



## **COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM Policies and Procedures**

### **1. Overview**

The purpose of the Coordinated Entry System (CES) is to ensure that all people experiencing homelessness in Imperial County have fair and equal access to housing and services appropriate for their needs. The CES is designed to ensure that individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness are quickly identified, assessed, and prioritized for housing resources, no matter where or when they present for services.

The system works with households in order to understand their strengths and needs, and to connect them with appropriate resources. Through the use of standardized tools and practices, the CES incorporates a system-wide housing first approach, increases coordination across community providers, ensures the most efficient targeting of resources, and prioritizes those with the highest level of need.

Furthermore, the CES is designed to:

- Allow anyone in need of housing assistance to easily access the system and be assessed in a standard and consistent way;
- Ensure that households who are experiencing homelessness gain access to community interventions as efficiently and effectively as possible;
- Prioritize households for limited housing resources based on need and vulnerability;
- Provide clarity, transparency, consistency, and accountability throughout the assessment and referral process for households experiencing homelessness, community partners, and homeless and housing service providers; and
- Facilitate exits from homelessness to stable housing in the most rapid manner possible.

To achieve these objectives, Coordinated Entry includes:

- A standard progressive engagement and assessment process to be used for all households who are seeking assistance, and procedures for determining the appropriate next level of assistance;
- Uniform guidelines among emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing programs regarding eligibility for services, screening criteria, prioritized populations, and expected outcomes; and
- Policies and procedures detailing the operations of Coordinated Entry.

### **2. Requirements of a Coordinated Entry Process**

Since the CoC Program interim rule was published in 2012, The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has determined that additional requirements are necessary for the coordinated entry process to be most effective. Those requirements are outlined in the January 23, 2017, Notice Establishing Additional Requirements for a Continuum of Care Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System.

In alignment with these requirements, as well as ongoing HUD guidance, the Imperial Valley CoC has implemented a CES for all households who are experiencing homelessness. CES, as described in these policies and procedures, is designed to meet the Federal and State requirements of a Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System which, at a minimum, must fulfill the following requirements.

- Cover the entire geographic area claimed by the CoC;
- Be easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing or services;
- Be well-advertised;
- Include a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool;
- Provide an initial, comprehensive assessment of individuals and families for housing and services; and,
- Include a specific policy to guide the operation of the centralized or coordinated assessment system to 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 specific providers.

The Imperial Valley CES provides access to housing resources within the regional system for all people meeting the minimal eligibility for a referral to housing listed below:

- Literally homeless (Sleeping outside, in a place not meant for human habitation, or in a shelter)
- Fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence (the individual or family must be fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member; have no other residence; and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing)
- Staying in or exiting an institution where they resided for up to 90 days and were in shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entering that institution

### **3. Housing First Approach**

In alignment with HUD guidance, CES participating agencies must adhere to Housing First principles. Housing First is an approach to connecting individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety (for non-AOD programs), treatment, or service participation requirements. Supportive services are client-driven and offered to maximize housing stability to prevent a return to homelessness, as opposed to addressing predetermined treatment goals prior to permanent housing entry. Housing First is an overarching philosophy and approach that can be applied to all homelessness. Housing First yields high housing retention and reductions in crisis or institutional care. For more information, CES participating agencies can utilize tools from the HUD Exchange.

### **4. Agency Participation in CES**

The IVCCC believes that a coordinated service approach is the most effective way to end homelessness. This includes a process of outreach, assessment, housing navigation, matching to appropriate housing resources, and placement, which prioritizes the most acute chronically homeless individuals and households.

The intent of this participation language is to further define each agency's dedication to this collaborative effort and increase the efficacy and scope of the CES through additional housing resources, navigation, retention support and leadership.

