

ALIGNING COORDINATED ENTRY WITH EMERGING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Coordinated Entry works best when it is aligned with a specific community's needs - but those needs are always changing. That means that **even if a system works perfectly today, something will change tomorrow. It's crucial to stay ready to adapt.** Every Continuum of Care (CoC) has a system in place and can build on the progress they've made to make needed changes to their Coordinated Entry system as these changes arise.

To make the changes, communities need:

- the curiosity to ask tough questions about what is going wrong and why.
- the humility to seek and truly listen to the deep knowledge that the people living through homelessness in each community can share.
- the persistence to keep asking until communities get to the root causes.
- the creativity to generate new ideas.
- the courage to name mistakes and take the risks necessary to try doing things differently.
- the honesty and empowerment to understand that “we built it, so we can change it!”
- the accountability to continuously strive to do better and repair harms done.

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Approaching Equitable Change

Change work of this nature can feel daunting. Here are few tips from communities who are making equitable changes in their Coordinated Entry systems:

Start small, but think big — Communities don't have to change everything all at once. Choose some tangible and doable steps and start there. Keep in mind when one part of a system changes, it will have impacts across the system as a whole.

Build on successes, learn from failures —

Small wins build momentum and show people what is possible. That can bring new partners to the table — including providers, funders, and political leaders — who can help transform a community's whole system.

Not everything will work. Communities should prepare to monitor the impact of system changes and be ready to let go of practices that show poor results. When risks don't pan out, communities should be prepared to address harms it has caused to people in their systems.

Build a bigger table — Genuinely engaging stakeholders in change processes is a great way to build alignment across sectors and grow the resources of a community's whole system. With increases in inflow driving increases in homelessness, engaging stakeholders in feeder systems (criminal legal system, child welfare/foster care system, hospital/healthcare system, social/human services system, housing system, etc.) in this way is increasingly essential to preventing and ending homelessness - especially considering the inequitable impacts of those systems.

Build out knowledge and capacity — Conducting the core functions of Coordinated Entry takes skill. Communities need to treat the people doing it as key professional assets to their systems. Communities should connect Coordinated Entry workers with resources for professional development, training, and technical assistance. Communities can also benefit from helping new organizations join in the effort — especially culturally-specific and grassroots organizations — by building their knowledge and capacity.

Emphasize relationships — Coordinated Entry is a systemwide endeavor, so it can only be as functional as the relationships between a system's different organizations and programs. Change work can expose rifts, disagreements, and differing priorities among stakeholders, but it can also be a powerful opportunity for communities to build trust, encourage participation, and support interdependence and cooperation between different programs. Communities who invest in existing relationships and build new relationships with entities who have interests that align with ending homelessness tend to see success in their change efforts.

Keep the conversation going — At all levels of the CoC, communities should actively share and analyze data (both quantitative and qualitative) and encourage conversation about how Coordinated Entry could be working better. Proactively seeking and implementing feedback from people with lived experience, service providers, and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis can keep momentum up.

Use data strategically — Communities should align data collection practices with what is needed to move people effectively and equitably from one intervention to the next. Often, very limited information about every household is necessary to analyze inequities at the front door of a system, and more detailed assessment data is most helpful when referring households to specific programs. Communities should tailor data collection practices based on what they actually need to know and when they need to know it both to ensure a system is treating people equitably and to effectively match households with and enroll them in available program referrals.

These recommendations can help communities get started or keep up momentum in their work to make Coordinated Entry more effective and equitable. The key is to continue to adapt as communities make changes to their systems and as external conditions change. Communities should harness the learning opportunities presented by new information that emerges from their efforts.



WATCH THE WEBINAR “COORDINATED ENTRY: BEST PRACTICES IN CENTERING EQUITY AND ENSURING EFFECTIVENESS”

PART OF THE WEBINAR SERIES **“STRONGER TOGETHER:
A ROADMAP TO AN EFFECTIVE HOMELESS SYSTEM”**