



# **Opening Doors Northwest Florida, Inc.**

## **Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures**

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**Continuum of Care (CoC) Lead Agency**

The Lead Agency is designated to carry out the activities or grants of the CoC including fiscal and compliance activities. Regular administrative tasks may include, but are not limited to: management of the annual HUD application, coordination of other funding opportunities, project and system monitoring, meeting management or planning assistance.

**Coordinated Entry System (CE)**

A consistent, streamlined process for accessing the resources available in the homeless crisis response system

**Disability**

A Physical, Mental or Emotional Impairment, including impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration, substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently, and could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions; includes:

- **Developmental Disability** Defined in §102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 USC 15002). Means a severe, chronic disability that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination AND is manifested before age 22 AND is likely to continue indefinitely AND reflects need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated. An individual may be considered to have a developmental disability without meeting three or more of the criteria listed previously, if individual is 9 years old or younger AND has a substantial developmental delay or specific congenital or acquired condition AND without services and supports, has a high probability of meeting those criteria later in life.
- **HIV/AIDS Criteria** Includes the disease of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or any conditions arising from the etiologic agent for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, including infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

**Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)**

Federal program established by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 which provides funding for Emergency Shelters, Homeless Prevention, Rapid Rehousing and Street Outreach activities.

**Fleeing domestic abuse or violence (HUD Definition, Category 4)**

Any individual or family who:

- Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking;
- Has no other residence; and
- Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

**F-SPDAT**

Family Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool; used with families experiencing homelessness to assist in determining the right services needed as well as assist with case planning processes and tracking change.

**Literally Homeless (HUD Definition, Category 1)**

Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

Inc.) – the Continuum of Care and Lead Agency for the two counties. All providers of services funded with Federal Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) are required to participate in the coordinated entry system. Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. further requires those providers of services who are funded through Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. to participate as well.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The CE System is a consistent, streamlined process for accessing the resources available in the homeless crisis response system. It provides housing and service assistance that will quickly and permanently end a person's housing crisis by matching appropriate levels of housing and services based on that person's needs to the appropriate service provider. The system also supplies information about needs and gaps to help the community plan for additional and improved services.

Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. believes that homelessness should be rare, brief, and non-reoccurring. Based on that belief, the following guiding principles have been established. The system will:

- Endeavor to house all who want to be housed.
- Provide the right service at the right time and intensity to meet the person's needs.
- Provide real time inventory of available resources.
- Provide accurate, timely data for evaluation and reporting out on community impacts and unmet needs.
- Be a good steward of limited resources.

The system is designed to:

- Cover the entire geographic area of the CoC.
- Be easily accessed by individuals and families seeking housing or services.
- Be well-advertised.
- Include a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool.
- Provide an initial, comprehensive assessment of individuals and families.

Coordinated Entry follows a client-centered approach. This includes using assessments that are easily understood and are based in part on a participant's strengths, goals, risks and protective factors. Staff is sensitive to the participant's lived experiences and the participant has a choice in the types of housing and services provided. The CE System also follows a Housing First approach which is a client driven strategy that provides immediate access to housing without first requiring participation in other services such as treatment, sobriety, or addressing other pre-existing condition.

Eligibility requirements are applied without regard to race, age, creed, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin or type of disability. No upper or lower age limit is established which could result in a finding of ineligibility for any person who otherwise meets basic eligibility requirements. No person will be treated differently based on the person's disability, age, sex, race, religion or other status protected by law. It is the policy of Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. to provide services to eligible persons with disabilities without discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability, age, sex, color, ethnic group, race, national origin, ancestry, religion, medical condition, sexual orientation, or marital status.

