

Coordinated Assessment Work Group Minutes

July 9, 2015

1:00-3:00pm

County Charcot Training Center

Attendees: James Alvarado (CityTeam), John Scott (CityTeam), Natalie Usack (Community Services Agency), Nishma Samat (Family Supportive Housing), Laura Foster (Bill Wilson Center), Selene Rojas (Bill Wilson Center), Patti Dolan (InnVision Shelter Network), Debra Chavez (IVSN), Bob Hutchinson (IVSN), Valerie Kang (MidPen Housing), Vanessa Beretta (HomeFirst), Alejandra Herrera (Destination: Home), Juliana Juarez (Abode Services), Greg Goloborodko (Abode Services), Janbir Sandhu (HomeFirst), Michelle Covert (City of San Jose), Chad Harris (Sacred Heart Community Service), Consuelo Collard (Catholic Charities), Regina Abadajos (Sunnyvale Community Services), Marty Estrada (Midtown Family Services), Hilary Barroga (Office of Supportive Housing), Erin Stanton (Office of Supportive Housing), Jason Satterfield (Bitfocus)

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. CoC Updates

- a. **Point-in-Time Count Report:** Released in June. The report can be accessed on the County website: www.sccgov.org/homelesscount2015.
- b. **HMIS Lead and Software Transition:** As of July 1st, the County Office of Supportive Housing is now the HMIS lead. ServicePoint will stay in place through September with limited support from Bitfocus. We will transition to Clarity on October 1st. ServicePoint will shut down September 25th for data migration.
- c. **HUD NOFA:** The Office of Supportive Housing recently submitted its review of the Santa Clara County CoC registration to HUD. This is one of the last steps that takes place before HUD releases the NOFA.
- d. **Performance Management Work Group:** The Performance Management Work Group approved the list of communitywide system performance measures at its May meeting. This group is on hiatus for the summer and will begin meeting again in August.
- e. **CoC Training:** There are two training opportunities this month. The first is a web based training that will be a repeat of the June training on CoC eligibility documentation. If you are interested in this training contact Hilary Barroga. Space is limited. The second training is the regular CoC training on the fourth Thursday of the month (7/23). This month's training will be on Grant Amendments and Monitoring.

3. Coordinated Assessment System Overview

Erin Stanton presented a brief overview of coordinated assessment. Coordinated assessment (also known as "Coordinated Entry") is a consistent, community wide intake and assessment process to match people experiencing homelessness to housing and services that are the best fit for their situation. Under the CoC interim rule, the Continuum of Care must establish and operate a coordinated assessment system.

The main components of a coordinated assessment system are: defined access, use of a standardized assessment, and coordinated referrals made to housing and/or services based on what is learned through the assessment.

In Santa Clara County we plan to implement coordinated assessment in phases. In phase 1, we will use coordinated assessment to connect people to permanent housing interventions. The assessment will help us identify the right permanent housing intervention for the household: permanent supportive housing (PSH), rapid rehousing (RRH), or more limited assistance. The Coordinated Assessment Work Group has set a long-term vision to phase in more community resources so that the entire continuum of care is coordinated.

We know that in Santa Clara County we will not have nearly enough available spaces in permanent housing for all the people who are referred. We will use the assessment to prioritize the list of people matched to each type of permanent housing (PSH and RRH) based on need, so those most in need are served first.

Why do we want to use Coordinated Assessment in Santa Clara County? Coordinated assessment will help our community by:

- Reducing the need for people to call around to multiple housing programs and fill out multiple applications to join waitlists. Coordinated Assessment will put people on the list for all participating housing programs at the same time.
- Providing clear communication about what housing is available.
- Collecting information about how many people in Santa Clara County need different types of housing. This information will help us advocate for more resources to provide housing and services for homeless people in Santa Clara County.
- Using existing resources effectively by connecting people to the housing program that is the best fit for their situation.
- Make our system more person centric – fewer barriers to accessing resources, and orient decision-making around the person, rather than the program.

