



SAFE HOUSE

P R O J E C T

SAFE HOUSE CERTIFICATION NARRATIVE & DOCUMENTATION

August 2021

NARRATIVES AND DOCUMENTATION

Safe House Certification Review Board's decision for certifying an organization is derived from:

- 1) the organization's application for certification,
- 2) the documentation provided as evidence to support the narratives within the application, and
- 3) the site visit observations and discussions with the parties participating in the site visit.

The narratives and documentation provide the Safe House Certification Review Board with an understanding of your organization's operations and how you are performing in each of the criteria. The Final Certification Report issued by the Certification Review Team provides an in-depth description of our observations and understanding of your adherence with each of the 67 guidelines.

Your answers to the SHC application questions for programs operated by your organization will provide us with an understanding of the inner operations of your organization. This understanding allows reviewers to note what areas are operating within best practices, as well as what areas are meeting minimum standards and the ways in which you can improve areas not meeting standards for best practices.

Narrative Responses

Narratives should be written clearly and concisely to provide the information needed to understand your organization's adherence with each guideline. The indicators under each guideline detail both the guideline and the standards by which they are evaluated. Your response to the indicators will provide the Safe House Certification Reviewer Team with a better understanding of your organization's operations.

Content & Organization

- a. Type the narrative responses for each question within the certification directly into the space provided below them within the Certification Application. Keep in mind, when a narrative is requested, it should fully outline both how your organization meets the indicator, and what challenges the organization has already identified and how they are addressing them.
- b. Keep narratives concise, under 500 words. Narratives should clearly outline how they support the guideline being inquired about. All indicators for each guideline are outlined in Safe House Certification Guidelines & Indicators - August 2021.
- c. If an indicator does not apply to your organization, please respond with "N/A" and a short description of why the indicator is nonapplicable to your organization. This should not be a common occurrence unless your organization does not participate in a specific

program or provide specialized services to survivors as outlined in criteria section 5 of the Certification Guidelines.

Writing Style Considerations

- a. Be concise. It is recommended to keep narratives 500 words in length or less.
- b. Be specific: use examples, facts, and specific references.
 - i. For example, instead of “minor survivors”, use “female survivors, ages 12-17”.
- c. Use active, not passive voice
 - i. For example, instead of “The certification process began in fall of 2021.”, use “SHP initiated the certification process in fall of 2021.”

Supporting Documentation

Content of Documentation

- a. The Safe House Certification Guidelines & Indicators - July 2021 document provides common documentation and evidence that is used to demonstrate how your organization adheres to specific guidelines. A list of these documents can be found in the Common Documentation tool in the appendix of this document. This tool is meant to help you, as the person filling out the Certification Application, select which document best supports adherence to each guideline. Should you have other documentation that reflects met guidelines, those documents are acceptable for use.
- b. The Safe House Certification Guidelines & Indicators - July 2021 and Common Documentation tools are not all-inclusive. Safe House Project reviewers understand that each organization is unique and will take all submitted documentation on its own merits and relevance to the organization.

Additional Documentation Guidance

- a. Selected documents should demonstrate the functioning of programs and adhere to the organization’s mission, vision, and values, as they are representative of your organization and are viewed by Safe House Certification Review Team as such.
- b. All uploaded documentation of policies, procedures, and plans should be current and in use by the organization.
- c. Your organization is free to upload additional documents in order to adequately show adherence to guidelines. Additional documents should be clearly labeled in the upload section. Additional documents can be uploaded to the “Additional Documents” section at the end of each section of the Certification Application.

- d. Each program seeking Safe House Certification should upload the most efficient documentation to show adherence to guidelines. Reviewers will evaluate each uploaded document, so evidence uploaded should be concise and well organized, just as narratives should be.

Documentation Description

- a. A short description for each document uploaded assists reviewers in understanding the document's relevance to each guideline.
- b. If the uploaded document is a portion of a larger document, the description should identify what document the segment was taken from.
- c. The description should detail specifically where in the uploaded document the evidence of adherence to the specific guideline is. Should one document contain evidence of adherence for multiple guidelines, each location should be noted.

APPENDIX

Common Documentation

Below is a general checklist for the common documentation Safe House Project will review once your organization becomes a candidate for certification. This checklist is a general guide for all organizations. It is not meant to be all inclusive, or overly specific, as we recognize there will be documentation that is needed for your specific organization and the methods used to adhere to guidelines. Evidence for compliance with a specific standard and guideline is often part of or within one or more of the documents below.

Organizational Structure and Compliance	Have Current Document	Needs Updating	Don't Have-Needs Development	N/A
Certifications Held by Employees				
Code of Ethics and/or Conflict of Interest policies				
Contracts or MOUs with other Anti-trafficking Affiliates				
Employee Ethics Policy				
Employee survey instruments and aggregate results				
Employee turnover rate				
HR Policy Manual				
Job Descriptions				
Organizational Chart				
Staff Orientation & Training Manuals				
Staff Policies and Procedures Document				
Employee Handbook				
Volunteer Handbook				
Audit or inspection reports				
Employee Background Check Reports				
Volunteer Training Logs				
Recent incident reports				
Residential Programming and Services	Have Current Document	Needs Updating	Don't Have-Needs Development	N/A

Client Handbook				
Contracts or MOUs with program service providers				
In-take Form(s)				
Policies & Procedures for Residential Program				
Program Licensing Document(s)				
Annual Report				
Future Development Plan				
Wait list Policy				
Governance and Executive Leadership	Have Current Document	Needs Updating	Don't Have-Needs Development	N/A
Articles of Incorporation				
Board Composition				
Board Handbook				
Board Meeting Agendas for last year				
Board Meeting Minutes for last year				
Board Orientation & Training Materials				
Sample Minutes				
Board & Executive Leadership Bios				
Board subcommittees: including purpose, membership and meeting frequency				
By-laws				
Copies of Docs board must sign				
Financial Management	Have Current Document	Needs Updating	Don't Have-Needs Development	N/A
Annual Financial Audit or IRS 990				
Budget vs. actual expenses for last year				
Current operating budget				
Program Budgets and narratives				

Current monthly financial statements				
Finance Committee Reports for last year				
Financial policies and procedures				
Insurance policies and coverage amounts				
Investment policy				
proposed operating budget for next year				
staff salaries, work status (full-time, part-time, etc.), and hours worked per month				
Title and Salary for the top 5 highest compensated employees				
Strategic Plan				
Specialized Services	Have Current Document	Needs Updating	Don't Have-Needs Development	N/A
Contracts or MOUs with program service providers				
Other	Have Current Document	Needs Updating	Don't Have-Needs Development	N/A
Marketing/ Communication materials				
Narratives describing programs				
Website information				