Persons fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence and victims of trafficking have safe and confidential access to the CE System and victim services, including safe access to Favor House and

First Call for Help Santa Rosa	First call for Help is a telephone hotline that can be accessed by dialing (850) 983-7200
Street Outreach	Street Outreach teams will conduct assessments in the field on a regular basis

CoC, ESG, and Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. funded emergency services, drop in services, and domestic violence services are to operate with as few barriers to entry as possible and access to these services are independent of the operating hours of the CE intake and assessment processes. In the case of individuals and families in emergency shelters that admit the same day, the preliminary assessment should occur as soon as possible after entry, and before being referred to another program.

It is understood that street outreach staff have an opportunity to connect with those literally homeless on a continuous basis. Gaining trust is vital and it may be necessary to obtain information during more than one encounter. Outreach staff may conduct the preliminary assessment while in the field. In addition, law enforcement officers will have preliminary assessment forms for use should the need arise.

Once the preliminary assessment has been received by Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. staff will contact the family or individual to set an appointment to conduct a full assessment for housing services within two (2) business days of receipt of the preliminary assessment. The full assessment should take place within seven (7) business days of initial receipt.

3. The *preliminary intake* form is then faxed, scanned, or delivered to Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. within 24 hours and placed in the CE Coordinator's inbox.
4. Within 2 business days, the CE Coordinator will contact the individual or family to set up an appointment with a case manager/assessor for *triage assessment* appropriate to their crisis.
5. At the appointment:
  - a. If person is at Imminent Risk of Homelessness (homeless within 72 hours):
    1. Case Manager/Assessor completes the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Intake (Including a Release of Information Form).
    2. Case Manager/Assessor completes Initial Measures.
    3. *DIVERT* to provider of homeless prevention.
  - b. If person is Homeless:
    1. Case Manager/Assessor completes the HMIS Intake (including a Release of Information form).
    2. Case Manager/Assessor completes the appropriate Vulnerability Assessment for the household (Vi-SPDAT for individual homeless and F-SPDAT for homeless families).
    3. Case Manager/Assessor completes Initial Measures.
    4. Households may be *DIVERTED* to Emergency Shelter, DV shelter, or Hotel/Motel stay if necessary.
    5. Case Manager notifies CE Coordinator appointment is completed and information is in the computer system.
6. CE Coordinator assigns the Household to housing priority list according to score. (*NOTE: Individual, youth and family score levels are different and should be compared separately.*) Referrals for housing are based upon the placement on the by-name listing and availability of housing. Should units or funding not be available, the households will be notified of that and remain on the list. Households are encouraged to check in with the Agency if their circumstances change. Once Housing is available the CE Coordinator refers the 1<sup>st</sup> name on the list to the receiving agency using the *CE Referral Form*.
7. Once a referral for housing has been made, the receiving agencies will contact the household to begin the housing process. If the receiving agency cannot reach the household within 7 days of the referral being made, they can reject or deny the referral and notify the CE Coordinator of the denial. If the household shows up at the receiving agency *AFTER* the 7 days have expired, they can be assisted by the CE coordinator to reenter they CE system. The receiving agency will house the participant as quickly as possible with a targeted goal of housing them within 60 days unless the participant does not meet the eligibility for a specific program.

Once the SPDAT is completed, the case manager will provide information on the next steps in the process to the individual or family, information on intermediate services (if needed), and review the information on record as to how to best contact the individual – such as phone numbers, where they spend their time, sleeping accommodations – so that housing providers can reach them upon referral.

Depending upon direct referral or placement on the Housing Priority List, a Self Sufficiency Outcome Matrix (SSOM) module will be completed. The SSOM establishes a measure of the individual/household's self-sufficiency at the time of entry into the CE System.

### PRIORITIZATION and BY NAME HOUSING PRIORITY LIST

*An individual or household seeking Emergency Shelter does not need to be prioritized prior to entering an ES facility.* CoC and ESG program recipients and sub recipients shall use the coordinated entry process established as the only referral source from which to consider filling vacancies in housing and/or services. In addition, Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. has established that program recipients and sub recipients of other federal, state, or local funding shall use the coordinated entry process established as the only referral source from which to consider filling vacancies in housing and/or services.

The By Name Housing Priority List is a community wide list that is based upon priority groups and SPDAT scores. For households experiencing homelessness, the SPADT score is calculated by adding the points based upon the individuals answers. It determines the person's vulnerability and results in a score that helps determine the appropriate type of housing intervention.

	Housing Assistance Type	Vi-SPDAT or F-SPDAT Score	Priority Group
1	Permanent Supportive Housing (CoC funded – dedicated beds)  CE Referral Required	Vi-SPDAT score of 10 or above F-SPDAT score 9 or above	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chronically homeless with the longest history of homelessness and most severe service needs.</li> <li>2. Chronically Homeless with the longest history of homelessness</li> <li>3. Chronically homeless with the most severe service needs.</li> <li>4. All other chronically homeless.*</li> </ol>
2	Permanent Supportive Housing (CoC funded –non-dedicated beds)  CE Referral Required	Vi-SPDAT score of 10 or above F-SPDAT score of 9 or above	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Homeless individuals and families with a disability with long periods of episodic homelessness and severe service needs.</li> <li>2. Homeless individuals and families with a disability with severe service needs.</li> <li>3. Homeless individuals and families with a disability coming from places not meant for human habitation, safe haven, or emergency shelter without severe service needs.</li> <li>4. Homeless individuals and families with a disability coming from transitional housing.*</li> </ol>
3	Rapid Rehousing (State)  CE Referral Required	Vi-SPDAT score of 6-9 F-SPDAT score of 4-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families with children</li> <li>• Elderly (62+)</li> <li>• Fleeing domestic violence</li> <li>• Unaccompanied youth</li> <li>• High utilizer of services or chronic health</li> </ul>

the referral is participating in the HMIS system, the client ID will be on the form to protect the client's confidentiality. If the provider is not on the HMIS system, the referral will only reference the client's first initial and last name.

If the household is not appropriate for the provider's services, the agency will contact Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. via email as to why and request the client be placed back onto the Housing Priority List. The household being referred is free to reject the housing and/or services without retribution or limiting their access to other forms of assistance.

The referral process is informed by Federal, State, and local Fair Housing laws and regulations and ensures participants are not "steered" toward any particular housing facility or neighborhood because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or the presence of children.

### **DATA MANAGEMENT**

Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. operates the Service Point Homeless Management Information System, a cooperative unit of *PromisSE*, a regional database for programs servicing the homeless and those at risk in the State of Alabama and 4 counties in the Panhandle of Florida. This system meets all the requirements of HUD's HMIS Data and Technical Standards of 24 CFR 578.7(a)(8). All users of HMIS are informed and understand the privacy rules associated with the collection, management, and reporting of client data, receive training at least annually on the system and must sign an agreement and adhere to *PromisSE* policies and procedures.

All client information will be entered into the system in a timely manner and in accordance with the *PromisSE* Policies and Procedures including client privacy and data security. All Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. participating organizations and programs are required to use the confidential Service Point database for client records, assessment, referral and service delivery. At least one person with each Opening Doors NWFL, Inc. participating organization must be licensed for Service Point access and use.

At the time of initial contact (and prior to entering information into the HMIS system), a participant shall sign a Release of Information (ROI) form. Services will not be denied if the participant refuses to allow their data to be shared (unless Federal statute requires collection, use, storage, and reporting of a participant's personally identifiable information as a condition of program participation). Clients who do not consent to data sharing may have basic information entered into the system which will then be locked such that it is not available to any other agency.

Clients who want domestic violence specific services should not have their information entered into Service Point. If the client is being served by a Domestic Violence Service Provider, that agency may enter their information into a comparable database system.

### **EVALUATION**

To help ensure that the system will be effective and manageable for homeless, at-risk households and service providers (especially in the early stages of implementation) the CoC anticipates making adjustments to the process. To aid in the adjustments, the system will be evaluated periodically and provide information and feedback for continued improvement.