



Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness
(Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care)
Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures

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SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

In accordance with 24 CFR 578.7 and as required by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH), in partnership with the Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity, has established a Coordinated Entry system.

Policies and procedures for the VCEH Coordinated Entry system are established in this document. These policies and procedures will govern the implementation of the Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC) Coordinated Entry system. The Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness is the primary decision-making body for the Balance of State Continuum of Care. Policies will be reviewed annually in accordance with the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness Governance Charter. The VCEH Coordinated Entry Committee is responsible for Coordinated Entry evaluation and oversight of implementation.

Coordinated Entry (CE) is a set of processes to ensure that people experiencing a housing crisis are quickly identified, assessed for, referred and connected to housing assistance based on their strengths and needs. At a minimum, Coordinated Entry is required to:

- Cover the geographic area of the CoC,
- Be easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing or services,
- Be well advertised, and
- Include comprehensive and standardized assessment.

Coordinated Entry also helps ensure the success of homeless assistance and homeless prevention programs in communities. In particular, Coordinated Entry can help communities systematically assess the needs of individuals and families, and effectively match each individual or family with the most appropriate resources available to address that individual or family's particular needs.

1.1 Geographic Area & Population

The Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care includes all the counties in Vermont *except* for Chittenden County. Within these 13 counties, there are 11 local Continuums of Care operating as part of the Balance of State CoC. VCEH has defined a Local Coordinated Entry Partnership model as key to Coordinated Entry implementation.

Coordinated Entry is intended to serve all households (adults only, adults with children, children only) experiencing a housing crisis, defined as: **Homeless** or **At-risk of Homelessness**, using the definitions adopted by HUD and the Vermont Agency of Human Services:

https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf

https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/AtRiskofHomelessnessDefinition_Criteria.pdf

1.2 Goals of Coordinated Entry

Most communities lack sufficient resources to meet all the needs of people experiencing homelessness. This combined with the lack of well-developed process for accessing resources has resulted in severe hardships for people experiencing homelessness. Coordinated Entry 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 complex service needs for the most intensive interventions.

HUD's primary goals for Coordinated Entry processes are:

1. Assistance will be allocated as effectively as possible
2. Assistance is easily accessible no matter where or how people present

In Vermont, the primary goal of Coordinated Entry is to provide and improve consumer information, referral, assistance and access to housing and services for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

In Vermont, Coordinated Entry will:

- Improve referral appropriateness and coordination
- Increase understanding among partners of what resources are available
- Decrease the time that people experience homelessness
- Help people move in and out of the "homeless system" as quickly as possible
- Support community-wide or system level planning and outcomes

VCEH further defines effective Coordinated Entry as client-focused, linking the household to an intervention to resolve the housing crisis, based on a standard assessment of needs and strengths and the knowledge of housing and services available.

VCEH will work to ensure that in policies and practice all clients in all permanent housing programs, regardless of their funding source, can be connected to high intensity supports (as needed), bridge to a permanent affordable housing placement as appropriate, and pursue mainstream housing resources.

1.3 Guiding Principles (from the Local Partnership Agreement)

1. **Reorient service provision**, creating a more client-focused environment.
2. **Recognizes the inherent dignity of persons in need of housing**, and honors their right to confidentiality, safety, respect, and choice.
3. **Identify which strategies are best for each household** based on knowledge of and access to a full array of available services.
4. **Link households to the most appropriate program** that will assist the household to quickly resolve their housing crisis and regain housing stability.
5. **Provide timely access and appropriate referrals** to housing programs and support services.
6. **Shorten the number of days** between onset or threat of homelessness and access to assistance needed to re-establish stable housing.
7. **Protects the safety of victims fleeing domestic/sexual violence** and simultaneously helps victims to access housing resources.
8. **Provide immediate access to information** regarding housing and support services.
9. **Establishes consistent referral protocols and uniform assessment** so that no matter where a person or family presents in need, they can have access to needed housing programs and support services.
10. **Reduces duplicate collection of household information** to streamline referral and access to needed resources.
11. **Provide for ongoing participation** by consumers and stakeholders in the development and evaluation process of Coordinated Entry.
12. **Commitment to continuous improvement** through ongoing evaluation of Local Coordinated Entry Partnerships and VCEH.

1.4 Associated Regulations

HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) Interim Rule

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CoCProgramInterimRule.pdf>

578.7 (a) (8) In consultation with recipients of Emergency Solutions Grants program funds within the geographic area, establish and operate either a centralized or coordinated assessment system that provides an initial, comprehensive assessment of the needs of individuals and families for housing and services. The Continuum must develop a specific policy to guide the operation of the centralized or coordinated assessment system on how its system will address the needs of individuals and families who are fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, but who are seeking shelter or services from non-victim service providers. This system must comply with any requirements established by HUD by Notice.

The VCEH is the primary decision-making body for the Balance of State Continuum of Care.

HUD Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Interim Rule

https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HEARTH_ESGInterimRule&ConPlanConformingAmendments.pdf

576.400 (d) Centralized or coordinated assessment. Once the Continuum of Care has developed a centralized assessment system or a coordinated assessment system in accordance with requirements to be established by HUD, each ESG-funded program or project within the Continuum of Care's area must use that assessment system. The recipient and subrecipient must work with the Continuum of Care to ensure the screening, assessment and referral of program participants are consistent with the written standards required by paragraph (e) of this section. A victim service provider may choose not to use the Continuum of Care's centralized or coordinated assessment system.

The Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity is the ESG recipient for the state of Vermont. ESG funds are administered as part of the Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP).

