

Columbia & Greene

Coordinated Entry

Policies and Procedure Manual

Implementation, Governance and Evaluation of
the Coordinated Entry System in the
Columbia & Greene Continuum of Care (CoC)

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Introduction

Document Overview

To implement and maintain a bilateral county wide Coordinated Entry (CE) System, Columbia & Greene Housing Coalition's Coordinated Entry Committee, along with the Collaborative Applicant, CARES, has 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.

Implementing Coordinated Entry is a requirement under the CoC program Interim Rule, all CoC funded and ESG (Emergency Solutions Grant) funded agencies are required to participate. The Columbia & Greene Coordinated Entry process is a necessary system for developing a systemic response to homelessness. The Columbia & Greene Coordinated Entry System ensures that people experiencing homelessness are prioritized for and matched with the right intervention as quickly as possible. This process standardizes the access, assessment, prioritization, and referral process across all providers who are CoC and for some that are non-CoC funded.

The Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedure will:

- Assist with the coordination of service delivery across Columbia & Greene and will be the foundation of the coordinated entry system;
- Assist in assessing individuals and families consistently to determine program eligibility;
- Assist in administering programs fairly and methodically;
- Establish common performance measurements for all local CoC components including outreach, Emergency shelters and prevention service; and.

The Policy and Procedures have been established to ensure that persons experiencing homelessness who enter programs throughout the CoC will be given similar information and support to access and maintain permanent housing. 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 to provide comprehensive services to the community's homeless population

Coordinated Entry works by establishing one process to assess the situation of all households who request help through the housing crisis response system. There are four core elements to the Coordinated Entry System Access, Assessment, Prioritization and Referral this manual will provide details about each of these four system functions.

Goals of Coordinated Entry

CE is intended to increase and streamline access to housing and services for households experiencing homelessness, match appropriate levels of housing and services based on their needs, and prioritize persons with severe service needs for the most intensive interventions. It helps communities prioritize assistance based upon vulnerability and severity of service needs to ensure that people who need assistance the most can receive it in a timely manner. CE also provides information about service needs and gaps to help communities plan their assistance and identify needed resources.

Primary goals for the coordinated entry processes are:

- Assistance will be allocated as effectively as possible,
- Assistance is easily accessible no matter where or how people present

Purpose of Coordinated Entry

Coordinated Entry is considered one of the many interventions in a community's united effort to prevent, reduce, and combat homelessness. The process works best and provides the greatest value if it is driven by "What does the client need" rather than by provider eligibility. Coordinated entry refers to the process used to assess and assist in meeting the housing needs of people at-risk of homelessness and people experiencing homelessness. The Columbia & Greene CoC Coordinated Entry (CE) process is designed to identify, engage, and assist homeless individuals and families and ensure those who need assistance are connected to proper housing and services. The implementation of coordinated entry is considered a 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; and
- 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 CoC and/or ESG funded fill all vacancies through referrals, while non-funded projects are strongly encouraged to accept referrals from the coordinated entry process.

Training: Lead CE representatives from each CoC will meet quarterly with collaborative Applicant to discuss policies and procedures and prioritization process. CE affiliates will be trained semiannually at funded member only meetings to ensure that all staff administering assessments has access to materials that clearly describe the methods by which assessments are conducted. A webinar training will be available for all CE affiliates that will provide step by step instructions on how to complete assessment tool, what documents must be submitted with tool and walk participants through referral process. A checklist noting the specific documents that must be submitted to verify disability and homeless status is attached to

the assessment. Training will also include a review of the policies and procedures and prioritization process for Coordinated Entry.

Operating procedures of the Columbia & Greene Coordinated Entry System

Coordinated Entry is an evolving practice as new research, models and assessment tools are continually being created. A CoC's CE process must be flexible and responsive to new information about more effective approaches as the process evolves and other services are wrapped into coordinated Entry.

The Target Population for Coordinated Entry may include:

- Chronically Homeless
- Homeless
- Veterans
- Domestic Violence
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Illness
- Youth
- Physically Disabled
- Families
- HIV / AIDS
- Unstably housed (Prevention services OR youth 18-24)

Full implementation and operation of the Coordinated Entry system includes the following Core Elements:

Access: The engagement point for persons experiencing a housing crisis.

- The Columbia & Greene Coordinated Entry System has adopted a No Wrong Door approach whereby assessment can be conducted regardless of which community stakeholder and/or CoC provider the client presents. This ensures that Consumers should have equal access to information and advice about the housing assistance for which they are eligible and assist them in making informed choices about available services that best meet their needs regardless of language barriers or impairments.
- Examples of access points include private and publicly funded homeless shelters, Local DSS, (when allowed) Temporary Assistance (TA) staff, street outreach projects, PSH/RRH programs, and outpatient treatment clinics.

