



New York State Balance of State Continuum of Care

Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures

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I. **BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

Purpose

Coordinated Entry (CE) is a process by which the CoC can identify, engage, and assist homeless individuals and ensure those who need assistance are connected to appropriate housing services.

CoC and ESG funded Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), Rapid Rehousing (RRH) and Homelessness Prevention (HP) services must follow the NYS BoS CoC policies. PSH, RRH and HP programs funded by other sources are strongly encouraged to participate in the CE system. Emergency housing/shelter services should not use the Coordinated Entry system to fill vacancies.

Guiding Principles

The New York State Balance of State Continuum of Care (NYS BoS CoC) CE system is:

- *Person-centered and inclusive of participant choice.* Choices include location, type of housing, and level of services.
- *Sensitive to lived experiences.* The NYS BoS CoC is trauma-informed and considers participants' lived experiences.
- *Accessible.* Tools are available in various formats to accommodate individuals with access and/or functional needs.
- *Managed in HMIS.* CE utilizes HMIS to manage participant information and facilitate access to available resources.
- *Flexible.* The CE system will adapt to changes in participant and community needs.
- *Transparent.* Participants are informed of the Coordinated Entry process throughout the duration of their engagement.
- *Housing First.* Participants are engaged in CE without preconditions or service participation requirements.

Coordinated Entry Oversight

Role of the Coordinated Entry Committee

The NYS BoS CoC's Coordinated Entry committee oversees adherence to the CE policies and procedures, including the assessment tool. The committee suggests policy updates to the Steering Committee in response to community need.

Role of Local Coordinated Entry Committees

Geographic areas within the NYS BoS CoC are responsible for meeting regularly to discuss the CE prioritization list and make program referrals. Efforts are made to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved.

II. PRIVACY AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Privacy Protection

The NYS BoS CoC HMIS Lead is CARES, Inc., which has established a policy and procedure manual that is updated annually. Providers are required to sign memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreements with CARES, and data entry users are required to attend training and review privacy procedures on an annual basis. The CARES HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual provides the adopted written standards of protection of client information. Data from domestic violence providers is not included in HMIS and not shared.

Participant Consent

The NYS BoS CoC obtains participant consent to share and store participant information for Coordinated Entry. The consent form is signed by the participant at the time of assessment (see attached).

This release of information allows participants entering CE options to choose the amount of information that will be shared through the HMIS. Participants have the right to refuse or revoke authorization for the sharing of information at any time. HMIS information is used to maintain a coordinated entry housing waitlist and to assist the referring agency in determining eligibility for housing placement. The NYS BoS CoC does not require the disclosure of specific disabilities and diagnoses. Specific information regarding the participants' disability and diagnoses will only be obtained for purposes of determining program eligibility to make appropriate referrals.

Participant refusal to participate in data sharing does not impact the ability of the project to serve the participant; it simply prohibits the sharing of data with other participating agencies. HIV/AIDS status, domestic violence history, behavioral health and substance use information and notes/logs are never shared via HMIS to protect the privacy of participants. The signed authorization to release information must match the participant preference as recorded in HMIS and be kept in the participant file (electronic or physical) for monitoring purposes.

III. ACCESS

Access is the primary engagement point for persons experiencing a housing crisis. The NYS BoS CoC has a "no wrong door" approach to CE. This ensures that all staff at access points are knowledgeable of the CE process and trained on the assessment tool.

Examples of access points include the local social services district, 211, homeless and domestic violence shelters, street outreach providers, and other social service providers. Local CE Committees should strive to increase the number of access points throughout the community.

IV. ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the process of gathering information about a person presenting to the Coordinated Entry system in order to ensure appropriate prioritization and referral. Assessment includes gathering information about the participants' needs, barriers and vulnerability.

The NYS BoS CoC utilizes the VI-SPDAT (see attached) as the universal assessment tool. All CE participating agencies will use the same tool to evaluate vulnerability. Participant assessments should be updated annually, if still on the prioritization list, or upon notification of significant change in a participant's vulnerability. (See attachments for guidance on when to complete the VI-SPDAT.)

The NYS BoS CoC prohibits the CE process from using assessment data to screen people out of housing due to little or no income, active or a history of substance abuse, domestic violence history, resistance to receiving services, disability, history of evictions or poor credit, lease violations or history of not being a leaseholder, criminal record, presumed readiness for a particular type of housing, or current/prior "sanction" by the local social services district. The CE process may collect and document participants' membership in Civil Rights protected classes but will not consider membership in a protected class as justification for restricting, limiting, or steering participants to particular referral options.

Assessment Training

The NYS BoS CoC is committed to ensuring that all staff who assist with CE operations receive sufficient training to implement the CE system in a manner consistent with policies.