HUD Coordinated Entry Policy Brief (2015)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Coordinated-Entry-Policy-Brief.pdf>

HUD Coordinated Entry Notice CPD-17-01 – Notice Establishing Additional Requirements for a Continuum of Care Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System (2017)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5208/notice-establishing-additional-requirements-for-a-continuum-of-care-centralized-or-coordinated-assessment-system/>

HUD Prioritization Notice CPD-16-11 – Notice on Prioritizing Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness and Other Vulnerable Homeless Persons in Permanent Supportive Housing (2016)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/notice-cpd-16-11-prioritizing-persons-experiencing-chronic-homelessness-and-other-vulnerable-homeless-persons-in-psh.pdf>

HUD Equal Access rule: 24 CFR 5.105(a)(2) and 5.106(b)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1991/equal-access-to-housing-final-rule/>

VCEH Governance Charter

<http://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/VT-BoS-CoC-VCEH-Governance-Charter-Revised-07.17.pdf>

SECTION 2: LOCAL COORDINATED ENTRY PARTNERSHIP

The Vermont Balance of State CoC is diverse in its local needs and has a large geography therefore, access to the Coordinated Entry process occurs through many local providers as well as through 2-1-1 statewide.

- A client can seek housing assistance through any of the participating providers¹ and will have access to the Coordinated Entry process.
- Clients will have equal access to information and advice about the housing assistance for which they are eligible to assist them in making informed choices.
- Providers participate in one of three roles: a local Lead Agency, an assessment partner or a referral partner. Departments or divisions within large agencies may have different roles.
- Participating housing providers will work collaboratively to achieve responsive and streamlined access services and cooperate to use available resources to achieve the best possible housing outcomes for clients, particularly for those with high, complex or urgent needs.

2.1 Designated Local Lead Agency

Each local Continuum of Care will designate a local Lead Agency to lead Coordinated Entry locally, including but not limited to management the local Master List and contact for the VCEH Coordinated Entry Committee.

2.2 Agencies Providing Housing and Services

All agencies that administer Continuum of Care (CoC)-funded programs, Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP)-funded programs, or Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) are required to participate in their Local Coordinated Entry Partnership. Other organizations and programs are encouraged and welcome to join; they can join by contacting the Lead Agency, establishing what role they will serve within the Local Coordinated Entry Partnership, and signing the Partnership Agreement.

Providers participate in one of three roles as follows and departments or divisions within large agencies may have different roles:

- a local Lead Agency,
- an Assessment Partner or a
- Referral Partner.

Participating housing providers will work collaboratively to achieve responsive and streamlined access services and cooperate to use available resources to achieve the best possible housing outcomes for clients, particularly for those with high, complex or urgent needs.

2.3 Partnership Agreement

VCEH will provide a Local Coordinated Entry Partnership Agreement template that will include the following:

- Identify the participating providers and their role in the Local Coordinated Entry Partnership: the Local Lead Agency, an Assessment Partner(s) or a Referral Partner(s)
- Describe the Purpose and Guiding Principles of VCEH Coordinated Entry
- Describe Coordinated Entry Core Components and Activities

¹ Participating Providers: Referral Partners, Assessment Partners, and the Lead Agency

- List shared responsibilities and partner responsibilities that relate to: advertisement, training, outreach, planning, evaluation, joint-problem solving and communication, confidentiality, client grievance, safety protocols, and nondiscrimination policies.
- Confidentiality Principles and Policies, including optional staff certification to use with partner staff.

The Local Coordinated Entry Partnership Agreement is in Appendix B. This template is considered part of the VCEH written policies and procedures for Coordinated Entry.

Local CoCs may only alter the Partnership Agreement with approval of the VCEH Coordinated Entry Committee.

2.4 Outreach and Advertisement

Agency Outreach

At least once annually, each local Coordinated Entry Partnership is required to contact local agencies and community partners who come in contact with persons who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness to provide them with education on the Coordinated Entry process and how to participate.

Client Outreach

Participating providers will coordinate with existing street outreach programs to receive referrals to ensure that people in unsheltered locations are prioritized for assistance in the same manner as other clients accessing Coordinated Entry.

Participating providers will take steps to ensure that coordinated entry is available to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, disability, actual or perceived sexual orientation, actual or perceived gender identity, or marital status. Partners will work to make access points accessible to individuals with disabilities, including wheelchair accessibility and auxiliary aids and services to assist communication. All partners will take reasonable steps to offer materials and instruction in other languages to meet the needs of people with limited English proficiency.

Advertisement

The Local CE Partnership will advertise the Coordinated Entry process in order to inform people how to get connected to housing resources for people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. At a minimum, advertisement will include: flyers posted at locations where clients may present (*e.g.*, hospitals, clinics, local Economic Services office, WIC offices, community meal sites, churches, food shelves, check cashing locations, *etc.*) The Local CE Partnership is encouraged to explore other venues of advertising such as during the Point in Time Count, a booth at local events, newspaper ads, participating provider websites, or radio. Local CE Partnerships will use plain language to advertise, such as “Look for help to get or keep housing? Contact <Lead Agency> to get connected”.

The Local CE Partnership is responsible for actively working to ensure all persons, regardless of language or disability, know how to access help through the Coordinated Entry process. This includes but is not limited to physical accessibility of access sites, provision of appropriate auxiliary aids and services necessary to ensure effective communication such as Braille, audio, large type, assistive listening devices and sign language interpreters and reasonable steps to offer material in multiple languages. Auxiliary aids and services can be provided through a third-party that is accessible to staff performing Coordinated Entry duties.

