



Coordinated Entry for Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Introduction

Coordinated Entry (CE) processes enable communities to effectively and efficiently use resources to house those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. A coordinated entry process makes it easier for persons experiencing homelessness to access the housing and service resources that are best suited for them. The CE process for youth should be informed by the expertise and capacity of all youth-serving providers and organizations in a community. The following brief provides information to youth housing and service providers through a review of the four Coordinated Entry core elements: *Access*, *Assessment*, *Prioritization*, *Referral*, and establishes the following for each:

- particular considerations for youth,
- key decision points within the process, and
- community highlights.

The community highlights provide very brief highlights of community approaches to a particular aspect of CE. In these communities, coordinated entry is evolving as communities evaluate and improve their processes.

See also:

- [HUD's Youth Specific FAQs for Coordinated Entry](#),
- [HUD Exchange Coordinated Entry](#) materials, and
- [CPD-17-01 Notice Establishing Additional Requirements for a Continuum of Care Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System](#).

Access

Assessment

Prioritization

Referral

Access

This core element focuses on how participants connect to the coordinated entry process. Access points of a coordinated entry process, either virtual or physical, must cover the entire geographic area of the CoC, be easily accessed by youth seeking assistance, and be well advertised so that those who need it are aware of the coordinated entry process. In order to facilitate easy access, CoCs might try offering *after-hours* access or ensuring accessibility by both public and private transit. A CoC might also consider having a dedicated and specialized access point for youth. Youth-specific access points might include youth drop in centers, youth emergency shelters, schools, and other locations where youth congregate.

In order to more effectively connect with youth, CoCs can utilize local peer networks and advertise through youth-friendly venues, such as social media and schools. CoCs should ensure that youth access coordinated entry in a space and manner that is culturally and developmentally appropriate for youth.

Decision Making Points:

- How will youth providers communicate with access points?
- Where should access points be located, and are they near areas youth are likely to congregate?
- How accessible to youth are the access points in terms of transportation and proximity to schools?

- When should access points be open, and are they open during times youth are likely to be around that location?
- Are the existing access points' location and room arrangement safe and inviting for youth, or will there be access points specifically for youth?
- Are staff at access points trained to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness, positive youth development, and trauma-informed frameworks?

Community Highlight:

To understand current access patterns, the Institute for Community Research in Connecticut is working with a group called the "Youth Action Hub." Research has included surveys and focus groups with the young adults in their community. This will lead to recommendations to the state during its planning process around coordinated entry for young adults.

CoC Action: Where will the access point(s) be? Who will operate the access point(s)? Will there be separate access point(s) for youth?

Youth Service Provider Action: How do you coordinate with the access points? Do you assist in training access point staff to meet the needs of youth? Do you act as an access point or lend staff to assist with staffing the access point?



Assessment

In coordinated entry, assessment is gathering information in a standardized way in order to understand a person's housing crisis.

Standardized assessment tools will document the needs and preferences of those seeking housing and services in a way that is uniform and consistent throughout the entire CoC.

Assessment can also be used to collect project eligibility requirements and potentially make presumptive eligibility determinations. The wording and order of questions on a standardized assessment tool can change based on the experience or perspective of specific subpopulations.

Some CoCs use a progressive or phased assessment approach which means that one set of assessment questions are used when clients initially enter the crisis response system, and other questions are asked at different relevant points as the client moves through the homeless system from initial crisis response or service to other interventions; however, phased assessments should be coordinated as much as possible, to ensure that youth are not required to repeat their story.

Staff conducting the assessments should use a person-centered approach that's based on youth's strengths, goals, risks, and protective factors including culturally and linguistically competent practices.

Decision Making Points:

- Do youth have to answer the same questions during multiple assessments?
- Do all youth have to be asked questions that do not apply to them, such as veteran status for those under age 18?
- Are questions asked in a developmentally appropriate manner reflecting the youth's age?
- Do assessors receive training for interacting with and guiding youth experiencing homelessness?

