

Howard County Coalition to End Homelessness

Committee: Coordinated Entry

Chair & Liaison to the Board: Linda Zumbrun and Jennifer Corcoran **Date of last meeting:** 11/27/2018

Attended: Cara Baumgartner, Donna Blackwell, Anne Brinker, Jennifer Broderick, Jennifer Corcoran, Ayesha Holmes, Sara Smoley, Liz Van Oeveren, Linda Zumbrun

Date of next meeting: 1/29/2019

Coordinated Entry Committee Purpose

Act in a coordinating capacity for the Howard County Coalition's Coordinated Entry System, Coordinated System of Homeless Services. Specifically, coordinate efforts and engage partners in building and maintaining a robust Coordinated Entry system.

Report Update

The Committee reviewed a proposed set of performance measurement and evaluation tools to assess the Coordinated Entry System's functioning with respect to activities in the categories of Access, Assess, Prioritize, Refer. The Committee discussed that HUD is reviewing community-level rather than project-level outcomes, and the potential for including programs outside of CSHS was raised.

With respect to specific areas of inquiry, the Committee discussed the following:

Topic: Length of time between referral to a project and project enrollment

Discussion: Baseline data will be collected and then goals will be set. Benchmarks for how quickly a program should contact a household once referred need to be developed and agreed upon within the system so that access points (hotline) can give households information on what to expect once referred.

Topic: Potential differences among projects in rates at which they enroll and house participants

Discussion: The Committee is also interested in which programs are most successful at stabilizing households so they do not return to homelessness.

Topic: Hotline is currently doing diversion that isn't being captured and it is unclear how to measure their efforts

Discussion: Grassroots staff agreed to review internal data to ascertain the amount of time staff are spending on housing assessments and any other relevant data points.

Topic: Informing households of their right to file a grievance/nondiscrimination complaint

Discussion: The Committee discussed how to handle the need to explain to households at the access point(s) that they are able to file a grievance, especially when the access point(s) are not the entities deciding on the prioritization standards and cannot change outcomes for households. The decision was

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for the access point(s) to inform households they can file a grievance/nondiscrimination complaint about the experience of the assessment, which would follow Grassroots' grievance process, but hotline staff will not be expected to handle complaints about the whole of CSHS. A process will need to be developed to address complaints/grievances about the system itself.

Topic: "Secret Shopper" calls to Grassroots hotline

Discussion: This had been discussed as a way to assess the user's experience as well as the knowledge level of staff about the functioning of the system. There also needs to be an assessment of how user-friendly the assessment process is for staff who are administering assessment. The Committee members discussed that secret shopper calls can be very helpful when the guidelines for what they are testing for are clear, but otherwise they can be problematic. Members also felt a similar assessment should be done for all projects within CSHS, and that the larger community should be educated about what to expect from the system. This will continue to be a discussion point for the Committee.

Topic: Need to make CSHS accessible to households who speak little or no English

Discussion: Use of the language line or FIRN can be a cost burden – how can small agencies be shielded from bearing the brunt of this expense? Smaller agencies could direct households to partners who have this capacity as a part of standard operations.

Topic: Staff Surveys

Discussion: Members felt a focus group rather than survey would allow for collection of deeper information and would provide information on what is working well in addition to what isn't working as well. The way the draft survey is worded might focus too much on the negative and make staff feel negatively about their job.

Topic: Community member Focus Group

Discussion: A focus group or series of interviews at the Day Resource Center was proposed as a proxy for connecting with the long-term unsheltered homeless to investigate issues related to system access. The point was made again that there should be an emphasis on the positives as well as limitations of the system, and the experience should have a way of directly benefiting participants.