Requirements for CES Participation:

- Attendance at required trainings and CES alignment meetings
- Adherence to the progressive engagement process
- Usage of the IVHTF Coordinated Assessment Tool Set (CAT)
- Contribution of Data to the CES database and the HMIS

- Sufficient data entry and quality (< 5% error)
- 100% of CoC and ESG funded housing resources filled through CES
- Adherence to all CES policies and procedures

Recommended Ways to Participate in CES:

- Participate in coordinated street outreach under CES
- Provide an open Access point (open drop- in center to complete the CAT)
- Housing Navigation for prioritized clients on a By-Name-List
- Dedicate non-CoC or ESG funded housing resources to be filled through CES

**5. Core Elements of the IVCCC CES**

Progressive Engagement

The Imperial Valley CES is designed to provide intentional pathways through the crisis response system while allowing for the quickest possible exit to permanent housing.

The system employs a phased approach of progressive engagement that allows the assessment process to occur over time and only as necessary. Progressive engagement prioritizes client choice and provides continual opportunity during the process for a household experiencing homelessness to engage in diversion resources. For example, if an eligible household can be referred to diversion resources for crisis resolution, then they will be referred to such a resource, rather than a housing intervention. Also, if a household denies a housing referral, they will again be offered the opportunity to receive diversion resources, rather than wait for another housing referral. There are eight steps in this process including Access, Initial Triage, Diversion Assistance, Housing Assessment, Population of By-Name List, Crisis Intervention, Housing Navigation, and Housing Referral.

Access

To ensure accessibility for eligible households, the CES provides services from Access Points located throughout the county. Eligible households can connect to the CES in person through any of the designated Access Points, which includes phone screenings and other flexible entry pathways. Households can also complete an assessment through street-based outreach.

Street-based Outreach

Street-based outreach and engagement teams play an essential role in the CES; a member of one of these teams will likely have the first contact with a client that is unsheltered and help keep them engaged throughout the process.

Street-based outreach allows for conducting assessments in the geographical location where individuals and families experiencing homelessness reside, including streets, parks, campsites, abandoned buildings, cars, and other places not meant for human habitation.

A region-wide street-based outreach plan has been developed based on information provided by agencies conducting street outreach, community members, and stakeholders. This plan provides a framework to enhance and expand coordination and collaboration between outreach and engagement teams to connect the target population to permanent housing and other appropriate services.

As the street-based outreach plan continues to be implemented, there will be policies and procedures to outline the roles and responsibilities of the street-based outreach teams in coordination with CES. The CES policies and procedures document will be amended to reflect these changes.

Diversion Assistance (Homelessness Prevention)

Access Points will have information on an array of services and mainstream resources to assist in resolving the immediate needs of a household and potentially end an episode of homelessness. This may include information on diversion opportunities, employment, education, transportation, public benefits, and legal services, among other resources.

Diversion is focused on assisting the client to examine his or her resources and options other than entering the homeless system.

Many of the people attempting to enter shelter or complete a housing assessment are experiencing an immediate housing crisis that can be resolved without shelter entry or common assessment if the system is oriented towards diversion and shelter/common assessment is viewed only as an option of last resort. This also requires staff trained in diversion who are strong problem solvers and understand that their goal is to figure out safe and feasible housing alternatives for people seeking shelter/assessment.

To maximize the use of homeless system resources, robust diversion is being integrated into the work of CES, and diversion should be attempted for all households seeking shelter and/or assessment (regardless of circumstances). Please see the Regional Task Force on the Homeless Diversion Training Manual (forthcoming) for more information about the required diversion process.

If a client cannot be diverted to a safe and appropriate location, they should continue to the Housing Assessment.

Housing Assessment

Trained staff are available at Access Points to administer the Coordinated Assessment Tool Set (CAT) with eligible households. The tool is completed and tracked within the CES database.

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THESE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ARE INITIAL COMMITMENTS FROM IVCCC PARTICIPATING AGENCIES AND ARE CONTINUOUSLY EVOLVING. THE IVCCC BOARD AND MEMBER AGENCIES WILL EXPAND AND REVISE THIS DOCUMENT IN RESPONSE TO EMERGING TRENDS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTIPLE PROGRAMS, INTERVENTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE OF IMPERIAL COUNTY.