

Chester County Partnership To End Homelessness

Case Conferencing Prioritization Policy

The Chester County Partnership to End Homelessness is committed to ending and preventing homelessness in Chester County, Pennsylvania. The Partnership is open to and inclusive of community-based, nonprofit, private, and public organizations, as well as people with the lived experience of homelessness and concerned citizens. An elected Continuum of Care (CoC) Governance Board ensures the Partnership is aligned with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s policy and funding requirements. The Partnership provides guidance, advocacy, and community resources to support Chester County’s homeless crisis response system, which is led by the Chester County Department of Community Development and powered by a network of nonprofit service providers that provide a continuum of care to help all families and individuals exit from homelessness to permanent housing with stability.

Chester County’s Coordinated Entry System (CES) ensures equitable access to housing and supportive services for people experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness. The two core elements of CES include 1) a toll-free Call Center accessed by dialing 211 for information, screening, and referral to homeless prevention services and street outreach and 2) a mobile street outreach team responsible for engagement, homeless verification, intake, and connection to services like housing and shelter. Our goal is to make homelessness a rare, brief, and one-time only experience.

Coordinated Entry Core Components

Access	Assessment	Prioritization	Connection
<p>Residents may access the system by calling 211 toll-free 24/7</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Through our mobile Street Outreach Team</p>	<p>Residents are assessed by Call Center and Street Outreach staff for three purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To confirm they are safe or help them make a plan to become safe. 2. To understand their current housing crisis. 3. To identify the possible causes of their housing crisis and their unique strengths and resources to 	<p>Currently, there are not enough housing resources to end homelessness for all Chester County residents.</p> <p>Coordinated Entry does not provide financial assistance nor housing units.</p> <p>Coordinated Entry does prioritize households for housing assistance to ensure equitable access to limited resources.</p>	<p>Coordinated Entry connects residents experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness to appropriate housing resources as they become available.</p> <p>Households are connected to these resources based on a combination of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The results of their assessment. 2. Prioritization standards established by the Partnership.

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	help resolve it.		3. Availability.
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Housing Resources in Chester County

Coordinated Entry can connect residents to any combination of the following housing resources when needed and available:

1. **Homeless Prevention** services including rental assistance and supportive services like food, employment and job training, legal aid, public benefits access, and mediation services to help residents continue to stay with family or friends.
2. **Temporary Housing** services for people that are living on the street or other places not intended for human habitation. These services include emergency shelter and transitional/bridge housing.
3. **Rehousing** services to help people experiencing homelessness to find, move into, and maintain permanent housing with a lease in their name. These services include housing location, time-limited rent subsidies (6 - 12 months on average), and light case management support to help households achieve their goals for health and economic self-sufficiency.
4. **Supportive housing** services that provide long-term rent subsidies and/or wraparound services (if appropriate and available) for people with disabilities and/or have significant barriers to permanent housing stability. These services include permanent supportive housing and housing choice vouchers.

Given the limited housing resources in our community, Coordinated Entry connects residents to the minimum level of services necessary to end or prevent their experience of homelessness. This approach, called progressive engagement, preserves more intensive and costly services for the people who need them most.

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Prioritization Standards for Housing Resources

The Chester County Partnership to End Homelessness has established the following standards to prioritize equitable access to limited housing resources for the most vulnerable members of our community as follows.

Housing Choice Vouchers (Homelessness Preference only):

1. Households experiencing literal homelessness with zero or limited income (defined as less than 30% AMI) and no ability to increase it.
2. People with a serious medical condition or terminal illness.

Permanent Supportive Housing:

1. People with disabilities who meet the federal HUD definition of chronically homeless.
2. People with disabilities experiencing homelessness with a criminal background and/or have been terminated by a housing subsidy program.
3. Other people with disabilities, a serious medical condition, or terminal illness experiencing homelessness.
4. People previously meeting the definition of chronic homelessness and enrolled in Rapid Rehousing at risk of returning to homelessness.

Rapid Rehousing:

1. Households that meet the HUD definition of chronic homelessness, with priority given to unsheltered households.
2. Households that do not have a documented disability but otherwise meet the HUD definition of chronically homeless, with priority given to unsheltered households.
3. Households by length of time homeless, with priority given to unsheltered households, in the following order:
 1. Households fleeing domestic violence or human trafficking.
 2. Families with one or more children aged 0 - 5.
 3. All other households.*

Temporary Housing:

1. Unsheltered households that meet the HUD definition of chronic homelessness.
2. Unsheltered households that do not have a documented disability but otherwise meet the HUD definition of chronically homeless.
3. Households fleeing domestic violence or human trafficking.
4. Other unsheltered households by length of time homeless.*

*Length of time homeless is determined by the first date of the household's most recent experience of homelessness.

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Homeless Prevention:

1. History of eviction.
2. Fleeing domestic violence or human trafficking.
3. Criminal record.
4. Chronic medical condition.
5. Single parent households with children under 18.
6. Termination from a housing subsidy program (e.g., Housing Choice Voucher).
7. All other residents who will lose their housing in 21 days or less.

Non-Prioritized Housing Resources: CES connects eligible households with other community housing resources but does not prioritize these referrals, including: US Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance Program, Mainstream Housing Choice Vouchers, Public Housing, Family Unification Vouchers, SSVF and HUD-VASH for Veterans, and others.

Prioritization Tools

Coordinated Entry utilizes the following tools to connect people experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness to housing resources in Chester County.

1. **Equity Lens:** To the greatest extent made possible by federal law and funding source requirements, Coordinated Entry strives to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities and over-representation in the homeless crisis response system.
2. **VI-SPDAT Screening Tool:** The VI-SPDAT stands for Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool. The VI-SPDAT is a national best practice screening tool to help make objective decisions about who to prioritize for housing resources based on their need and vulnerability to the negative impacts of homelessness on their health and well-being.
3. **Chester County HMIS:** HMIS stands for Homeless Information Management System. This secure data system is used by continuum of care service providers to enroll, manage, and exit people from the homeless crisis response system efficiently and effectively. The system maintains a By Name List (BNL) of everyone who has been prioritized for each major housing resource to ensure they are connected to services as quickly as possible based on their priority and the availability of resources.
4. **Case Conferencing:** Case Conferencing brings together the homeless crisis response system providers with other health and human service providers for weekly meetings to ensure the highest priority households on the By Name List are being enrolled into housing and supportive services as quickly as possible. Case Conferencing also allows for the discussion of the unique needs of each household and creative problem-solving to ensure these needs are met. In order to maintain confidentiality, all associated staff participating in Case Conferencing are required to complete and sign a Data Sharing

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Agreement. Staff that have not signed a Data Sharing Agreement are not eligible to participate in case conferencing until the form is signed and dated.