Coordinated Entry:
Best Practices to Plan and Implement a Rural Coordinated Entry System

Learning Objectives

- Understand the fundamentals and origin of coordinated entry
- Identify the core components of coordinated entry and assess where your community is in the development and implementation of CE
- Identify ways to address common challenges faced by rural communities and to engage your local stakeholders in planning and design of CE
- Use best practices and case studies to support local planning efforts and develop a checklist and next steps for your community

Group Activity #1: Who's in the room?

Answer the question:

What is the current status of your local Coordinated Entry process?

1. I'm familiar with Coordinated Entry, but don't know what it looks like in our CoC
2. My community is just getting started and hasn't quite finalized a coordinated entry approach or design yet.
3. My CoC has implemented SOME aspects of a CE system, but we still have a lot of work to do.
4. My CoC has implemented MOST aspects of a CE system but we have room for improvement.
5. My CoC is fully operational, we are just interested in learning how we can improve adjustments.
Section 1: Basics of Coordinated Entry

Origin & Overview of Coordinated Entry

Background & Context: HEARTH ACT

- The call to action of the HEARTH Act
  - “Transform homeless services into crisis response systems that prevent and end homelessness and rapidly return people who experience homelessness to stable housing.”
- Purpose of the HEARTH Act
  - Consolidate homeless assistance programs
  - Codify the Continuum of Care planning process
  - Establish a goal of ensuring that families who become homeless return to permanent housing within 30 days

Background & Context

- Establishing a Coordinated Entry System has been a requirement since 2012 (CoC Program interim rule)

- HUD has established a deadline of January 23, 2018 for CoC to establish or update their Coordinated Entry System (Notice CPD-17-01)
CoC Interim Rule

- Each CoC and ESG recipient operating within the CoC’s geographic area must participate in the CoC coordinated entry process
- The same assessment approach must be offered at all access points
- A standardized assessment tool and process is used, regardless of where a client presents for service
- Homeless households are prioritized based on a standard set of criteria
- The referral process is standardized

Why Coordinated Entry?

Coordinated Entry is a way to coordinate and manage the crisis response system -

- Reorient service provision, creating a more client-focused environment
- Identify which strategies are best for each household based on knowledge of and access to a full array of available services
- Improves system efficiency
- Fosters more collaboration among providers

Why: Coordinated Entry – A Systems Approach

Before CE
- Project-centric
- Many access points with multiple assessments
- Ad hoc referral system
- No strategy or process to prioritize

After CE
- Person-centric
- Standardized access, forms, assessment & referrals

Before CE
- Defined Access Points
- Screening/Triage
- Common/Standardized Assessment
- Prioritization List
- Housing Placement

After CE
What: Coordinated Entry - Core Elements

- **Coordinated Entry Is/Will:**
  - It is a systems approach to coordination
  - It is inclusive of all CoC providers and resources
  - It is a data-driven approach to homeless service delivery
  - It will help the CoC make the best use of scarce resources
  - It is using Housing First to end homelessness
  - It is an evolving process utilizing best practices
  - It will succeed using a collective effort

- **Coordinated Entry Is Not/Will Not:**
  - It is not a "program"
  - It is not creating new units or beds – a more effective referral process alone will not increase housing, services, or other resources
  - It will not reduce the challenges of serving households with multiple barriers to obtaining or maintaining housing
  - It is not first-come, first-served
  - It will not happen without leadership
Group Activity #2

Special Considerations for Coordinated Entry Planning in Rural Communities

Challenges & Solutions

Section 2: Core Components of Coordinated Entry

Access, Assess, Prioritization, Referral and Housing Placement

Coordinated Entry -- Access

Your system must have a coordinated entry point(s) and standardized approach for homeless households seeking assistance

- Basics of Access include:
  - Full geographic coverage
  - Easily accessible by individuals and families
  - Well advertised
  - Written policies and procedures to document and ensure fair and equal access
Access

➢ **Access points can be a**
  - single point of access
  - Multi-site access points
  - no wrong-door system
  - Phone/Hotline

*Required:* Same assessment approach at all access points

Additional Access Requirements include:

