Sonoma County Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Committee
Agenda for
12:00pm-1:30pm Pacific Time

Zoom link:

https://sonomacounty.zoom.us/j/92281657937?pwd=SW42V2tOcHdlY0o5OStQNFk3WUY4UT09

Passcode: 710577

	Agenda Item	Packet Item	Presenter	Time
1.	Welcome, Roll Call and Introductions		Committee Chair	12:00pm
2.	Approval of agenda, minutes, follow up last meeting: Action Item	1, 2,3	Committee Chair	12:10pm
3.	Dynamic prioritization (action item)	4	HomeFirst staff	12:15pm
4.	Standing agenda item (changes to CES policies and procedures): Action Item	3	Staff/Homefirst staff	12:45pm
5.	Coordinated Entry self-assessment	5	Staff/HomeFirst staff	1:00pm
6.	Public Comment on non-agenized items		Public	1:25pm

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Public Comment may be made via email or during the live zoom meeting. To submit an emailed public comment to the CE committee email Thai.Hilton@sonoma-county.org. Please provide your name, the agenda number(s) on which you wish to speak, and your comment. These comments will be emailed to all Board members. Public comment during the meeting can be made live by joining the Zoom meeting using the above provided information. Available time for comments is determined by the Board Chair based on agenda scheduling demands and total number of speakers.

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** Graham Thomas proxy for Committee Chair Matthew Verscheure called Meeting to order at 12:03pm; Thai Hilton, Coordinated Entry Coordinator, went over Zoom rules around public comment and Brown Act guidelines.

Roll Call:

 Present: Robin Phoenix, Mary Haynes, Ben Leroi, Graham Thomas proxy for Matthew Verscheure, Susan Pierce, Justin Milligan, Kathleen Pozzi, Heather Jackson

 Absent: Ashlyn Artis, Margaret Sluyk

2. **Approval of Minutes and agenda:** Approval of meeting minutes from 2/15/2023 and agenda for 3/15/2023

Motion: Robin Phoenix moves to approve meeting minutes and agenda; Justin Milligan seconds. motion.

Public comment: none at this time

Vote:

 Ayes: Robin Phoenix, Mary Haynes, Ben Leroi, Graham Thomas proxy Matthew Verscheure, Susan Pierce, Justin Milligan, Kathleen Pozzi, Heather Jackson

 Nays:

 Abstain:

 Absent: Ashlyn Artis, Margaret Sluyk

Motion Passes

3. **CEA decision-making authority:** Thai Hilton provided information on a staff request that if supported by CEA Committee will be sent to CoC Board next week. Request is that the CoC board delegate decision making authority to the CEA committee rather than forward recommendations to the full CoC Board. This authority would be limited to non-controversial, unanimous decisions. Any decisions that have large implications or are not unanimous approvals

would be forwarded to the CoC board for final decision. Anything approved by CEA committee will be delayed a month when presented to the CoC Board

Public comment: Gerry La Londe-Berg

Committee directed staff to find another time to hold CEA Committee Meeting that would better align with CoC Board Meetings to allow faster implementation of changes.

4. **Updates to CE policies and procedures: Inclusion of Domestic Violence status in Permanent Supportive Housing projects:** Hunter Scott, HomeFirst presented policy change proposal to include Domestic Violence status and equally prioritized with Chronic Homeless status for PSH referral's when project eligibility allows. The reason for proposed policy change is current policies create barriers to safety for those fleeing domestic violence.

Public Comment: Gerry La Londe-Berg, Rochelle

Motion: Ben Leroi moves to accept staff recommendation to accept policy change; Robin Phoenix motion seconds.

Public Comment: None at this time

Vote:

- o **Ayes:** Robin Phoenix, Mary Haynes, Ben Leroi, Graham Thomas proxy Matthew Verscheure, Susan Pierce, Justin Milligan, Kathleen Pozzi, Heather Jackson
- o **Nays:**
- o **Abstain:**
- o **Absent:** Ashlyn Artis, Margaret Sluyk

Motion passes

5. **Shelter Length of stay policy:** Thai Hilton provided background on proposal and staff report to allow shelter stays in excess of 6 months. Chris Cabral, COTS presented slides; Currently, funding requirements state that emergency shelter stays cannot exceed 6 months. The State has recently signaled that they may remove that requirement. COTS is requesting that the CEA consider the removal of the length of stay policy for clients who are engaged in supportive services.

