

Building Public Housing Agency Partnerships and Maximizing Resources



Moderator- Stanley Sorrell

Public Policy and Advocacy Manager, San Antonio Food Bank

Speaker- Eboni Jett

Senior Director of System Advancement, Close To Home San Antonio

Speaker- Patricia Guzman

Coordinated Entry Manager, Close To Home San Antonio

Speaker- Kevin Finn

President/CEO, Strategies to End Homelessness

This session will explore ways Continuums of Care (CoCs) can partner with Public Housing Agencies to house unsheltered populations. You will learn about two communities that have used resources like mainstream vouchers to bridge partnerships to get vulnerable people housed.



Building Public Housing Agency Partnerships and Maximizing Resources

This session will explore ways Continuums of Care (CoCs) can partner with Public Housing Agencies to house unsheltered populations. You will learn about two communities that have used resources like mainstream vouchers to bridge partnerships to get vulnerable people housed.



Moderator



Stanley Sorrell
Public Policy and Advocacy Manager
San Antonio Food Bank

Stanley Sorrell is the Public Policy and Advocacy Manager at the San Antonio Food Bank. He advocates for policies that feed families and individuals at the local, state, and federal levels.

In addition, Stanley is also a lived experienced member of the Community Strategic Team with the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Speaker #1



Eboni Jett
Senior Director of System
Advancement
Close To Home
San Antonio, Bexar County

Eboni Jett is a dynamic leader with a rich non-profit management and organizational development background. With a passion for improving operations and maximizing team effectiveness, she has a proven track record of driving positive change in complex environments.

Grounded by her yoga practice, she emphasizes transparency, clear communication, and strategic planning to achieve long-term goals. With expertise in staff training, data analysis, and strategic collaborations, Eboni is dedicated to making a lasting impact in her field.

Speaker #2



Patricia Guzman
Coordinated Entry Manager
Close To Home
San Antonio, Bexar County

Patricia Guzman is a dedicated leader with extensive experience in the nonprofit sector. She is deeply passionate about her agency's mission and consistently works to enhance the Coordinated Entry system efficiency while supporting and empowering her community.

Patricia excels in developing and implementing procedures and processes to improve services for homeless partner agencies. She has successfully, in partnership with leadership, implemented strategies that enhance operational efficiency and service delivery.

Her expertise in process optimization and procedural documentation has led to significant improvements in resource allocation, client and partner support, and overall program effectiveness. Patricia's work continues to inspire and drive positive change within the community.



Collaborating with PHAs

One Community's Views on effectively Using Housing Vouchers
as a Coordinated Entry Resource



Close To Home

4100 E. Piedras, Suite 105 | San Antonio, TX 78228 | 210.876.0720 | www.CloseToHomeSA.org

Person-First Language

- Puts the person before the circumstance or diagnosis, describing what a person “has,” NOT what a person “is.”
- Currently Experiencing Homelessness vs. Homeless People
- Labels can generate strong emotional reactions that create barriers and reinforce stereotypes
- Homelessness is a temporary circumstance. It does not define someone.
- People experiencing homelessness are – first and foremost - people

Agenda

- CoC Overview
- Coordinated Entry Overview
- Collaboration with PHAs to effectively and

HEARTH Act & Interim Rule

- Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act passed on May 20th, 2009
 - Consolidated three separate homeless assistance programs administered by HUD
 - Codified into law the Continuum of Care (CoC) planning process
- The Interim Rule was created through the implementation of the HEARTH Act.
 - Establishes a regulatory framework for the CoC program
 - Requirements for establishing a CoC planning process
 - CPD 17-01 Notice Establishing Additional Requirements for a Continuum of Care Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System

Coordinated Entry (HOMELINK)

Core Elements per HUD:

“Established (1) access points use a standardized (2) assessment process to gather information on people’s needs, preferences, and the barriers they face to regaining housing. Once the assessment has identified the most vulnerable people with the highest needs, the CoC follows established policies and procedures to (3) prioritize households for (4) referral to appropriate and available housing and supportive services resources (“projects”).”

