



**THE MAHONING COUNTY HOMELESS CONTINUUM OF CARE**  
**Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures**

**Approved:**

**September 5, 2019**

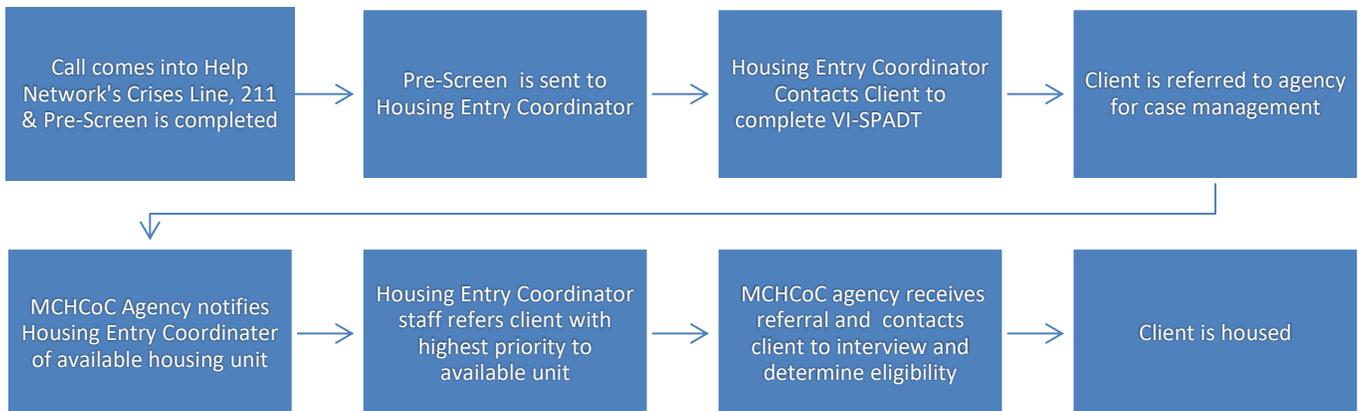
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## Overview Coordinated Entry Process

The goal of Coordinated Entry is to focus on the most vulnerable people within our community and move them into housing quickly. The goal of this program is to have a person housed within 60 days of entering Coordinated Entry.

To be entered into Coordinated Entry, a person will call Help Network's Crises Line, 211 and a crisis worker will complete a short prescreen assessment to determine if the person meets the criteria for Coordinated Entry . At that time the crisis worker will also make a referral to an emergency shelter, as well as other emergency services the person may need. After the prescreen is completed, the crisis worker will forward the prescreen to the Housing Entry Coordinator. The Housing Entry Coordinator will follow up with the homeless person, confirm that the person will be able to verify their homelessness and complete the appropriate VI-SPDAT assessment. After gathering this information, the person will be entered into HMIS and added to the prioritization list and if appropriate, the information will be forwarded to a housing project for case management. At a monthly Case Management meeting, people that have been entered into Coordinated Entry within the past month will be reviewed on status and any complications. . The agency assists the person with getting the documentation needed to move into housing and to give the person a point of contact to call with any questions and update any information that changes such as phone number. The person will then be referred to a housing project when an opening occurs.



## Definitions

**HMIS** Homeless Management Information System

**Housing Entry Coordinator** person employed by Help Network of Northeast Ohio, who is a part of the Coordinated Entry Team who completes VI-SPDAT, prioritizes people looking for housing, issues referrals to participating agencies and keeps current/ updated information in HMIS for homeless people.

**MCHCoC** Mahoning County Homeless Continuum of Care

**VI-SPDAT** Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool

**FVI-SPDAT** Family Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool

**TAYVI-SPDAT** Transition Aged Youth Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool

## **Standard Assessment Tool**

The MCHCoC has chosen to use the VI-SPDAT created by Community Solutions. This standard tool will be used to assess all people that would like to go through the Coordinated Entry process. While this is a standardized tool, all people that call into Coordinated Entry are made aware that they do not have to answer a question or a question can be re-phrased. Any person or professional that the person is working with can call to update information in the VI-SPDAT, in order to assist in getting a clearer picture of the person and their needs.