VCEH will include information on accessing Coordinated Entry on its website, www.helpingtohousevt.org.

SECTION 3: COORDINATED ENTRY STEPS

ACCESS → ASSESSMENT → MASTER LIST → PRIORITIZATION → REFERRAL TO HOUSING INTERVENTION

3.1 Screening and Assessment

VCEH uses two standardized tools for screening and assessment:

VCEH Housing Crisis Referral (Screening and Access)

Referral partners will triage by conducting a housing screening using the VCEH Housing Crisis Referral Form to refer households for housing crisis help. This initial screen reviews for basic eligibility (e.g., housing status) and offers a referral to the local Domestic Violence Service Provider, if appropriate.

Referral Partners:

- Complete the VCEH Housing Crisis Referral Form for households identified as experiencing homelessness or at-risk of experiencing homelessness.
- All individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness and served by a Referral Partner must be offered the opportunity to participate in Coordinated Entry.
- Submit the Housing Crisis Referral Form to the local Lead Agency within one business day.

A DV provider or youth provider who is contacted by a client from another subpopulation should complete this form and forward to the Local Lead Agency for assessment.

Any participating provider may complete the Housing Crisis Referral form, but it is not required for anyone but referral only partners.

VCEH Housing Assessment

If an individual or family contacts an Assessment Partner or local Lead Agency, or if a Referral Partner submits a Housing Crisis Referral Form, the Lead Agency and Assessment Partner will reach out to the client as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to complete the Housing Assessment.

It is the goal of VCEH that all individuals and families have the opportunity to complete the assessment process as quickly as possible. To this end, VCEH has set the following

Assessment Partners and Lead Agencies will aim to:

- Reach out to all households referred through the Coordinated Entry process to schedule a housing assessment within three days of referral receipt.
- Provide clients the opportunity to complete the housing assessment within one week of referral or “walk-in”.
- Add (or “refer”) all individuals and families to who have completed the assessment to the Master List within three days of completion.

The Housing Assessment:

- Will be offered to all individuals and families experiencing homelessness and served by an Assessment Partner or Lead Agency.
- Will only be conducted by a trained assessor.
- May be conducted in an office or community-based setting, such as through outreach.

- Includes the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Universal Data Elements, which may be updated for returning clients.
- Collects all the information needed to determine prioritization for housing interventions.
- Screens for whether a household would be served well by short-term, medium-term or long-term assistance to regain stability in permanent housing. This division of short-term, medium-term or long-term assistance is referred to as “level of assistance”.
- Includes some optional sections and provides instructions to the assessor on how to conduct the interview.
- May be first recorded on paper or directly inputted within HMIS.

Participating assessment partner providers are responsible to respond to the range of client needs and act as the primary contact for clients who complete the Housing Assessment with their organization, unless or until another provider assumes that role. This includes providing proactive help to facilitate the client applying for assistance or accessing services from other providers.

If a participant becomes homeless after losing housing obtained through Coordinated Entry, the Local Coordinated Entry Partnership is required to conduct a Housing Assessment and put forth an effort to connect them with appropriate housing interventions, which may be placement in the same program type (RRH or PSH) again.

Best Practice for Consideration

As part of a client-centered approach, VCEH believes that each individual or family experiencing or at-risk of homelessness should have an individualized housing plan developed jointly by housing staff and the client. A housing plan should be based on the strengths, needs and desires of the household, and guided by the Housing Assessment. A housing plan outlines the type, amount and length of services and assistance for a household, as well as housing preferences. Each Local Coordinated Entry Partnership will determine the protocol for ensuring that all participants receive the help necessary to develop an individualized housing plan.

Once on the Master List, households should be connected to housing navigation services when available. Housing navigation services include support for the following:

- Development of a housing stability plan.
- Close work with housing providers regarding eligibility documentation/verification.
- Follow-up on referrals to housing to support enrollment.
- Completion of housing applications.
- Assistance with submitting rental applications and understanding leases.
- Housing search and placement, sometimes in conjunction with local Landlord Liaisons.
- Education and training on the role, rights and responsibilities of the tenant and landlord.
- Finding resources to support move-in (security deposit, moving costs, furnishings, other one-time costs).
- Ensuring living environment is safe and ready for move in (facilitate inspections).
- Assistance in arranging for/supporting move (set up utilities, moving arrangements, etc)
- Work to address barriers to project/housing admissions (e.g., criminal record, credit report, utility arrears, unfavorable references).
- Development of a housing support crisis plan that includes early prevention/intervention when housing is jeopardized.
- Identification of other service needs/ongoing retention support needs and connect/refer to these mainstream services and benefits.

3.2 Master List

Each Local Coordinated Entry Partnership will maintain a local Master List that includes all households (individuals and families) experiencing homelessness that have participated in the assessment process. Households who meet with an assessment partner, even if they do not complete the full assessment are considered to be participating and will be added to the Master List.

The Master List guides referrals to the following housing interventions:

- Rapid Re-housing (RRH)
- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

A Master List that is local recognizes that entrance into a program is based on both eligibility and availability for both the rental subsidy/unit and services. Service capacity is inherently local and thus necessitates a local list.

