



**SCHENECTADY COUNTY
COORDINATED ENTRY POLICY
AND PROCEDURE MANUAL**

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Introduction

Document Overview

To implement and maintain a Countywide Coordinated Entry System (CE), Bethesda House and the Legal Aide Society of NENY have developed the following Policies and Procedures Manual to outline and define the goals and objectives of the CE program. This document delineates the roles and responsibilities of each agency and user involved in the program, while establishing protocol for program assessment, referral acceptance, client privacy, and consumer disclosure. Each participating agency must have the Director of that agency sign the Agency Agreement at the end of this document, indicating that the agency has reviewed these policies and procedures and will comply with them. Additionally, all users are required to sign the User Agreement (also at the end of this document) indicating that they have reviewed and will abide by these policies and procedures as well.

These policies and procedures will govern the implementation, governance, and evaluation of the Coordinated Entry (CE) in Schenectady's CoC. It is expected that the standards will adjust as programs evolve, members gain more experience, and Homeless Management Information System data from programs and services is analyzed. This Policy and Procedure will serve as the guiding principles for funding ESG and CoC programs. These policies may only be changed by the approval of the CoC HSPB based on recommendations from the Coordinated Entry stakeholders through CE meetings.

Purpose and History of Coordinated Entry

Coordinated Entry is considered one of the many interventions in a community has united effort to end and prevent homelessness. The Coordinated Entry system is an approach to coordinate and manage housing and supportive services that allows providers to effectively and efficiently connect clients to interventions that will rapidly end their homelessness. The Schenectady County CoC Coordinated Entry (CE) process is designed to allow efficient access, assessment, prioritization and referral for homeless individuals and families.

Bethesda House of Schenectady, Inc. (Recipient) and Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York (Sub-recipient) consolidated their individual HUD CoC funding to form a partnership and co-lead the Coordinated Entry program for Schenectady County.

The process works best and provides the greatest value if it is driven by "What does the client need" rather than by provider eligibility. The implementation of coordinated assessment is considered national best practice.

When implemented effectively, coordinated assessment can:

- Reduce the amount of research and the number of phone calls people experiencing homelessness must make before finding crisis housing or services
- Reduce new entries into homelessness through coordinated system wide diversion and prevention efforts
- Prevent people experiencing homelessness from entering and exiting multiple programs before getting their needs met
- Reduce or erase entirely the need for individual provider wait lists for services
- Foster increased collaboration between homelessness assistance providers
- Improve a community's ability to perform well on Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act outcomes and make progress on ending homelessness.

The coordinated entry process makes referrals to all projects receiving Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and CoC Program funds, including emergency shelter (ES), Rapid Re-housing (RRH), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), and transitional housing (TH), as well as other housing and homelessness projects. Projects in

the community that are dedicated to serving people experiencing homelessness fill all vacancies through referrals, while other housing and services projects determine the extent to which they rely on referrals from the coordinated entry process.

Schenectady County Coordinated Entry System Core Elements

- **Access:** the engagement point for persons experiencing a housing crisis could look and function differently depending on the specific community. Persons (families, single adults, and youth) might initially access the crisis response system by calling a crisis hotline or other information and referral resource, walking into an access point facility, or being engaged through outreach efforts.
- **Assessment:** upon initial access, CoC providers associated with coordinated entry will assess the person's housing needs, preferences, and vulnerability. This coordination entry element is referred to as assessment. It is progressive with multiple layers of sequential information being gathered at various phases in the coordinated entry process, for different purposes, by one or more staff.
- **Prioritization:** during assessment, the person's needs and level of vulnerability will be documented for purposes of determining prioritization. Prioritization helps the CoC manage its inventory of community housing resources and services, ensuring that those persons with the greatest need and vulnerability receive the supports they need to resolve their housing crisis.
- **Referral:** the final element is referral. Persons are referred to available CoC housing resources and services in accordance with the CoC's documented prioritization guidelines.

Prioritizing people who are most vulnerable or have the most severe service needs:

One of the main purposes of coordinated entry is to ensure that people with the most severe service needs and levels of vulnerability are prioritized for housing and homeless assistance. In order to fulfill this process Schenectady County follows the guidelines set forth in HUDs CPD-16-11. People experiencing homelessness will be prioritized for permanent supportive housing. In addition to prioritizing people experiencing homelessness, the coordinated entry process prioritizes people who are more likely to need some form of assistance to end their homelessness or who are more vulnerable to the effects of homelessness.

Points to consider when prioritizing people for housing and homelessness assistance:

Based on Vulnerability Scoring from Coordinated Entry Application

- Homelessness: 5 points
- Domestic Violence: 1 point
- Veterans: 1 point
- Pregnant Women: 1 point
- Youth, 18-24: 2 points
- Older/Seniors, 60 yrs. or older: 1 point
- One a documented disabling condition: 1 point
- Two or more documented disabling condition: 2 points

NOTE: Chronic homelessness is notated with the letter 'C', all 'C's are a priority.

The Schenectady County Coordinated Entry Structure

The structure of the CE system in Schenectady can be described visually within figure 1. The figure shows that the system is:

- No Wrong Door, the principles of this approach are:

- A consumer can seek housing assistance through any of the participating homeless services providers and will receive integrated services
- Consumers should have equal access to information and advice about the housing assistance for which they are eligible in order to assist them in making informed choices about available services that best meet their needs
- Participating providers have a responsibility to respond to the range of consumer needs and act as the primary contact for consumer who apply for assistance through their service unless or until another provider assumes that role
- Participating providers will provide a proactive service that facilitates the consumer applying for assistance or accessing services from another provider regardless of whether the original provider delivers the specific housing services required by a presenting consumer
- Participating housing providers will work collaboratively to achieve responsive and streamlined access to services and cooperate to use available resources to achieve the best possible housing outcomes for consumer, particularly for those with high, complex or urgent needs

CoC Domestic Violence Consumers

When a consumer enters a POE and through the intake process, it is revealed that they are involved in a DV situation, the POE will immediately contact the DV shelter. The consumer will stay in the DV emergency shelter program, as determined by the DV program. Once it is determined that the consumer is stabilizing and there is a need for housing, the DV agency will submit a CoC application and send it to the CEF. All identifying information will be left off the application; initials will identify the person.

CoC Youth Consumers

When a consumer enters a POE and through the intake process, it is revealed that they are eighteen (18) years of age and older, their CoC application will be submitted to the CEF for housing. The CoC agency that is specific to providing services to the Youth population, will not submit applications to the Coordinated Entry for consumers under eighteen (18) years of age.

Schenectady County CE Process

The process is designed to prevent duplication of services, reduce length of homelessness and improve communication among agencies. The process is a combination of the following:

All agencies must use the approved universal intake and assessment form and include the client's vulnerability score on the documents. The vulnerability scores will be used to prioritize each client. Each POE agency will complete appropriate paperwork and refer to three (3) agencies in addition to the CE Recipient Agency. The Recipient Agency will enter client data on the excel spreadsheet/HMIS System and track client activity as it is received from the referral agency. The process is designed to be easy for the client and provide quick and seamless entry into homelessness services. Individuals and families will be referred to the most appropriate resource(s) for their individual situation. The Recipient and Sub-Recipient Agencies will co-lead bi-weekly meetings (physical and/or telecommunication) and the Sub-recipient will contact CoC agencies to identify pertinent housing data.

The CoC ensures participants may not be denied access to the coordinated entry process on the basis that the participant is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking.

Operating the Coordinated Entry System: Refer to Schenectady County CE User Guide for details.

There are four principle parts to the Coordinated Entry System within Schenectady that work to provide services to persons presenting as homeless. The CEF is responsible for overseeing the process from the time the Client presents as homeless at the Point of Entry to being stably housed. The Point of Entry guides the Client through the application process, the Referral agency reviews the application and determines if Client qualifies for their specific program and the CEC is responsible for getting weekly updates on vacancies, and waitlist.

Role of the Coordinated Entry Facilitator (CEF)

The CEF will oversee the referral process and track all referrals. The CEF is responsible for monitoring and managing the waitlist and making annotations as necessary. The CEF will also communicate regularly with Point of Entry and Referring agencies to get updates on vacancies and referrals. The CEF will distribute the client tracking list weekly, co-lead CE monthly meetings, and is the point of contact for CoC CE questions.

