Coordinated Entry FAQ

The Coordinated Entry System

Q: What is Coordinated Entry/CES?

A: Coordinated entry is a system used to connect people who are experiencing homelessness or domestic violence to housing resources. Through the coordinated entry system (CES), households in need of homeless services can be connected to providers through a centralized assessment process.

Q: Who works for coordinated entry?

A: The Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP) is the system-lead for the Indianapolis Continuum of Care (CoC) coordinated entry system and employs a team who is responsible for overall management, training, operation, and evaluation of the system. CHIP does not provide direct services – We collaborate and work with agencies who do! Coordinated entry Skilled Assessors are trained community staff members who work on behalf of the coordinated entry system to directly assess and connect households experiencing homelessness to services and housing resources provided by the community. Skilled Assessors collect and enter data for resource eligibility and barriers into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the community's database for tracking homelessness and client services.

Q: What is the difference between the coordinated entry *assessment* and the coordinated entry *system*?

A: The coordinated entry assessment is a set of questions Skilled Assessors use to collect eligibility information and assess vulnerability related to a household's housing needs. The coordinated entry system is an organized system of information used to enter people in programs that are a good fit for their needs.

Q: Who can access coordinated entry? Who does coordinated entry serve?

A: Anyone experiencing literal homelessness or fleeing domestic violence is encouraged to connect to the coordinated entry system. The coordinated entry system is designed to use resources as effectively as possible, so most resources are reserved for people who have been experiencing homelessness the longest and currently living unsheltered or in a temporary homeless shelter. Coordinated entry serves people who are considered literally homeless or who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, according to HUD's homeless definitions. For additional information, view HUD's Homeless Definition found here.

Q: Is the coordinated entry system public housing?

A: No. While the coordinated entry system matches households to housing within the Continuum of Care (CoC), it does not create or administer housing. Rather, the role of coordinated entry is to ensure that people experiencing homelessness are connected to housing units and supports that are a good fit for their situation.

Q: Who makes decisions about coordinated entry?

A: The Indianapolis community works in a collective impact model to make decisions and refinements to the coordinated entry system. Active workgroups with brief descriptions of their work may be found on the Indianapolis Continuum of Care Members Page.

Q: How can I provide feedback regarding the coordinated entry system?

A: Feedback about coordinated entry is critical to creating a more fair, efficient, and effective system that quickly moves people into permanent housing. CES requests feedback each year through a survey but welcomes informal feedback throughout the year. To provide feedback or request to be included on the email list for the CES evaluation survey, please email info@chipindy.org.

The Coordinated Entry Assessment

Q: What can someone expect during an assessment?

A: To complete a coordinated entry assessment, a person will speak with a trained Skilled Assessor either in-person or over the phone. The assessment usually takes between 30-45 minutes and includes questions that help identify a person's needs and refer them to services that are a good fit for them. The information provided is used for housing eligibility purposes only and will not be used to get a person in trouble or disqualify them from services. At the end of the assessment, the Skilled Assessor will talk about the services and programs a person may be eligible for. There is no guarantee that there will be an immediate program opening, but the Skilled Assessor will work with them to create a plan for future housing stability.

Q: What happens after an assessment?

A: There is some documentation needed before a person can be referred and enrolled in a housing program, so after an assessment it is important to start collecting these documents. Skilled Assessors may help, too! Documents include verification of homelessness (such as a letter from an outreach worker or shelter), proof of chronic homelessness and disability documentation (if applicable and only required for some programs), proof of military service (for veterans, if applicable – this includes a DD214, Service Dates letter, or VA ID). Some programs and/or landlords also require a birth certificate and social security card for all household members, identification

(state or license for anyone 18 or older), or proof of income (paystubs, SSI/SS/SSDI Award Letters). It is also important for households to keep in touch with the Skilled Assessor who they completed the assessment with, if possible, to provide updates about changes in living situation, location, or contact information.

Q: If someone is undocumented, is it safe to complete an assessment?

A: Yes. Information collected during a coordinated entry assessment is never used to get a person in trouble; it is only used to ensure that a person is connected to the right resources for them. Within the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), it is impossible to distinguish between people that do not have social security numbers and those that simply refused to provide them, so there is no way to tell who is documented and who is not. Please see our HMIS Privacy Notice for more information. You can learn more about HMIS Privacy and Rights here.

Accessing Resources through the Coordinated Entry System

Q: If someone is experiencing homelessness, what is the first step?

A: For immediate assistance and access to emergency shelter, call Indiana 2-1-1 by dialing 2-1-1 or (866)-211-9966. Indiana 2-1-1 is available 24/7 and can facilitate connections with a variety of social services a person may need. Indiana 2-1-1 can determine shelter availability and directly connect households to an emergency shelter provider. For other community resources, such as food and clothing assistance, check the Need Help section of CHIP's website. To complete a coordinated entry assessment, go to a CES Access Point - to find one, see the Keys to Housing Flyer.

Q: What will coordinated entry do for a person at-risk of or experiencing homelessness?