The NYS BoS CoC provides training for persons conducting CE assessments.

Topics for training may include:

- Review of CE policies and procedures;
- How to determine prioritization;
- Use and application of the CE assessment; and
- Workflow within HMIS.

Special Protections for Survivors of Domestic Violence

The NYS BoS CoC CE is designed to meet the needs of victims of violence accessing services through both victim service providers and providers with services that are not specific to victims. The CE process ensures both safety and confidentiality. Assessments conducted provide extra precautions to participants that are attempting to flee domestic violence, concerned for their safety, victims of stalking and any related violence.

In such cases, the following occurs:

1. Assessor ensures that there is not an immediate threat to a participant's safety. If there is an immediate threat, law enforcement will be contacted.
2. Participants are offered an immediate referral to DV-specific resources.
3. Households may choose to complete an assessment and receive services via the CE and/or can receive an immediate referral to a victim service provider.

V. PRIORITIZATION

People with the most severe service needs and levels of vulnerability are prioritized for housing and homeless prevention assistance.

The Coordinated Entry process prioritizes those who are most vulnerable. The NYS BoS CoC prioritizes its RRH and PSH CE list based on assessment score, length of time homeless and location of homelessness. The NYS BoS CoC prioritizes its Prevention CE list based on assessment score and immediacy of need. The local CE committee can adjust priorities as needs arise.

Prioritization List

The NYS BoS CoC maintains one prioritization list in HMIS for each local CE implementation. New participants are added to the prioritization list following assessment. Participants' rank on the prioritization list is managed through local CE committee meetings.

The list includes client name or identifier, referring agency, family composition, source and amount of income, veteran status, assessment score, special accommodations, and any other relevant housing information. For domestic violence agencies, or at the discretion of staff or the participant, only de-identified information and score are provided for inclusion on the prioritization list. If de-identified, the referring agency is responsible for maintaining identifying information so an appropriate placement can be made.

Each local CE committee will identify a responsible party to:

- Maintain a prioritization list;
- Maintain a list of participating agencies who use CE;
- Facilitate the CE process; and
- Receive notification of program vacancies.

VI. REFERRAL

The person with the highest priority is offered a referral for housing or homelessness prevention services based on the recommendations below.

Notification of Vacancies

All CE participating providers must fill vacancies from the NYS BoS CoC's CE referral process. To facilitate prompt referrals and to reduce vacancy rates, participating providers must notify the CE coordinating entity of any known or anticipated vacancies as soon as possible. The notification must include specific details of the vacancy, including the project name, unit size, location, and any funder-defined eligibility requirements. The local CE entity works to identify a prioritized household to fill the vacancy.

Scoring Recommendations

The following is a recommendation. Not every community will have every resource available. It is important that placement is guided by internal protocols as approved by the local CE committee.

RRH and PSH Referrals

The table below is recommended for family, single adult and youth VI-SPDAT placements.

RECOMMENDED PROJECT PLACEMENT CRITERIA	VI-SPDAT Score Range		
	Family	Single Adult	Youth
Crisis Response – Emergency Shelter [ES] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literally [street] homeless Fleeing or attempting to flee DV or family violence 	Do not conduct VI-SPDAT for emergency shelter placement.		
Resource, Referral and Self-Resolve Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client able to address housing barriers with individual resources and/or available community-based resources 	0-3	0-3	0-3
Rapid Rehousing [RRH] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular income or recent work history or ability to quickly obtain income for housing Can be used as a bridge to permanent subsidy 	4-8	4-7	4-7
Permanent Supportive Housing [PSH] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reserved for the most vulnerable No income or inadequate income Disability that can be documented Issues with independent living skills History of housing instability or prior homeless episodes 	9+	8+	8+

Prevention Referrals

The table below is recommended for prevention VI-SPDAT placements.

RECOMMENDED PROJECT PLACEMENT CRITERIA		VI-SPDAT Score Range
Brief Intervention	Use diversion techniques, landlord mediation, etc. or referral to DSS for small financial payment.	0-10
One-Time Assistance	Referral to community organization for up to 3 months of assistance from community organizations.	11-15
Short-Term Assistance	Immediate referral to ESG Prevention for 3 months to 12 months of assistance.	16-21
Medium-Term Assistance	Immediate referral to ESG Prevention for ongoing case management and financial assistance.	22+

Notification of Referral

The person who completed the assessment is responsible for completing the Email Referral Template (see attached).

Referral Considerations

Appropriateness of placements should be discussed at local CE committee meetings before a referral is made. CoC providers and program participants may refuse referrals for one of the reasons listed below. All participating programs must provide the reason for service denial.

