

Coordinated Entry Operational Manual

Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care

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OHIO
Balance of State
Continuum of Care

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Background and Introduction

Coordinated Entry (CE), also known as coordinated intake or coordinated assessment, is a process that coordinates entry into, movement within, and ultimately exit from a homeless system. Coordinated Entry processes increase the efficiency of a homeless assistance system by standardizing access to homeless services. In particular, a well-functioning CE system should help the Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoSCoC) advance our goals of helping households quickly access appropriate services to address housing crises, increasing exits to housing, decreasing length of time homeless, and reducing returns to homelessness.

As part of the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH) regulations that govern Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all CoCs across the United States to implement Coordinated Entry.

According to HUD guidance, required elements of Coordinated Entry include:

- **Access:** ensures the entire Continuum of Care (CoC) area is covered and that service access points are easily accessible and well-advertised.
- **Assessment:** standardizes information gathering on service needs, housing barriers, and vulnerabilities.
- **Prioritization:** matches the output of the assessment tool to community priorities based on severity of need and establishes a priority rank for available housing and services.
- **Referral:** coordinates the connection of individuals to the appropriate and available housing and service intervention.

As it pertains to Coordinated Entry, the Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards state:

- All homeless projects in the Ohio BoSCoC, including HP, ES, TH, RRH, SH, and PSH, must participate in their Homeless Planning Region's Coordinated Entry system and process. This includes using the CoC's common assessment tool, following the CoC's referral process, and anything else as appropriate.
- Homeless Planning Regions must review their Coordinated Entry plans and update them as necessary to ensure there are no contradictions between their Regional Coordinated Entry system and the CE Systems Standards, and that CoC staff approves updated CE plans.

Coordinated Entry (CE) is defined as a process designed to coordinate program participant intake, assessment, and provision of referrals. It covers the geographic area, is easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing and services, is well advertised, and includes a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool.

The terms "Coordinated Access", "Centralized Intake", "Coordinated Intake", "Coordinated Entry" and "Coordinated Assessment" are often used interchangeably, and with the exception of "Centralized Intake", more or less mean the same thing: transitioning from a "first come, first served" mentality to a mentality that says "now that you are here, let's determine, together, what might be your next step". **The Ohio BoSCoC primarily uses the term "Coordinated Entry."**

| Before Coordinated Entry: | After Coordinated Entry: |
|---|---|
| Should we accept this family into our program? | What housing and service intervention is the best fit for each family and individual? |
| Unique entry and assessment forms for each individual program | Standard forms, assessment, and entry processes across all programs |
| Uneven knowledge about existing programs, eligibility, and purpose in communities | Accessible information about housing and service options in the COC |

Coordinated Entry Implementation Requirements

HUD required that all CoCs establish a CE process in accordance with the CoC Program Interim Rule by **January 23, 2018**. This includes ensuring that all HUD required CE elements, as noted above, are addressed in the CE system and process.

Purpose

The purpose of this Coordinated Entry (CE) Manual is to compile all of the Ohio BoSCoC guidance and requirements related to Coordinated Entry. This includes the Ohio BoSCoC CE System Standards as well as CoC guidance, processes, and requirements as it pertains to implementation of the CE System Standards and the Regional CE Plans.

Vision Statement

The Ohio BoSCoC seeks to end homelessness by increasing exits to housing, decreasing length of time homeless, and reducing returns to homelessness through a high-quality CE system that helps households quickly access appropriate services to address housing crises.

Guiding Principles

Across the Ohio BoSCoC, the Coordinated Entry system will be:

- Person-centered: assessments into CE are based in part on participants' strengths, goals, risks, and protective factors.
- Sensitive to lived experiences: systems consider participants' lived experience in all aspects of CE including assessment and delivery protocols that are trauma-informed, minimize risk and harm, and address potential psychological impacts.
- Inclusive of participant choice: systems consider participant choice in CE process decisions such as location and type of housing, level and type of services, and other program characteristics, as well as assessment processes that provide options and recommendations that guide and inform participant choice.
- Accessible: people in housing crisis are able to easily identify where to seek assistance and how to request assistance. This includes using accessible formats in CE Access Point marketing, outreach, and advertising.
- Sustainable: resources required to operate the CE system are identified and available now and for the foreseeable future.
- Flexible: limited customization of CE processes is allowed based on community needs, resources, and services available. These choices must follow CE standards as established by the BoSCoC.
- Transparent and accountable: consumers know what is being done and why, agencies' program rules and success rates are clearly defined and readily shared with consumers, and there are clear feedback processes for both consumers and agencies.
- Housing First: participation in supportive services is voluntary and barriers to program entry and housing are minimized.
- Housing-Focused: households experiencing housing crises return to permanent housing within 40 days (as a goal).
- Committed to referral success: providers are committed to successfully completing referral processes and supporting participants in identifying and accessing the assistance to which they have been referred and accepted
- Easy to use: system is not cumbersome to agencies, and is accessible and well known to the community.
- Committed to advancing race equity: CE system strives to ensure that system outcomes do not contribute to or exacerbate existing racial disparities within the homeless response system.

Ohio BoSCoC Governance

Continuum of Care

A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a geographically based group of representatives that carries out the planning responsibilities required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) CoC Program. These representatives generally come from organizations that provide services to persons experiencing homelessness.

The Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care

The Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoSCoC) represents the 80 largely suburban and rural counties in Ohio. Within these 80 counties there are approximately 400 homeless programs including emergency shelters, transitional housing, rapid re-housing programs, and permanent supportive housing. On any given day, these programs can serve over 7700 persons experiencing homelessness.

The Ohio BoSCoC has further divided its 80 counties into 17 Homeless Planning Regions. Providers in these regions plan and coordinate local and regional homeless systems and programs, and are responsible for working with the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) and COHHIO to ensure the CoC meets all HUD homeless program requirements. The Homeless Planning Regions report to COHHIO and ODOD, not to HUD.

Ohio BoSCoC Board

The Ohio BoSCoC Board (hereafter referred to as 'The Board' or 'Board') is the primary planning body for the Ohio BoSCoC. Board members determine the policy direction of the CoC and ensure that the CoC fulfills its responsibilities as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other state entities as relevant, including approving all CoC policies. Additionally, the Board oversees and approves the work of BoSCoC committees and workgroups.

To guide the overall governance of the CoC, the Ohio BoSCoC Board has approved a Governance Charter. This Governance Charter can be found at <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/gov-pol/#documents>.

Ohio BoSCoC Collaborative Applicant

The CoC Board has designated the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) to serve as the CoC's Collaborative Applicant (CA). The CA is responsible for submitting the annual CoC Competition consolidated application and project listing to HUD and being the applicant/grantee for CoC Planning funds.

Ohio BoSCoC Staff Lead

COHHIO serves as the CoC Staff Lead (also referred to as CoC staff or CoC Team) for the Ohio BoSCoC. ODOD contracts with COHHIO to provide this CoC staff support to the Ohio BoSCoC and to manage all aspects of the CoC, including work related to the annual CoC Competition, the annual Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory Count, and all other federal requirements, including the design and implementation of the Coordinated Entry (CE) System.

Ohio BoSCoC HMIS Lead

The CoC Board has designated COHHIO to serve as the CoC's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead. In this role, COHHIO is responsible for administering the Ohio BoSCoC's HMIS, which includes providing training, technical assistance, and support related to data entry for Ohio BoSCoC HMIS-participating providers. COHHIO is also responsible for submitting to HUD the annual HMIS project application, submitting Longitudinal Statistical Analysis (LSA) data, and managing HMIS grant funds.

Management and Oversight of the Coordinated Entry System

To ensure appropriate management and implementation of the CoC's CE system, HUD requires CoCs to identify and designate a Policy Oversight Entity, a Management Entity, and an Evaluation Entity. Details about the entities designated by the Ohio BoSCoC to serve in these roles and their respective responsibilities are below.

