the operating budget includes long-term operating subsidies or a rent reserve sufficient to meet operational costs while maintaining affordable tenant rents
- Evidence that the operating budget includes a recurring replacement reserve to repair/replace major systems that is consistent with state housing finance agency or other funder standards
- Budgetary information that shows a strategy for maintaining affordability (built projects)
- Copy of rental reserves
- Annual budget
- Sample rent repayment plan
- Evidence of service funding commitment

The evaluator will also meet with staff and tenants to get feedback on other Quality Housing standards such as services, amenities, facilities, community involvement, collaboration, property management and tenant outcomes.