The local Master List:

- Will be populated by assessment partners and the local Lead Agency using the Coordinated Entry process— e.g., housing assessment will be completed. Only assessment partners and the local Lead Agency can refer directly to the list.
- Is the responsibility of the Lead Agency and they will manage the list(s).
- May be generated in and exported from HMIS, and other households can be added to the list manually, outside of HMIS (e.g., those working with a victim service provider).
- May have households added to it prior to and at a monthly review meeting.
- Will be (re)generated/updated and reviewed at least monthly by all relevant providers (e.g. shelters, PSH providers, etc.).
- May use unique IDs in place of names, etc., for confidentiality purposes
- May be included in the generation of a state Master List, as needed.
- May only be accessed if a Local CE Partnership Agreement is in place. Respective agencies who are part of the Local CE Partnership will have signed the agreement.
- Will only include households who have executed a Client Release of Information form.

Participating Providers:

- Will use the local Master List to fill all openings in housing programs that elect or are required to use the Coordinated Entry process and prioritization policy.²
- Will review the Master List to match households with openings in a Rapid Re-housing and Permanent Supportive Housing program based on prioritization AND eligibility for services and housing subsidy.
- Will review the Master List to assess how agencies can work together to enroll a client quickly.
- May and should enroll households from the Master List in between meetings, as needed.
- Will develop systems to anticipate openings in services and vouchers availability, and review list prior to program opening and identify priority client(s).
- Will review of the Master List at least monthly to provide updates on household status.
- Are part of a system of shared accountability for enrolling households into a Permanent Supportive Housing or Rapid Re-housing project according to the prioritization policy.

The HMIS Lead will work with local Lead Agencies to create the local Master List. Lead Agencies and Assessment Partners that use ServicePoint will be able to “refer” to the ServicePoint Master List using the “Referrals” feature. Households do not need to be enrolled in a program at the agency that refers them to the Master List. For additional guidance on using the Master List in ServicePoint, a pre-recorded training is available.

² *Projects that receive the following funding must enroll households from the Master List:* Continuum of Care (CoC) Program-funded: Shelter+Care, Rapid Re-housing, Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP)-funded: Rapid Re-housing, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF): Rapid Re-housing

Agencies making referrals to the Master List are responsible for following up with the households they refer to determine whether they are still in need of permanent or transitional housing, until another provider has assumed this responsibility. Follow-up contact will occur at a minimum every 90 days. If still in need of housing, the agency should update contact information if needed. If they no longer need housing, the agency can close the referral to remove the individual or family from the Master List.

Providers that contact an individual or family to offer services and find out the household is no longer in need, can close the referral to the Master List in ServicePoint, even if that provider did not make the referral to the Master List.

3.3 Prioritization

The goal of prioritization is to get the next available housing resource to the client with the highest needs and greatest barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing on their own.

The clients on the master list have all started and/or completed the Coordinated Entry assessment. This information includes but is not limited to: homeless status, length of homelessness and assessment score that assists coordinated entry staff in prioritizing people on the list for available housing resources. See below and in the “Referral” Section for prioritization factors for each project type.

The **Order of Priority**³ on the Master List is:

1. Chronic Homelessness + Complex Service Needs (Points)
2. NonChronic Homelessness + Disability, then
 - a. Unsheltered or living in an emergency shelter/safe haven
 - i. Then, homeless at least 12 months + Complex Service Needs (Points)
 - ii. Then, homeless for less than 12 months + Complex Service Needs (Points)
 - b. Living in transitional housing (meeting homeless definition prior to entry) + Complex Service Needs (Points)
3. NonChronic Homelessness without Disability + Complex Service Needs (Points)

Where households are equally ranked on the list, priority will first be given to those who are unsheltered, then those in emergency shelter/safe haven. If there are equally ranked households with the same living situations, (e.g. two households in unsheltered living) the priority will be given to the household that presented for assistance first.

Points for Complex Service Needs are determined as follows:

Complex Service Needs

- One or more trips to an emergency room in the past year
- Stayed in a psychiatric facility (lifetime)
- Stayed in a substance abuse treatment facility (lifetime)
- Stayed in another type of residential facility, including a nursing home or group home (lifetime)
- Been in foster care at age 16 years or older
- Been homeless before the age of 25 (adults only)
- Stayed in a prison or correctional facility
- Open case with Family Services (DCF Child Welfare)
- Without any cash income (including from a job or not from a job) for the entire past year

³ This prioritization policy follows guidance from HUD on the prioritization of permanent supportive housing.
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5108/notice-cpd-16-11-prioritizing-persons-experiencing-chronic-homelessness-and-other-vulnerable-homeless-persons-in-psh/>

- Urgent medical need (e.g., severe infection, acute diabetic condition, mental health crisis)
- Currently unsheltered or living in a place unfit for human habitation (e.g., car, tent)
- Survivor of domestic/sexual violence
- Adult household member living with a chronic condition that is disabling

Length of Time Homeless

“0” for less than 12 months of homelessness; “1” for 12 – 23 months of homelessness; “2” for 24 – 60 months (2-5 years) of homelessness; “3” for more than 60 months (5 years) of homelessness

Total Complex Service Needs boxes checked: _____

Score for length of time homeless: + _____

Total Complex Service Needs Score = _____

Prioritization is different than eligibility verification. For the purposes of prioritization, self-reported information is sufficient.

Among eligible participants, VCEH has not chosen to prioritize sub-populations such as individual or families. Some programs may only serve a specific sub-population and referral will be made according to program eligibility criteria.

Engagement in services is something that is negotiated at the point of enrollment, it is not to be considered in the context of prioritization.

