Santa Clara County Continuum of Care

Coordinated Assessment FAQ for Service Providers who do not Administer the VI-SPDAT

1. What is the Coordinated Assessment System?

The Coordinated Assessment System is a consistent, community-wide intake process to match people experiencing homelessness to community resources that are the best fit for their situation. Santa Clara County has been using coordinated assessment since November 2015 to evaluate and refer households to permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing programs. Beginning in January 2018, coordinated assessment was expanded to transitional housing programs as well.

To participate in the Coordinated Assessment System, all people experiencing homelessness complete a standardized assessment tool (the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assessment Tool or VI-SPDAT), which generates a score based on the household's situation. This score determines the household's priority on the Community Queue for referrals to the services that match their level of need. High acuity households are prioritized for permanent supportive housing and moderate acuity households are prioritized for rapid rehousing or transitional housing. Low acuity households are not placed on the Community Queue, but instead receive referrals for other services. A separate, confidential Community Queue is maintained for domestic violence survivors to safeguard their privacy.

When a space becomes available in a participating housing program, the most needy eligible household (based on assessment score and other factors) is referred to the program from the Community Queue.

2. What are the benefits of the Coordinated Assessment System?

- It ensures that the people who need our community's limited resources the most are prioritized.
- It maximizes the utilization of local resources through a single Community Queue, preventing housing opportunities from going unused.
- It increases access to housing assistance by increasing the number and types of service providers by which households can complete the assessment and be added to the Community Queue.

3. What does the Coordinated Assessment System NOT do?

- It does not guarantee access to housing.
- It does not place people on waiting lists for Section 8 housing, low-income affordable housing complexes, or private housing complexes.
- It will not increase the supply of housing in Santa Clara County.
- The assessment tool (VI-SPDAT) is **not** an application for housing or programs. Additional paperwork will be needed for any individual program once the household is matched to a participating program.

4. How can I connect my client to the Coordinated Assessment System?

To enter the Coordinated Assessment System, the household must take the VI-SPDAT assessment. The VI-SPDAT is offered by over 40 agencies at numerous Coordinated Assessment System access points in order to make the process more convenient for the household. If you want to connect the household you are working

with to a provider who can assess them using the VI-SPDAT, you can refer them to a Santa Clara County agency access point.[1]

As the system map below indicates, access points are typically shelters, outreach programs, and homeless service providers, but they also include other organizations that may encounter people experiencing a housing crisis. These agencies will conduct the VI-SPDAT to generate a vulnerability score. The VI-SPDAT is entered in a centralized database (the Homeless Management Information System or HMIS) and the most appropriate housing intervention (if applicable) is determined.

There are many more households in need of housing assistance than there are units or program slots. Due to the limited supply of resources, most households in the Community Queue will **not** be offered housing. However, those who are offered a placement will have an important resource to assist them in exiting their housing crisis and moving towards self-sufficiency.

5. Is the Community Queue a Waiting List?

No, the Community Queue is not a waiting list. It is a not a first come, first served system. Instead, it takes into account a variety of factors about each household to determine what type of housing service would be most appropriate and who might be in the greatest need at that time. Because new households are assessed each day, the Community Queue adjusts regularly as new households with different priority levels are added. As a result, a household's priority in the Community Queue may change.

6. How can I support my client once they are on the Community Queue?

Please make sure that your client's contact information in HMIS is as current as possible. This will help ensure that it is possible to find them if they are matched to a housing program. Please also encourage them to update their information if it changes. Many households each year miss the opportunity for housing because the program is unable to locate them.

Clients who are not sure about their status on the Community Queue or whether they have received a VI-SPDAT assessment can check with a Coordinated Assessment System access point provider. However, because each household's prioritization changes regularly as other households are assessed, it is not possible to provide households with a waiting list number or estimated time of placement. Supporting clients to have realistic expectations about the Coordinated Assessment System can help ensure that the system is efficiently serving as many households as possible.

Finally, because resources are limited, most households on the Community Queue will not be matched to a housing intervention. Please continue to support your client in pursuing all of their options, benefits, and community resources.

7. Who can I contact with questions?

Please contact Elisha Heruty at the County of Santa Clara Office of Supportive Housing at (408) 793-0546 or Elisha.Heruty@hhs.sccgov.org.

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[1] See http://scc.hmis.cc/participating-agencies/ for a list of access points.