



Snohomish County, WA

Human Services



Investing in Futures

**Coordinated Entry
Policies and Procedures**

Table of Contents

- Overview 1
 - I. Vision 1
 - II. Governance and Oversight 2
 - III. General Process 2
 - IV. Cultural Competence 4
 - V. IIF Navigation Services 4
 - VI. Comprehensive Assessment and Response to Housing Crises 5
 - VII. Uniform Process and Assessment Tools 7
 - VIII. IIF-Management Information System and Data Sharing 8
- Coordinated Entry Policies 9
 - I. Fair Housing 9
 - II. Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications 9
 - III. Active Client List 9
 - IV. Prioritization 9
 - V. Homeless Eligibility Documentation and Verification 9
 - VI. Homeless Housing/Program Openings 10
 - VII. Housing Referrals 10
 - VIII. Low-Barrier and Housing First 10
 - IX. Provider Denials 11
 - X. Participant Right of Refusal or Failure to Engage 11
 - XI. Filling Vacancies outside of Coordinated Entry 11
 - XII. Grievance Policy 11
- Contact 13

Overview

I. Vision

Since 2009, Snohomish County has been engaged in a community-wide strategic planning and implementation process to transform systems and reduce homelessness. An assessment of data regarding homeless typologies as well as the available housing stock, prevention and intervention services, and funding streams has been undertaken. Goals and strategies have been identified and coordinated entry (CE) has been brought to scale.

CE is a process for people in Snohomish County to access needed homeless prevention, housing and other services. CE incorporates uniform screening and assessment, prioritization and program matching, and connections to mainstream services to help those seeking housing and services access programs more efficiently.

The CE implementation phase started with a small group of providers who tested the effectiveness of using a standardized CE process that connected households with a wide range of services to respond to their assessed needs. The service delivery system that was piloted featured:

- 1) Prevention strategies aimed at keeping households who were on the edge of homelessness housed and linked with appropriate services.
- 2) Diversion services targeted to people as they apply for entry into shelter.
- 3) A standardized, uniform CE assessment aimed at providing consistent, effective and swift access to needed services.
- 4) Rapid housing aimed at helping homeless households quickly exit homelessness and stabilize in permanent housing.
- 5) Tailored services to provide services at the appropriate level and time to meet households' needs.
- 6) Economic opportunities that include aggressive engagement with employment service systems to help households advance toward self-sufficiency.
- 7) Data and evaluation enhancements to inform planning and decision-making.

The experiences of pilot partners and households served as a catalyst for making next step improvements in CE and service delivery. In late 2012, the system began expanding to new CE sites and today the system is being implemented on an even larger and more comprehensive scale. CE assessment, referrals, and access to homeless prevention and homeless housing Navigators is available through ten (10) sites located throughout the region so that individuals and families have multiple locations from which they can access housing and services:

- North Sound 2-1-1 provides 24-hour per day access to CE and standardized prevention and housing assessment and services across the county.
- Physical sites provide standardized access to housing and services in conjunction with the specialized service delivery that is appropriate for high-priority subpopulations like veterans, youth, and individuals and families fleeing domestic violence.

Every CE site offers information and referral services to any individual or family seeking housing services and refers literally and imminently homeless households to Navigators who provide a range of homeless prevention and rehousing services. Investing in Futures (IIF) Navigators work with imminently homeless and homeless households not only to address their current housing crisis, but also to address their

immediate barriers to housing stability by providing direct referrals to tailored services by CE service partners, including landlord dispute resolution and family mediation, civil legal assistance, mental health and chemical dependency services and a range of employment and job training programs. By providing these next-step referrals, Navigators can assist households to identify and resolve their immediate barriers to housing stability and retention, regardless of whether a housing intervention is immediately available to address their situation.