- Ability to access emergency services with as few barriers as possible and ensure access isn’t limited to CE operating hours
- Develop an Affirmative marketing strategy and accessibility policies to ensure all populations and subpopulations have non-discriminatory access to the CE process
- Street outreach efforts must be linked to CE
- Safety planning for those fleeing and seeking services from non-victim service providers
- Ensure adequate privacy protections are extended and enforced throughout the process from the first point of access
Special Considerations: Access

- Addressing special considerations and challenges for CE Access in rural communities
  - Access Points – careful consideration of the CoC geography, transportation, resources, and capacity in order to select your Access model/points
  - Fewer homeless system providers – particularly agencies that serve exclusively people experiencing homelessness
  - Wide distance between providers – they can be isolated and very spread-out geographically
  - Lack of connectedness or collaboration between partners
  - Limited visibility of homeless population
  - Limited jobs and affordable housing
  - Needs in one area of the CoC may be very different than needs in another area

Coordinated Entry -- Assess

The assessment phase of coordinated entry is a standardized process to document the needs and preferences of individuals and households accessing the system

- HUD requires standardized tools and activities
- The assessment process of coordinated entry should be progressive and include multiple phases, which may include:
  - Initial Screening/Triage (what assistance does this person/household need right now?)
  - Prevention or Diversion (can this episode of homelessness be prevented or resolved before it starts?)
  - Initial Standard Assessment
  - Eligibility Assessment (what assistance does this household need to exit homelessness?)
  - Comprehensive Assessment

Assess – Screening & Triage

Screening & Triage

An initial screening can be used to:
- Determine a household’s immediate needs and resolve immediate crisis, when possible
- Inform the next step/type of referral a household receives
- Determine if the homeless system is appropriate for resolving the household’s crisis
Assess – Prevention & Diversion

Assisting the household to avoid homelessness is always the best outcome

- Utilizing prevention services to avoid homelessness and/or incorporating a diversion approach to examine existing resources and options to prevent entry into shelter are appropriate as part of the initial triage.

Assess – Prevention & Diversion

Prevention
- Prevention is assistance to help a person or household maintain their current housing (usually financial assistance)
- May be one-time assistance
- May include short-term service provision (budget help, case management, landlord mediation)
- Case management can address the underlying issues of the housing crisis

Diversion
- Finding temporary alternate housing options outside of shelter when appropriate and safe
- Prevents unnecessary shelter entry
- Happens when an individual or household comes to the system to request shelter
- Requires service flexibility and light service provision (landlord mediation, negotiating)
- May or may not include financial assistance

Assess – Standard Assessments

Standardized assessment:
- Documentation of participant’s needs, preferences, vulnerability
- Can happen in multiple phases (initial, eligibility, comprehensive)
- Determines a household’s housing and services needs and informs the ‘best-fit’ referral
Assess – Requirements & Best Practices

- Other Requirements
  - Must use same standardized assessment process and assessment tool at all access points
  - Written criteria used for uniform decision-making
  - Allow for participant autonomy
  - Provide training to organizations that serve as ‘access points’ or otherwise conduct assessments

- Best Practices:
  - The assessment is client-centered and collects only the information that is relevant at that point in time
  - The assessment is progressive and phased, is trauma informed, and addresses safety and privacy

Special Considerations: Assessment

- Special considerations and challenges for CE Assessments in rural communities
  - When planning for your CE assessment process, consider
    - What information will be collected
    - Who will be conducting the assessments
    - How you will train the assessors
    - Data-management and sharing
    - Privacy concerns

Coordinated Entry -- Prioritization

- What does it mean to prioritize?
  - A CoC must use a coordinated entry process to prioritize households for access to housing and services
  - A CoC must prioritize the most severe service needs/highest vulnerability
  - Prioritization must be defined by specific community-established principles and criteria that are publicly available and consistently applied
  - Prioritization policies must be documented in written standards
Prioritization & Referral

The person’s assessed vulnerability will establish their level of priority for resources in the homeless system and lead to identification of vacancies at housing and supportive services projects that the person can be referred to.