There are also many challenges in implementing coordinated assessment. In particular, we are challenged to message this initiative in a way that doesn't create false hope that it will guarantee access to housing.

The timeline for implementation is:

- June-August: Gather community input
- August-October: Develop policies and procedures
- October-November: Training
- November-December: Phase 1 implementation
- January-March: Initial evaluation and begin planning phase 2

4. Community Input Process

The Coordinated Assessment Work Group decided to devote the summer months to gathering community input. In June, Work Group members solicited input from people experiencing homelessness. In July, we are gathering input from organizations that could be potential access points. In August, the focus will be on gathering input from permanent housing providers.

Work Group members summarized some of the feedback they have heard from their clients.

5. Access Points – Community Input Session

Access points are the points of entry into the coordinated assessment system. This is where the assessment is conducted. In Santa Clara County, we have chosen to use the VI-SPDAT as the standardized assessment. The VI-SPDAT is a prescreen triage tool developed by OrgCode and Community Solutions. It is designed to quickly determine if an individual has high, medium, or low acuity so that they can be referred to the right level of permanent housing intervention: permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, or other resources. Because it is a self-report tool, training is quick and easy. The tool is designed to be conducted in about 10 minutes.

Organizations that provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, drop in services, and outreach were invited to this meeting to learn about coordinated assessment and provide feedback from the perspective of potential access points. These programs will NOT be asked to change their procedures for accepting new clients at this time. In Phase 1, ONLY permanent housing programs will be taking placements from the coordinated assessment system. Organizations serving as access points will refer people into the coordinated assessment system, but will not yet accept people out of it for their programs. Referrals to emergency shelter and transitional housing will be a later phase of implementation.

The group provided input regarding coordinated assessment. Some key themes included:

- Considerations for implementing a small number of centralized access points vs. encouraging as many organizations as possible to conduct assessments with their existing clientele.
 - Organizations have limited resources (i.e. staff time) to conduct assessments for large numbers of people in addition to their existing clientele.
 - Organizations do not have the expertise to work with or provide appropriate referrals to people from different populations (e.g. youth, families, etc.)
 - Consider a hybrid option to have a small number of access points that people can be referred to and in addition a larger number of organizations conduct assessments for their existing clients.
 - The time commitment may seem overwhelming initially when no one in the community has been assessed, but once the system is up and running the number of new assessments will be much more manageable.
 - Start with a slow rollout rather than trying to assess everyone in the first few weeks.
 - Concerns about staff time/resources for doing assessment.
 - Some funders are very strict about what staff can do when they are paid by the funder. Might not be able to do assessments.
 - Communities that have the most success view this as a collective process that is in the best interests of the client.

- Implementation of the VI-SPDAT
 - The tool looks useful. One small group did a role play of conducting it and found it to be quick and easy to go through.
 - The VI-SPDAT could be incorporated as part of the HMIS standard intake for people who are homeless.

- It would be challenging for organizations that serve large numbers of people in a quick transactional environment to add the assessment to the existing intake.
- Could we create a system where clients complete the assessment themselves?
- Add local questions to assess eligibility for specific programs, e.g. veteran status.

- Communication about coordinated assessment
 - How to communicate with people about what happens after they do the assessment?
 - How do we find people if they are placed with a program? We need to be transparent about how people are contacted.
 - Decisions need to be made about how long and how many attempts and what it means to try to find someone
 - There are tools in Clarity that can help with this
 - Alerts when someone shows up in any other program
 - Tools when there may be an opening coming up – queue
 - Concern over what we're promising with this and making sure that we're not overpromising what we can't deliver.
 - Transparency – People need to have a way to check back and get updates about their assessment/opportunities.

6. Check Out

The next meeting will be Thursday, August 13th from 1-3pm. It will focus on gathering input from permanent housing providers.