Public Comment: Gerry La Londe-Berg, Michael Frank

Motion: Graham Thomas motions that COTS go to other services providers in the area (shelter and other homeless services) and gather interest and get feedback.

Mary Haynes motions and states that the committee supports the concept presented by COTS but encourages them to seek stakeholder input and include that in the presentation to the CoC Board at the April meeting; Kathleen Pozzi seconds motion.

Vote:

- o **Ayes:** Robin Phoenix, Mary Haynes, Graham Thomas proxy Matthew Verscheure, Susan Pierce, Justin Milligan, Kathleen Pozzi, Heather Jackson
- o **Nays:**
- o **Nays:**
- o **Abstain:**
- o **Absent:** Ashlyn Artis, Margaret Sluyk, Ben Leroi

Motion passes

6. **Public Comment on non-agendized items:** none at this time

Thai Hilton provided update to CEA committee; previously the CEA committee endorsed the idea of moving away from the current prioritization assessment tool and process. Update: Staff and CE operator has been working with technical assistance from the State, TA will be reaching out to service providers next to gather information about current prioritization and assessment process. There will be a chance for public input in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 1:23pm

Sonoma County Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Advisory Committee
Executive Summary

Item: Follow up from previous meeting

Date: May 3, 2023

Staff Contact: Thai Hilton thai.hilton@sonoma-county.org

Agenda Item Overview

In the 3/15/2023 Coordinated Entry Advisory Committee (CEA) meeting, COTS presented a policy proposal to move away from the 180-day maximum shelter stay policy.

The CEA directed COTS to discuss the proposed change with other emergency shelter providers to ensure there was buy in across the shelter system. Below is a report from COTS on the outcome of that meeting.

The group of shelter providers pointed to the current policy which gives them autonomy in developing length-of-stay policies. Lead agency staff agrees that the policy, as it is written, allows for that autonomy. Additionally, lead-agency staff has received information from the State that they do intend to move away from maximum length-of-stay policies. The lead agency does not oppose agencies allowing for shelter stays that exceed 180 days so long as the policy does not condition extensions of shelter stays on participation in case management.

Recommendation

None. Informational only

Discussion: 6-Month Shelter Policy Meeting Follow Up from April 6, 2023, Meeting

In attendance: Margaret Sluyk, Dannielle Danforth, Kelli Kuykendall, Matthew Versheure, Maureen Vittoria, Robin Phoenix, Chris Cabral

Agencies Represented: Reach for Home, West County Community Services, Catholic Charities, COTS, City of Santa Rosa

On April 6, 2023, the individuals listed above attended a Zoom meeting to discuss Sonoma County's 6-month shelter stay (180 days) regulation as outlined in the adopted <u>Sonoma County Continuum of Care Emergency Shelter Standards of Care,</u> hereafter referred to as "Standards of Care."

The Standards of Care, under "Exits from Shelter," on pg. 12, the *Time Limits* reads:

"Shelters provide a safe temporary housing for individuals experiencing homelessness for up to 180 days within 1 shelter stay. Shelter operators will track the number of days a participant has accessed the shelter to ensure participants are not exceeding 180 days in one stay. Extensions beyond 180 days are possible under limited circumstances. Shelters will develop their own policies and procedures for considering extensions."

The Standards of Care, under "Limits to Service (Time Limits) and Extensions" on pg. 15, reads:

"Emergency shelter stays are limited to 180 days in one shelter stay unless an extension is granted by the shelter operator. Extensions are granted on a case by case basis. Shelter operators will develop their own policies and procedures for considering extensions.

There is no limit to the maximum number of times a person can access shelter services with the exception of those whose services have been suspended due to an egregious violation of the rules."

Group discussion around both of these sections concluded that the Standards of Care allow emergency shelter operators enough autonomy in authoring their own policies and procedures related to the 180-day maximum stay that no further action is necessary at this time.