Components of a prioritization process
- Determining priority level
- Managing the priority list (priority list, master list, by-name list)
- Using the priority list to fill all vacancies
- Case Conferencing

Special Considerations: Prioritization

- Special considerations and challenges for CE prioritization in rural communities
  - Case conferencing – how to manage this in a large geography
  - Establishing a clear and formal decision-making process
  - List conversion – managing the process of converting multiple waitlists into one centralized priority list

Coordinated Entry -- Referral and Housing Placement

Once a person is assessed and their level of vulnerability or need is determined (based on the CoC prioritization standards), they will be referred to the appropriate placement.
Referral & Housing Placement Fundamentals

- The CoC must implement a referral process that applies to all beds and service projects funded by the CoC or ESG Program
  - The process also applies to any other projects within the CoC that are participating in CE
- Referral can occur at various points in the CE process
- Households are referred to programs for which they are eligible
- Client choice informs the process

Referral and Housing Placement Requirements

- Other Requirements for Referrals for Housing Placement:
  - The group of persons with the highest priority must be offered housing and supportive services projects first.
  - Lowering barriers: Providers should remove barriers to entry into projects
  - The referral process should be uniform across projects and must comply with nondiscrimination provisions

Additional Elements of Housing Placement

Additional considerations
- Avoiding long wait times for referrals
- Person-centered approach
  - Ensure participant choice regarding location and type of housing
  - Setting clear expectations for referrals
  - Process when a person is rejected by a project
- Programs use a Housing First approach to lower barriers and ensure that high-need households receive assistance
- Referral process should account for occasions when a referral is rejected by the potential participant or when the provider rejects a referral under established policies
- Equal access and fair housing protections in place to ensure households are not steered to any particular program
- Referral data management and efficiency tracking
Special Considerations: Referral & Housing Placement

- Special considerations and challenges for CE referrals and housing placement in rural communities
  - Wait times – how you will eliminate long wait times for resources and identify alternative options (housing that may have less intensive services until other more appropriate housing is available)
  - Differing referral strategies
  - How to incorporate a person-centered approach (client choice)
  - Addressing provider concerns

Questions about the CE Core Components?

Break
Engaging Stakeholders

Coordinated Entry planning and implementation requires participation, buy-in and support from community stakeholders.

How to recruit and engage stakeholders across large geographies to support planning and implementation efforts --

Who needs to be at the table

HUD requires CoC to facilitate ongoing planning and stakeholder consultation concerning the implementation of CES
- CoC must solicit feedback at least annually from participating projects and from households in CES
- Feedback must address both the quality and the effectiveness of the system

Stakeholder/Partnership Engagement

Poll: How Ready is Your CoC or Regional Coalition to Move Forward with planning and implementation of Coordinated Entry?

- 100% ready; all the right people are at the table, including CoC and ESG providers, the VA and public housing authorities, emergency shelters and street outreach providers, the mayor’s office, and other representatives from relevant organizations
- 75% ready; we have an active Regional Coalition but membership is mostly CoC and ESG providers
- 50% ready; sometimes our full membership meets, but it’s typically a small group of providers
- 25% ready; I am the only provider in my region and I have difficulty engaging with other relevant organizations like local governments and faith-based organizations

Group Activity #3

Stakeholder Worksheet
Stakeholder Worksheet

Template Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Committee or Group</th>
<th>Role of the Committee or Group</th>
<th>Who is involved now (current members or attendees)</th>
<th>Who is missing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care Planning and Design Committee</td>
<td>Make decisions on care planning</td>
<td>CE Planning and Design Committee members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE Governance/Leadership Committee</td>
<td>Make decisions on CE governance</td>
<td>CE Oversight Committee members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoC Board member</td>
<td>Help prevent and address issues</td>
<td>CoC Board members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Stakeholder or Community group</td>
<td>Help inform or provide feedback to other groups</td>
<td>General Stakeholder group members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Advisory Group</td>
<td>Stay informed/engaged by attending community meetings</td>
<td>Consumer Advisory Group members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 3: Local Planning & Implementation