3.4 Referral to Participating Housing Programs⁴

Projects that receive the following funding for homelessness assistance may only enroll individuals and/or families experiencing homelessness or who are at imminent risk of homelessness if they are on the Master List:

- Continuum of Care (CoC) Program-funded: Shelter+Care, Rapid Re-housing
- Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP)-funded: Rapid Re-housing
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF): Rapid Re-housing

Other Rapid Re-housing, Transitional Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing Programs are encouraged utilize the Master List as their sole referral source and to participate formally in Coordinated Entry by signing the Local Partnership Agreement.

Permanent Supportive Housing providers use the Order of Priority and program-specific eligibility requirements (e.g., disability, youth, CRT eligibility, etc.) to enroll the highest prioritized individual or family on the Master List.

Rapid Re-housing referrals are made as follows:

- Short-term Rapid Re-housing is provided on a first-come, first-serve basis to all households that screen for a short-term level of assistance determined by the Housing Assessment.
- Medium-term Rapid Re-housing is for households that screen for a medium-term level of assistance determined by the Housing Assessment. Rapid Re-housing providers then use the Order of Priority on the Master List.

⁴ Participating Housing Programs/Projects/Providers refers to those that are required or elect to enroll participants ONLY through the CE process; program refers to the statewide program, project refers to a specific local project, and provider refers to the agency that is administering the local project

HOWEVER, a participant is not excluded from accessing any housing resource solely based on the Housing Assessment determined level of assistance, such that, if resources are limited, households need not be prevented from exiting homelessness.

In these cases, a household identified as needing long-term assistance, may be reviewed and referred to a medium-term Rapid Re-housing program if their individual housing plan clearly demonstrates a reasonable and adequate plan for maintaining stable housing once the program ends. This is achieved by demonstrating:

- Reasonable expectation for increased income as indicated by tenure in current employment, expected completion of education/vocational programs, achievement of skills and training certifications, or pending military, retirement, social security benefits, alimony or child support.
- Documented opportunity of receiving subsidized housing or an assisted living placement before rental assistance would end.

In a similar way, a household identified as needing medium or long-term assistance, may be reviewed and referred to a short-term Rapid Re-housing program if their housing plan meets the above criteria. This is referred to as a documented “Housing Sustainability Plan”.

3.5 Example of Master List Prioritization⁵

NAME or ID#	Chronic Homeless Status	Disability	Homeless Status	Length of Current Homeless Episode	Complex Service Needs	Level of Assistance	Housing Sustainability Plan Documented	Date Assessment Completed
RW	Y	Y	Shelter	5 months	24	L	N	5/15/2017
Doug	Y	Y	Unsheltered	24 months	15	L	N	7/18/2017
Osnium58	Y	Y	Shelter	2 months	12	L	N	8/15/2017
Brian	Y	Y	Unsheltered	3 months	10	L	N	10/15/2017
AK	Y	Y	Shelter	13 months	10	L	N	9/20/2016
Emily	N	Y	Shelter	7 months	12	L	Y	3/3/2017
Daniel	N	Y	Unsheltered	9 months	8	L	N	9/28/2017
Dawn	N	Y	Transition'l Hous.	3 months	18	L	N	6/27/2017
JD	N	N	Unsheltered	3 months	22	M	Y	8/28/2017
Osnium243	N	N	Shelter	13 months	18	L	N	9/14/2016
Pete	N	N	Unsheltered	1 month	12	M	N	10/19/2017
Osnium612	N	N	Shelter	3 months	12	M	N	7/5/2017
Deb	N	N	Shelter	1 month	7	S	N	10/3/2017
Amos	N	N	Shelter	6 months	5	M	Y	4/11/2017
Sarah	N	N	Shelter	1 month	4	S	N	10/14/2017

If Agency A has an opening in its Permanent Supportive Housing Project, they would offer this opening to RW because she meets the definition of chronically homeless and has the highest complex service needs score, so long as RW met the basic eligibility requirements for the project and chooses to participate. The next opening would be offered to Doug, and so on.

If Agency B has four openings in its Rapid Re-Housing Project which offers 12 months of rental assistance (medium-term), they would offer these openings to Emily, JD, Pete and Osnium612. Although Emily has been identified as being a good candidate for long-term housing assistance, she has met the documentation requirements for housing plan sustainability. JD, Pete and Osnium612 are the candidates next highest on the list that have been identified as candidates for medium-assistance.

⁵ The Master List report may not contain other data fields that are not included in this example, such as Veterans status, family type, primary contact person, and the date of the ROI execution.

If Agency C has funding available to support short-term Rapid Re-housing Assistance for four clients this month. Providing short-term rental assistance to these households would be done on a first-come, first-serve basis. They would offer financial or rental assistance to Amos, JD, Deb, and Sarah. Short-term rapid re-housing is provided on a first-come, first-serve basis. Deb and Sarah have both been identified as good candidates for short-term housing assistance. Josh and Amos have been identified as good candidates for medium-term assistance, but have both met the documentation requirements for housing plan sustainability.

Maintaining a Local Inventory

Each Coordinated Entry Partnership should maintain an inventory of local homeless assistance projects, including the number of beds or subsidies available, open slots or vacancies, and eligibility criteria. Maintaining this knowledgeable inventory is key to expediting referrals and assisting clients with documentation to support eligibility verification. It will also reduce the occurrence of clients having to be referred back to the Coordinated Entry Master List for alternate referral.

3.6 Declined Referrals

Agency Declining Referral

There are few legitimate reasons that can be considered when not enrolling the highest priority household, such as eligibility requirements or the household choice/preference does not match available project opening.

