

Coordinated Entry Navigation System Redesign

The City of Spokane and Spokane County (City/County), jointly, are moving forward with a significant redesign of the community's Coordinated Entry System. The redesigned system will shift from a model primarily centered on assessment and referral to an active housing-navigation model focused on resolving housing crises, supporting community members through the housing process, and improving the rate at which referrals result in program enrollment and positive placements (permanent housing is but ONE of these).

Recent system data demonstrate a substantial difference between the number of households assessed, the number referred to housing interventions, and the number ultimately placed in housing or other positive placements. The redesigned system is intended to address this gap by ensuring that Coordinated Entry does more than assess households and place them in a priority pool.

Implementation of this approach will begin during the current program year. Existing CE Leads are encouraged to begin incorporating elements of the redesigned model into their current work wherever possible, including increased housing navigation, diversion, ongoing engagement with households, coordination with street outreach and other community partners.

Under the redesigned model, households will receive case management tailored to their needs. Of course, our community, like all communities, will still face being under-resourced yet have a high demand. This system change does not purport to fundamentally alter this reality. Rather, the way in which services are delivered and the way help is provided is the intent.

The City/County anticipate using the upcoming competitive RFP process to formalize and fully implement the redesigned navigation model beginning July 1, 2027. The period between now and that contract start date provides an opportunity to begin aligning existing practices with the future model, identify operational challenges, establish baseline data, and refine performance measures before full implementation.

Housing Navigators

Navigators will maintain active caseloads. They will conduct problem-solving and Diversion, assist households in addressing documentation and eligibility barriers, maintain housing plans, participate in case conferencing, and follow referrals through acceptance and placement (regardless of whether these placements/referrals come from CE or other pathways).

Navigation services are mobile in nature. Brick-and-mortar locations have an important role in providing privacy, stability, accessibility, and coordinated services; however, the system must ultimately go to the households it serves. Navigators are expected to meet households in locations that are safe, accessible, and appropriate to the household's circumstances, including shelters, encampments, vehicles, libraries, community settings, Day Drop-in shelters, and other locations where households can be engaged. Applicants must describe how their proposed services model will balance the appropriate use of fixed locations with mobile, field-based, and community-based engagement.

Universal Coordinated Entry Enrollment

Households seeking assistance will enter the system through a Universal Coordinated Entry enrollment. The CE enrollment establishes:

1. Household's initial entry date;
2. The household's navigator assignment or pending-navigation status;
3. Basic household and contact information;
4. The household's current housing situation and any barriers to participation that will be memorialized in the Case Notes Section in HMIS.

Coordinated Entry Enrollment will not require a concurrent completion of the SALA (local assessment tool). At initial enrollment, households will receive a brief housing-crisis and routing screen. This screen will be used to identify immediate safety concerns, route the household to the appropriate population specific resources. It will also establish a reliable method of continued contact.

The initial screen is not intended to replace the SALA or operate as a scored mechanism for determining whether a household is entitled to navigation.

Navigation Assignment and Caseloads

The City/County intends for households enrolled in CE to be connected to housing navigation as system capacity becomes available.

These assignments will generally be made in chronological order based on the household's CE Enrollment date. The City/County may establish narrowly defined exceptions for immediate safety or emergency circumstances. Navigator assignment will not establish the household's priority for a housing intervention offered through the priority pool.

The City/County anticipates establishing an active caseload of 30 households per navigator. Final caseload requirements may be established through contract negotiation based on the funded service model, population served, staffing structure, and available resources.

When navigator capacity is unavailable, households will remain enrolled in CE for no longer than 90-days and will be maintained in a pending navigation queue. The selected Coordinated Entry lead agencies will be responsible for managing this queue, maintaining appropriate and consistent contact with waiting households, responding to changes in household circumstances, and assigning households as capacity becomes available.

Because navigation is mobile in nature, caseload expectations must account for travel time, field-based engagement, coordination across multiple locations, safety planning, and the time required to meet households where they are. Applicants must describe how they will organize mobile coverage, transportation, communication, supervision, and safety practices to support consistent engagement.