HUD

Access

Access refers to how people experiencing a housing crisis learn that coordinated entry exists and access crisis response services. The first contact that most people experiencing a housing crisis will have with the crisis response system is through a coordinated entry access point. Access points play a critical role in engaging people in order to address their most immediate needs through referral to emergency services. Access points also play a critical role in beginning to determine (through assessment; see Chapter 2: Assessment) which intervention might be most appropriate to rapidly connect those people to housing.

When adopting an access model for its coordinated entry process, a CoC's planning group must ensure that the model meets the HUD requirements for access, as well as consider the local geography, service patterns, and capacity of its crisis response system. The purpose of designating access points is to ensure that all people in a community have equal access to all crisis response system resources in the CoC. Equal access is an important part of the overall strategy of coordinated entry, which shifts the system from a project-centric focus to a person-centric focus.

Homelink Access

No Wrong Door Hybrid:

Individuals can present at any front door homeless service provider (including Street Outreach and Emergency Shelters) or access point in the geographic area and are assessed using the same tool and methodology so that “access” to referrals are consistently completed across the CoC.

Model approved by committee/board in 2022 & implemented in November 2022

HUD

Assessment

Assessment is the process of gathering information about a person presenting to the crisis response system. Assessment includes documenting information about the barriers the person faces to being rapidly housed and any characteristics that might make him or her more vulnerable while homeless.

Historically, assessment of persons experiencing a housing crisis included inordinately long and intrusive interviews, even if they were only seeking temporary emergency assistance. Persons might have to undergo the assessment process multiple times, at every place they accessed. With coordinated entry, assessment can collect information in phases—initially collecting only the information essential to ascertaining the person's immediate needs and to connecting that person to appropriate interventions.

The assessment practice a CoC implements is critical to that CoC's overall coordinated entry process because assessment determines how people are prioritized and referred to housing and supportive services projects. In addition to identifying a person's overall needs and preferences, the assessment also must appropriately triage the person by asking about immediate needs (e.g., "Are you safe where you are right now?" "Do you need medical services?"), accurately evaluating his or her vulnerability and barriers to housing, and providing information to support accurate referrals.

Homelink Assessment

- Individuals and families are screened to determine what Homelink Resource will best meet their need (i.e., prevention, diversion, housing project, etc.).
- One screening tool, the Resource Placement Index (RPI), is utilized by all entities via the front door/Homelink enrollment enabling “access” to the Resource Eligibility List (REL) from which the Priority Pool (PP) is updated weekly for housing referrals.

Model approved by committee/board in 2022 & implemented in November 2022

HUD

Prioritization

Once a person experiencing a housing crisis has been assessed, the coordinated entry process moves on to determining his or her priority for housing and supportive services. The person's level of vulnerability or need is determined by analyzing the information obtained from the assessment against the CoC's prioritization standards. It is the person's prioritization status (and other information from the assessment) that determines where the person will be referred in the next coordinated entry step. In referral, the group of persons with the highest priority is offered housing and supportive services projects first.

Homelink Prioritization

RPI Prioritization

Data Driven Score

- Length of Stay
- Number of Episode
- Long-term medical, physical, cognitive, developmental, mental health, substance abuse challenges

Skilled Assessors' Rating

- Subjective ranking of the presenting individual/family's need in comparison to their own caseload.
- Ranking Justification

All enrollments include both assessment types. Enrollments are prioritized by either one score or the other when priority pool is refreshed.

Homelink Prioritization

How we got here

- In 2020, concerns were being expressed about the VI-SPDAT as an equitable assessment across CoC.
- In late 2020, the committee determined we needed to explore a new tool
- In early 2021, CTH applied to work with Notre Dame to develop a new tool.
- The original design included developing a tool to run along side VI-SPDAT was study Randomized Control Trial (RCT). Design shifted after VI-SPDAT creators stopped supporting the tool in its use.
- Community Listening sessions were conducted with all Homelink users and partners to develop local vulnerability definition. There was no consensus, but feedback from users that users better understood vulnerability than any tool.