If a program does not take the highest prioritized individual or family from the Master List to fill an available opening, the agency that operates that program must document the reason for not accepting that referral in the ServicePoint client file. In cases where two or more agencies must accept a client, the documentation requirement applies to either agency in the case of a declined referral. If that client does not have a ServicePoint file, the agency must provide a written explanation to the provider. It is the responsibility of the agency not taking the highest prioritized individual or family to ensure that the individual or family has a new referral to the Master List, if needed. The individual or family remains on the Master List to access the next available program opening, as long as the individual or family needs housing.

Client Declining Referral

One of the guiding principles of the VCEH Coordinated Entry Process is client choice. Individuals and families will be given information about the programs available to them and have choice about which programs they want to participate in. If an individual or family declines a referral to a housing program, their name remains on the Master List until the next housing opportunity is available.

3.7 Information & Data Sharing

The Local CE Partnership Agreement (Appendix A) and the Client Release of Information (Appendix D), provide the specific details on when and how client data is collected in the Coordinated Entry System.

Housing Crisis Referral Form

The Housing Crisis Referral Form includes a client release of information in order to allow the Referral Partner to share the form with the local Lead Agency. Staff completing the form will review the “Permission to Share Personal Information to Help with Housing” with the client so they understand what information will be shared with the Lead Agency. Information from the Housing Crisis Referral Form will not be inputted into HMIS.

Housing Assessment

As part of the Housing Assessment process, staff will review the Coordinated Entry Release of Information (ROI) with clients after the Housing Assessment is completed. Staff will be responsible for ensuring clients understand their rights as far as release of information and data confidentiality, as outlined in the Release of Information, and the Confidentiality Principles & Policies of the Coordinated Entry Partnership Agreement. VCEH has provided a staff ROI explanation tool (<http://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ROI-Staff-Form-Draft.docx>). On the ROI, clients may request that none of their information be shared with one or more agencies, or that certain types of information not be shared.

Respecting Client Consent

Sharing of client information and data occurs both “in” and “out” of VT HMIS as part of Coordinated Entry. It is the responsibility of all Partners to ensure that client permission is reviewed and followed. The Partner who initially collects the Release of Information from the client is responsible for tracking the expiration date of the release and renewing, as needed.

Any client whose name is on the Master List must have signed the ROI that guides the information shared on the list. The Local Coordinated Entry Partnership is required to include a list of agencies with the Release of Information. All Assessment Partners and the local Lead Agency should be included in this list. As agencies within the local Coordinated Entry Partnership change, or as Referral Partners elect to participate in a Master List review process, it is incumbent on the Lead Agency and all Partners, to ensure that client releases are honored with respect to the permission provided by the client regarding both the specific agencies and information allowed (or to update the client release). For this reason, it is recommended that attendance at any group review of the Master List include a regular group of partners that is closely monitored by the Lead Agency. This may include asking staff from one or more organizations to exit a meeting when a specific case is reviewed. Master List review meetings (e.g., Housing Review Team) should include only those agencies that have signed a Local Partnership Agreement. The date of the ROI execution for each client will be included on the Master List.

All Partners participating in VT HMIS are required to meet the VT HMIS Security Standards and all users are required to complete the annual security training.

Victim service providers⁶ must never enter information into ServicePoint about survivors of domestic or sexual violence served by their agency. There may be other times when it is not in the best interest of the client (e.g., safety) to have their data in VT HMIS or shared with others. It is the responsibility of participating providers to support clients in making their own informed consent.

⁶ “Victim service provider” refers to the local domestic and sexual violence organizations. To find the domestic or sexual violence organization that serves your area go to: <http://vtnetwork.org/get-help/>

SECTION 4: EMERGENCY SHELTER

Emergency shelter refers to any temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness in general or for a specific population of people experiencing homelessness. Emergency shelter is sometimes provided in a facility, scattered site apartments, host homes for youth, or through a publicly-funded motel stay. By design, emergency shelter programs work to help individuals and families move into permanent or transitional housing as quickly as possible.

The VCEH Coordinated Entry system does not interfere with the current process for individuals or families to seek emergency shelter or services, including domestic violence shelters and other short-term crisis residential programs, outside of the Coordinated Entry operation hours. The VCEH Coordinated Entry system also allows for a triage of needs to ensure that all individuals and families have access to emergency services and shelter, regardless of whether they have first completed the Housing Crisis Referral Form or Housing Assessment.

If someone is seeking shelter immediately, a referral should be made to:

- Local Shelter(s), Economic Services District Office or 2-1-1

In cases of a person fleeing domestic or sexual violence, a referral should be made to:

- Local Domestic/Sexual Violence Shelter
 - Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-228-7395, or
 - Sexual Violence Hotline, 800-489-7273, or
 - Online: <http://vtnetwork.org/get-help/>

For unaccompanied minors, a referral should be made to:

- Local Vermont Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth Program (VCRHYP)
 - Online: <https://vcrhyp.org/find-your-local-agency.html>
 - 2-1-1

4.1 Coordinated Access to Local Emergency Shelters

In each local Continuum of Care, there is a written protocol for coordination and communication between local shelter providers, the Economic Services District Office, and 2-1-1 (developed by these parties) to ensure streamlined access to emergency shelter.

- An optional template is provided by the VCEH Coordinated Entry Committee.
- At a minimum, the protocol must include:
 - contact info for each agency,
 - intake hours,
 - shelter hours,
 - population(s) served, and
 - the intake process for each agency.
- Protocols should emphasize ease of access for those seeking emergency shelter.
- Local emergency shelter coordinated access protocols are submitted to and reviewed by the VCEH Coordinated Entry Committee.