The VI-SPDAT is primarily completed by the Housing Entry Coordinator. However, in occasional circumstances where a person does not have a phone or is difficult to maintain contact with, the PATH Homeless Outreach Team will complete a paper VI-SPDAT and it will be entered in HMIS. All persons completing the VI-SPDAT's follow the same script (Appendix B) and complete training on the tool at least annually.

## **Release of Information**

Prior to completing the VI-SPDAT the Housing Entry Coordinator asks for verbal consent from the person to be entered into HMIS. If a person cannot have their information entered in HMIS for safety concerns, they can be entered as "anonymous".

## **Accessibility**

MCHCoC is utilizing the single point of access for its Coordinated Entry process. While an initial phone call is made to the person requesting housing, Coordinated Entry operates in a building that is open to the public and is accessible to all populations. The building is on the local bus line and it is around other community resource programs. If a person has limited mobility, the Housing Entry Coordinator can meet the person where is easiest.

## **Hours of Operation**

The Help Network's Crises Line, 211 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Housing Entry Coordinator is available Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00pm. TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf) is available at 330-744-0579 or 1-800-750-0750. Translators are also available.

## **Eligibility**

Eligibility for Coordinated Entry is based on the projects that participate in the system through the MCHCoC. At the different steps of Coordinated Entry, homelessness is assessed and if a person is not currently residing in an emergency shelter, the PATH Homeless Outreach Team, is able to follow up with the person to verify homelessness. Projects must notify Coordinated Entry of their program requirements and update the requirements as they change. Once a person is referred to a project, the project is responsible for gathering information documenting homeless and other paperwork/ documentation required for project entry.

If a Veteran calls, they will be entered into the Coordinated Entry program, but also referred to the local VA at 1-877-424-3838.

## **Referrals to Projects**

A project will notify the Housing Entry Coordinator there is an opening or a project opening with their project. The project will specify if the opening is for a single or a family.

The Housing Entry Coordinator will run a “referrals” report in HMIS, with the following order: Referral Ranking, VI-SPDAT score and referral date. The Housing Entry Coordinator will follow Prioritization Standards is followed, which has been approved by the MCHCoC Executive Board (see below).

The first person on the prioritization list that meets the projects’ requirements is referred to the project within HMIS. The Housing Entry Coordinated contacts the person before the referral is made, to confirm that the person is still homeless and would like the project where they are being referred. The Housing Entry Coordinator also emails the project for notification of the referral.

Once the person is accepted into the housing project, the project will notify the Housing Entry Coordinator, then the person will be exited from the Coordinated Entry Program.

## **Prioritization Standards**

### **First Priority—Homeless Individuals and Families with a Disability with Long Periods of Episodic Homelessness and Severe Service Needs**

An individual or family that is eligible for CoC Program-funded PSH who has experienced fewer than four occasions where they have been living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter but where the cumulative time homeless is at least 12 months **and** has been identified as having severe service needs.

### **Second Priority—Homeless Individuals and Families with a Disability with Severe Service Needs.**

An individual or family that is eligible for CoC Program-funded PSH who is residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter and has been identified as having severe service needs. The length of time in which households have been homeless should also be considered when prioritizing households that meet this order of priority, but there is not a minimum length of time required.

### **Third Priority—Homeless Individuals and Families with a Disability Coming from Places Not Meant for Human Habitation, Safe Haven, or Emergency Shelter Without Severe Service Needs.**

An individual or family that is eligible for CoC Program-funded PSH who is residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter where the individual or family has not been identified as having severe service needs. The length of time in which households have been homeless should be considered when prioritizing households that meet this order of priority, but there is not a minimum length of time required.

### **Fourth Priority—Homeless Individuals and Families with a Disability Coming from Transitional Housing.**

An individual or family that is eligible for CoC Program-funded PSH who is currently residing in a transitional housing project, where prior to residing in the transitional housing had lived in a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or safe haven. This priority also includes individuals and families residing in transitional housing who were fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking and prior to residing in that transitional housing project even if they did not live in a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter, or a safe haven prior to entry in the transitional housing.

