# Enhancing Coordinated Entry through Partnerships with Mainstream Resources and Programs

We have made consistent progress on ending homelessness in America, providing a safe and stable foundation for thousands of individuals and families to pursue their goals and aspirations. That progress can be directly attributed to investments in evidence-informed models like supportive housing and rapid re-housing delivered using a Housing First approach. However, people exiting homelessness often need access to more than just homelessness-related supports to achieve their goals. They may need assistance from other federal, state, and local services to permanently resolve their homelessness and set them on a path to success.

Coordinated entry processes have the potential to ensure that individuals and families have ready access to all the resources they need based on an individualized assessment of their needs and strengths. These resources should include federal, state, and local programs that serve the broader community and are not specifically tailored to individuals or families experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. We refer to these non-targeted supports as "mainstream" resources and programs.

Building on HUD's Coordinated Entry Policy Brief and Notice, this document offers additional guidance for making sure that mainstream resources and programs are partners in your community's coordinated entry process.

## Background

Historically, people experiencing homelessness have had to navigate a complicated maze of programs to get connected to housing and support services. Too often, access to emergency shelter was based on chance, and access to permanent housing may only have been offered at the end of a linear process or after the achievement of particular milestones. Housing and services programs frequently maintained their own tenant or participant selection processes and criteria for admission, and people experiencing homelessness typically had to apply to each program separately and go through multiple and often lengthy applications and assessments to access services. For these reasons, communities across the country began to develop and implement coordinated entry processes, in order to ensure they were responding to needs more systematically, to streamline access to assistance, and to target their resources more effectively.

Informed by the innovation taking place within those communities, HUD identified the development and implementation of coordinated entry processes as a requirement of all Continuums of Care (CoCs) "with the goal of increasing the efficiency of local crisis response systems and improving fairness and ease of access to resources, including mainstream resources."[1] With support, guidance, and technical assistance from federal agencies, communities across the country have already begun to adapt, design, and implement coordinated entry processes appropriate to their local contexts that:

- Coordinate outreach efforts to better identify and engage people experiencing unsheltered homelessness;

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[1] https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Notice-CPD-17-01-Establishing-Additional-Requirements-or-a-Continuum-of-Care-Centralized-or-Coordinated-Assessment-System.pdf
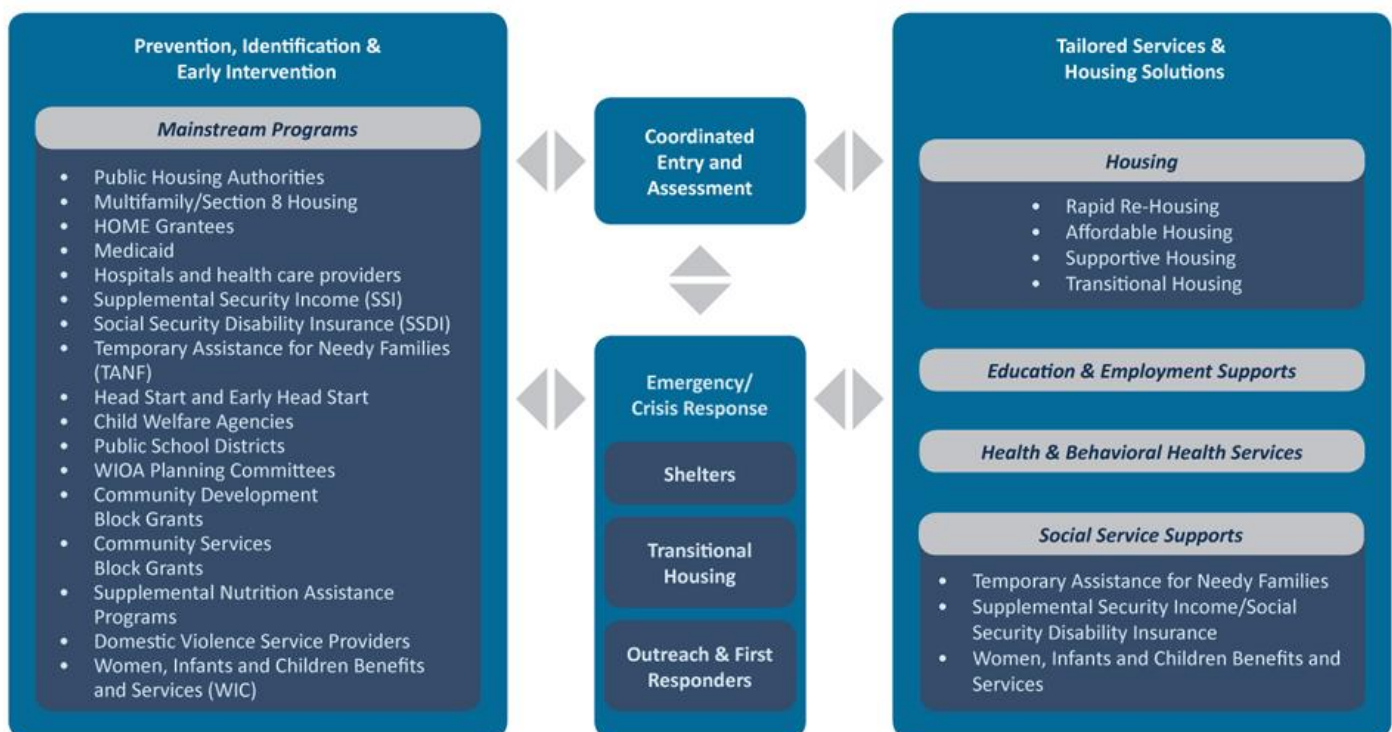
- Develop and maintain active by-name lists of all people identified as experiencing homelessness;
- Implement standardized assessments for people seeking homelessness assistance;
- Streamline and coordinate access to housing and services;
- Target interventions and assistance based on assessed needs and strengths;
- Ensure that the people with the most significant needs are prioritized for assistance;
- Make shelter and crisis services available while stable housing and supports are being secured; and
- Determine service gaps in order to more strategically allocate limited resources.

## Roles of Mainstream Resources and Programs in Coordinated Entry

We will not end homelessness through targeted resources alone. In order for a community to offer a full array of services and supports to those experiencing a housing crisis, homelessness services and mainstream programs must work together to more efficiently and effectively reach those in need. These mainstream resources are often designed for low-income families and individuals, though some, such as educational programs, may be available to all members of a community.

The figure below illustrates the potential connections that can be facilitated between mainstream resources and homelessness services through the coordinated entry process. For example, mainstream programs can play critical roles in identifying households experiencing or at risk of homelessness and refer them to coordinated entry processes for assessment and access to services and housing solutions. In turn, coordinated entry processes may connect households to mainstream programs that can provide access to services and resources that can help prevent or end their homelessness and set them on a path to success.

## Mapping Connections between Mainstream Resources and Programs and Homelessness Services

**Prevention, Identification & Early Intervention**

**Mainstream Programs**

- Public Housing Authorities
- Multifamily/Section 8 Housing
- HOME Grantees
- Medicaid
- Hospitals and health care providers
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- Child Welfare Agencies
- Public School Districts
- WIOA Planning Committees
- Community Development Block Grants
- Community Services Block Grants
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs
- Domestic Violence Service Providers
- Women, Infants and Children Benefits and Services (WIC)

**Coordinated Entry and Assessment**

**Emergency/Crisis Response**

Shelters

Transitional Housing

Outreach & First Responders

**Tailored Services & Housing Solutions**

**Housing**

- Rapid Re-Housing
- Affordable Housing
- Supportive Housing
- Transitional Housing

**Education & Employment Supports**

**Health & Behavioral Health Services**

**Social Service Supports**

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance
- Women, Infants and Children Benefits and Services

## Strategies for Enhanced Partnership

Leaders at the state and local level often decide the degree to which mainstream resources and programs support efforts to end homelessness. Therefore, building local relationships is key to the success of these partnerships. Through local conversations, community leaders can develop a shared understanding of how to best utilize mainstream resources and identify where funding or service gaps exist. There are a number of opportunities for mainstream programs and resources to partner with the local coordinated entry process:

1) **Identifying people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.** Mainstream and non-targeted resources can play a critical role in identifying people experiencing and at risk of experiencing homelessness who apply for and/or currently participate in their programs. Such programs can integrate housing stability and homelessness status questions into their intake processes, and play larger roles in ensuring that those issues are addressed and resolved in order to strengthen outcomes for people participating in their programs. For example, the Department of Health and Human Services recently released a guide to help state TANF agencies recognize their role in identifying and serving families experiencing a housing crisis, including examples of the types of standardized questions that mainstream programs can ask in order to identify people experiencing homelessness.