4.2 Emergency Shelter Programs and Housing Assessment

If an emergency shelter provider is a referral partner:

- They must make a referral to the local Lead Agency within 3 calendar days.

It is strongly recommended that referrals occur as soon as possible after entry into the emergency shelter program. This includes General Assistance Emergency Housing Program, and 2-1-1 as the after-hours General Assistance Emergency Housing provider.

If an emergency shelter provider is a Local Lead Agency or an Assessment Partner:

- They provide an opportunity for the client to complete the Housing Assessment within one week of entry into shelter program.

4.3 Emergency Shelter Prioritization for Programs with Waiting Lists

When an emergency shelter program operates with a waiting list for entry into shelter, the order of priority is:

- Unsheltered
- Literally Homeless (Category 1), including those fleeing domestic or sexual violence, AND staying in a motel (not paid for by self)
- Literally Homeless (Category 1), including those fleeing domestic or sexual violence – staying some place other than a motel
- Imminently Homeless (Category 2), including those fleeing domestic or sexual violence

The order of priority does not override admission requirements or eligibility that may exist for an emergency shelter.

SECTION 5: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, DATING VIOLENCE, AND STALKING

5.1 Policies

VCEH is committed to ensuring survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence and stalking who are fleeing or attempting to flee have access to homeless assistance through the Coordinated Entry process.⁷ To ensure the process works best for survivors, VCEH adheres to the following policies:

Access

- The Coordinated Entry process will be voluntary and trauma-informed, and have an option for survivors to remain anonymous.
- Victim service providers and non-victim service providers work together to ensure that all survivors have fair and equal access to the Coordinated Entry process.
- Participants may not be denied access to Coordinated Entry on the basis that the participant is or has been a survivor of domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence or stalking.
- Individuals and families who are fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking will have the option of working with and seeking services from both victim service providers and non-victim specific providers.

Victim-Service Provider Involvement

- Victim service providers will continue to be included in the design and implementation of the VCEH Coordinated Entry system.
- Victim service providers are included in all Local Coordinated Entry Partnerships. Victim service providers will work with their local CoC to determine the best role (i.e., Referral Partner, Assessment Partner) for their organization within the partnership.

Safety

- The VCEH Coordinated Entry system does not in any way interfere with the current process for homeless survivors seeking emergency shelter outside of the Coordinated Entry operation hours. The VCEH Coordinated Entry system also allows for a triage of needs in order to ensure that survivors have access to emergency services such as domestic violence hotline and shelter.
- Non-victim service providers will be trained in the Coordinated Entry process for survivors as well as safety planning for survivors who disclose domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence or stalking in order to ensure that services are inclusive and trauma-informed.

5.2 Procedures

The VCEH, Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and its member programs worked together to create a Coordinated Entry process that is inclusive, safe and accessible for survivors fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence and stalking.

The following procedures aim to allow survivors to enter into the Coordinated Entry system through multiple entry points, make informed decisions about how they would like to navigate through the system and the level of personal information they choose to share.

⁷ References to domestic violence survivors or victims means all survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence and stalking who are fleeing or attempting to flee. The terms survivors and victims are used interchangeably.

A survivor may enter the Coordinated Entry system in one of two ways, either starting with a victim service agency or starting with a non-victim service agency.

Referral Partners

Non-victim service providers - Referral partners within the Coordinated Entry Partnership will offer a referral first to the local domestic/sexual violence agency, if the survivor discloses that they are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence or stalking. The referral form will be sent to the assessment partner chosen by the survivor.

**Note: DV/SV providers are the only ones with expertise to determine eligibility for their services. Even if a non-victim service provider refers someone to a DV/SV organization, it is still up to that organization to determine if the participant is a survivor and is eligible for their services. If it is found that the participant is not eligible, the DV/SV provider will refer them to the local Lead Agency.*

Victim service providers - If a DV/SV agency is a referral partner they may complete the referral form and attach with it a unique ID for the survivor, generated in Osnum (a database used by victim service providers). They will explain the Coordinated Entry Process and their choices around confidentiality and anonymity. The referral form will be sent to the assessment partner. If the local victim service provider is an Assessment Partner, the survivor may choose to continue the Coordinated Entry process with the victim service provider or they may choose to continue the process with another (non-victim service provider) assessment partner. The referral form will be sent to the assessment partner chosen by the survivor.

Assessment Partners

Non-victim service providers-

1. The Local Lead Agency and Assessment partners will offer a referral first to the local domestic/sexual violence agency, if the survivor discloses that they are fleeing domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence or stalking. If the local victim service provider is an assessment partner, it will be presented to the survivor as an option do the assessment with the local DV/SV agency or to choose to continue with the organization that they have begun the assessment with. It will be explained to the survivor, the difference between assessment and sharing of information within the two options.
2. If the survivor chooses to continue with the non-victim service provider, they would complete the assessment and refer to the Master List for prioritization.

Victim service providers-

1. Complete assessment with survivor.
2. Refer to the Master List for prioritization.

Confidentiality and the Master List

Non-Victim service providers-

- Providers will explain the confidentiality forms and survivors may choose if they wish to have their information shared in HMIS, or not. Survivors may also choose who they would like to share their information with, within the Coordinated Entry Partnership.
- If survivors were referred to the assessment partner by a DV/SV agency, the provider will explain what the Master List is and offer to use the anonymous unique ID for the survivor if they choose, instead of adding their name to the list/sending their name to the Local Lead Agency to add to the list.
- If the survivor chooses, their name will be added to the Master List for housing intervention.