The minimum score range associated with the assessments for housing resources of Rapid Re-Housing (RRH), Transitional Housing (TH) or Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is as follows:

1. Households will be referred to **RRH** based on the availability of resources and the client's VI-SPDAT score.
2. Households will be referred to **TH** based on the availability of TH units, the client's VI-SPDAT score, and at least one of the following criteria:
  - **Youth** – All individuals between the ages of 15-24 who present as a household. This can include unaccompanied youth (household size of one) or multiple youth who are related, such as siblings, cousins, or other family members who are seeking assistance together.
  - **Youth Parent(s)** – Women and men between the ages of 15-24 who are the parent(s) of at least one (1) child and are seeking assistance with that child(ren).
  - **Domestic Violence Survivors** – Households with at least one person who identifies a domestic violence experience as the primary reason causing their housing crisis.
  - **Persons Being Released From Correctional Facilities** – and are homeless before entering prison/jail and/or homeless (as per HUD definition) when released.
  - **Pregnant Women** – Women who are pregnant regardless of their age or whether they have additional children.
  - **Persons in the Early Stages of Alcohol or Drug (AOD) Addiction Recovery**- Households with at least one (1) person who recently began receiving services to assist in their recovery from alcohol or other drug addiction. This can include (but not limited to) people who were recently released from a treatment center or other institution.
  - **Veterans** – (choosing Grant and Per Diem – GPD).
3. Households will be referred to **PSH** based on the VI-SPDAT score and the following specific criteria:
  - Chronic Homelessness as defined by HUD
  - Long-Term Homelessness as defined by Federal and State mandates
  - Longest history of homelessness
  - Most severe Service Needs as determined by the VI-SPDAT

### **Housing Matching Prioritization Process for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)**

The following represents the uniform process to be used across the community within the MCHCoC for assessing individuals and matching them to an intervention. Within each category, prioritization of placement into housing is paramount.

Individuals who score an eight (8) or above on the VI-SPDAT or a score of twelve (12) or above on the F VI-SPDAT, which signals the need for Permanent Supportive Housing will be prioritized based on the following criteria:

1. **Length of Time Homeless**: Priority is given to individuals or families that have experienced homelessness consecutively for the least twelve (12) months or longer OR have been homeless more than four (4) times within the last three (3) years and with a disabling condition of long duration.
2. **Medical Vulnerability**: Homeless individuals with severe medical needs who are at greater risk of death will receive expedited placement. This determination is based on questions 22-34 of the VI-SPDAT with a maximum score of five (5).

3. **Overall Wellness**: Individuals with similar medical needs as criteria #1, will be prioritized when the individual has behavioral health conditions or histories of substance use, which may either mask or exacerbate medical conditions. This score will be based on questions 21-50 of the VI-SPDAT (i.e., the “Wellness Domain”).
4. **Unsheltered Sleeping Location**: Unsheltered individuals will be given priority over sheltered individuals.
5. **Age**: The age of the individual or Head of Household, giving priority to elderly clients.
6. **Veterans**: Veterans who score an eight (8) or above on the VI-SPDAT or those veterans who are identified as chronically homeless and clinically appropriate for Grant Per Diem (GPD), VA contracted housing or community shelter in the interim are referred to HUD VA Supported Housing (VASH). Veterans not accepted into HUD-VASH who scored eight (8) or above on the VI-SPDAT are then placed on the priority list in HMIS to engage in other permanent housing options.

### **Housing Matching Prioritization Process for Transitional Housing (TH) and Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)**

For individuals scoring 4-7 on the VI-SPDAT or 5-11 on the F VI-SPDAT, the following process will be used to prioritize for Transitional Housing or Rapid Re-Housing Placement:

Scores of 4-7 on the VI-SPDAT for individuals or 8-11 on the F VI-SPDAT for families will be referred to Transitional Housing (TH).

Scores of 4-7 on the VI-SPDAT for individuals or 5-7 on the F VI-SPDAT for families will be referred to Rapid Re-Housing (RRH).

Individuals that score 4-7 on the VI-SPDAT, or families that score 5-11 on the F VI-SPDAT will be prioritized based on the following criteria:

1. **Date of Assessment**: The date of the individual’s assessment (giving priority to the most recent date of assessment).
2. **Unsheltered Sleeping Location**: Unsheltered individuals will be given priority over sheltered individuals.
3. **Length of Time Homeless**: The length of time an individual has experienced homelessness, giving priority to the person that has experienced a longer period of homelessness.
4. **Overall Wellness**: Homeless individuals with medical needs will be prioritized when they have behavioral health conditions or histories of substance use, which may either mask or exacerbate their medical conditions.
5. **Medical Vulnerability**: Homeless individuals with severe medical needs who are at greater risk of death will receive expedited placement into housing.

