Coordinated Entry as a Tool for Equity: Do's and Don'ts

Coordinated Entry (CE) is a CoC-established system-wide process to quickly and equitably coordinates the access, assessment, prioritization, and referrals to housing and services for people experiencing or at imminent-risk of homelessness. CoCs should implement CE to match individuals and families experiencing homelessness efficiently and consistently to limited housing resources that meet their needs, in a way that addresses inequities based on race, disability, and other protected characteristics while complying with fair housing and civil rights laws.

Dos and Don'ts for Pursing Equity through Coordinated Entry

✔ DOs

DO: Put the whole person first. Consider all dimensions of a participant's identity and lived experience.

DO: Revise policies and procedures to reflect fair housing best practices. Use the checklists in Coordinated Entry as a Tool for Equity training and the Self-Assessment Checklist on the HUD Exchange for guidance.

DO: Train staff in fair housing and civil rights laws and best practices. Walk them through this training or make a special request for a facilitated training for the team.

DO: Refer participants to multiple appropriate housing options. The best way to avoid steering is to provide participants with all available housing options for which they may be eligible. Do not assume individuals would prefer to live in or would succeed in a particular type of housing environment. Refer each individual to all housing for which they may be eligible and allow the individual to decide whether or not to apply.

DO: Increase access for all people by ensuring advertising, education, and assessment materials are inclusive. Ensure that materials are available in languages of community members with limited English proficiency (LEP) and are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

DO: Use local fair housing groups and HUD resources to help integrate fair housing practices into the CE process.

DO: Analyze the inequities that exist in the system and use CE as a tool for advancing equitable access to, experiences within, and outcomes after leaving the system.

Remember, there are resources to help implement changes to a CE process to further fair housing compliance for participants. When in doubt, contact HUD.

✕ DON'Ts

DON'T: Make assumptions about a participant's need based on one or more protected characteristics. The presence of a protected characteristic by itself does not establish a need, a vulnerability, or a barrier. Instead, focus on the participant's lived experience. In some cases, this experience may constitute a housing barrier or suggest greater need or vulnerability. In others, it will not.

✖ DON'Ts

DON'T: gather more information than needed. Gather only information necessary to determine the person's severity of need and potential match for housing and supportive services. The purpose of assessment in CE is to gather only the information necessary to connect a person experiencing a housing crisis to a service strategy and housing plan that rapidly meets the person's needs. When developing a standardized assessment, focus on limiting the intrusiveness of the assessment and on gathering only information necessary for prioritization and referral. Remember, for many, diversion from the housing crisis response system is an appropriate and successful service strategy.

DON'T: steer, direct, or limit referral options based on the person's actual or perceived protected characteristic. From a fair housing perspective, it is important to note that people cannot be "steered" toward any particular housing facility or neighborhood because of protected characteristic(s).

DON'T: merge eligibility determinations with prioritization. The two must remain separate and distinct. Staff may naturally begin to consider a participant's presumptive eligibility for a particular service or program during the assessment. That is okay. It is important to keep in mind, however, that project eligibility determinations should be separated from the prioritization process.

DON'T: use an assessment tool or prioritization process if it would discriminate because of any legally protected characteristic. Not all questions are appropriate to ask during an assessment or prioritization process. Carefully review CE tools and processes to ensure that all questions are phrased in a tone that is sensitive to participant experience and are not unnecessarily collecting information about protected characteristics. For example, questions about one's disability status are not appropriate when there is no connection to determining project eligibility. Depending on the circumstances, such questions may be appropriate at different stages in the process, for example, when there is a need relating to reasonable accommodation requests or matching accessible units with households that need the accessibility features.

DON'T: limit or restrict participants' expression of their own needs, preferences, or feedback during the scope of assessment and prioritization. The CE system should ensure that potential program participants have choices regarding location and type of housing, level and type of services, and other project characteristics. The participant and housing provider must determine together whether a particular intervention is a good fit for the participant.

DON'T: introduce new prioritization factors that are not expressly documented in written policies and procedures for CE. The CE process prioritizes homeless persons within a CoC's geographic area for access to housing and supportive services. CoCs must base prioritization on defined criteria, publicly available through written standards, and applied consistently throughout the CoC.

Additional Resources

- [Coordinated Entry Notice](#)
- [Coordinated Entry Core Elements](#)
- [Coordinated Entry Management and Data Guide | HUD Exchange](#)
- [CoC Program Toolkit – CoC Responsibilities and Duties | HUD Exchange](#)
- [Coordinated Entry as a Tool for Equity: Training on Fair Housing and Coordinated Entry](#)