Assessment: Upon access CoC providers associated with the Coordinated Entry Process will begin assessing the person's housing needs.

- A universal intake and assessment form will be utilized for all consumers. The process will be easy on 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 process will prevent duplication of services, reduce length of time homeless and improve communication among agencies.

Prioritization: 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 where their individual needs can be met.

- People experiencing chronic homelessness are prioritized within the CE waitlist for permanent supportive housing. In addition to prioritizing people experiencing chronic 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.
- If it happens that the current Columbia & Greene Coordinated Entry waitlist shows no chronically suitable households, with HUD guidance, a non-chronic homeless household may be approved for a vacant unit. It is expected that while CE members meet program definitions for admission that simultaneously all efforts have been undertaken to locate persons that would be considered the highest priority and a form documenting this action must be completed by agency accepting non-chronic household and approved by the lead CE agency.

Points to consider when prioritizing households for housing and homelessness assistance: Based on Vulnerability Scoring from Coordinated Entry Application

Chronically homeless households are prioritized within the Coordinated Entry waitlist; applications are given a vulnerability score based on points given for the following. (List below is not in order of points awarded)

- Over 60 years of age- 2 points
- Veterans- 1 points
- Youth (18-24 years old)- 1 point
- Chronic homelessness- 2 points
- Currently unsheltered- 1 point
- Disability- 2 points -OR-
- Multiple disabilities- 3 points
- Diagnosed with mental illness- 2 points
- Applicant has child with a mental illness- 2 points
- Applicant indicates that they do not have an income or receive public assistance only- 1 point
- Pregnant- 1 point
- Applicant indicates a criminal history, current probation or parole status for self or any member of the house hold- 1 point

Referral: Persons will be referred to available housing resources and services in accordance with the CoC's documented prioritization guidelines.

- The point of entry (POE) agency completes the (CE) intake/assessment with a signed consumer consent/release form.
- All (CE) Point of Entry (POE) locations offer the same assessment approach and referrals using uniform decision-making processes. A person presenting at a coordinated entry location is not steered towards any program or provider simply because they presented at that location.

Referral protocols: Programs that participate in the CoC's coordinated entry process accept all eligible referrals unless the agency has documentation that would support rejecting a referral.

Referral Rejection Policy: Both CoC providers and program participants may deny or reject referrals from the defined CE access point, although service denials should be infrequent and must be documented with specific justification as prescribed by the CoC. The specific allowable criteria for denying a referral must be established by the CoC, must be shared with each project and client, and be reviewed and updated annually. All participating projects and client must provide the reason for service denial, and may be subject to a limit on number of service denials.

Coordinated Entry System Ensures:

- **Low Barrier:**
 - The coordinated entry process does not screen people out for assistance because of perceived barriers to housing or services, including, but not limited to, lack of employment or income, drug or alcohol use, or having a criminal record.
- **Person-Centered:**
 - The coordinated entry process incorporates participant choice, which may be facilitated by questions in the assessment tool or through other methods. Choice can include location and type of housing, level of services, and other options about which households can participate in decisions.
- **Emergency Services:**
 - The coordinated entry process does not delay access to emergency services such as shelter through the local Department of Social Services.
 - Emergency Shelter providers will be invited to the Coordinated Entry monthly meetings. DSS places families and singles at emergency shelters and hotel/motels throughout Columbia & Greene
- **Prevention Services:**
 - Referral to Prevention Services Provider is made through the Coordinated Entry system.
 - Community Action of Greene County, Inc. administers The Solution to End Homelessness Program (STEHP) for Greene County residents. STEHP provides prevention assistance for individuals and families who are currently involved in the eviction process and are income eligible. Eligible applicants receive comprehensive supportive services throughout their eviction and / or housing stabilization process. Services include financial assistance to remain in or obtain new permanent housing, as well as advocacy, information, and referral to other community resources.
 - The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York (LASNNY) administers the Solutions to Eligible Homelessness Program (STEHP) to eligible Columbia and Greene County residents. We provide prevention assistance to financially eligible residents who are at risk of eviction. Financial eligibility is at or below 30% of area median household income, while at risk eligibility is persons who are within 21 days or less of eviction. Typical issues we address are landlord tenant advocacy, eviction representation, benefits advocacy, code violations, illegal lockouts, public and subsidized housing and other lease terminations, and utility shut offs or denials of utility service.
- **Inclusive:**
 - A coordinated entry process includes all subpopulations, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, Veterans, families, youth, and survivors of domestic violence.