Any person referred to a project can decline the referral. It will be explained to the person, they will remain on the prioritization list, but the prioritization report is based on who presents with the most severe need and someone may present with a more severe need than them.

### **Transfer Process**

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) project participants may request a transfer to another PSH unit when the participants no longer meets the eligibility criteria for the project that currently houses them or when their current housing unit no long satisfies their needs. Appropriate reasons for granting a transfer include the following:

1. Circumstance in which the participants qualify for emergency transfers as victims of domestic violence under 24 CFR Part 5, Subpart L, or circumstances that justify the participants' belief on their housing project's belief that the participants' continued residence in their current unit poses an imminent danger to themselves or other;
2. The existence of verified disabilities that cannot be reasonably accommodated in the participant' current unit; and
3. Changes in the size or composition of a participants' household.

To request a unit transfer, the project or person may call Coordinated Entry and explain the reason for the request. If the request meets the above listed criteria, information will be updated in Coordinated Entry as needed and the person will move to the top of the prioritization list for housing.

### **Denying a Referral**

Before a client can be deemed "unreachable" the project will make three separate attempts to contact the person within seven (7) working days. The project will also contact the local emergency shelter, as well as the PATH Homeless Outreach Team, to see if these programs have had contact with the person. After these attempts and there is no contact, the project will notify the Housing Entry Coordinator. The Housing Entry Coordinator will call the person and give them two (2) business days to call back. If the person does not call back, the person can be denied in HMIS and a new referral will be made.

Each contact the project attempts should be documented in HMIS. The calls will be entered in "Client Notes" section within the "Client Profile" tab. Then, when the client is declined, the "Notes" will be updated within the referral from Coordinated Entry.

A project can make three denials for a reason, outside of homeless status or disability verification. After they have denied the third person, the Housing Entry Coordinator will notify the MCHCoC Director. The director will review the information, then a meeting occurs with the project.

### **60 Day Policy**

If an agency cannot find a person that was referred to them, the person will remain on the prioritization list for 60 days. The purpose of this policy is to allow this person who may no longer have a working number, make contact with another services, such as the emergency shelter or PATH Homeless Outreach. At 60 days the Housing Entry will attempt to call the person again to determine if they are in need of housing, if the person does not call back within 2 business days they will be removed from the prioritization list.

## **Exceptions to Coordinated Entry**

Due to the nature of their programs, the following agencies do not receive referrals through Coordinated Entry: Sojourner House, Daybreak Youth Crisis Center, Catholic Charities Regional Agency: Homeless Prevention Program, and Mahoning Valley Dispute Resolution Services.

## **Advertising Plan**

All agencies that receive referrals through Coordinated Entry will have a link to the MCHCoC website on their website, which describes the Coordinated Entry process. Flyers are given to Community Organizations to display at their agency to call 211 if looking for housing. The Housing Entry Coordinator and/or MCHCoC Program Manager speak at public meetings with service providers about the Coordinated Entry process and provide brochures and flyers for the program.

## **Privacy Protections**

Coordinated Entry staff must abide by the defined privacy protections in the HMIS End User Agreement. Client consent protocols, data use agreements, data disclosure policies and other privacy protections offered to program participants upon entry into Coordinated Entry.

Program participants have the right to refuse to answer any questions, though that may impact their assessment score and appropriate referrals. Participants will not be denied services for refusal to provide certain information. Participants are not required to disclose their specific disability or diagnosis for the Coordinated Entry process.

## **Appeal Process**

A person will be notified at the time of assessment with the Housing Entry Coordinator of their right to appeal their placement on the prioritization list. A participant can appeal their placement at any time and can do so by, notifying the Housing Entry Coordinator. The Housing Entry Coordinator will arrange a meeting or phone call to occur with the person(s) and the MCHCoC Director. A final determination will be given to the participant via a follow up phone call or letter, depending on the participant's preference.

## **Evaluation of Coordinated Entry**

At least annually, people that went through the Coordinated Entry will have the opportunity to complete an evaluation of the program.

Surveys are sent to people that received housing with a MCHCoC housing project, people that were entered into the project but found other housing and people that are still waiting for housing. Surveys are also placed at the local emergency shelters for people to complete and send in throughout the year.