All parties in attendance agreed that on occasion, participants may need to exceed a 180-day shelter stay for various reasons, including but not limited to the following:

- Lack of available housing, despite being housing ready.
- More time is necessary to obtain necessary documentation prior to housing placement.
- More time is necessary to address unique barriers for some individuals.
- More time is necessary to address behavioral and physical health barriers prior to placement into permanent housing.
- An exit at 180 days may otherwise materially disrupt a participant's progress toward a pathway to housing.

Providers agreed that the average length of stay will remain under 180 days, but flexibility for some participants is necessary in solving the County's homelessness crisis.

COTS, in partnership with the County of Sonoma, proposed to amend its internal rule related to participant stays within its emergency shelter.

COTS will continue to monitor client stays with an eye on 180 days but intends to update its policy to allow for stays beyond 180 days when clients are on a pathway towards permanent housing, and if an exit would materially disrupt this progress.

Because all providers agreed that the current Standards of Care allowed for this type of flexibility, no further action is proposed at this time.

Respectfully,

Chris Cabral
Chief Executive Officer | COTS
ccabral@cots.org | 740.501.1063 C

Sonoma County Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Advisory Committee
Executive Summary

Item: 3. Dynamic Prioritization

Date: May 3, 2023

Staff Contact: Thai Hilton thai.hilton@sonoma-county.org

Agenda Item Overview

Recently, lead-agency and HomeFirst staff participated in HUD learning sessions on new Coordinated Entry processes. One of the new practices that was shared was the concept of "dynamic prioritization". Dynamic prioritization is a process that uses more than just a static vulnerability score to refer individuals to housing interventions. Dynamic prioritization uses a "bucket" system where individuals are placed into housing interventions based on their need.

When a referral is needed, case conferencing is used to discuss the vacant unit and who is ready to move into the unit. In this context "ready" means in contact with a provider. Of those who are ready, the most vulnerable who is eligible is prioritized for the housing intervention. This means that referrals would only be sent to those who have verified contact information. This does not mean that those who do not have verified contact information are ignored rather outreach is directed to attempt to find those individuals to verify their contact information. This is a crucial component of dynamic prioritization.

Lead-agency and HomeFirst staff believe that this process would allow for more provider participation in the referral process. It allows for the use of current information in the decision-making process, and this is done in an open, transparent setting.

Our local CE system is not currently set up to immediately implement this process. There are several steps that need to be taken to implement this process. Today's presentation will outline those steps and the timeline for implementation.

Lead-agency staff believes that this process will increase the buy-in to CE and the case conferencing meeting. It also would align well with the sub-regional approach to outreach that the community is pursuing. Providers often voice frustration with the current static process and spending time locating clients. Lead-agency staff believes that this process will allay some of those concerns. Ultimately, if adopted, staff believes that this approach will lead to a more collaborative, efficient coordinated entry process informed by data.

Recommendation

Approve the dynamic prioritization approach.

Sonoma County Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Advisory Committee
Executive Summary

Item: 4 Updates to Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures

Date: May 3, 2023

Staff Contact: Hunter Scott Hscott@homefirstscc.org Thai Hilton thai.hilton@sonoma-county.org

Agenda Item Overview

HomeFirst will regularly provide updates to the Coordinated Entry policies and procedures. Attached is a description of the changes and the rationale for the change.

Recommendation

Approve the updates to the CE polices and procedures.

Change: Including a minimum location standard in the "Unknown/Disappeared" Rejection Standard that would define the minimum attempts to contact a referred participant each program must complete before rejecting the referral.

Reasoning: Housing Providers have consistently asked for clarity on the policy for when they can request referral rejection in Case Conference since the system policies went through their major overhaul in July 2022. HomeFirst staff met with providers who had success filling their units successfully with a comparatively low referral rejection rates early in Q3 to ask for their tips on locating referrals. HomeFirst also met internally with a group of people with lived experience (all recommended or from the LEAP board) to develop this standard. Both groups generally aligned in what they considered to be required in successfully locating vulnerable referred participants. Such a policy is also standard in many Coordinated Entry Systems in other regions.