Navigation Services

Applicants seeking funding for CE or housing navigation services must propose a service model capable of providing, as applicable:

1. Engagement and relationship building;
2. Mobile, field based, and community-based outreach;
3. Housing crisis screening;
4. Problem solving and Diversion;
5. Development and maintenance of individualized housing plans;
6. Collection of core documents;
7. Assistance in addressing barriers to housing;
8. Connection to mainstream community resources;
9. Administration of or referral for the SALA when appropriate;
10. Participation and active maintenance in the By-Name List;
11. Participation in Case Conferencing;
12. Follow-up with receiving programs;
13. Continued engagement when a referral does not result in enrollment or placement.

Navigation will not end when a referral is placed or sent. Navigators will be expected to remain engaged until responsibility has been successfully transferred to the receiving project, the household cannot be located following required engagement efforts, or another documented exit condition has been met.

Applicants must demonstrate how they will use brick-and-mortar locations while ensuring that fixed site requirements do not become a barrier to engagement. Households should not be required to travel to an office when a navigator can reasonably and safely meet the household in the community or another location selected in partnership with the household.

Problem Solving and Diversion

Problem solving and diversion will be embedded in as core practices within the CE navigation process.

Households will be offered an appropriate problem solving or diversion conversation, Participation in diversion will not prevent a household from continuing through CE when diversion does not resolve the housing crisis.

Diversion may include:

1. Exploration of safe and appropriate alternatives to continued homelessness;
2. Mediation with family members, friends, landlords or other natural supports;
3. Conflict resolution;
4. Landlord engagement;
5. Credit repair;
6. Transportation assistance;
7. Connection to community resources;
8. Development of a specific diversion housing plan; and
9. Flexible financial assistance as allowable and necessary.

Diversion screening and initial problem solving may be performed as part of the Coordinated Entry enrollment process. Diversion specific services and flexible financial assistance will be supported through applicable funding sources.

HUD Continuum of Care funded CE projects will not be used as a separate diversion funding source or as a general flexible financial assistance fund.

Diversion HMIS Configuration

The City/County and Community are evaluating whether state- and/or locally-funded Diversion will be:

1. Documented within the household's existing CE Enrollment through CE Events, services, case notes, financial assistance records, and a Diversion related exit; or
2. Documented through a separate Diversion project enrollment that operates in coordination with the household's CE enrollment.

The final HMIS configuration will be established by the City/County in consultation with the HMIS Lead, funded providers, and community partners.

Applicants seeking funding must demonstrate the ability to implement either configuration and comply with the City/County's final HMIS workflow.

Regardless of the selected configuration:

1. Every Household will first be enrolled in Coordinated Entry;
2. Initial Diversion screening will be documented as a CE activity;
3. A separate Diversion enrollment, if required, will not be opened merely because Diversion was discussed;
4. Diversion services and outcomes will be documented in HMIS;
5. State/locally-funded Diversion expenditures will be separately identifiable;
6. The same staff time, services, or expenditure may not be charged to more than one funding source; and
7. Unsuccessful Diversion will not require the household to restart the CE process.

If the City/County adopts an embedded model, Diversion will be documented through the existing CE enrollment and applicable Diversion event and outcome fields. Successful Diversion will result in an appropriate CE enrollment exit.

If the City/County adopts a separate enrollment model, the Diversion enrollment, the Diversion enrollment will begin when the household receives a substantive Diversion intervention beyond initial screening. This may include development of an actionable Diversion plan, mediation or negotiation on the household's behalf, active coordination of relocation or reunification, or authorization or provision of financial assistance when allowed.

SALA and Intervention Prioritization

The SALA will be used when a household requires eligibility determination and prioritization for an applicable housing intervention offered under Coordinated Entry (RRH; Joint TH/RRH; TH; PSH; etc).

The SALA may occur after:

1. CE Enrollment
2. Navigator Assignment;
3. Multiple engagement contacts;
4. Initial housing planning; and
5. Problem solving or Diversion efforts.

The SALA is not a prerequisite for receiving navigation or participating in Diversion. Households whose housing crises are successfully resolved through problem-solving or Diversion may exit CE without completing the SALA.

When Diversion does not resolve the housing crisis and the household may need a housing intervention, the navigator will complete or coordinate completion of the SALA. Eligible

households may then proceed to the applicable BNL (By-Name List), case conferencing, prioritization, and referral process.