The information gathered will be used to improve the Coordinated Entry process, as well as update the Policies and Procedures if necessary.

## **Meetings**

The Coordinated Entry Committee meets once monthly to review the current process and to update policies and procedures as needed.

Case Management meetings are held monthly with all agencies that receive people through Coordinated Entry.

**APPENDIX I:**

**MCHCoC Coordinated Entry Initial Engagement Prescreen**

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ HMIS \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ VISPDAT \_\_\_\_\_

Clients Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where did you sleep last night? \_\_\_\_\_ How long have you been there? \_\_\_\_\_  
Shelter, Transitional Housing or Street \_\_\_\_\_  
Home or Family/Friend Home \_\_\_\_\_  
Inpatient Program \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where was client prior to above? \_\_\_\_\_ Shelter or Street \_\_\_\_\_  
Home \_\_\_\_\_  
Family/Friend Home \_\_\_\_\_

3. Does client qualify as literally Homeless? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes - Continue with Screen  
\_\_\_\_\_ No- STOP Give Referrals

**PLEASE NOTE: Staying with a friend or family member is not considered homeless.  
Even though the caller may not have a place of their own, they have a safe place to stay.**

Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_  
Are you fleeing Domestic Violence? \_\_\_\_\_ Are you a Veteran: \_\_\_\_\_  
Household size: \_\_\_\_\_ Income? \_\_\_\_\_  
What caused you to be homeless? \_\_\_\_\_  
How long have you been homeless? \_\_\_\_\_ Date homelessness began \_\_\_\_\_  
How many times have you been homeless in the past 3 yrs? \_\_\_\_\_  
Do you have a disability? \_\_\_\_\_ Substance abuse? \_\_\_\_\_  
Do you have documentation of your disability? \_\_\_\_\_  
Type? \_\_\_\_\_  
Does Client have Current ID, Original SS Card & Birth Certificate? \_\_\_\_\_  
If not accessible by phone, where is best place to find you? \_\_\_\_\_  
Counselor Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_  
Does client give permission to share this information with other agencies? \_\_\_\_\_  
Are you interested in housing that requires sobriety/drug testing? \_\_\_\_\_  
Emergency Shelter and other Social Service referrals given/other notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please fax this form to Coordinated Entry -Housing Entry Coordinator**

**330-746-3042**

Screeners Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Agency \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX B:**

### **VI-SPADT Script**

I have a 10 minute survey to get you entered into Coordinated Entry. The answers you provide will help to determine how we can go about supporting and housing you. Most questions only require a yes or no answer. A handful of the questions require a one-word answer. Some of the questions are personal, so if you feel uncomfortable with any question, please let me know and you do not need to answer. The information I collect will be entered into our Homeless Management Information System/Coordinated Entry.

If there is a question you don't understand, just let me know and I can explain a little better. There are no right or wrong answers so please answer the questions as honestly as you can.

If any of your information changes, (phone #, income), it is very important that you let me know as soon as possible. If an agency does not have the most up-to-date information, it will be more difficult to meet your needs. You can give me a relative's phone number if you're worried about running out of minutes.

## **APPENDIX III:**

### **Case Management**

The purpose of the case management process is to keep in touch with people while they are waiting to be housed. We have found that the people with the most severe service needs, do not update Coordinated Entry when they have a change in contact information, then when a referral is made for housing, the person cannot be found. The intent of the case management process is for someone from a housing project to stay in contact with a person while they wait for housing and assist them with any housing related problems.

Any homeless person scoring 12 or higher on the VI-SPDAT will be assigned to an agency for Case Management via email on Mondays by the Housing Entry Coordinator. The agency will contact the person at least weekly. Any changes to contact information should be updated in HMIS. The agency will add notes in HMIS under Client Profile, Client Notes.

If an agency is working with a person, that moves out of the county or into non CoC funded housing, the agency will contact the Housing Entry Coordinator and the person will be exited from the Coordinated Entry program.

When a person is referred to an agency for case management, this does **not** mean the person will move into that housing project, however the Housing Entry Coordinator assigns people to project who meet the project criteria. When there is an opening for housing in a project, the list will be sorted as described in Prioritization Standards.

Meetings for Case Management will be the first Wednesday of the month at 3pm at 1344 Fifth Ave., Help Network's Community Center.