Victim Service providers-

- Providers will explain the confidentiality forms. Survivors may choose who they would like to share their information with, within the Coordinated Entry Partnership. DV/SV agencies do not use HMIS.
- The provider will generate a unique ID for the survivor using Osnum and send it to the Local Lead Agency with their prioritization information and any additional needed information.

Referral to Housing Program

- If a survivor is listed by name on a Master List and they are next for a referral to an opening in a housing program, they will be contacted by the housing program.
- If a survivor's unique ID number comes to the top of a Master List, the Local Lead Agency will contact the victim service provider or the Assessment Partner to connect the survivor with the housing program.
- The organizations involved will work to ensure that the survivor is connected to housing navigation and other support as needed.

COMING in 2018: REFERRAL PROTOCOL FOR UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH

COMING in 2018: REFERRAL PROTOCOL FOR VETERANS

COMING in 2018: HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

SECTION 6: TRAINING

This section details the annual training plan; additional training will be provided as part of start-up implementation and on an as needed basis.

- **Overview of VCEH Coordinated Entry Process**
 - Content:
 - What is Coordinated Entry and the VCEH Local CE Partnership
 - Roles and Responsibilities of Lead Agency, Assessment Partners, Referral Partners
 - The Coordinated Entry Committee and Master List Review Process
 - Coordinated Entry Policy and Procedures for: Referral to CE, Assessment, Master List, Prioritization, Referral to Housing Program
 - Confidentiality
 - Safety Planning and a Trauma-Informed Process
 - Fair Housing, Equal Access, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other Nondiscrimination Requirements
 - Evaluation Process
 - Method:
 - Training for Lead Agencies to provide Overview of VCEH Coordinated Entry Process
 - Training materials provided
 - Recorded Webinar for staff and available in person, by request
 - Audience:
 - Required for all Key Coordinated Entry Partner staff (Local Lead Agency, Assessment Partner, and Referral Partner)
- **Housing Assessment Training**
 - Content:
 - Assessment Tool and Process
 - How to conduct a Trauma-Informed assessment
 - Safety Planning
 - Release of Information
 - Method:
 - Training for Lead Agencies to provide Assessment Training
 - Recorded Webinar for staff and one in-person training annually
 - Audience:
 - Required for all Coordinated Entry Partner staff administering the assessment including Lead Agency
- **HMIS ServicePoint and Coordinated Entry Referral Process Overview**
 - Content:
 - How to access HMIS and technical instructions for making referrals
 - Method:
 - Provided by Institute for Community Alliances (ICA), the CoC HMIS Lead Agency, to each region, as needed
 - Web-based recording
 - Audience:
 - Coordinated Entry Partner staff including Lead Agency staff
 - Required for HMIS Coordinated Entry Users

Providing training and training materials is the responsibility of the VCEH Coordinated Entry Committee, in partnership with the ICA, the VT HMIS Lead Agency.

SECTION 7: EVALUATION

Once the Local Coordinated Entry Partnership has been implemented, the local CoC and the VCEH will regularly evaluate its effectiveness. Lessons derived from these evaluations will be used to further improve the Coordinated Entry process.

VCEH will evaluate the Coordinated Entry process primarily through local CoC implementation, but will also consider aggregate data.

At least annually, each Local CE Partnership will:

- Survey all local Partners to solicit feedback on how well the Local CE Partnership is being implemented, and
- Collect feedback on the Coordinated Entry process from consumers through a focus group or survey.

The VCEH will establish uniform questions to support this evaluation process.

Every 6 months, the VCEH Coordinated Entry Committee will review the following data points for each local CoC and the aggregate data points for the Balance of State CoC:

- The number of participating organizations in each on program type (Prevention, Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Rapid Re-housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Other);
- The number of project openings for each program type
- The number of referrals made to each program type;
- The length of time for referrals to each program type;
- The length of time to accept referral and admit to project;
- The number of housing placements in each program type;
- The length of the Master List;
- The number of households on the Master List more than 3 months including a review reasons why any of those households were rejected by one or more projects;
- The number of households recurring on the Master List; and
- Unmet needs based on the Master List by program type (Rapid Re-housing, Permanent Supportive Housing).

The VCEH Coordinated Entry Committee will provide an annual summary report and analysis to the VCEH Board.

APPENDIX A – Key Terms & Definitions

Rapid Re-housing – A housing intervention that provides time-limited rental assistance and support services to individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness. In Vermont there are multiple funding sources for Rapid Re-housing and each program has their own eligibility criteria, policies and procedures; specific eligibility for each Rapid Re-housing Program varies depending on funding source, including the category of homelessness.

Short-term rental assistance – Tenant-based rental assistance and housing stability services for up to three months

Medium-term rental assistance – Tenant-based assistance and housing stability services for more than three months and up to 24 months

Participating Housing Programs/Providers/Projects – Housing programs that are required or elect to enroll participants ONLY through the coordinated entry process; program refers to the statewide program, project refers to a specific local project, and provider refers to the agency that is administering the local project

Victim Service Provider – Local domestic and sexual violence organizations

Youth Provider – Local youth service provider, as part of the Vermont Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs

APPENDIX B – Local Partnership Agreement Template

APPENDIX C – VCEH Housing Crisis Referral Form

APPENDIX D – VCEH Housing Assessment

APPENDIX E – VCEH Release of Information

APPENDIX F – Emergency Shelter Coordinated Access Protocol Template (Coming Soon)

APPENDIX G – Client Complaint Notice Template