Coordinated Entry IS a way to help those seeking housing and services access programs more efficiently by:

- Making fewer phone calls
- Undergoing fewer screenings
- Being realistic with participants about their near-term options, giving them the opportunity to assess their situation honestly and identify alternatives to public assistance
- Identifying and prioritizing the most vulnerable, disabled, and/or chronically homeless individuals and families

Coordinated Entry IS NOT a stand-alone solution to end homelessness or a solution to the shortage of affordable housing stock. The Investing in Futures (IIF) Coordinated Entry system supports the purpose of Snohomish County's Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Partnership to End Homelessness (PEH) CoC Board: to promote access to an effective utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families and to optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

II. Governance and Oversight

While oversight of the CE system is performed primarily by the County, the Partnership to End Homelessness (PEH) Continuum of Care (CoC) Board, which was formed by agencies participating in the CoC and IIF CE, is tasked with advising and informing the process of expansion and identifying goals and system objectives as well as current gaps in services.

The County and PEH conduct ongoing reviews and assessments of the CE system by looking at CE data, meeting with CE providers to gather input and context, and evaluating the information. This information is presented to the PEH committees working on data evaluation and services coordination. Additionally, a community provider group meets monthly in order to staff CE clients, and discuss and provide feedback on service needs and gaps to be reported the PEH committees. Collaboration from the PEH and the community provider group ensures that direct service providers, managers, directors, and local government have input into the procedures and processes that are developed by the County.

III. General Process

The CE system provides multiple points for access and appropriate assessment for subpopulations, while maintaining standardized processes and tools. The CE process begins with the standardized IIF Intake Assessment, which determines whether households are eligible to work with a homeless prevention or housing Navigator and to determine the appropriate referral site for navigation services. CE intake assessment and referrals are available at ten (10) core sites located throughout the county.

The IIF Intake Assessment is administered by IIF Intake Assessment staff at all CE sites and is the first-step assessment for all households seeking housing services throughout the county. The IIF Intake Assessment

is comprised of twenty (20) questions that are designed to gather basic household characteristics as well as to determine the next-step referral needs of households.

Households who are literally or imminently homeless are referred to a Navigator. Those households who are unstably housed but not imminently or literally homeless are served on-site by IIF Intake Assessment staff, who connect the household with services to address their immediate barriers to housing retention or to meet other service needs, as identified through the IIF Intake Assessment. To ensure consistency of services across sites and fidelity to best practice, IIF Intake Assessment staff and IIF Navigators are required to conform to service delivery policies and procedures incorporated into these CE Policies and Procedures.

IIF CE Site	IIF Intake Assessment & Services	Homeless Prevention Assessment & Navigation	Homeless Housing Assessment & Navigation
Arlington Community Resource Center	Yes	Yes	Yes
Catholic Community Services	Yes	No	Yes
Cocoon House	Yes	Yes	Yes
Domestic Violence Services	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Counties' Family Services	Yes	Yes	Yes
Snohomish County Office of Community and Homeless Services (OCHS)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Snohomish County Veterans Assistance	Yes	No	No
Volunteers of America – Everett and Sky Valley	Yes	Yes	Yes
Volunteers of America – Dispute Resolution Center	No	Yes	No
Volunteers of America – North Sound 2-1-1	Yes	No	No
YWCA	Yes	No	Yes

SPECIALIZED SERVICE PATHWAYS FOR SUBPOPULATIONS

Literally or imminently homeless veterans, youth, and persons fleeing domestic violence are referred to a specific site for CE navigation and customized services. CE sites tasked with serving a pathway population were selected for their experience and expertise in serving the specific population. In addition to administering the uniform assessment tools and providing standardized CE services, these sites also use customized assessments that are geared toward determining services and referrals that best meet the specific needs of that population.

Veterans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IIF Intake Assessment staff determine whether a veteran household is already connected with the Veterans Administration (VA) so that eligibility for VA benefits and HUD-VASH is established.

- Eligible households are referred to HUD-VASH and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and remaining households are assessed for prevention and either served on-site or offered rapid rehousing (RRH) or permanent supportive housing (PSH) through CE.

Youth under 18 & Youth 18-24

- IIF Intake Assessment staff assess for prevention, family reunification or emergency shelter options for literally or imminently homeless youth.
- Specialized assessments are used in conjunction with the IIF Housing Assessment to connect youth with appropriate housing and services.

