



Coordinated Entry as a Tool for Equity: Prioritization Best Practices

CE is a CoC-established system-wide process to quickly and equitably coordinate the access, assessment, prioritization, and referrals to housing and services for people experiencing or at imminent-risk of homelessness. HUD requires CoCs to craft and annually evaluate the CE system's written policies and procedures. CE enables a CoC to standardize its data processes and efficiently and consistently match individuals and families experiencing homelessness to limited housing resources that meet their needs. There is not a "one-size-fits-all" approach to CE system design because each CoC's resources, housing inventories, geographies and populations are unique.

Prioritization must be based on a specific and definable set of criteria that are made publicly available through a CoC's written prioritization standards and applied consistently throughout the CoC. One way to do this is to use the results of the participant's housing barriers screen or vulnerability score to inform prioritization. The assessment score provides a standardized analysis of risk and other objective assessment factors. This is a particularly important step when ensuring fair housing for participants because it provides a standard and objective means for evaluating a person's needs.

It is important to remember that prioritization is based on **need**, **vulnerability**, and **barriers** as

identified in the assessment and from interactions with the participant.

- **Need:** Putting aside preconceived notions about the participant's protected characteristics, does the participant's lived experience suggest they have a greater need than others on the CE list?
- **Vulnerability:** Putting aside preconceived notions about a participant's protected characteristics, does the participant's lived experience indicate they are more vulnerable than others on the CE list?
- **Barriers:** Putting aside preconceived notions about the participant's protected characteristics, does the participant's lived experience indicate they face greater housing barriers than others on the CE list?

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](#)

Below are additional best practices to consider during the CE system's prioritization process.

Best Practices: Do's and Don't

✓ DOs

Use data to inform the prioritization process

Using information gathered through the assessment and from other sources will enable a prioritizing agency to determine a

household's vulnerability level. Other sources of information include mainstream service providers (e.g., hospitals, criminal justice system, Medicaid) if their data are part of the CoC's CE assessment process.



DOs

Define and record a specified set of prioritization standards to apply consistently throughout the CoC

HUD requires CoCs to use the CE process to prioritize homeless persons for referral to housing and services. A CoC's CE policies and procedures must describe the factors and assessment information used to make prioritization decisions for all homeless assistance in the CoC. CoCs are encouraged to review regional and programmatic data to identify disparities in housing outcomes, to inform the prioritization process.

Consider multiple criteria in determining a participant's level of priority

Having a wider variety of prioritization criteria will enable more informed decision-making. A CoC's prioritization criteria may include any of the factors listed below.

- High use of crisis or emergency services to meet basic needs, including emergency rooms, jails, and psychiatric facilities
- Vulnerability to illness or death
- Risk of continued homelessness
- Other factors determined by the community and based on severity of needs

Strive to use the assessment process to gather only the information needed to help resolve a housing crisis.

Maintain a priority list

To manage prioritization for referral and placement in CoC resources, a CoC may maintain a priority list, by-name list, waitlist, or master list (all used interchangeably in this training). The priority list generally lists people by name or identification code. It serves as the basis for the CE referral process.



DON'Ts

Don't exclusively use the standardized assessment to determine priority level

CoCs should not rely solely on the results of a standardized assessment tool to determine priority level. Prioritization should also account for the intensity and complexity of individual vulnerabilities and other risk factors the assessment tool may not reflect. Thus, CoCs should develop additional nondiscriminatory criteria to determine prioritization in addition to the standardized assessment tool results. CoCs can identify additional factors that a household could offer during the assessment process and that could be considered in the prioritization process.

Don't leave project vacancies unfilled

The priority list ensures all project vacancies are filled through the CE prioritization and referral processes. It further ensures a standardized

process for consistent referrals across CoC providers, and in compliance with federal fair housing and civil rights laws.

Don't disconnect the assessment tool from prioritization tools

Assessment data must effectively support the prioritization process. Ensure that prioritization criteria inform the questions in the assessment tools.

Don't operate in silos

An effective centralized prioritization system requires collaboration and information-sharing among individual providers and entities within the system. Ensure input from individual providers engaged in the process when establishing prioritization criteria or creating assessment tools.