- All subpopulations including chronically homeless individuals and families, Veterans, youth, persons and households fleeing domestic violence, transgendered persons, and refugees and new immigrants must be provided equal access to the CoC's Coordinated Entry System services regardless of the characteristics and attributes of their specific subpopulations.
- **Ongoing planning and stakeholder consultation**
 - The CoC engages in ongoing planning with all stakeholders participating in the coordinated entry process. This planning includes evaluating and updating the coordinated entry process at least annually. Feedback from individuals and families experiencing homelessness or recently connected to housing through the coordinated entry process is regularly gathered through surveys, focus groups, and other means and is used to improve the process.
- **Informing local planning:**
 - Information gathered through the coordinated entry process is used to guide homeless assistance planning and system change efforts in the community.
- **Safety planning:**
 - The coordinated entry process ensures the safety of the individuals seeking assistance. This ensures that people fleeing domestic violence have safe and confidential access to the coordinated entry process and domestic violence services, and that any data collection adheres to the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The CoC coordinates with victim/non-victim providers to ensure DV survivors are provided housing services that uphold safety by prioritizing programs that collaborate to offer victims a wide range of options. Households presenting at non-victim providers are linked with DV services via a phone assessment. Households are given options including VAWA and CoC services to guard personally identifiable information. If a client is eligible and elects DV services the provider will end intake, void electronic record and connect victim with DV service provider. If client elects for non DV services, the Client is referred to a nonvictim provider to fulfill CoC CE process. VAWA compliant informed consent is required to provide information to other providers.
- **Street Outreach:**
 - Programs that are staffed by outreach workers will address homeless individual and families housing by offering ongoing engagement with those not able or willing to access housing services on their own. Street outreach services by local DSS staff will have access to CE assessment tools and are well to complete coordinated Entry application and provide follow up with the client while the client transitions to being housed. Unsheltered persons will be engaged by local DSS staff and will be offered immediate support, intervention and connections with homeless assistance programs, social services and housing programs including permanent supportive housing. Street outreach efforts are linked to the coordinated entry process when the local DSS participates in the well-defined CE system. Through the collaboration with the local DSS staff and their street outreach efforts, The Columbia & Greene Coordinated Entry Committee is committed to the people on the streets being prioritized for assistance in the same manner as any other person assessed through the Coordinated Entry process.
- **Using other systems for Coordinated Entry process:**

- Columbia & Greene will use document sharing to collect and manage data associated with assessments and referrals in addition to an excel workbook designed to track activity and produce reports for weekly communication.
- **Fair and Equal Access:**
 - The Columbia & Greene Coordinated Entry system will ensure fair and equal access so that all people can easily access the Coordinated Entry process and the process for accessing help is well known.
 - All programs will ensure fair and equal access to CE system programs and services for all clients regardless of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender identity, pregnancy, citizenship, familial status, household composition, disability, Veteran status, sexual orientation, or domestic violence status.
 - To ensure fair access by individuals with disabilities, physical and communication accessibility barriers must be addressed by appropriate accommodation within the Coordinated Entry System.
 - If an individual's self-identified gender or household composition creates challenging dynamics among residents within a facility, the host program should make every effort to accommodate the individual or assist in locating alternative accommodation that is appropriate and responsive to the individual's needs.

Marketing: 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. Marketing strategies may include participating agencies utilizing their websites to advertise that they are a point of access and a brochure outlining the coordinated entry process as well as where individuals can go to apply for housing assistance through the CoC. This flyer will be available at community organizations such as health centers, churches and libraries.

Evaluation/Oversight: Grievance/Appeal process:

- There will be formal grievance and appeals process overseen 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. It is Coordinated Entry policy to make every effort to settle difficulties and problems which may occur in the Coordinated Entry process.
- Every client who participates in the Coordinated Entry process is entitled to file a grievance if they have a complaint about the services they receive from any participating Coordinated Entry Agency. We would encourage every client to first attempt to resolve problems directly with the Agency that they are working with in the housing process. If, after addressing concerns with the Agency, the client is not satisfied with the outcome, then the client should proceed with the grievance procedure.
- Coordinated Entry Grievance Form will be available at each participating CoC Agency.
- The Coordinated Entry Committee will engage in regular evaluations. The committee will recommend changes to the CE process after these evaluations. Changes will be recommended to and approved by the COC Board. The Coordinated Entry Committee will also be responsible for overseeing the grievance and appeals process within CE.

- Coordinated Entry formal meetings will occur biweekly. This meeting should 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 will be evaluated on their level of participation in Coordinated Entry including having CE committee members who attend and actively participate in the monthly meetings, taking referrals from coordinated entry, and regular updates on vacancies and waiting list. Participation in coordinated entry will be tracked through shared documentation 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 by all stakeholders annually. Recommendations for policy change will be presented to the COC Board.

*The statements in this manual may be impacted by resources available to the funded agencies.