Infrastructure, Oversight and Engagement

Coordinated Entry – Structure and Oversight

Strengthening your CoC governance model to support system change during the design and implementation of CE:

- The CoC is responsible for establishing and operating the CE system
  - Establishing policies and procedures
  - Appointing a designated entity to oversee/manage CE

- Planning for the management and oversight of your CES should include:
  - Identifying where decisions are made
  - Identifying who will be responsible for daily oversight as well as ongoing performance
  - Ensuring comprehensive and diverse stakeholders are involved
Considerations for CE Structure

**During planning, design & Implementation:**

- Establish CE system vision, values and guiding principles
- Define CE geography, participation, expectations and roles, oversight and management
- Identify your CE model (access points, assessment tool, etc.)
- Get community engagement and buy-in
- Develop your management/oversight plan and your operational policies and procedures

Considerations for CE Structure

- Establish CE system vision, values and guiding principles
  - Define CE geography, participation, expectations and roles, oversight and management
  - Identify your CE model (access points, assessment tool, etc.)
  - Get community engagement and buy-in
  - Develop your management/oversight plan and your operational policies and procedures

Questions to consider when establishing your management and oversight structure:

- Who develops/adopts/revises policies?
- Who sets performance expectations?
- Who monitors performance?
- Who resolves conflicts?
- Who will operate CE?
Special Considerations for Coordinated Entry Planning in Rural Communities

CoC must consider the geographic characteristics of the community when planning coordinated entry.

Rural communities can face unique challenges, such as:

- Expansive geography
- Natural barriers such as mountains or bodies of water
- Often fewer homeless system providers
- Providers can be isolated

Lunch

Section 4: Action Steps

Planning for Next Steps in Your Implementation of CES
Action Planning

Group Activity #5

- Action Planning – developing your checklist
  - The goal of this exercise
  - Review the Checklist template
  - Instructions
  - Get in to small groups

Step 1: Questions to think about/discuss
- What --
  - What are our short and long-term goals for CE?
  - What action steps will we take over the next 1,3,6 months?
  - What steps will move the needle for our community
- Who --
  - Who will lead our planning and implementation process?
  - Who do we need to engage during each step of the process?
- How --
  - How will these action steps drive us towards our goal?

Step 2: Fill out worksheet (Coordinated Entry Next Steps Checklist)
Group Activity #5

Report out and Wrap up

Section 5: Case Study

Colorado Balance of State CoC

CoC Background

- CoC Characteristics:
  - Geography consists of primarily rural communities with mix of several growing urban areas (Northern Colorado has population of 500,000+)
  - FY 2017 Award: $2,908,936
  - 2017 PIT Count: 1,511 sheltered persons; 2,508 unsheltered persons
  - CoC geography covers 56 counties grouped into 11 regions. Each of the 11 regions has its own regional coalition.

- Governance and Decision-making:
  - CoC Governing Board historically consisted of service providers. To diversify the Board they recently added new board members that represent different types of planning organization across the state.
  - Limited top-down governance
  - Governing Board consists of 25 members, now including at-large members
  - Each regional coalition has one representative as a member on the governing board.
Co BoS Coordinated Entry Characteristics

- Full coverage:
  - Access points from each region
  - Engagement with 211 for the first time
- Assessment:
  - Phased assessment approach
  - Uses VI-SPDAT Assessment tool
- Prioritization:
  - Housing first approaches: no maximum 'score' that would preclude people from getting access to housing
  - Uses RRH as a bridge
- Data management:
  - Statewide ROI for data sharing
  - HMIS in progress
- Regional coalitions manage locally:
  - Deployment of diversion, based on resources available
  - Training
  - Prioritization list management
  - Case conferencing
  - Referrals (for now, occurs through case conferencing)
  - Housing navigation

Section 5: Case Study
Anchorage, Alaska CoC

CoC Background

- Anchorage CoC Characteristics
  - Consists of the most populous city in Alaska as well as large rural areas
    - Approximately 300,000 residents across nearly 2,000 square miles
    - Only a very small portion of the municipality is densely populated, with all other areas sparsely populated
  - FY 2017 Award: $2,932,595
  - 2017 PIT Count: 973 sheltered persons; 155 unsheltered persons
- Engaging with stakeholders across sectors to support a community-wide planning process
  - Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH) provides support to the CoC and Board
  - Shared interests and geography strengthened connections across sectors, organizations, and people
  - High rates of CoC participation from many diverse sectors
Lessons Learned

- **Following the Process**
  - Once the planning process was set, each subsequent planning effort followed the same steps.