- Client/household refused further participation (or client moved out of CoC area).
- Client/household does not meet required criteria for program eligibility.
- Client/household unresponsive to multiple communication attempts.
- Client/household resolved crisis without assistance.
- Client/household safety concerns. The client's/household's health or well-being or the safety of current program participants would be negatively impacted due to staffing, location, or other programmatic issues.
- Client/household needs cannot be addressed by the program. The program does not offer the services and/or housing supports necessary to successfully serve the household. Program at bed/unit/service capacity at time of referral.

Policy Amendments

Item Added/Amended	Date Added/Amended	Date Adopted by SC
Added Homelessness Prevention language. Updated Privacy section.	11/30/2020	12/3/2020



New York State Balance of State Continuum of Care

NYS BoS CoC Coordinated Entry Client Release of Information

Authorization to Share Protected Health and Personal Information and Participate in Housing Eligibility Survey

I understand that I am here today to discuss my housing and service needs. By signing this form, I acknowledge that I will be asked questions about my health and housing. This survey will take about 7 to 9 minutes. I understand that participation in the Vulnerability Index and Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) is completely voluntary.

What is the benefit to the client allowing service providers access to their information?

Coordinated Entry (CE) is a system that allows for access to a local homeless services system, as well as coordinated movement upon entry and ultimately exit from the system. CE increases the efficiency of a homeless assistance system by standardizing access to homeless services and coordinating program referrals. The benefit of utilizing CE is to improve access and service alignment by assessing various health and social needs, and then to match those assessed with the most appropriate housing interventions available. The VI-SPDAT is a tool to help guide those assessed to the appropriate services and housing assistance.

Please initial below if you agree with the following statements:

Who will have access to the information collected and how will it be disclosed?

____ I agree to allow my responses to the VI-SPDAT assessment tool to be used by the service providers that participate in the NYS BoS CoC Coordinated Entry System to determine if I am eligible for participating housing, services and related programs.

____ I understand that my information may be shared during case conferencing to assist in finding suitable housing resources.

What information about clients and their dependents linked to their household will be disclosed?

____ I understand that the following information will be shared with participating agencies that are using HMIS and service providers that participate in the NYS BoS CoC Coordinated Entry System as needed to help me find appropriate housing and services:

- Name
- Family Composition
- Current Residence
- Additional information used strictly for connecting me with suitable housing and/or services
- All information contained within the Vulnerability Index and Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) survey, including:
 - History of Housing and Homelessness

- Risks
- Socialization and Daily Functioning
- Wellness

Important Rights and Other Required Statements You Should Know

- The providers participating in HMIS and Coordinated Entry System who may see client information have signed agreements to maintain confidentiality regarding the information and to use the information provided only to link clients with housing or supportive service options.
- I understand that participating in the Coordinated Entry System does not guarantee that I will be called for a housing program.
- This consent will remain in effect until I revoke it in writing. I may revoke this authorization at any time by contacting the NYS BoS CoC. If I revoke this authorization, it will not apply to information that has already been used or disclosed.
- This release is valid for five years from the date of the signature below.
- This authorization is completely voluntary, and I do not have to agree to authorize any use or disclosure.
- I have a right to a copy of this authorization once I have signed it and must contact the NYS BoS CoC to obtain a copy.
- I acknowledge that auditors or funders who have legal rights to review the work of this agency, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development may see my information.

My signature below indicates that I have read (or been read) the information provided above, have received answers to my questions, and agree to participate in the VI-SPDAT survey and Coordinated Entry. By agreeing to be interviewed for Coordinated Entry, I am not giving up any legal rights.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

**NYS BoS CoC
Coordinated Entry
Email Referral Template**

Subject: CE Referral for Homelessness Prevention

Dear _____:

This is to notify you that [client initials] [mm/dd] has been recommended by the [county] Coordinated Entry Committee to your homelessness prevention program. Documentation and proof of eligibility is attached. The client can best be reached at _____.

Sincerely,

Enclosed (check all that apply):
 Proof of housing crisis/eviction
 Lease
 Documentation of income

Subject: CE Referral for RRH

Dear _____:

This is to notify you that [client initials] [mm/dd] has been recommended by the [county] Coordinated Entry Committee to your RRH program. Documentation and proof of eligibility is attached. The client can best be reached at _____.

Sincerely,

Enclosed (check all that apply):

Proof of homelessness

Documentation of income

Subject: CE Referral for PSH

Dear _____:

This is to notify you that [client initials] [mm/dd] has been recommended by the [county] Coordinated Entry Committee to your PSH program. Documentation and proof of eligibility is attached. The client can best be reached at _____.

Sincerely,

Enclosed (check all that apply):

- Proof of homelessness
- Proof of disabling condition
- Documentation of income