I have received the Policy and Procedures Manual for the Columbia & Greene 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: _____

Please return this page to your Coordinated Entry Lead:

Tara Lehmann

HUD Program Supervisor

MHACGC

45 Five Mile Woods Rd.

Suite #2

Catskill, NY 12414

Phone: (518) 943-2930 x363

Fax: (518) 943-2910

Acronym Index

- ❖ **CoC: Continuum of Care** is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families
- ❖ **CE:** Coordinated Entry is a process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access and are quickly identified, assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and assistance based on their strengths and needs.
- ❖ **DSS:** Department of Social Services
- ❖ **DV:** Domestic Violence
- ❖ **ES:** Emergency Shelter
- ❖ **ESG:** Emergency Solutions Grants The purpose of the **Emergency Solutions** Grants (**ESG**) program is to assist individuals and families quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis or homelessness.
- ❖ **HEARTH:** Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act on May 20, 2009, the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 was signed. The HEARTH Act amends and reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes,
- ❖ **HMIS:** Homeless Management Information System is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness.
- ❖ **HUD:** Housing Urban Development
- ❖ **POE:** Point of Entry
- ❖ **PSH:** Permanent Supportive Housing is defined as community-based housing without a designated length of stay in which formerly homeless individuals and families live as independently as possible.
- ❖ **RRH:** Rapid Re-housing is an intervention, informed by a Housing First approach that is a critical part of a community's effective homeless crisis response system. Rapid re-housing rapidly connects families and individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through a tailored package of assistance that may include the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services.
- ❖ **TA:** Temporary Assistance
- ❖ **TH:** Transitional Housing is designed to provide homeless individuals and families with the interim stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing. Transitional housing may be used to cover the costs of up to 24 months of housing with accompanying supportive services.

- ❖ **VAWA**: Violence Against Women Act U.S. federal legislation that expanded the juridical tools to combat violence against women and provide protection to women who had suffered violent abuses.

Funded Agency Contact Information

Columbia Opportunities, Inc.: 518-828-4611
540 Columbia Street, Hudson, NY

Community Action of Greene County, Inc.: 518-943-9205
7856 US Highway, Catskill, NY

Mental Health Association of Columbia & Greene Counties: 518-943-2930 ext. 363
45 Five Mile Woods Road, Suite #2 Catskill, NY 12414

St Catherine's Center for Children: 518-869-1960 ext. 18

Columbia and Greene County Coordinated Entry Grievance Policy

It is the Columbia and Green Coordinated Entry's policy to make every effort to settle difficulties and problems which may occur in the Coordinated Entry process.

Every client who participates in the Coordinated Entry process is entitled to file a grievance if they have a complaint about the services they receive from any participating Coordinated Entry Agency.

We would encourage every client to first attempt to resolve problems directly with the Agency that they are working with in the housing process.

If, after addressing concerns with the Agency, the client is not satisfied with the outcome, then the client should proceed with the grievance procedure.

The *Columbia and Greene County Coordinated Entry Grievance Form* will be available at each participating COC Agency.

There are two levels of review available for each grievance filed:

Level 1:

- The first person to review the grievance will be the Coordinated Entry Lead
- Once the grievance is received, the Coordinated Entry Lead will contact and meet with the client within (3) business days.
- After the meeting, the Coordinated Entry lead will complete part II of the grievance form and inform the client of the outcome.
- The client will complete Part III and sign and date the form.
- If Client agrees with the outcome, the process ends and the resolution is implemented
- If Client disagrees they move to the next level of grievance.

Level 2:

- The Columbia and Green County Coordinated Entry Committee (if member is employed by agency involved in grievance member will excuse him/herself) will review grievance and complete part IV of grievance form.
- After this meeting the Coordinated Entry lead will contact the client to convey possible resolutions.
- The client will complete Part V of the *Columbia and Greene County Coordinated Entry Grievance Form*.
- If Client agrees the process ends and the resolution is implemented
- If Client disagrees Client may bring grievance to the Columbia and Greene County Executive Board.

Columbia and Greene County Coordinated Entry Grievance Form

Part I:

Your Name (Please Print):

Date:

Agency Name:

Please state your concern *(use back of form, if necessary):*

What action would you suggest?

Your Signature:

Date:

Part II:

To Be Completed by Coordinated Entry Lead

CE Lead Name

Date Grievance Received:

Recommended Grievance Solution:

CE Lead Signature:

Date:

Part III:

To be completed by client, name above:

_____ **I am satisfied with the recommended grievance solution.**

_____ **I am not satisfied with the recommended grievance solution.**

Signature of Client:	Date:
Part IV:	
To Be Completed by Coordinated Entry Committee	
Name:	
Date Grievance Received:	
Date of Committee Review:	
Final Grievance Solution:	
Date Discussed with Client:	
Panel Facilitator Signature:	Date:
Part V:	
To be completed by client:	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am satisfied with the recommended grievance solution.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am not satisfied with the recommended grievance solution.	
Signature of Client:	Date: