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## SNAPS Weekly Focus: Why Coordinated Assessment is Critical to Ending Homelessness Locally

Welcome to week three of SNAPS Weekly Focus! Last week's message addressed why CoCs should prioritize chronically homeless persons in permanent supportive housing. This week, I am going to talk about how implementing a coordinated assessment system will help your CoC address prioritization and more effectively achieve its system-wide goals and objectives.

Under the CoC Program interim rule, each CoC must establish and operate a coordinated assessment system. Coordinated assessment is a powerful tool designed to ensure that homeless persons are matched with the right intervention, among all of the interventions available in the CoC, as quickly as possible. It standardizes the access and assessment process for all clients and coordinates referrals across all providers in the CoC. When providers intake and assess clients using the same process, and when referrals are conducted with an understanding of all programs, including their offered services and bed availability, participants can be served with the most appropriate intervention and not with a "first come, first served" approach— something we discussed in last week's message.

CoCs can choose from a number of coordinated assessment models including single point of access, multi-site access, no wrong door approaches, and phone based services such as a 2-1-1 Assessment Hotline. Finding the right model for your community will depend upon the type of homeless assistance system you have, the geographic area you may cover, and how you use your HMIS or other technology. Regardless of the model that you implement, however, every coordinated assessment system must be designed to allow anyone who needs assistance to know where to go to get help, to be assessed in a standard and consistent way, and to connect with the housing/services that best meet their needs.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness created a [Coordinated Assessment Toolkit](#) that provides great information about the benefits and drawbacks of several models. In March 2012, HUD and USICH hosted a [joint webinar on coordinated assessment](#), which you are encouraged to watch if you have not already done so.

Although it is a requirement under the CoC Program interim rule, we understand that many CoCs are still determining how to implement coordinated assessment. We recognize that implementation may require a significant community-wide change that is not easy and takes time. To that end, there are several options for implementing coordinated assessment thoughtfully over time. One such approach involves implementing coordinated assessment in phases. For example, the system might first be designed to address families experiencing homelessness or chronically homeless individuals, and then would later add other populations after developing valuable experience. Alternatively, CoCs might start with a small group of providers willing to test a specific approach, and then include others after the early adopters have found their footing.

We believe that the implementation of coordinated assessment will improve the delivery of housing and services in the long run, and we want communities to plan for it carefully. The implementation plan must make sense for the CoC, homeless services providers, relevant mainstream service providers, and the



individuals and families that need our programs. It is imperative that a comprehensive group of stakeholders take part in the systems design, and that ample time and space are given to stakeholder feedback and performance review during the early stages of implementation.

Over the course of the next few weeks, HUD will be issuing new guidance and training materials related to the implementation of coordinated assessment systems. Please stay tuned and review those materials carefully as they become available.

In addition, please check out other SNAPS Weekly Focus messages, related blog posts, and Secretary Donovan's video message regarding the FY2013 CoC Program Competition on the [SNAPS Weekly Focus page](#).

As always, we thank you for your commitment to ending homelessness.

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