Policy Oversight Entity

The Ohio BoSCoC has designated the CoC Board to serve as the CE Policy Oversight Entity. In this role, the CoC Board is responsible for the following:

- Establish CE participation expectations
- Determine data collection and data quality expectations
- Provide approval of all CE policies

Management Entity

The Ohio BoSCoC has designated COHHIO, specifically the CoC team, as the CE Management Entity. The CoC team is comprised of CoC and HMIS staff housed at COHHIO. In this role as the CE Management Entity, CoC staff are responsible for the following:

- Provide day-to-day management of the CE system
- Develop and deliver training related to CE system and requirements
- Conduct monitoring of the implementation of the CE system
- Please note, monitoring implementation of CE is different from conducting CE evaluation, and the Management Entity may not also serve as the Evaluation Entity

Evaluation Entity

The Ohio BoSCoC has designated the CoC Board as the Evaluation Entity. Responsibilities of the Evaluation Entity include:

- Plan annual CE evaluation
- Collect data as part of evaluation
- Evaluate CE implementation process for effectiveness and efficiency
- Identify policy and process improvements

As needed, the Evaluation Entity may identify a third party to carry out the annual CE evaluation, so long as the third party is not also the Management Entity.

Coordinated Entry Liaisons

The Ohio BoSCoC utilizes Coordinated Entry Liaisons within each Homeless Planning Region to help implement the CE system, provide training and support to local providers, and to assist with monitoring of CE implementation. More specifically, the responsibilities of CE Liaisons include:

- Assist CE staff in guiding Regional CE planning processes:
- Attend CE Collaborative meetings
- Assist in the development of monitoring and evaluation processes, as needed
- Assist the Homeless Planning Region Executive Committee to:
- Update the region's CE plan annually or as needed
- Update the region's Available Housing List and Community Resource List as needed
- Update the region's Access Point information as needed
- Ensure that all updates are communicated to COHHIO
- Assist with Ongoing Implementation of Ohio BoSCoC Standardized Diversion Process:
- Complete standardized diversion training from CoC staff

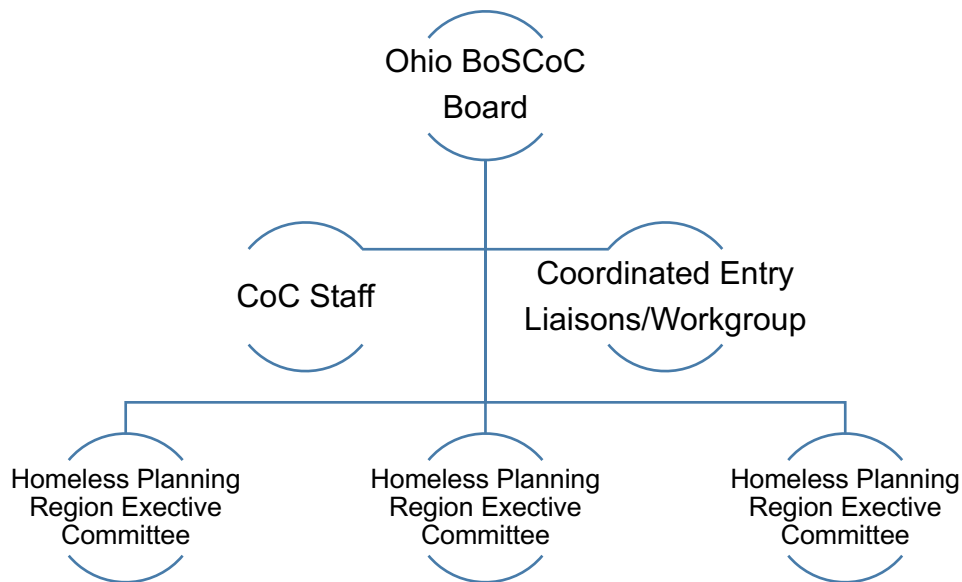
- Provide regional diversion trainings as needed

Generally, there is one CE Liaison per Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Planning Region. CE Liaisons are designated by the Homeless Planning Region Executive Committee. CE Liaisons have the backing of the CoC and the authority to train local providers on CE requirements, provide CE updates, and to communicate information about CE from the CoC team.

Role of Homeless Planning Regions in CE Management and Oversight

In addition to the entities designated above, the Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Planning Regions maintain some responsibility for ensuring Regional CE Plans are appropriately implemented. CoC staff, in conjunction with the Ohio BoSCoC Coordinated Entry Core Team and CE Liaisons), lead and support CE implementation CoC-wide.

At the regional level, the Homeless Planning Region Executive Committees are responsible for assisting with the oversight of the regional CE system. This may include convening a standing CE workgroup to work with the designated CE Liaisons to review CE system data and address issues that arise, or addressing CE issues in the Executive Committee itself.



Ohio BoSCoC Coordinated Entry System Standards

Implementing Coordinated Entry (CE) Systems in the Ohio BoSCoC is challenging in part because of the large geographic area covered and the variations in resource availability, cross-county coordination, and service areas. To account for these challenges all Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Planning Regions have developed Regional Coordinated Entry (CE) Plans. These Regional CE Plans include all required CE components, as outlined in the Coordinated Entry System Standards below. Regional CE Plans differ, however, in the identification of Access Points and local resources/providers.

Required Coordinated Entry Components

All Regional CE plans address/include the following components:

1. Outreach, Advertising, and Marketing of CE System
2. Inventory of Available Projects and Community Resources
3. Identification of Access Points
4. Diversion Screening
5. Entry into Emergency Shelter or Crisis Response System
6. Assessment of Client Need
7. Determining and Making Referrals
8. Permanent Housing Prioritization
9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Component No. 1 - Outreach, Advertising, and Marketing

In order to reach persons who are most vulnerable to homelessness, who are unsheltered, or who may have barriers to accessing programs and resources, CoCs must ensure that access to local homeless systems and resources are well advertised to the entire community. This includes taking explicit steps to make advertising and communications materials easy to understand, making the system easily accessible, and taking specific action to reach out to those who may be least likely to seek out resources on their own.

CE plans include advertising and outreach strategies that clearly communicate how persons in need can access the CE system. These strategies and related materials are explicitly aimed at persons who are homeless, vulnerable to homelessness, and/or who are unsheltered, disabled, and/or currently not connected to services.

Advertising: Content and Strategies

Standard No. 1A

All Homeless Planning Regions have advertising materials that identify the local CE system Access Points and process for seeking assistance.

- Materials are easily accessible to persons with developmental disabilities and are available in multiple languages as needed (based on local need/populations).
- Materials clearly identify how to access assistance including, at minimum:
 - phone number
 - address (except for victim service provider agencies)
 - hours of operation

Standard No. 1B

Homeless Planning Regions designate an agency to be responsible for ensuring CE AP advertising materials are up-to-date and regularly distributed to key partners and locations in local communities.

Standard No. 1C

Advertising materials are distributed to local providers and stakeholders, to ensure their clients and constituencies know how to seek assistance if needed. These local providers and stakeholders include those who most

frequently encounter homeless households, particularly households with highest barriers and not currently connected with services. Additionally, any local communities with higher proportions of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other persons of color should be specifically targeted for distribution of CE AP advertising materials. Please note, the advertising distribution strategy will vary community by community.

Examples of local providers and stakeholders to provide advertising materials to include:

- Law enforcement
- Soup kitchens and food pantries
- Faith-based organizations and churches, including informal street outreach projects
- Libraries
- Behavioral Healthcare providers
- McKinney Vento liaisons within local schools
- Other nonprofit organizations working with marginalized or vulnerable communities
- 211 programs, where available

Outreach Strategies

Standard No. 1D

Designated provider staff engage in regular and frequent outreach to the region/community's entire geographic area.

- CE plan identifies local homeless services providers and staff positions responsible for engaging in outreach to persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
- CE plan identifies the times/days that staff engages in outreach.
- CE plan identifies geographic areas covered by designated staff.
- CE plan provides contact information for other local homeless services providers and community members to use when needing to report unsheltered homeless to staff.
- Where multiple providers engage in outreach to unsheltered individuals within the same geography, those providers must coordinate and enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to ensure no duplication of effort and to ensure broader geographic coverage.

Component No. 2 - Inventory of Community Resources

CE plans include **how** the local Community Resource List **will be updated and accessed**. The Community Resources List includes information on local food/clothing pantries, healthcare providers, benefits banks, employment/job training services, legal services, and other crisis response resources (such as churches and other agencies who may pay for hotel/motel stays when shelters are full). The Community Resource list should be as comprehensive as possible and reviewed and updated at least annually to ensure accuracy.

Standard No. 2A

The Community Resource List includes the following components:

- Organization name and contact information
- Type of program or services offered
- Phone number
- Address
- Hours of operation
- Service area- county and/or cities served
Target population

Maintenance of Community Resource List

Standard No. 2B

CE plans identify how the Community Resource List is updated and maintained. This includes the following:

- The agency responsible for reviewing/updating the Community Resource List annually.
- The region ensures consistency in use of the Community Resource list among local homeless service providers.
 - Either the region agrees that providers will share the list with people seeking assistance, or the region agrees to retain the Community Resource list as the provider only resource, and shares relevant resource information with those seeking assistance as needed.

Component No. 3 - Identification of Access Points

Stakeholders in homeless systems must identify entry points (called Access Points from here on) into the homeless system in a given region or county. Clear understanding about points of entry into the system helps ensure that persons experiencing homelessness, or at-risk of homelessness, are most quickly and effectively entered into or diverted from homeless systems as appropriate. Refer to later sections of this document for more details about the responsibilities of Access Points.

Identification of Access Points

Standard No. 3A

CE plans identify all local Access Points (APs) into the homeless system and how those points are accessed. Identification of APs includes providing the following information in Regional CE Plans, required MOAs, and to the CoC:

- Names of providers serving as CE Access Points
- All providers that have agreed to serve as CE Access Points must enter into an MOA with each other, and COHHIO (primary CoC staff support). The MOA includes the following:
- Identification of all parties entering into the MOA.
 1. Agreement to complete the responsibilities of Access Points
 2. CE AP Contact information
 3. Agreement that any needed changes will be communicated to all parties
- Counties Served for General Population
- Counties Served for Veterans
- Counties Served for Youth
- The community must ensure that at least one CE entry point be in operation 8am to 5pm M-F (excluding holidays) so that Diversion Screening can be conducted during those hours.

Standard No. 3B

All CE APs are easily accessible both for those needing to call and those needing to visit in-person, meaning all CE APs at minimum provide a phone number by which people in housing crisis may contact the CE AP. Victim service agencies may choose to only make their phone numbers available and conduct Diversion Screening over the phone, as long as other local Access Points can accommodate in-person meetings.

Component No. 4 - Diversion Screening

When persons experiencing housing crises present themselves for possible entry into the local shelter/emergency response system, APs must first go through diversion screening. Diversion Screenings determine if persons experiencing a housing crisis can be/remain housed or if they absolutely must enter the homeless system. Quality screening helps reduce needless entries into the homeless system and standardizes access to program referrals.

Timeline for Completing Diversion Screening

Since all CE APs can complete the Diversion Screen with every presenting household to see if they can be diverted from the homeless system, the timeline for completing Diversion Screens aligns with the availability of CE APs.

Standard No. 4A

All CE APs provide Diversion Screening during their full hours of operation.

- Persons in housing crises are screened for diversion (using the Diversion Screen) during their initial contact with the CE AP, assuming they called/visited during AP hours.
- All CE APs, except for victim service providers, are available to conduct diversion screening either in person or by phone
- If the applicant contacted the CE AP after hours or while CE staff were occupied with another household, CE AP staff attempt to contact the applicant immediately upon opening or immediately after completing Diversion Screens with other households who presented first.

Method for Completing Diversion Screening

Standard No. 4B

All Ohio BoSCoC APs use the Ohio BoSCoC Diversion Screening tool in their process to determine if the applicant can be/remain housed or if they must enter the homeless system.

Standard No. 4C

All CE APs conduct Diversion Screening in person and over the phone during identified hours of operation. The only exception is for DV agencies that may conduct Diversion Screening over the phone only, if they desire.

Standard No. 4D

Completed Diversion Screening tools are stored in secure and private locations that are not publicly accessible including, at minimum, the following precautions:

- Paper versions of completed Diversion Screening tools are stored in locked file cabinets that are not publicly accessible, in the same manner that paper client files would be stored.
- Electronic versions of completed Diversion Screening tools (e.g., word documents or PDFs) are stored on password-protected computers that are not publicly accessible. Completed Diversion Screening Tools should not be stored on the computer desktop.

Standard No. 4E

CE APs record diversion data in HMIS in accordance with the appropriate workflow, which can be found here: <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/hmis/> .

Component No. 5 - Entry into Emergency Shelter or Crisis Response System

After completion of a Diversion Screening, if the CE AP has determined that they are unable to divert the household in housing crisis, entry into the local emergency shelter may be required.

Not all Ohio BoSCoC communities have access to emergency shelters. Therefore, this section outlines CE standards related to processes for entering homeless persons into an emergency shelter or into other local forms of crisis response assistance. These other types of assistance may include transitional housing that, for all intents and purposes, operates as emergency shelter, rapid re-housing assistance, or other local resources that seek to provide emergency housing/shelter to people who would otherwise be unsheltered (e.g., winter shelters, or hotel/motel vouchers used in lieu of shelter). For ease, we use the term 'emergency shelter' to refer to emergency shelters as well as the other types of crisis response resources used in lieu of shelter.

Local Emergency Shelters/Crisis Response System Referral Protocol

Standard No. 5A

The CE AP that completed the Diversion Screening tool with the household in crisis makes referrals to the local emergency shelter/crisis response system. This includes the following:

- AP calls or emails the emergency shelter provider directly to inform them of the referral and ensure the availability of space.
- If no emergency shelter beds are available, contingencies for providing shelter are made by the CE AP
- If the household in crisis includes a veteran, the local SSVF provider is contacted to arrange a shelter alternative, if needed.
- In regions or counties where diversion screening can be done after regular business hours, CE plans outline how and when referrals will be made.
- Referrals to emergency shelter are also documented in HMIS. See information about the HMIS workflow for referrals in section 6.

Managing Limited Bed Availability

Standard No. 5B

CE plans outline the process for assisting homeless individuals and households when local emergency shelters are at capacity. This includes the following:

- When local shelters are at capacity, CE APs and/or emergency shelters/crisis response providers refer homeless persons to other crisis response organizations that have agreed to provide hotel/motel vouchers in lieu of shelter, or to shelters in neighboring counties.
- CE APs or local emergency shelters coordinate transportation where necessary.

Client Data Entry

Standard No. 5C

CE plans identify how client data will be entered. This includes the following:

- CE APs enter client level data into their CE AP project in HMIS for all clients who are diverted, who will be assisted to enter the homeless system (e.g., shelter), or who are remaining in an unsheltered location
- Once the household in crisis has been referred to and accepted into the local emergency shelter, that shelter provider enters all client data collected in their intake form into HMIS per the Ohio BoSCoC HMIS Policies and Procedures and Data Quality Standards.
- DV shelters are exempt and should enter data into their comparable database.

Compliance with Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards

Standard No. 5D

Ohio BoSCoC homeless assistance providers must comply with the Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards, as well as applicable state and federal requirements related to program eligibility. If CE APs or other local homeless providers become aware of non-compliance with the Homeless Program Standards, CoC staff should be notified immediately.

Component No. 6 - Assessment of Client Need

After an individual or household has entered the emergency shelter/crisis response system, completion of an assessment helps determine the level of need of the persons experiencing homelessness and helps inform

referrals and prioritization decisions to connect them to the most appropriate housing or service intervention to end homelessness quickly.