Individuals and Families Experiencing Domestic Violence

- IIF Intake Assessment staff determine the safety needs of individuals and families who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, or are at imminent risk of harm.
- Specialized assessments are used in conjunction with the IIF Housing Assessment to connect households with appropriate housing and services.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES WHO ARE FLEEING OR ATTEMPTING TO FLEE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Victim and non-victim CE navigation and housing providers must prioritize safety and equitable access to housing and services for households who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking, while ensuring that client choice is upheld. While victim service providers operate specialized housing and services targeted to households who are experiencing domestic violence, CE participants have access to the full range of housing and services available. For this reason, all CE Navigators including those who are victim service providers must offer homeless prevention and housing navigation services. All CE Navigators use a unique identifier and confidential methods of communication to coordinate services and housing placement for these households.

IV. Cultural Competence

Cultural competence involves understanding and appropriately responding to the unique combination of cultural variables, including age, ability, beliefs, ethnicity, experiences, gender identity, gender, linguistic background, national origin, religion, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status. Navigators are expected to be culturally competent and strongly encouraged to engage in training opportunities to build these skills. As part of this process Navigators are advised to explore how their own values, biases, and beliefs influence their communication and service delivery. This self-reflection will help ensure that Navigators are respectful of the different cultural backgrounds, preferences and practices of participants, and incorporate this information into participant action plans.

Navigators will continually build their culturally competent knowledge and skills as part of their everyday work, and will have many opportunities to share what they learn with their peers. They are also expected to draw upon their experiences and growing knowledge of cultural competency to assess the cultural relevance of tools, assessments, and strategies, and to develop referral partnerships with culturally competent partners.

V. IIF Navigation Services

IMMINENTLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES are eligible to work with a homeless prevention Navigator. The homeless prevention Navigator will administer the IIF Homeless Prevention Assessment

and provide direct services with the goal of helping to prevent households from becoming homeless, either by assisting the household to prevent loss of current housing or to access other appropriate housing in lieu of becoming homeless. Homeless prevention Navigators will advocate for households to access any appropriate (even temporary) housing as an alternative to homelessness and will connect the household with the services they need to increase income or otherwise reduce barriers to future housing retention such as employment assistance, legal assistance, mental health services, healthcare, etc.

Households may work with a prevention Navigator to stabilize their housing situation and reduce their barriers to housing retention. If the household becomes literally homeless while the homeless prevention Navigator is working with them, the prevention Navigator will continue trying to assist the household to find housing outside of the homeless housing system. If it becomes apparent that the household will need a housing program to stabilize, they will be referred to a homeless housing Navigator who will assess the household for program eligibility.

LITERALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES are eligible to work with a homeless housing Navigator. The housing Navigator will administer the IIF Housing Assessment to determine eligibility and priority for housing programs. Housing Navigators will assist households in obtaining market-rate housing, if appropriate, and will work with all households to reduce barriers to housing access and retention, in addition to providing direct referrals to mainstream resources like employment assistance, legal assistance, mental health services, healthcare, etc.

Households may work with a housing Navigator to obtain housing and reduce their barriers to housing access. If the household cannot be immediately served with an available housing resource or assisted to obtain housing in the private-market, they will be referred to programs they are eligible for if/when an opening is available. Rapid rehousing (RRH), permanent supportive housing (PSH), transitional housing (TH), and other permanent housing (OPH) openings are filled through this process.

The **IIF FLEXIBLE FUND** was developed to meet the needs of individuals and families in a timely, individualized manner. The IIF Flexible Fund may be used to help the most vulnerable individuals and families in Snohomish County with their specific needs that cannot be addressed in a timely fashion through subsidies or other means as needed to achieve optimal self-sufficiency including safe and sustainable housing. Utilization of the IIF Flexible Fund is to be customized for each participant household served.

VI. Comprehensive Assessment and Response to Housing Crises

The IIF Homeless Prevention Assessment and IIF Housing Assessment determine the most appropriate response to the individual or family's housing crisis.

The **IIF HOMELESS PREVENTION ASSESSMENT** is the uniform prevention tool used by all navigation sites. The IIF Homeless Prevention Assessment is intended to perform the following tasks:

- ✓ Assess the sustainability of current housing;
- ✓ Determine eligibility and prioritization for Targeted Prevention rental assistance;
- ✓ Collect necessary household information to assist the participant with the creation of an action plan to either stabilize current housing or obtain new housing.