Navigator assignment may generally occur chronologically, but referrals to scarce housing interventions will be based on applicable eligibility requirements, the community's approved prioritization policies, available resources, and the requirements of the funding source supporting the intervention.

By-Name Lists and Case Conferencing

The redesigned system will use population specific By-Name Lists (BNL's) and structured case conferencing to support active navigation and housing placement.

Coordinated Entry lead agencies and navigators will be expected to:

1. Maintain accurate and current household information;
2. Identify households ready or approaching readiness for a referral;
3. Review documentation and eligibility barriers;
4. Identify appropriate housing interventions;
5. Track household prioritization status;
6. Monitor outstanding referrals;
7. Resolve referral barriers;
8. Assign follow-up responsibilities; and
9. Document case-conferencing decisions and outcome.

BNL's are intended to function as active system management and navigation tools. They are not intended to operate solely as static waiting lists of households that have completed an assessment.

The City/County may establish separate policies and procedures governing BNL membership, inactive status, re-engagement, prioritization, case conferencing, referrals, removal, and data quality expectations.

Street Outreach Projects and Housing Navigators

Street Outreach providers will serve as critical partners within the redesigned Coordinated Entry System. Their role will continue to be the first line of connection to those households who are experiencing street homelessness. Street Outreach staff assist households in completing a Universal CE Enrollment when requested by the household. require immediate and emergent support or referrals to Emergency Shelter, Street Medicine, SUD or Mental Health Treatment assistance, etc.

When a household is connected to a Navigator, outreach staff will use warm handoffs, including joint meetings (such as Case Conferencing or more informal meetings to be determined by the Outreach teams and Navigators). These formal and informal connections will transfer relevant information, reduce repeated assessments or households needing to retell their personal stories, and help establish trust between the household and housing navigator.

Once connected, the Navigator will assume primary responsibility for Diversion and housing problem solving, development of the housing plan, document and eligibility preparation assessment and prioritization (when applicable) and continued navigation towards a positive outcome out of street homelessness.

Outreach providers will continue supporting engagement, locating or reconnecting households who lose contact, and addressing urgent safety and basic needs while coordinating with Navigators thorough HMIS, BNL's, and case conferencing. This partnership will be clearly defined with an eye towards preventing duplication. The coordination of service delivery will be key to ensuring that people living in unsheltered homelessness remain actively connected to the housing response system.

Expectations for Housing and Service Projects

All applicants for housing and homeless service project funding must describe how the proposed project will coordinate with the redesigned Coordinated Entry Navigation System.

As applicable to the project type and funding source, funded projects may be required to:

1. Accept referrals through CE;
2. Maintain accurate information regarding vacancies, openings, and program capacity;
3. Review referrals within City/County-established timeframes;
4. Communicate referral decisions promptly;
5. Provide specific and documented reasons for any referral denial or return;
6. Avoid requiring households to repeat assessments or documentation unnecessarily (use of HMIS for document uploads and Case Notes)
7. Participate in case conferencing;
8. Coordinate with the referring housing navigator;
9. Support warm handoffs between Coordinated Entry and the receiving project;
10. Enter required information in HMIS or an approved comparable database;
11. Notify the navigator when a household cannot be located, decline assistance, is determined ineligible, or does not complete enrollment; and

12. Participate in system-performance and continuous quality improvement activities.

Funded projects may not establish referral, eligibility, screening, or prioritization practices that conflict with applicable funding requirements, approved Coordinated Entry policies, or the terms of the City/County contract.

Intended System Outcomes

Through this redesign the City/County seeks to:

1. Increase the percentage of households receiving active navigation/case management;
2. Reduce unnecessary or duplicative assessments;
3. Expand effective problem solving and Diversion;
4. Improve timeliness and quality of engagement;
5. Strengthening the BNL and Case Conferencing;
6. Increase referral acceptance and project enrollment;
7. Increase housing placements;
8. Reduce unsuccessful or unresolved referrals;
9. Improve coordination between CE and publicly funded housing projects;
10. Establish clear accountability for household and system outcomes.

The City/County and CoC, will establish final performance measures, reporting requirements, and contract deliverables based on project type, funding source, and the role of each selected provider within the redesigned system.