Standard No. 6A

The Ohio BoSCoC has adopted the VI-SPDAT as the CoC’s common assessment tool. All providers responsible for completing assessments with homeless individuals/households must only use the VI-SPDAT. The only exception to this requirement is for victim service providers.

Standard No. 6B

Shelter, Street Outreach, or CE AP staff who are charged with completing VI-SPDATs with clients or households seeking assistance, must complete all required training as outlined in VI-SPDAT section of this manual.

Standard No. 6C

All emergency shelter/crisis response providers complete the VI-SPDAT on all households in shelter as outlined below:

- The VI-SPDAT should be completed no sooner than 5 days after shelter entry, and no later than 8 days after entry. Exceptions to this timeline are outlined in the standard below.
- Results of the VI-SPDAT (i.e., the assessment score) are recorded in HMIS, following all HMIS protocol and relevant workflows
- In cases where households report to staff that they have and are working on a housing plan, staff may wait to complete the VI-SPDAT in order to allow the household time to resolve their own homelessness.

Standard No. 6D

Emergency shelter/crisis response providers complete the VI-SPDAT immediately, or take other action, in the following cases:

- Homeless veterans are immediately referred to the local SSVF provider. No assessment needs to be done by the shelter provider unless the veteran has declined SSVF assistance or is determined to be ineligible for VA assistance.
- If a resident seems to need assistance to exit shelter ASAP for their well-being (e.g. exhibiting severe mental health needs/issues)
- Individuals/households with previous episodes of literal homelessness, including those identified as chronically homeless
- Individuals/households who are currently unsheltered and will be remaining unsheltered (i.e., not entering shelter).

Standard No. 6E

CE APs may complete the VI-SPDAT with households seeking assistance only if the household reports they are currently experiencing unsheltered homelessness and are unable or unwilling to enter into an emergency shelter.

When a CE AP is completing the VI-SPDAT, they may do so over the phone or in person.

CE AP staff must complete all required VI-SPDAT training if they are going to complete VI-SPDATs with households seeking assistance

Standard No. 6F

In cases where a partner agency is charged with completing the VI-SPDAT with shelter residents, an MOU between the emergency shelter and partner agency should be executed.

Standard No. 6G

Upon completion of the VI-SPDAT and entering the data into HMIS, the emergency shelter/crisis response provider, street outreach provider, or CE AP (if person is unsheltered) must add the household to the *TH, RRH, PSH Community Queue*. Adding households to the Community Queue ensures that compliance with our CE process and HUD requirements is appropriately documented in our CE Annual Performance Report (APR) to HUD.

Component No. 7 - Prioritization for Permanent Housing

As stated in the Ohio BoSCoC Program Standards (available at: <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/gov-pol/>), all Ohio BoSCoC Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) projects must prioritize chronically homeless individuals/families first, in all cases, and must adhere to the PSH Order of Priority. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) and Transitional Housing (TH) projects are also required to prioritize households with the greatest needs and longest homeless histories. To facilitate this prioritization, Ohio BoSCoC communities must establish and maintain Prioritization Workgroups.

Prioritization Workgroups

Standard No. 7A

Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Regions establish and maintain one or more Prioritization Workgroups

- Prioritization Workgroups identify all members.
 - All local PSH providers, RRH providers, street outreach providers (such as PATH), and local shelter providers, at minimum, participate.
- All workgroup members have been given consent to discuss clients and prioritization for PH resources, as evidenced by signed client releases of information (ROIs).
- Prioritization Workgroups meet at least monthly by phone or in-person
- Prioritization Workgroups use the Prioritization Report in R minor elevated as the primary data source for identifying the pool of currently homeless clients who may need to be considered for PSH or RRH assistance.

Standard No. 7B

The Prioritization Workgroup will address, at minimum, the following:

- Identify currently homeless households potentially in need of PSH or RRH assistance that are currently residing in non-HMIS participating emergency shelters/crisis response providers, and therefore not appearing on the *Prioritization Report*.
 - Any homeless household considered for RRH or PSH assistance must first be assessed with the VI-SPDAT (see the Victim Service Provider policy available at: <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/coordinated-entry/>).
- Discuss any current or upcoming PSH and RRH openings and identify households with most severe service needs and longest homeless histories to prioritize for assistance
 - Some Homeless Planning Regions or counties may decide to have more frequent RRH prioritization meetings, depending on availability of resources.

Standard No. 7C

The Prioritization Workgroup runs the *Prioritization Report* in advance of meetings to ensure it is current and accurate and use that report as the primary data source for identifying the pool of currently homeless clients who may need to be considered for PSH or RRH assistance.

Standard No. 7D

The Prioritization Workgroup follows the Order of Priority outlined in the [Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards](#) to ensure persons/households in greatest need are prioritized for local PSH.

- RRH providers must also prioritize households with the greatest needs and longest homeless histories (including those who are eligible for PSH, but no PSH units are available), but they do not have to specifically follow the Order of Priority.

Standard No. 7E

The Prioritization Workgroup uses VI-SPDAT scores and other information about severity of need to inform PH prioritization decisions.

- Households with higher assessment scores, which may indicate higher housing barriers and higher level of need, are prioritized for available assistance, especially for assistance that can be provided for a longer duration or higher level of intensity.
- For PSH projects, chronically homeless are always prioritized first

Standard No. 7F

Once a household is matched with an available PSH or RRH unit, local providers should immediately notify the client and prepare client documentation to ensure the household is housed as quickly as possible.

Standard No. 7G

Prioritization Workgroups take and retain meeting notes that include identifying – using client HMIS ID – which clients are being prioritized for which available PH resources. Prioritization decisions and the rationale for decisions are also included in client files.

Standard No. 7H

Homeless households are given the choice to accept or decline offered housing assistance, based on the local prioritization decisions, and at least one alternative is provided when the first referral is declined.

Standard No. 7I

Ohio BoSCoC TH, RRH, and PSH providers do not decline to enrolled prioritized households because of perceived housing barriers or service needs that are too great (i.e., VI-SPDAT scores).

- If a more intensive or longer duration housing resource, such as PSH, seems more appropriate for the homeless household being referred, the Prioritization Workgroup may explore availability of that option. However, if that resource is not available, alternatives, including RRH, must be identified.

Standard No. 7J

Outline contingency plans that delineate the process for assisting homeless individuals and households when the community lacks certain homeless assistance resources and/or when those local resources are at capacity and not immediately available.

Component No. 9 - Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are essential for maintaining and improving outcomes in services for persons experiencing homelessness. Monitoring keeps programs on track and provides data that is useful in making critical changes to allocation of resources and progress in meeting goals. Monitoring and evaluation will occur at the Ohio BoSCoC systems level as well as on a regional/local level.

Regional Planning Groups or Executive Committees should meet at least quarterly to assess and address monitoring and evaluation. These groups must maintain on-going contact with CoC staff in order to ensure consistency in monitoring and evaluation.

Homeless Planning Regions and/or providers respond to and address any client grievances about their experiences with the CE system and process. If grievances cannot be resolved at the local or provider level, the grievances are shared with CoC staff, which serve as the CE Management Entity.

Standard No. 9A

Homeless assistance providers respond to and attempt to resolve client grievances about the CE system or process. If the situation cannot be resolved at the provider level, provider staff elevate the client grievance to the CE Management Entity (COHHIO CoC staff serve in this role).

- Providers email details about the grievance along with the client's HMIS ID to ohioboscoc@cohhio.org

Standard No. 9B

On an annual basis, the Ohio BoSCoC CE Evaluation Entity will solicit feedback from projects/agencies participating in CE and from households who engaged with CE for assistance during the same time period. Feedback will be collected to address the quality and effectiveness of the entire CE experience. The Ohio BoSCoC CE Evaluation Entity will work with local homeless service providers to identify households who have engaged with CE to provide feedback, with an emphasis on collecting feedback from households who accessed housing as well as those who didn't, and on ensuring respondents are representative of those served by the system in terms of race, ethnicity, and other characteristics.