2) **Coordinating referrals between mainstream resources and the homelessness response.** When mainstream programs identify people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, they can refer households directly to local coordinated entry processes, which are usually managed by the Continuum of Care. Likewise, an effective coordinated entry process should connect households to the mainstream resources for which they are eligible. Communities should engage other local resources and service providers in their community to explore ways to collaborate and maximize opportunities to serve households who are likely touching both mainstream and homelessness service systems.

3) **Aligning resources and investments to expand communities' capacity to prevent and end homelessness.** Mainstream programs can align their resources with homelessness and housing programs to scale key interventions that prevent and end homelessness. For example, many behavioral health care providers have partnered with housing programs to expand supportive housing opportunities and ensure that people experiencing homelessness who have complex care needs have the support necessary to maintain stable housing. Many Public Housing Agencies are also utilizing their waiting list preferences to target housing assistance as a strategy to expand affordable and supportive housing capacity to assist the most vulnerable households in their community, including families and individuals experiencing homelessness.

4) **Co-locating services and promoting unified case planning.** Homelessness services and mainstream resources and programs should consider co-locating services, making critical supports like health and behavioral health care and housing assistance as easily accessible for households as possible. Additionally, many communities are conducting unified case planning among the various providers serving people experiencing homelessness to ensure holistic, coordinated, and integrated assistance, and to clarify roles and responsibilities and reduce the duplication of services in the community.

5) **Prioritizing access to mainstream resources for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.** Communities can also ensure that mainstream programs prioritize access to supports for individuals and families experiencing homelessness who are engaged in their services. For example, employment and

training programs supported through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act can ensure that people being assisted through local rapid re-housing programs have access to their services, in order to help strengthen stability, employment, and income outcomes.

## Community Spotlight

In an effort to use limited resources as effectively as possible, Los Angeles County and City have spent the last several years developing the Coordinated Entry System (CES) for Families. The mission of the CES for Families is to create a seamless, cooperative system of service delivery for families at risk of or experiencing homelessness throughout LA County.

The main objectives of the system are to:

- Reduce the length of time a family is experiencing homelessness and permanently house them as quickly as possible, using rapid re-housing and linkages to supportive services.

- Build upon existing community-based infrastructures to serve families experiencing homelessness, leverage resources, and provide more targeted and cost-effective interventions.

The backbone of the CES for Families is a network of Family Solution Centers — one in each of the eight Service Planning Areas in Los Angeles County. Each Family Solution Center is a non-profit agency that has been awarded a grant through the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority to build and maintain a collaborative of providers in their service area that can provide interim and permanent housing, information, supportive services, and resources that families need to become stably housed.

Those Family Solution Centers are required to support the city's and county's goals around improving permanent housing placement and residential stability, and increasing the skill and income levels of families experiencing homelessness so that they are prepared to live more independently. Specifically, they are expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- 65% of families assessed exit into emergency shelters, transitional shelter, safe haven, or permanent housing
- 85% of families enrolled in RRH exit to permanent housing
- 70% of families enrolled in RRH are placed within 90 days
- 90% of families that exit to permanent housing do not re-enter crisis housing within two years

In order to improve long-term outcomes for families exiting homelessness, Family Solution Centers must build a collaborative that integrates mainstream resources and programs. For example, the coordinated assessment process determines if the family needs substance abuse or mental health services provided through the mainstream behavioral health care system, and each Family Solution Center has a co-located Department of Mental Health clinician and a Department of Public Health substance abuse counselor onsite. The process also integrates eligibility determination for TANF, SNAP, and Medicaid benefits.

To address the well-being of the whole household, the collaborative must also include key early childhood partners and providers, including Head Start and Early Head Start programs, home visitors, Healthy Start programs, child care providers, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, local school districts, early intervention and special education providers, local McKinney-Vento Homeless liaisons, mental health and substance use

treatment providers, local WIC clinics, local medical systems and primary care providers, and others. [Learn more about LA's CES for Families](#).

## Additional Resources

- [Notice Establishing Additional Requirements for a Continuum of Care Centralized of Coordinated Assessment System](#) (HUD, 2017)

- [Coordinated Entry Policy Brief](#) (HUD, 2015)

- [Enlisting Mainstream Resources and Programs to End Homelessness](#) (USICH, 2016)

- [Enhancing Family Stability: A Guide for Assessing Housing Status and Coordinating with Local Homelessness Programs for TANF Agencies](#) (HHS, 2016)

- [Coordinated Entry and Victim Service Providers FAQs](#) (HUD, 2015)

- [Youth Specific FAQs for Coordinated Entry](#) (HUD, 2016)