- **Challenges**
  - Developing coordinated entry by population type meant that different stakeholders were involved at different times.
    - Created silos across the system.
    - Planning efforts lacked continuity.

- **Successes**
  - Established a pilot process allowed for continuous quality improvement.
  - Single adults first, families and youth followed.
  - Lessons learned were incorporated into subsequent planning efforts via a plan > do > study > act framework.
  - Created community-wide buy-in for coordinated entry and systems change.

**Break!**

Section 5: Case Study

Idaho Balance of State CoC
CoC Background

CoC Characteristics:
- FY 2017 Award: $2,801,256
- 2017 PIT Count: 1,398 sheltered persons; 639 unsheltered persons
- BoS CoC geography covers 43 counties, excluding Ada County, which is part of Boise/Ada County CoC.

CoC Governance:
- Governance allows for full coverage of the CoC, represented by 6 regions across the state in Regional Coalitions and through the Idaho Homelessness Coordinated Committee
- Inclusive and well represented governing committee (known as IHCC), which includes Boise CoC as a member of the board

ID BoS Coordinated Entry Characteristics

- Full coverage:
  - CES covers all of the 6 regions. Each region has at least one physical access point.
  - 2:1:1 serves as virtual access point across the CoC

- Prioritization:
  - Separate priority lists for TH, RRH, PSH
  - Households prioritized by vulnerability score (for PSH, CoC adopted CPD-16-11)
  - HMIS as the data management system for prioritization and referral

- CES Administrator responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of coordinated entry

- Regional coalitions manage locally:
  - Approval of access points, in conjunction with the CE committee
  - Case conferencing (with CES administrator participating in each call)
  - Distribute CES marketing materials
  - HMIS data entry timeliness standards (no longer than a week)

Section 5: Case Study
Alaska Balance of State CoC
CoC Background

CoC Characteristics:
- FY 2017 Award: $798,651
- 2017 PIT Count: 578 sheltered persons; 139 unsheltered persons
- CoC geography covers all of Alaska, outside of the City of Anchorage. This area is over 660,000 square miles and includes 464 communities.
- Major hubs that receive HUD homelessness assistance funding include Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak, and Mat-Su Valley. The CoC includes many other communities that serve as hubs to neighboring villages but they have limited housing and services resources.

AK BoS Coordinated Entry Characteristics

- **Full coverage:**
  - Physical access points from each regional referral zone; each region must have the ability to do assessments telephonically
  - 211 serves as virtual access point for prevention and diversion

- **Assessment:**
  - Phased assessment approach
  - Uses VI-SPDAT Assessment tool

- **Prioritization:**
  - CoC adopted HUD’s Prioritization Notice for PSH (CPD-16-11)
  - Housing first and low barrier policies

- **Data management:**
  - Privacy policy allows for written and verbal consent
  - CoC uses HMIS to facilitate referrals
  - Each referral zone, also called a Designated Lead Agency/Organization, manages the following locally:
    - Prioritization list
    - Ensure fidelity of local access points
    - Coordinate marketing efforts
    - Monitor system performance

Wrap Up & Questions
Resources

- HUD’s Notice on Establishing a Coordinated Entry System
  - https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5208/notice-establishing-additional-requirements-for-a-continuum-of-care-centralized-or-coordinated-assessment-system/

- Coordinated Entry Self-Assessment

- HUD’s Coordinated Entry Policy Brief

- HUD’s Continuum of Care FAQs
  - Select > Program Requirements > Coordinated Entry

- US Interagency Council on Homelessness Housing First Checklist
  - https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/housing-first-checklist