



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 Emergency Solutions Grant (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 CE system to fill vacancies.

Guiding Principles

The 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 the Homeless Management Information System (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 CE process throughout the duration of their engagement.
- *Housing First.* Participants are engaged in CE without preconditions or service participation requirements.

CE Oversight

Role of the CE Committee

The NYS BoS CoC's CE 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 CE 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 of NY. CARES has 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 participant 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 CE. 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 CE 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 CE 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 Balance of State Vulnerability Assessment Tool (BoS-VAT) 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 BoS-VAT.)

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 offers 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 homelessness prevention assistance.

The CE process prioritizes those who are most vulnerable. The NYS BoS CoC prioritizes its CE list based on assessment score, length of time homeless, immediacy of need and location of homelessness. 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 participant 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.

For a detailed description of CE Coordinator responsibilities and workflow, reference the attached "CE Checklist".

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

Administration of the BoS-VAT may result in a score ranging from 0.5 to 27. The following chart provides placement recommendations. 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.

Recommended Project Placement Criteria	Possible BoS-VAT Score Range
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 BoS-VAT for emergency shelter placement.
Resource, Referral and Self-Resolve Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant able to address housing barriers with individual resources and/or available community-based resources 	0 to 8.5
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 	9 to 16.5
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 	17 to 27

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.

- Participant/household requested removal from the CE list or moved to a geographic area where ongoing assistance is not feasible.
- Participant/household does not meet required criteria for program eligibility.
- Participant/household unresponsive to multiple communication attempts.
- Participant/household resolved crisis without assistance.
- Participant/household safety concerns. The participant/household's health or wellbeing or the safety of current program participants would be negatively impacted due to staffing, location, or other programmatic issues.
- Participant/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
Updated policy to reflect use of the BoS-VAT as the assessment tool.	1/5/2024	6/6/2024