Homelink Prioritization

The Study and Pilot seek to understand the following:

- Are there disparities in our system? At which point, access, assessment, prioritize, referrals and resolutions?
- Are there trends with these disparities by user, organization, intervention?
- After mining two years of Skilled Assessors' ratings and justifications, are there trends in characteristics for what is considered "vulnerable" to get to weighting and/or additional inclusion of factors for the final tool recommendation.
- How do the Skilled Assessors' ratings compare to the Data Driven Score.
- Are individuals most successful in their housing (no documented returns to homelessness) based on being prioritized with one tool or the other?

HUD

Referral

Once a person experiencing a housing crisis has been assessed, the coordinated entry process moves on to determining his or her priority for housing and supportive services. The person's level of vulnerability or need is determined by analyzing the information obtained from the assessment against the CoC's prioritization standards. It is the person's prioritization status (and other information from the assessment) that determines where the person will be referred in the next coordinated entry step.

In referral, the group of persons with the highest priority is offered housing and supportive services projects first. As required by the [Coordinated Entry Notice](#), that referral process must be guided by an intentional protocol that follows the CoC's prioritization standards as documented in its written policies and procedures. This chapter outlines requirements established in the [Notice](#), describes the components of a referral process, and provides an overview of referral management—eligibility screening, monitoring project availability, enrollment coordination, managing referral rejections, and tracking the status of the referral throughout the referral process.

Homelink Referrals

- Homelessness Prevention
- Homelink Diversion
- Homelink Vouchers
- Homelink Housing

Homelink Prevention

Applicable for ESG and HOME ARP
TBRA Homelessness Prevention
Funded Project.

Eligibility:

- Imminent Risk of Homelessness (not eviction) – within 14 days of falling into homelessness.
- At or below 30% AMI
- No other means of support or resolution

Diversion

Homelessness Diversion, also referred to as "rapid exit" or "housing problem solving," targets swiftly diverting households from the homeless response system by promptly identifying safe housing alternatives outside of the system.

This approach ensures that the limited housing resources are maximized for the most vulnerable populations. Diversion strategies involve engaging in solutions-focused, strength-based conversations and providing one-time financial assistance to address a household's housing crisis.

COSA funds Homelink Diversion with \$400,000 annually to do this work.

Housing Project

Housing Project Types

- Transitional Housing (TH)
- Rapid Rehousing (RRH)
- TH-RRH
- Permanent Supportive Housing

All CoC, ESG, HOME ARP TBRA, Housing Bond and YHDP TH, RRH, TH-RRH, and PSH funded projects abide by Homelink Policies, Procedures and the CoC, ESG and Local Written Standards.

Homelink Vouchers

To ensure equitable access to resources for clients experiencing homelessness, Homelink coordinates with both Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), Opportunity Home San Antonio OHSA) and Housing Authority of Bexar County (HABC) to allocate vouchers through the homeless response system.

Homelink vouchers participants ***must be connected with a Homelink provider willing to provide case management support to the household*** while applying for the voucher, identifying housing, and a minimum of three months' post-move-in stabilization case management.

Homelink Vouchers Include:

OHSA Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) – 284*

HABC EHV – 36*

OHSA Housing Stability Vouchers (HSV) - 32

HSABC HSV - 6

OHSA Family Referral Program (FRP) - 73

OHSA Move-on Vouchers – 40

OHSA Housing Vouchers* - 250

Voucher Strategy & Collaborations

- Monthly Coordination meetings
- Homeless Response System Advisory Committee (HRSAC)
 - Opportunity Home San Antonio and Housing Authority Bexar County both hold seats.
 - Housing and Prevention Providers Subcommittee

Community Strategies in Practice

- Targeting COVID vouchers toward older adopts (50+) during pandemic
- Targeting Housing Vouchers toward families with minor children during family challenge
- Targeting SNOFO HSVs for those currently or previously unsheltered (cat 1) and experiencing chronicity.
 - Partnering vouchers with PSH providers for those needing more support
- Strategically using the Move-on vouchers to step down from PSH bridge project when the case management support is no longer needed

Challenges & Opportunities



- Define and Document Structured Procedures for Interconnected,
- Follow the procedures,
- Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!!