Policy language change below. Highlighted sections are additions. Beginning of this section can be found on page 38 of the current CES Policies and Procedures found here: https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Main%20County%20Site/Health%20and%20Human%20Services/Health%20Services/Documents/Homelessness%20Services/Coordinated%20Entry%20System/CES%20Policies%20and%20Procedures%20update%2002.22.23.pdf

Rejection of Referrals

Only four standardized options are available for rejecting a referral from Coordinated Entry: the participant does not meet eligibility requirements, the project is not currently accepting applications, the participant has disappeared or is not able to be located, or the participant refused the housing offer. Providers may not reject a referral without a consensus approval of all parties present at CES Case Conference. Housing providers may request to reject a referral at any CES Case Conference subsequent to the referral being made.

Procedure:

1) The Housing Provider shall record all attempts to contact participant when following up on a referral. Records of attempted contacts, contacts made and their disposition shall be recorded in the "Case Notes" of each participants' HMIS dashboard and electronic file.

2) All referral rejections must be brought to CES Case Conference and the reasons for rejection and attempts to accept the referral presented. They may request additional support or community expertise in moving forward with the referral. The rejection request will be voted on by all parties present at CES case conference.

   a. After voting approval, the Housing Provider will reject the referral in HMIS and include a note of the reason why.

3) If a provider wishes to appeal a rejection decision made at CES Case Conference, they may present the case at the Coordinated Entry Advisory Committee Shelter and Appeals Subcommittee.

Rejection Standard: Does not meet eligibility requirements

- The CoC maintains a public website with eligibility requirements for all projects in the CoC's geographic area participating in Coordinated Entry. A housing provider may reject a referral only

if the participant does not meet basic published eligibility requirements, inclusive of (when applicable) immediate safety risk or meeting activities of daily living (ADLs), or the provider has exhausted all options to document eligibility. Examples include single adults that were part of a family unit when assessed and have been referred to a families-only project, or non-veterans attempting to access SSVF funded units. An agency may not reject a participant on presumed "fit" in housing or shelter. An agency may not reject a participant due to barriers in documenting eligibility without exhausting all possible options first.

Rejection Standard: Program no longer accepting applications

- If a program is no longer accepting applications, the referring agency and CE will work together to redirect the referral to another program within HMIS. This includes instances when a project serves multiple populations (ex: individuals and families) but only has openings for one population at a given type.

Rejection Standard: Unknown/Disappeared

If referring agencies have exhausted all options to contact a referral, they may request to decline the referral as "unknown/disappeared." While all options must be exhausted, at minimum this is defined as:

- In person outreach to likely locations on at least 2 separate occasions, including at least once at a prepared meal distribution site in the referred participant's most recent known region
- If a secondary contact is known, 1 attempt
- For any known and in service phone number, 6 attempts, at different times of day, over at least 4 days
    - If possible, leave a voice message with call back info
    - Text each known and in service phone number at least 1 time
- Known email addresses, 1 attempt
- Known contacts with other agencies within the last 90 days: housing provider must successfully get in contact with the agency

All attempts must be documented in the referred participant's HMIS profile in their CES program.

To ensure quick movement of participants into available openings, the community present at CES Case Conference is highly encouraged to allow housing providers to reject a referral if they have exhausted all options to contact them and it has been 2 weeks since the referral was made, though each case should be considered with its own context. NOTE: Project Based Voucher units shall allow a minimum of 2 weeks from referral being made to rejection due to "Unknown/Disappeared".

Rejection Standard: Participant Refused Offer

- If a participant refuses a referral, the below "Right of Refusal" policy will be followed.

Sonoma County Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Advisory Committee (CEA)
Executive Summary

Item: 5 Coordinated Entry Self-assessment

Date: May 3, 2023

Staff Contact: Thai Hilton thai.hilton@sonoma-county.org Hunter Scott hscott@homefirstscc.org

Agenda Item Overview

The Sonoma County Coordinated Entry (CE) policies and procedures state that the Coordinated Entry Advisory Committee (CEA) will complete HUD's CE self-assessment annually. This self-assessment is sometimes required for funding applications. There are seven sections to the self-assessment. Lead-agency and HomeFirst staff will guide the committee through the assessment process. Insights gained from this process will inform strengths and weaknesses of the local CES system.

The assessment can be found here: https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/coordinated-entry-self-assessment.pdf

Recommendation

None. Informational only