Role of the Coordinated Entry Coordinator (CEC)

CEC will contact Referral Agencies -weekly by phone and/or e-mail to get vacancy and anticipated vacancy status, waiting lists, update on applications, and generate analytical reports. During the weekly contact the CEC will ask referral agencies to report on current and anticipated vacancies (including information regarding the vacancies that could be useful to share with the Points of Entry) and check in on the status of all clients referred to them. The CEC will report information obtained in the weekly contacts to the CEF and will provide a summary written report to CE participants.

The CEC will co-lead monthly meetings, generate minutes, and be the secondary point of contact for CoC CE questions.

Wait List Process

The CEF is notified by the POE that Client qualifies for Permanent Supportive Housing. CEF records referral and Client is put on approved spreadsheet (waitlist). Permanent Supportive Housing agencies report application status reports by phone/e-mail bi-weekly to the CEC and in person at monthly Coordinated Entry meetings. CEF will track waitlist from Client's initial notification to discharge.

NOTE: In the event that two or more homeless households within the same geographic area are identically prioritized for referral to the next available unit, and each household is also eligible for referral to that unit, the CoC should refer the household that first presented for assistance in the next available unit.

Monthly, the CEF will call the clients who have been referred to housing agencies to ensure appropriate contacts have been made and will record a summary of the interaction.

Homeless assistance organizations

All homeless assistance organizations should be involved in the coordinated entry process by helping people access the system and receiving referrals. Emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing programs should only receive referrals through the coordinated entry process.

Mainstream housing and services

Affordable housing and mainstream services are crucial tools for ending homelessness this includes referral sources such as public schools, hospitals, public libraries, first responders, and homeless assistance providers within the CoC. Each agency will have a list of providers and their services to assist in long-term stabilization, e.g. Schenectady County Resource Guide as well as the process to access services at each entity (position to contact and corresponding contact information).

Information from the coordinated entry communications plan should be shared with mainstream resource providers, serving people who might experience a housing crisis or who are at risk of experiencing a housing crisis.

Information will be distributed and will include how wait lists for housing and supportive services will be transitioned to the CE process.

All programs that receive ESG or CoC funding are required to abide by the Policy and Procedure guidelines. Agency program procedure should reflect the policy and procedures described in this document. The CoC strongly encourages the collaboration with programs that do not receive either of these sources of funds in order to provide comprehensive services to the community's homeless population. The Policy and Procedures have been established to ensure that persons experiencing homelessness receive similar information and support to access and maintain permanent housing.

Geographic Area: Schenectady County

Target Population:

- Chronically Homeless
- Homeless
- Veterans
- Domestic Violence
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Illness
- Youth
- Physically Disabled
- Families

Marketing and Non-Discriminatory Access

CoC's and recipients of HUD CoC Program and ESG Program funding are required to affirmatively market their housing and supportive services projects to eligible persons who are least likely to apply in the absence of special outreach. This is regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, marital status, handicap, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or gender identity. To ensure the coordinated entry process assists CoC Program and ESG Program recipients in meeting this requirement, the following market strategy was developed:

- Regular outreach and communication to entities in outlying areas is performed by the CEF and CEC
- Physical materials, e.g. flyers, brochures are available for distribution
 - Materials include the DV hotline number
- CoC agencies have been asked to include a Coordinated Entry statement on their materials and social media

NOTE: Non-discrimination document attached.

Training:

Training will be conducted by the CEF, CEC, and DV and Youth Program staff

- A training curriculum for CoC and Non-CoC entities has been developed
 - Domestic Violence training, required
 - Youth “best practices” training, required
- Training will include a cross-county curriculum

Street Outreach:

Schenectady County CoC participates in the annual Point In Time count. VCHC and Soldier On provides street outreach to veterans, SAFE Inc. providers street outreach for youth.

Prevention Services:

Prevention services are available through Schenectady Community Action Program (SCAP), Bethesda House,

Emergency Shelter Providers

Two Emergency Shelter providers, the City Mission and Altamont Program (Monastery), have staff attending the HSPB Data Committee and one emergency shelter provider, Altamont Program (Monastery), attends the coordinated entry monthly meetings. Schenectady County DSS places families and singles at emergency shelters at additional emergency shelters and processes referrals for those units to SCAP for families and Bethesda House for singles.

The CE team is developing a plan to speak with both the City Mission and the Altamont Program (Monastery) to talk about CE in detail and strategize the most effective way CE applications can be generated and homeless individuals can be included in the CE system.

Evaluation/Oversight:

- **Grievance/Appeal process:** There will be formal grievance and appeals process managed by the coordinated entry committee. Consumer choice is central to coordinated entry and the appeals process will embrace that same person centered and easily navigable model. If a participant feels they did not receive fair treatment, they were denied resources or given an inappropriate referral, the participant may appeal these decisions or actions.
- The Coordinate Entry Review Committee is a three-person sub-committee comprise of members of the coordinated entry committee and members of CoC agencies. This sub-committee will meet quarterly to review the program, procedures, and suggested modifications. Meeting minutes will be distributed to the CE agencies. Changes will be recommended to and approved by the HSPB.
- Coordinated Entry formal meetings occur biweekly. Meetings serve as a space for agency representatives to discuss participants’ progress and referral status, troubleshoot any issues, and coordinate outreach. The agency representatives can make recommendations on suggested changes to the coordinated entry system.
- Programs are evaluated on their level of participation in coordinated entry including having coordinated entry staff, participating in the bi-weekly calls and meetings, taking referrals from coordinated entry, and regular updates on vacancies and waiting list. Participation in coordinated entry will be tracked through the established data tracking system, currently an Excel Workbook, for quality, and agencies will be given the opportunity to submit their feedback on the process.

All components of the Coordinated Entry System will be reviewed and assessed monthly by the Co-Lead Agencies, Bethesda House and Legal Aid Society of NENY, and the CoC Collaborative Applicant. Recommendations for policy change will be presented to the HSPB.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Schenectady County Coordinated Entry does not exclude, deny services to, or otherwise discriminate against any person based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, familial status, gender, sexual identity, or disability in admission to, participation in, or receipt of the services and benefits under any of its programs and activities. *

Schenectady County Coordinated Entry is committed to providing services to those who would be least likely to apply for assistance due to any identifying characteristics/conditions listed above by affirmatively marketing our services to these populations. To further this goal, each staff member conducting assessments at point of entry, is required to read and understand the Fair Housing Act, and the purpose and objectives of the Affirmative Marketing Plan. If you believe an applicant has been denied services due to one of the above characteristics, please contact: Melissa Zampino at (518) 374-7873.

If an applicant wishes to file a formal complaint because he/she believes they have been discriminated against for any of the above characteristics, please provide the applicant with the procedure to do so.

The complaint should contain:

- The applicant's name, address, and contact information
- The name and address of the person/organization the complaint is against
- The address or other identification to the housing/program involved
- A short description to the event(s) that caused the applicant to believe his/her rights were violated
- The date(s) to the alleged violation

**Unless the housing or program has been designated for specific sub-populations by federal requirements.*

Fair Housing Act prohibits discriminatory housing practices based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or familial status.

NY FHEO Center
26 Federal Plaza
New York, NY 10278

(800) 496-4294 (voice)
(800) 927-9275 (TTY)

Individuals have one year after an alleged violation to file a complaint with HUD, but it should be filed as soon as possible.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. This includes providing a reasonable accommodation for

applicants with disabilities; program accessibility; effective communication with people who have hearing or vision disabilities; and accessible new construction and alterations.

U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Disability Rights Section - NYAV
Washington, D.C. 20530

(800) 514-0301 (voice)
(800) 514-0383 (TTY)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin, including limited English proficiency (LEP) under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Federal Coordination and Compliance Section - NWB
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

(888) 848-5306 - English and Spanish (inglés y español)
(202) 307-2222 (voice)
(202) 307-2678 (TTY)

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits public entities, which includes state and local governments, and special purpose districts, from discriminating against individuals with disabilities in all their services, programs, and activities, which include housing, and housing-related services such as housing search and referral assistance.

See SECTION 504 for details on how to file a complaint.

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits private entities that own, lease, and operate places of public accommodation, which include shelters, social service establishments, and other public accommodations providing housing, from discriminating on the basis of disability.

See SECTION 504 for details on how to file a complaint.

The Age of Discrimination Act of 1975 prohibits discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance.

See SECTION 504 for details on how to file a complaint.

HUD's Equal Access Rule at 24 CFR 5.105(a)(2) prohibits discriminatory eligibility determinations in HUD-assisted or HUD-insured housing programs based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status, including any projects funded by the CoC Program, ESG Program, and HOPWA Program.

See *FAIR HOUSING ACT* for details on how to file a complaint.

NYS Human Rights Law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, age, marital status, domestic violence victim status, disability, pregnancy related condition, predisposing genetic characteristics, prior arrest or conviction record, familial status, retaliation for opposing unlawful discriminatory practices, gender identity, or transgender status.

NYS Division of Human Rights
Agency Building 1, 2nd Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12220

(518) 474-2705 (voice)

24 CFR § 578.93 Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity allows recipients of HUD funding to exclusively serve a subpopulation of homeless individuals, in circumstances where the housing addresses the specific needs of that group, for example:

- a) Housing may be limited to one sex where the housing is a single structure with shared bathrooms or bathing facilities;
- b) Housing may be limited to families with children;
- c) Housing may exclude registered sex offenders and persons with violent crime records when a family with a child under 18 resides in the housing;
- d) Sober housing may exclude persons who refuse to sign an occupancy agreement or lease that prohibits participants from possessing, using, or being under the influence of illegal substances and/or alcohol on the premises;
- e) Housing may be limited to a specific subpopulation, such as homeless veterans, victims of domestic violence, chronically homeless individuals, or persons with AIDS, so long as admission does not discriminate against any protected class (as identified in the stated laws and acts);
- f) Housing that provides specialized support services may limit or prioritize individuals who identify with a specific disability but may not refuse housing to a person who may benefit from the services regardless of having that specific disability.

Special Considerations for DV Survivors

It is of the utmost importance to provide a safe and confidential way for domestic violence survivors and those who are actively fleeing a domestic violence situation to access the Coordinated Entry Process. The following procedures should be implemented when an assessment indicates the applicant is currently or formerly a victim of domestic violence.

Emergency Assistance

If the applicant indicates he/she is in immediate danger, ask him/her to hang up and call 911. If the applicant has indicated they are temporarily safe, but you are unable to meet with him/her at the time, please have the applicant contact the 24-hour emergency domestic violence hotline at 518-374-3386.

Sharing Information

While any applicant may opt out of sharing information with other Coordinated Entry agencies, it is especially important to explain this option to the applicant. The applicant should be informed that the information provided during the assessment does not have to be shared with any agencies but those to which referrals are made.

To make a referral for a client who opts out of the Coordinated Entry system, have the applicant complete a release of information for your agency to share information with the agency to which you will be making the referral. Each agency that is referred to must have a separate release of information on file with the applicant's assessment.

When communicating via email with other agencies refer to the applicant only by his/her initials.

If the applicant has opted out of the Coordinated Entry process, you may not discuss his/her case at any group-wide meetings.

Application Accommodations

If the applicant is currently housed at a confidential location/DV shelter do not ask for the address when completing the assessment. Instead, please enter "confidential location" in the section which asks where the applicant was/will be during the night.

If obtaining documentation to support the applicant's homelessness status has the potential to place him/her in danger, the applicant may self-certify.

Other Considerations

Verify with the client that it is safe to contact them at the phone number provided. Ask the client to notify you immediately if it ever becomes unsafe to contact them. Work with the client to identify different ways to stay in contact (e.g. schedule a regular time to meet with the client).

Domestic Violence Hotline: 518-374-3386

I have received the Policy and Procedures Manual for the Schenectady County Coordinated Entry System and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this Manual and any revisions made to it.

Name of Participating Agency:

Name of Designated Agency Representative authorized to sign:

Title: _____

Signature of Designated Agency Representative:

Date: _____