



## PHA GUIDE TO COORDINATED ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

### Background

“Coordinated entry” or “centralized entry” refers to the concept of ensuring that access to homeless services in a community is streamlined and households experiencing or at-risk for homelessness are able to quickly access the assistance they need and for which they are eligible, without having to call or be turned away from multiple programs.

In some communities, this *coordinated* system is *centralized*, in that there is a single point of entry for accessing all types of homelessness assistance. Other communities do not use a centralized point of entry, but rather have coordinated systems, which may include multiple points of entry, to coordinate access to homeless assistance services and housing and to link people to the most appropriate services and housing interventions.

Communities with coordinated entry systems also utilize “coordinated assessment” strategies to better match people experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate types of housing assistance (such as prevention, rapid re-housing, shelter, and permanent supportive housing) based on an assessment of the needs of households .

In communities that have coordinated assessment systems, homeless assistance programs use a common set of measures or tools for assessing the needs of people seeking homelessness assistance. Therefore, decisions about referrals are based on consistent criteria and a comprehensive understanding of each program’s requirements, target populations, and available openings and services.

HUD is requiring all communities funded through its Emergency Solutions Grant or Continuum of Care program to implement a centralized or coordinated intake and coordinated assessment system.

Coordinated entry describes the process by which individuals and families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness request assistance. This can take the form of a call center (e.g., 2-1-1), a single facility, such as an emergency shelter or intake center, or multiple access points.

The coordinated assessment process means that, regardless of where people apply for assistance, staff are asking the same questions and using the same criteria to determine eligibility and assess which programs are the best match or fit for each household.

As one of the larger providers of affordable housing in the community, PHAs can be a critical contributor of this process. PHAs can support this process on the front-end by identifying applicants for rental assistance who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and encouraging them to also seek assistance through the community's coordinated entry system.

PHAs can also provide housing opportunities for individuals and families based on referrals from the community's coordinated entry and centralized assessment process. For example, a PHA can collaborate to identify homeless households that might qualify for a [wait-list preference](#), or the PHA can rely on the coordinated entry process to refer persons who qualify for [special purpose vouchers](#) or [permanent supportive housing](#) programs that are administered by the PHA and its partners.

### **Where Can PHAs Do This?**

All PHAs can participate in and support their communities' coordinated entry process and use the centralized or coordinated assessment system to identify and refer eligible households for housing assistance.

### **Who Can PHAs Assist?**

Coordinated or centralized entry and coordinated assessment is important for all households experiencing homelessness as it increases the transparency and ease of access to homelessness assistance and ensures that households are matched to the most appropriate types of housing assistance and services model.

### **Additional Resource**

[USICH's Solutions Database](#) has examples of coordinated entry and assessment systems.

## Examples

Chicago has implemented a Central Referral System<sup>1</sup> for permanent supportive housing and for permanent housing with short-term support services. The Central Referral System prioritizes people for these housing resources based on responses to the Vulnerability Index and length of homelessness. The **Chicago Housing Authority (CHA)** cross references applicants to the CRS against its waiting lists to identify households that are experiencing homelessness and active on one or more of the CHA lists. This process helps CHA identify its applicants who are currently homeless and in need of supportive housing, which allows them to make more targeted referrals to permanent supportive housing projects that use project-based vouchers provided by CHA. The supportive housing providers work with community partners to reach out to these individuals. Contact information of the applicant, a case manager, and other emergency contacts that is submitted to the CRS is also passed on to the CHA supportive housing provider in order to increase the likelihood of successful contact for a vacant unit.

The **Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)** collaborated with [Home For Good](#), the [Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority](#), County departments, the VA of Greater Los Angeles, and other partners to develop a pilot coordinated entry system for chronically homeless persons in the Skid Row area. Through this effort, the partners developed a standardized assessment tool that prioritizes persons based on length of homelessness and vulnerability and streamlined, universal application forms for permanent supportive housing. In the pilot phase, HACLA and the other partners utilized this process to prioritize clients for some of HACLA's targeted housing choice vouchers, Shelter Plus Care subsidies, project-based voucher-funded permanent supportive housing, and HUD-VASH vouchers. These partners are now implementing plans for expanding the pilot beyond Skid Row and into other communities in the city and county of Los Angeles, with a goal of the coordinated entry system becoming the standardized system through which persons are prioritized for and access all permanent supportive housing programs.