A: Coordinated entry currently lacks resources for individuals who are at-risk of experiencing homelessness. However, there are organizations within the Indianapolis CoC that provide Diversion and Housing Problem Solving. If the person at-risk of experiencing homelessness is:

- **A youth & young adult** (YYA) (ages 18-24)
    - Connect to Outreach Inc. for a Housing Problem Solving conversation and connection to other youth and young adult specific resources and supports.
- **A family with minor children** (under age 18)
    - Connect to RDOOR's Diversion Team for a Family Housing Problem Solving conversation
- **A Veteran:**
    - Connect to Helping Veterans & Families of Indiana (HVAF) or access HVAF's walk-in hours: 45 East 10th Street, 46204 | Walk ins welcome M-F 8am-5pm | (317)951-0688

Q: Can people fleeing domestic violence be served through the coordinated entry system?

A: Yes. People fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence meet HUD's definition of homelessness (found here). If a household has safety concerns or is uncomfortable having personally identifying information (PII) in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a Skilled Assessor can complete an anonymous coordinated entry assessment. This allows a household to enter the housing pool without revealing their identity to the coordinated entry system. If someone is seeking domestic violence-specific services, they should contact our local Victim Service Providers (VSP):

- Indy Champions 24/7 crisis line: 317-210-0866
- The Julian Center's 24 hour crisis line: 317-920-9320
- Or reach out to Salvation Army to see if they have availability in their limited shelter beds for people experiencing domestic violence through their Ruth Lilly Women & Children's Center. They can be contacted at 317-637-5551

Joining the Coordinated Entry System

Q: What will coordinated entry do for my organization?

A: Coordinated entry streamlines assessments and referrals to homelessness services within the community, which eliminates the need for each organization to design their own assessment, manage their own waitlists, or know about every housing resource available in the community. For homeless service providers, coordinated entry intends to make quick and appropriate referrals – keeping service utilization high and ensuring that your program serves the people it is designed to serve. For shelter and outreach organizations, coordinated entry helps connect people who are already engaged in services to permanent housing. Coordinated entry may also help identify where additional services are needed and connect people to additional organizations within the CoC.

Q: Can my agency become an access point?

A: The coordinated entry system is not currently looking to add new assessing agencies, but it is possible for your staff to facilitate warm hand-offs for phone assessments. These assessments would be provided by a trained Skilled Assessor but completed over a phone provided by your location for your client's convenience. To find access points, see the Keys to Housing Flyer. Please email ces@chipindy.org for more information.

Q: What is the best way for an agency who is not an access point to support the coordinated entry assessment process for households that are already engaged with the system?

A: Agencies that are not Access Points should assist in connecting households to an Access Point. The agencies should also work with Skilled Assessors to ensure the assessment is accurate based on their case management knowledge with the household. After the assessment, they can help the household get social security cards, birth certificates, homelessness verification and updated contact information, which will help speed up the referral and lease-up process.

Housing and Coordinated Entry

Q: What should someone do if they are waiting for housing through the coordinated entry system?

A: The need for housing is greater than what is available, so it is important to keep looking for other housing options even after completing a coordinated entry assessment. The best thing to do is to thoroughly explore alternative housing situations - like a roommate or waitlists for affordable housing units - and not to rely entirely on the coordinated entry system. If someone finds a new option while waiting in the coordinated entry housing pool, they should update a Skilled Assessor and see if there are any additional resources available to support their new housing situation.

Q: Can you tell where someone is in the housing pool? Who will get housed first?

A: In general, people who have high vulnerabilities and have been homeless for a long time are prioritized for housing openings. The CoC has developed policies and procedures for different types of housing solutions (such as transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing). For more information on prioritization, review the Indianapolis CES Policies and Procedures.

Q: If people are still experiencing homelessness, does that mean that coordinated entry doesn't work?

A: The focus of the coordinated entry system is to quickly connect people to housing solutions once a housing crisis has already occurred. The need for homelessness services is greater than what is available in the community and other organizations within the CoC continue to explore how to reduce risk-factors for homelessness to prevent people from experiencing housing instability in the first place.

Q: How long will someone wait for housing through coordinated entry?

A: The Indianapolis CoC's goal is to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring. Right now, some households are waiting longer periods of time for housing units to become available through coordinated entry. While a person is in the housing pool, it is important to explore other potential housing solutions: senior living facilities, roommates, affordable housing units, living with family members, etc. If a household is able to secure housing outside of the coordinated entry system, that is the best solution, as there are currently not enough resources to serve everyone in need.

Q: How are services and housing programs prioritized?

A: The Indianapolis CoC has developed written standards (found here) for providing housing and services to people experiencing homelessness and domestic violence across Indianapolis. The written standards establish community-wide expectations on operations of projects, establish a minimum set standard of expectations, and establish transparent prioritization for each housing and service project. The coordinated entry system prioritizes households in the housing pool in compliance with the written standards.

Q: How does the Indianapolis Continuum of Care define vulnerability?

In 2022, the CES Refinement workgroup reviewed and refined how the Continuum of Care defines vulnerability. Read about how our CoC defines vulnerability here.