Community Highlight:

Multiple communities, including Washington, D.C., King County, WA, and Hollywood, CA, have been using a standardized tool and adding questions for use in their communities. These questions are around topics such as eligibility for other types of mainstream services, youth choices and goals, and immediate safety.

CoC Action: What assessment tool(s) will be chosen? Will you develop your own assessment tool for youth? If so, what vulnerabilities, risks and needs specific to youth will you include? Will you assess in phases? Who will conduct the assessments?

Youth Service Provider Action: Will you be involved in helping to develop/choose and/or test the assessment tool? Will you help train the assessors in youth-specific language and culture? Does your staff participate in conducting assessments?

Prioritization

The prioritization process involves determining the order in which potential project participants are served when there are openings in housing or service projects.

Prioritization is based on a person's level of vulnerability and need as documented in an assessment. This process should be applied consistently across the CoC and be based on specific criteria that are publicly available.

Often, one entity in the CoC manages the prioritization process based on the CoC's agreed upon prioritization guidelines as established in CE policies and procedures as well as in the CoC Program and Emergency Solutions Grant Program written standards for prioritizing assistance. This designation is different than eligibility for a specific project or the referral process.

The prioritization process must not delay access to crisis housing and emergency services. Regardless of an individual's priority, communities should ensure that all young people are assisted to move off the streets as quickly as possible, and work to connect all individuals to other types of appropriate resources.

Decision Making Point:

- How do youth connect to other resources if they are not prioritized high enough for a dedicated homelessness resource?



Community Highlight:

Hollywood, CA, prioritizes youth experiencing homelessness for services by a stratified prioritization system for each available housing resource, and uses care coordination meetings to ensure that scores are accurate and reasonable. They have also integrated most of their youth assessment tool into their Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and thus they are able to generate a participant priority list through HMIS.

CoC Action: What will be in our prioritization policy? Where in the assessment process does prioritization take place? How will we ensure that all subpopulations are weighted or scored equitably?

Youth Service Provider Action: Will you be involved in helping to develop the prioritization policy? How do youth connect to other resources besides dedicated homelessness resources?

Referral

Youth are connected to specific projects in the referral process based on the housing and services for which they are prioritized. Referrals are made per coordinated entry policies and procedures. Well-defined and documented standards for referrals are needed to ensure that consumers are connected with appropriate resources according to their need, eligibility, and preference. This process should be implemented for all beds and services available at projects that are participating in the coordinated entry process. The process should also incorporate individual eligibility requirements and current availability.

Referrals should consider the youth's developmental stage, needs, and strengths. The final decision about enrollment in a project will be made by the youth, as participant choice and autonomy is of utmost importance. Youth participants need to know exactly which project they are being referred to, what will be expected of them, what they should expect from the project, and what happens if they reject the referral.

Decision Making Points:

- When is Family Reunification an appropriate referral?
- Is the process and information that is provided to youth regarding the referral developmentally appropriate for youth?
- Are referral staff trained to interact with and guide youth?
- Do referral staff know the best project options for youth, including eligibility and documentation requirements?

- What is the responsibility of the CE and other stakeholders to ensure that youth referred to a project actually access the project?

Community Highlight:

In Houston, TX, youth who have been assessed are placed on the referral list for any project (youth-specific or adult) for which they are eligible. A provider with an open voucher/unit contacts the highest prioritized youth and explains the project, location of the unit, and additional information so the youth can make an informed choice. If a youth chooses not to accept that referral, they are placed back on the prioritized list in the same order. Houston's Operations Manual allows for three referral denials before a youth is placed at the bottom of the prioritized list.

CoC Action: How do you gather all of the eligibility criteria from providers? Who will conduct the referrals? How do you ensure participant choice?

Youth Service Provider Action: What eligibility criteria does the referring agency need to know about your project? Who in your agency will accept the referrals from the referral agency?

Disclaimer: This tool provides examples from communities without any edits from HUD. They are included only as useful examples. HUD has not reviewed them to determine if they meet all funding requirements, including whether all costs depicted are eligible. By including them, HUD is not endorsing the examples as strategies that all communities should adopt.