Feedback methodologies may include, but are not limited to:

- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Interviews

Standard No. 9C

On an annual basis, after receipt of feedback from projects and households engaging with CE, as noted above, CoC staff will identify any needed revisions to the CE System Standards and/or implementation procedures outlined in this Manual, as indicated in the feedback. Recommended revisions will be reviewed by standing CE workgroups/committee, YAB/LEAB groups, and approved the Ohio BoSCoC Board as needed.

Coordinated Entry Access Points

As noted in CE Standard 3A, any agency serving as a Coordinated Entry (CE) Access Point (AP) for their local homeless system must be identified in the Regional CE Plan, must be identified to CoC staff (COHHIO), and must have entered into the required MOA.

Process to Make Changes to CE APs

If a Region needs to make changes to its CE Access Points, it must do the following:

- Obtain approval from Regional Executive Committee and/or Regional Planning Group to make the proposed change to CE APs
- Work with CE Liaison to inform CoC staff, via email at ohioboscoc@cohhio.org, of the intended change to APs
- Upon approval of CE AP changes by CoC staff, execute a new MOA
- Ensure new APs (if applicable) have completed training with regional CE Liaison on the CoC's standardized diversion protocol and are fully prepared to manage all responsibilities of an AP
- CE Liaison or designee updates local CE advertising materials, as needed
- After completion of all steps above, HMIS team will create new CE AP provider in HMIS, if applicable.

In no case may a service provider decide on its own, without agreement from the region and CoC, that it is going to begin or cease to serve as an AP for CE purposes. And no service provider may act as an AP unless it has followed the steps outlined above, completed all training, and entered into the MOA, as described.

Roles and Responsibilities of CE APs

Agencies serving as CE APs are responsible for all of the following:

- Enter into the CE MOA
- Ensure current contact information, including hours of operation, for their agency is provided in the Regional CE Plan, in local CE advertising materials, and to the CoC
- Identify sufficient and appropriate staff to provide standardized diversion screening and data collection/entry
- Ensure staff have been trained in the CoC's standardized diversion protocol; training is provided by the region's CE Liaison
- Conduct diversion screening with anyone seeking assistance from the AP
- Ensure any changes to AP services, staffing, or contact information are provided to the Regional Planning Group, and/or Regional Executive Committee, CE Liaison, and to CoC staff, prior to implementing any changes

Diversión

Diversión is a practice that assists households in housing crisis to return to housing or identify alternative housing outside the crisis response system. Diversión utilizes mainstream resources and mediation techniques to assist the household in identifying alternative housing options, including but not limited to returning to their own housing, staying with family/ friends, or relocation to another area.

As described previously, CE APs are responsible for conducting standardized diversion screening with anyone who contacts the AP seeking assistance. To ensure diversion screening is completed appropriately, CE APs must do the following:

- Ensure any staff who will be completing diversion screening have completed training on the standardized diversion protocol with the region's CE Liaison.
- Ensure agency end users have reviewed the HMIS diversion workflow and guidance documents and understand how to capture and record client-level data for diversion purposes into HMIS.
 - Training materials are available at <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/coordinated-entry/>

Referrals

The Ohio BoSCoC CE system connects clients experiencing homelessness to the permanent housing resources for which they are eligible. Referrals happen both via direct communication between homeless services providers and via HMIS. Referring clients to the Community Queues in HMIS is primarily done to document that a homeless household appropriately moved through the CE system.

Referrals from Access Points to Crisis Response System

After screening a household in housing crisis for possible diversion, APs make a referral to local emergency shelters/crisis response providers if the crisis cannot be resolved. Making a referral involves contacting the provider directly and referring the household to the Emergency Shelter Queue. The CE AP then re-assigns the household to the appropriate emergency shelter/crisis response provider, who enrolls the household into their project (details about the HMIS workflows are below).

Please note, if the local shelter/crisis housing provider does not have open beds to serve the household in crisis, or the household does not want the referral, APs do not refer the household to the Emergency Shelter Queue in HMIS. Using the Community Queues in HMIS is primarily done to document actual movement through the CE system and process.

Referrals from Crisis Response Providers to Permanent Housing: Decision-making Guidance

After completing the VI-SPDAT on a homeless household, emergency shelter/crisis response providers, including street outreach providers, should determine if RRH, TH or PSH assistance needed. In making this decision providers should consider the following:

1. Is the household struggling to identify a housing plan themselves?
 - a. If the household is already working on a realistic housing plan, assistance with RRH or PSH may not be needed, thus preserving the resource for a needier household. You may also be able to skip the VI-SPDAT, in this case.
 - b. If the household has identified a housing plan themselves, indicate this in the Housing Plan field in their client-record in HMIS
2. Is the household willing to accept assistance from RRH, TH, or PSH if resources are available?
3. Is the household eligible for RRH, TH or PSH?

If emergency shelter/crisis response providers can answer yes to all questions posed above, then a referral to the BoSCoC Permanent and Transitional Housing Queue may be necessary.

Referrals from Crisis Response Providers to Permanent Housing

In general, there are five steps involved in making a referral to permanent housing (PH) for a homeless household in an emergency shelter/crisis response or unsheltered location. These steps include:

1. Emergency shelter/crisis response providers confirm that RRH, TH, or PSH assistance is needed, appropriate, and acceptable to the homeless household
2. Emergency shelter/crisis response providers refer the household to the BoSCoC Permanent and Transitional Housing Community Queue in HMIS (referral is made from the VI-SPDAT in HMIS)
 - Prioritization Workgroup meets and makes decisions about which currently homeless households need to be prioritized for available RRH and PSH resources, using the *Prioritization Report* as the primary data source
3. If the homeless household in question has been prioritized for RRH or PSH, the emergency shelter/crisis response provider continues working with the homeless household to help get needed intake documents together.
4. The Emergency shelter/crisis response provider or CE AP re-assigns the household being prioritized for assistance to the appropriate project in HMIS

- The receiving PH agency moves forward on the intake and enrolls the client in their project. Doing so also automatically removes the household from the Community Queues in HMIS.

Documenting Referrals in HMIS: Guidance and Workflow

In general, referrals to a Community Queues are required in HMIS to document movement through CE for every client entering any project with the exceptions of clients entering the Homelessness Prevention projects, Street Outreach projects, and non-HMIS participating projects.

You can find detailed referrals workflows for HMIS at <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/hmis/>

VI-SPDAT

The Ohio BoSCoC uses the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) as the CoC’s common assessment tool. The VI-SPDAT is designed to be used by providers to quickly assess the health and social needs of people experiencing homelessness in order to help determine who needs to be prioritized for housing and service interventions available in the community.

The Ohio BoSCoC uses different versions of the VI-SPDAT for single individuals age 25 and above, households with children, and for youth up to age 24 years old.

VI-SPDAT Training Requirements for Staff

Staff who are responsible for completing VI-SPDATs with clients and/or entering VI-SPDAT data into HMIS must first complete the required training. Training involves reading the Instructional Guide and completing the VI-SPDAT e-learning course and passing the related quiz. You can find the VI-SPDAT Instructional Guide and link to the e-learning course at <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/coordinated-entry/>

The Ohio BoSCoC strongly encourages homeless service providers to incorporate training on completing the VI-SPDAT into their standard staff training/orientation process. This training should involve providing shadowing opportunities for new staff who will be completing VI-SPDATs with clients.

Completing VI-SPDATs with Clients

Prior to completing a VI-SPDAT with a client, providers must obtain informed consent to complete the assessment from the client. Providers **cannot** complete a VI-SPDAT with a client without that person’s knowledge and explicit agreement. Providers also **cannot** complete the VI-SPDAT solely using information obtained through observation or known within your organization. The VI-SPDAT is client driven and focused.

Prioritization

Prioritization for Permanent Housing Resources

As stated in the Ohio BoSCoC Program Standards (available at: <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/gov-pol/>) all Ohio BoSCoC Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), Rapid Re-Housing (RRH), and Transitional Housing (TH) projects are required to prioritize for assistance individuals/households with the most severe needs and longest homeless histories. The process for making prioritization decisions is primarily outlined in the Ohio BoSCoC CE System Standards included in this document, but additional details can be found below:

**Effective March 15, 2020, the Ohio BoSCoC has implemented temporary changes to the prioritization process. Please see the RRH Prioritization section and Changes to Coordinated Entry Prioritization to Support & Respond to Covid-19 section for details.

Prioritization Workgroups

The Ohio BoSCoC CE System Standards require that Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Regions establish and maintain one or more Prioritization Workgroups that are used to identify who needs to be prioritized for available RRH, TH, and PSH resources.

- The Workgroup uses the *Prioritization Report* (in R minor elevated) as the primary data source for identifying who is currently homeless and may need RRH, TH, or PSH assistance
- The workgroup discusses current or upcoming PSH, TH, and RRH openings and identifies eligible households with most severe service needs and longest homeless histories to prioritize for assistance
- Some Homeless Planning Regions or counties may decide to have more frequent RRH prioritization meetings, depending on availability of resources

Considering Households in Non-HMIS Participating Providers for Prioritization

When non-HMIS participating emergency shelters, including DV shelters, are located in a Region or community, Prioritization Workgroups must include membership from those agencies. This helps ensure that individuals/households in those agencies may still be considered for prioritization.

- In these cases, it is the responsibility of the non-HMIS participating ES staff to ensure their clients are assessed with the VI-SPDAT and that those scores and any other relevant information is shared in the Prioritization Workgroup as appropriate for prioritization consideration.
- Non-HMIS participating ES providers serving DV survivors may consider using the [Victim Service Providers Prioritization Inclusion Form](#) to help ensure they have all appropriate and relevant client-level info available for prioritization discussions

RRH Prioritization

During the COVID-19 pandemic some communities in the Ohio BoSCoC may have sufficient RRH resources to provide this assistance to every eligible household who wants it. Effective January 1st, 2021, communities that can demonstrate to the CoC that they have sufficient RRH resources to serve every eligible household who wants the assistance can suspend RRH prioritization meetings.

When a community is able to suspend RRH prioritization meetings, local RRH providers continue to receive referrals for RRH assistance from local shelter and outreach providers and via the BoSCoC Permanent and Transitional Housing Queue in HMIS. The RRH providers then make their own determinations about who they enroll.

Demonstrating Sufficient RRH Capacity

Communities that believe they have sufficient RRH resources to serve all eligible households may request to suspend their Prioritization Workgroup meetings. Within a Homeless Planning Region, one or more counties may request the suspension; it's not required that the whole Homeless Planning Region suspend prioritization meetings. Communities/providers must do the following before they may be permitted to suspend RRH prioritization meetings:

- Get approval from Homeless Planning Region Executive Committee (or other designated body) to request suspension of RRH prioritization meetings
 - This is required to ensure RRH resources are appropriately allocated across the region and to address any concerns or questions
 - Providers/communities that do not have the support of their Homeless Planning Region will not be permitted to suspend RRH prioritization
- Contact the CoC team to inform them of interest in suspending RRH prioritization meetings and approval by the Homeless Planning Region to submit the request
- CoC team will review local data to verify sufficient RRH capacity, including the following:
 - Rate of permanent housing exit destinations from local emergency shelter projects (data source = HMIS CoC APR and Rme)
 - Persons enrolled in local emergency shelter projects compared to RRH enrollments, pre-pandemic and during pandemic (data source = HMIS CoC APRs and Rme)
 - Expenditures (data source = HCRP expenditures information provided by grantee)

Upon review of data and discussion with relevant providers/communities, CoC staff will either approve or deny the request to suspend RRH prioritization meetings.

PSH Order of Priority

Ohio BoSCoC communities and providers must continue to maintain Prioritization Workgroups for PSH projects. The Prioritization Workgroup follows the Order of Priority outlined in the [Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards](#) to ensure persons/households in greatest need are prioritized for local PSH.

RRH providers must also prioritize households with the greatest needs and longest homeless histories (including those who are eligible for PSH, but no PSH units are available), but they do not have to specifically follow the Order of Priority.

Documenting Prioritization Decisions

Prioritization decisions made within the Prioritization Workgroups should be documented as part of the workgroup meeting notes and kept in a confidential location. If no PII was included in the meeting notes, notes may be emailed to workgroup members. In addition to archiving meeting notes, staff should ensure that copies of the prioritization decision – either via the meeting notes or other documentation - are included in the client file for those being prioritized for assistance.

Prioritization meeting notes should include the following:

- Identification of clients, by HMIS client IDs or other unique identifiers (no personally identifying information) if possible, that Prioritization Workgroup members agreed to prioritize for available PH resources
- If non chronically homeless households were prioritized for PSH, meeting notes must denote that no chronically homeless households were identified in the service area, the due diligence providers took to attempt to find a chronically homeless household, and why the non-chronically homeless household was prioritized
- Remember, all PSH projects must first prioritize those who meet the chronically homeless definition. They can only serve non-chronically homeless households if no chronically homeless household can be found
- Details of any disagreements related to prioritization decisions, and how disagreements were resolved
- Details of any discussions around prioritization that relied on information beyond HMIS documented homeless history and VI-SPDAT scores

- Identification of next steps and staff responsible
- Notes may be emailed to all group members as long as no PII is included
- Documenting prioritization decisions in client files
- Provider staff may include Prioritization Workgroup meeting notes in the prioritized client file

For PSH providers only, staff may use the Adherence to PSH Order of Priority form available in the Verification of Homelessness, Chronic Homelessness, and Eligibility Packet at <https://cohhio.org/boscoc/training-and-templates/>.

Changes to Coordinated Entry Prioritization to Support & Respond to Covid-19

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Ohio BoSCoC has made temporary changes to the prioritization process. The goal of these updates is to address evolving needs and to respond to this crisis, while ensuring the safety of staff and the households they serve.

Prioritizing for PH during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Effective March 15, 2020, Prioritization Workgroups may consider risk factors for contracting or experiencing greater complications from COVID-19 as part of their prioritization decision-making process, along with considering factors related to past homeless history and severity of need.

Based on [guidance](#) from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), people with the following conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19:

- People 65 years or older
- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions – the greater number of underlying medical conditions the greater the risk of severe illness
- People who are immunocompromised

Prioritization Workgroups may use the updated Prioritization Report in Rme to help identify households that may be at greater risk of complications from COVID-19. You can find the training video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKfHCZUzmSA&feature=youtu.be> , and the report's documentation here: <http://hmis.cohhio.org/index.php?pg=kb.page&id=200>.

Prioritization Workgroups are still expected to try to adhere to the PSH Order of Priority, while also considering COVID-19 risk factors. Prioritization Workgroups must still document all prioritization decisions.

The revised prioritization process will be in effect until the CoC communicates otherwise.

Coordinated Entry Monitoring and Evaluation

The Ohio BoSCoC conducts regular monitoring and evaluation of CE implementation, effectiveness, and impact. Monitoring and evaluation efforts help ensure the CE system is implemented as intended, that the CE system has an overall positive impact on the people and households in housing crisis that it serves, and that CE governing documents and processes are modified as needed to achieve better positive outcomes.

Coordinated Entry Monitoring

Monitoring of CE is focused primarily on determining if the CE system is being implemented as it was designed and identifying where CE implementation may be out of compliance with CE Standards. The CoC team, as the CE Management Entity, is responsible for monitoring CE implementation and providing necessary training and technical assistance to ensure ongoing compliance with the CoC's CE Standards.

Where the CoC team identifies those homeless service providers or regions who are not implementing CE activities/requirements in accordance with the CE System Standards and Regional CE Plans, CoC staff may work with providers/regions to develop improvement plans including providing any necessary training or TA. Ongoing CE compliance problems may result in more drastic measures including informing funders of CE non-compliance.

The CoC team will review the following data to determine how well CE is being implemented as intended, identify areas in need of review or revision, and work to make improvements where needed. Please note, all CE monitoring is currently being reviewed because of the transition in fall 2021 to a new HMIS product.

| CE Component | CE Activity or Requirement | Monitoring Data Source and Detail | Frequency of Monitoring |
|-------------------|--|--|-------------------------|
| Access | Access Points (AP) are accessible and well-advertised | Access Point (AP) Response Testing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CoC Staff contact APs by phone or in-person to confirm accuracy of contact information and ability to meet AP responsibilities and document outcomes | monthly |
| | APs Complete Standardized Diversion Screening with all Households Seeking Assistance and Appropriately Record Data in HMIS | Diversion Data Quality (DQ) Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CoC Staff review the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> APs with no or very little diversion data recorded (pending) Questionable exit destination Entered all HH members Service but no data (pending) | monthly |
| | APs Refer Households That Cannot be Diverted to Emergency Shelter (ES) | <i>Pending</i> | monthly |
| Common Assessment | Providers Complete VI-SPDATs on all HoH Unsheltered or in ES, Except Self-Resolvers | Current HH without VI-SPDAT (Rme) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HoHs in ES for 8+ days without VI-SPDAT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> | monthly |
| | No HH Enter PH without Completed VI-SPDAT | Current HH without VI-SPDAT (Rme) HoHs in PH who entered with no VI-SPDAT | monthly |
| Prioritization | Prioritization Workgroup Meetings Occur | Reports by Regions or providers, verified by CoC | Ongoing |
| | Prioritization Workgroup Meetings Used to Determine Prioritization for both RRH and PSH | Reports by Regions, verified by CoC | Ongoing |
| | HH with Most Severe Needs and Longest Homelessness are Prioritized for PH | Community Need, Entered PH (RMinor) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Need by County Avg VI-SPDAT scores for HHs entering RRH and PSH is higher than avg VI-SPDAT scores for all HH in the homeless system (pending) | monthly |
| | APs Refer Households That Cannot be Diverted to Emergency Shelter (ES) | <i>Pending</i> | monthly |
| Referrals | ES and Outreach Providers Refer HH to PH Projects for Assistance, after PH Prioritization Meetings | <i>Pending</i> | TBD |
| | Providers Appropriately Close Referrals | <i>Pending</i> | TBD |

Coordinated Entry Evaluation

On an annual basis, the CE Evaluation Entity undertakes evaluation of the functioning of the CE process, as described in the CE System Standards. Core questions of the evaluation include:

- Does the CoC's implementation of CE efficiently and effectively assist persons to end their housing crisis?
- Are the housing and services interventions in the CoC more efficient and effective because of CE?

CE evaluation includes, at minimum, soliciting feedback from providers and people experiencing homelessness who have interacted with the system. Collected feedback is then used to inform any needed updates, changes, or enhancements to the CE System Standards and the Regional CE Plans.

Coordinated Entry Special Populations

Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

To address the needs of homeless Veterans in the Ohio BoSCoC, CoC staff worked with VA funded providers to expand the availability of Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) across the entire CoC. SSVF can provide financial assistance and supportive services to low-income Veterans and their families who are literally homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Because of the extensive funding provided to SSVF grantees by the VA, generally Ohio BoSCoC SSVF providers are able to provide assistance to every eligible homeless Veteran who wants the assistance.

CE Access Points for Veterans

All SSVF providers are CE Access Points within the Ohio BoSCoC CE system. Veterans at risk of homelessness can also contact non-SSVF BoSCoC CE Access Points where they are first screened for possible diversion, and then may be further screened for SSVF homelessness prevention assistance, if needed. Veterans who are not eligible for SSVF assistance are immediately referred by SSVF to the local HCRP-HP provider for assistance.

If a non-SSVF CE AP is contacted by a Vet in crisis, they may offer a referral to the local SSVF provider AP. However, if the Veteran declines that referral, the non-SSVF AP must complete diversion screening and provide any further referrals as needed.

Prioritization of Veterans for Permanent Housing

Ohio BoSCoC homeless assistance providers immediately, meaning within 2 business days, refer literally homeless Veteran to their local SSVF provider for assistance obtaining permanent housing. SSVF grantees will determine if the Veteran is eligible and if the Veteran desires to accept an offer of assistance.

1. If not eligible, SSVF providers contact the referring agency to inform them, so that alternative shelter plans may be identified.
2. If Veteran is not eligible for SSVF or declines SSVF assistance, the homeless assistance project in which the Veteran is currently residing should strive to complete the VI-SPDAT assessment tool with the Veteran, according to the Homeless Planning Region's Coordinated Entry (CE) Plan.

Homeless providers should then strive to prioritize the Veteran for local housing assistance they are eligible for, according to local processes.

Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking

Access Points and Victims of Violence

When a person or household in housing crisis contacts an Access Point (AP) and discloses that they are fleeing DV, the AP should offer referrals to local victim service providers where available. However, if the person/household declines the referral or if there are no local victim service provider resources, local emergency shelters are required to serve households fleeing domestic violence.

When screening a survivor of violence for possible diversion, APs should ensure they are conducting the conversation in a manner that protects the privacy of the person in crisis. This means that phone interviews must be conducted in a private office with no other clients or visitors present. If doing diversion screening in-person, the interview must be conducted in a private office with no other persons present.

VI-SPDAT and Victims of Domestic Violence

The VI-SPDAT is the common assessment tool for the Ohio BoSCoC. However, people/ households seeking assistance, including those fleeing domestic violence, may decline to complete the VI-SPDAT assessment if they

are not comfortable doing so. Providers completing VI-SPDAT assessments should always inform the household that they are not required to complete the assessment in order to access services, but it is particularly critical that this is emphasized with households who are fleeing domestic violence. If a household fleeing domestic violence chooses to complete the VI-SPDAT, providers should shred physical copies of the VI-SPDAT once the assessment is completed and the score is recorded.

Victim service providers may decline to complete the VI-SPDAT on all households served in their DV emergency shelter programs. However, if a victim service provider is not completing any VI-SPDATs then it is their responsibility to participate in local RRH and/or PSH Prioritization Workgroup meetings and share appropriate client-level data needed to make prioritization decisions in order to ensure their clients are able to access local permanent housing resources. See following section for more details.

Prioritization of Victims of Domestic Violence for RRH and PSH

PH Prioritization workgroups must include victim service providers in their prioritization process. In turn, victim service providers must be able to share client-level data that is comparable to the data reported in the Prioritization Report. Victim service providers can utilize the Victim Services Inclusion Form to help aid in prioritization workgroup discussions.

HMIS Data Entry for Victims of Domestic Violence

As a reminder, victim service providers, such as domestic violence shelters, utilize a database comparable to HMIS and do not enter data into the Ohio BoSCoC HMIS.

Homeless services providers not dedicated to serving victims of DV or sexual assault, are still required to enter client-level data into HMIS. However, if serving a person fleeing DV who requests to have their data entered into HMIS anonymously or not at all, providers are permitted to continue to serve this person and to enter limited or no client-level data into HMIS. The Ohio BoSCoC Data Quality Standards (available at hmis.cohhio.org) allow for missing data related to serving survivors of domestic violence, where the missing data is in response to direct client request. To date, no project has been penalized for poor HMIS data quality relative to serving survivors. However, homeless services providers not dedicated to serving victims of DV or sexual assault are **NOT** permitted to have a blanket policy of not entering data into HMIS for anyone reporting DV. Every client is given the opportunity to consent to data collection and HMIS data entry.

Definitions

Chronic Homeless

1. An individual who:
 - a. Is currently homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; AND
 - b. Has been homeless and living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least one year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined occasions total a length of time of at least 12 months. Each period separating the occasions must include at least 7 nights of living in a situation other than a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven. AND
 - c. Can be diagnosed with one or more of the following conditions: substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability;
2. An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph a of this definition before entering that facility; or
3. A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph a of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

More detailed information about HUD's final rule on the definition of chronically homeless can be found at <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4847/hearth-defining-chronically-homeless-final-rule/>.

Common Assessment Tool

A comprehensive and standardized assessment tool used for the purposes of housing prioritization and placement within a CoC Coordinated Entry System. The Ohio BoSCoC has adopted the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) as the Common Assessment Tool.

Continuum of Care

A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a geographically based group of representatives that carries out the planning responsibilities required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) CoC Program. These responsibilities include coordinating and implementing a system to meet the needs of the population and subpopulations experiencing homelessness within the CoC's geographic area.

The Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoSCoC) represents the 80 largely suburban and rural counties in Ohio. The Ohio BoSCoC is responsible for coordinating and implementing the homeless system for this 80-county geography. Within these 80 counties there are approximately 400 homeless programs including emergency shelters, transitional housing, rapid re-housing programs, and permanent supportive housing. On any given day these programs can serve over 5,500 persons experiencing homelessness.

Coordinated Entry

A process based within a geographically defined homeless system that helps homeless individuals and families access homeless assistance in a coordinated and standardized way that is also tailored to the individual's or household's needs and is primarily focused on moving people back into permanent housing.

Coordinated Entry Plan

A plan developed by a CoC, region, or community that outlines how the CE system will operate. CE plans are working documents that communities revise based on the effectiveness of CE processes. For the Ohio BoSCoC, each Homeless Planning Region has its own Regional CE Plan that complies with the Ohio BoSCoC CE System Standards.

Crisis Response System

An overall system that involves the coordination and reorientation of programs and services to a Housing First approach, and emphasizes rapid connection to permanent housing, while also mitigating the negative and traumatic effects of homelessness. Mostly commonly, we think of the crisis response system as including those resources and programs best designed to respond to immediate housing and homelessness needs. More information about an effective crisis response system can be found at <https://www.usich.gov/solutions/crisis-response>.

Disabling Condition

(1) a condition that: (i) is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration; (ii) substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently; (iii) could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions; and (iv) is a physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury; or (2) a development disability, as defined above; or (3) the disease of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) or any conditions arising from the etiologic agent for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, including infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). 24 CFR 583.5.

Diversion

Diversion is a strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing. Diversion programs can reduce the number of families becoming homeless, the demand for shelter beds, and the need for prioritization. The main difference between diversion and other permanent housing-focused interventions centers on the point at which intervention occurs. Prevention targets people at imminent risk of homelessness, diversion targets people as they are applying for entry into shelter or crisis response system, and Rapid Re-Housing/Permanent Supportive Housing targets people who are already homeless.

HMIS

A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a database used to record and store client-level data including the numbers, characteristics, and needs of persons using shelter, housing assistance, and supportive services within a geographically defined homeless system. Aggregate data from HMIS can be used to understand the size, characteristics, and needs of the homeless population at the client, project and community level. All state and federally funded Ohio BoSCoC homeless projects must use the Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to maintain client and project-level data.

Family

Includes, but is not limited to the following, regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status: (1) A single person, who may be an elderly person, displaced person, disabled person, near-elderly person, or any other single person; or (2) A group of persons residing together, and such group includes, but is not limited to: (i) A family with or without children (a child who is temporarily away from the home because of placement in foster care is considered a member of the family); (ii) An elderly family; (iii) A near-elderly family; (iv) A disabled family; (v) A displaced family; and (vi) The remaining member of a tenant family. 24 CFR 5.403.

Homeless

The Homeless definition is comprised of four categories:

1. Literally homeless individuals/families
 - a. Literal homeless is further defined as homeless individuals/families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- i. Sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, such a place not meant for human habitation
 - ii. Living in emergency shelter or transitional housing designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotel/motel stays paid for by charitable or government programs)
 - iii. Exiting an institution where the individual resided for less than 90 days and where the individual entered the institution immediately from emergency shelter (including hotel/motel stays paid for by charitable or government programs) or an unsheltered location
2. Individuals/families who will imminently (within 14 days) lose their primary nighttime residence with no subsequent residence AND no resources or support networks
 3. Unaccompanied youth or families with children/youth who meet the homeless definition under another federal statute and three additional criteria¹
 4. Individuals/families fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence with no subsequent residence AND no resources or support networks

Homeless Project Types

Homeless Project Types include: Homelessness Prevention (HP), Emergency Shelter (ES), Transitional Housing (TH), Rapid Rehousing (RRH), Safe Haven (SH), and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). All project types in the Ohio BoSCoC must participate in their Homeless Planning Region’s Coordinated Entry system. For more information about each project type and eligibility, see the BoSCoC Homeless Program Standards.

Households

Any person, or group of persons who present together is considered a household regardless of the number of persons.

Ohio BoSCoC Homeless Planning Regions

The 80 counties in the Ohio BoSCoC are divided into 17 Homeless Planning Regions (HPRs). Homeless program representatives in these Homeless Planning regions plan and coordinate local and regional homeless systems and programs, and are responsible for working with Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) and the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) to ensure all HUD homeless program requirements are met. The Homeless Planning Regions report to COHHIO and ODSA, not to HUD.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Community-based housing without a designated length of stay. Permanent supportive housing means long term permanent housing in which supportive services are provided to assist homeless persons with a disability to live independently. 24 CFR 578.3.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)

An intervention designed to help individuals and families exit homelessness as quickly as possible, return to permanent housing, and achieve stability in that housing. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) assistance, is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are typically tailored to the unique needs of the household. The core components of an RRH program are housing identification and relocation, short-and/or medium-term rental assistance and move-in (financial) assistance, and case management and housing stabilization services. This assistance is subject to the definitions and requirements set forth in 24CFR§576.2 Homeless” paragraph (1) and paragraph (4) who are residing in a place set forth in (1), 24CFR§576.105, 24CFR§576.106 and 24CFR§576.400. (24CFR§576.104 & Core Components of Rapid Re-Housing, National Alliance to End Homelessness).

¹ Ohio BoSCoC homeless projects are not permitted to serve anyone defined as homeless under category three of the federal definition.

Transitional Housing (TH)

Housing to facilitate the movement of individuals and families experiencing homelessness into permanent housing within 24 months. 24 CFR 578.3.

VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool)

The VI-SPDAT is a pre-screening, or triage tool that is designed to be used by all providers within a community to quickly assess the health and social needs of homeless persons and match them with the most appropriate support and housing interventions that are available. The VI-SPDAT is the common assessment tool for the Ohio BoSCoC and is primarily used to help understand the severity of needs of those experiencing homelessness in order to help identify who needs to be prioritized for assistance.

Changelog

- Revised March 2023
 - Added a new Guiding Principle about advancing race equity
 - Updates Component #1
 - Added clarity around how CE APs are advertised and added requirement that an agency be formally designated as having responsibility for maintaining and distributing CE AP advertising materials
 - Component #5
 - Removed some standards that were no longer relevant
 - Added guidance re: how to document prioritization decisions in PH Prioritization Workgroup meeting notes when non-chronically homeless households are prioritized for PSH when no chronically homeless can be identified
 - Component #9
 - Provided more detailed about how the CoC will annually solicit feedback on CE system implementation
- Revised November 2021
 - Updated throughout to reflect new processes, tools, reports, and workflows related to the new HMIS product, Clarity
 - Updated Component #7
 - Streamlined standards to align with current processes and HMIS workflows
- Revised June 2020
 - Page 25: Changes to Coordinated Entry Prioritization to Support & Respond to Covid-19
 - “In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Ohio BoSCoC has made temporary changes to the prioritization process. The goal of these updates is to address evolving needs and to respond to this crisis, while ensuring the safety of staff and the households they serve.”
- Document adopted December 2019