Shared understanding of procedures, priorities, and objectives is key!

Speaker #3



Kevin Finn
President, CEO
Strategies to End Homelessness
Hamilton County, Ohio

Kevin Finn is the founding President/CEO of Strategies to End Homelessness, Inc. He began working as a street outreach worker in 1998, providing services to unsheltered teenagers. He founded a day-shelter for homeless teens and then created several programs which sought to break the cycle of chronic homelessness.

In 2007, Kevin founded Strategies to End Homelessness, which leads a coordinated community effort to end homelessness in Greater Cincinnati. Working in partnership with 30 non-profit organizations, Strategies to End Homelessness is the Continuum of Care Lead Agency, a Unified Funding Agency as designated by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, and the Homeless Management Information System Lead for Cincinnati/Hamilton County.

As such, the agency administers Federal, State, County, and City funding for homeless services, oversees system-wide data, Coordinated Entry, street outreach, emergency shelter, supportive housing, shelter diversion and predictive data analytics solutions with the goal of ending homelessness.

Kevin has a bachelor's degree in psychology from St. Louis University and a master's degree in social work from the University of Kentucky.



STRATEGIES TO **END HOMELESSNESS**

prevent. assist. solve.

CoC Partnership with PHA (One Example)

Kevin Finn

President/CEO

Kfinn@end-homelessness.org



Key Steps in the Cincinnati/Hamilton County CoC/PHA Partnership:

1. Homeless Preference
 2. Address Waiting list
 3. Documenting Eligibility
-
4. Prioritization
 5. Application review
 6. Review & Follow-up



Homeless Preference

- Worked with the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) to incorporate homelessness as a preference
 - Incorporated into Strategic Plan adopted by CMHA Board each April, effective July 1
 - Adopted April 2015
 - Effective July 1, 2015
 - Preference applies to both Housing Choice Voucher program (HCV= Section 8) & Asset Management site-based housing programs



Wait List

- Referrals go onto waitlist even when waitlist is closed to new applications
 - Important because approximately 11,000 households on waitlist at any given time
 - On average, remain on waitlist for 3-5 years
 - Our average time on waitlist: 4-5 months
- Preference allows CMHA to identify and prioritize populations with greatest need
- Combination of placement onto waitlist & preference means referrals are high on list immediately



Documenting Eligibility

- Most PHAs = self report
 - Self report = total waste of time
- Eligibility determined by the CoC
 - Referrals come with documentation that the household has been on the street, in a shelter, fleeing DV
 - If household applies with CMHA & indicates they are homeless, STEH is asked to provide documentation
 - No third party documentation = no preference



Prioritization

- Almost 13,000 people moving through homeless services system each year
 - Only a certain number of referrals (not vouchers)
- Started with PSH exits only, following “Moving On” strategy
 - Have incorporated RRH, TH & Shelter Diversion referrals as access to referrals has grown
- Coordinated Exit Subcommittee
 - Review requested referrals from around CoC
 - Ensure appropriate & **ELIGIBLE**
 - Questions they ask:
 - What barriers has the HH overcome?
 - Are they connected to ongoing services now?
 - What barriers remain?



What's in it for them (PHA's)?



Application Review & Follow-Up

- Important that the application is complete in addition to doing everything we can possibly do to ensure eligibility
- Need to provide follow up when referrals are not approved, hearing to be requested
- Strategies to End Homelessness employs a full-time employee who does nothing but process & review applications, screen for eligibility, provide homelessness documentation, & follow-up with case managers

Questions?



Thank you

Stanley Sorrell
ssorrell@safoodbank.org

Kevin Finn
kfinn@end-homelessness.org

Eboni Jett
ebonijett@closetohomesa.org

Patricia Guzman
Patriciaguzman@closetohomesa.org