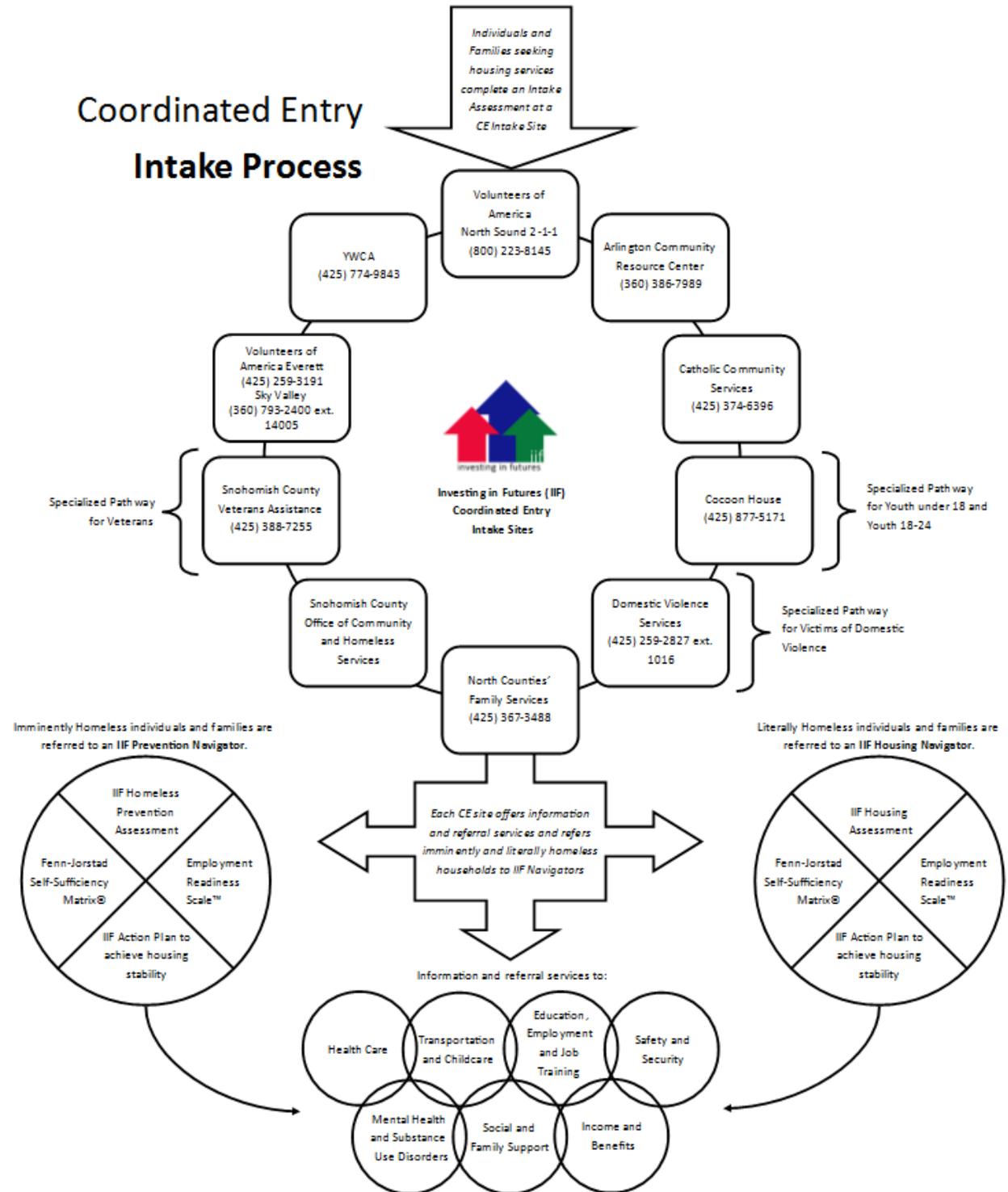
The **IIF HOUSING ASSESSMENT** is the uniform housing assessment tool used by all navigation sites. The IIF Housing Assessment, which determines a household's prioritization for housing, is intended to perform the following tasks:

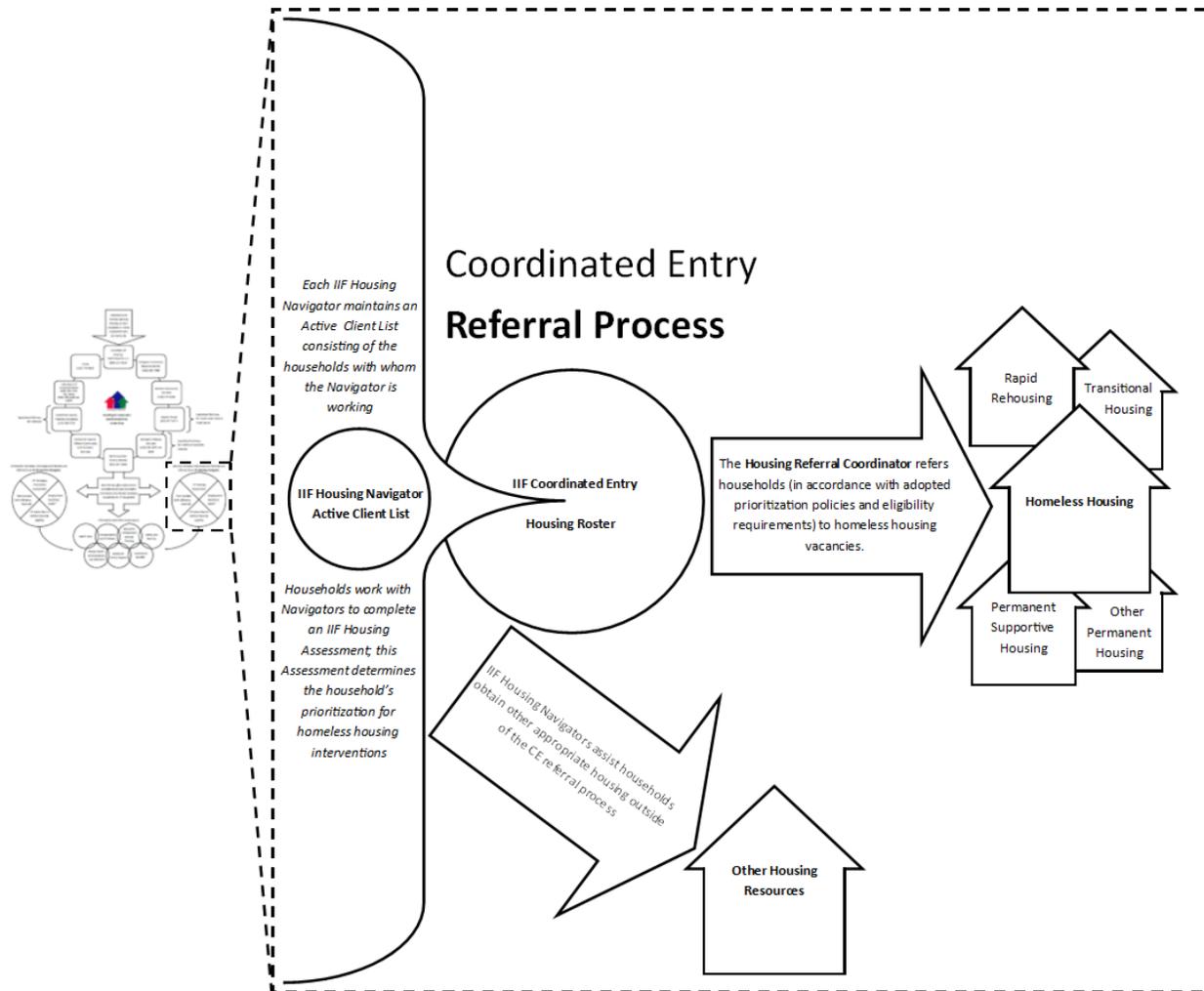
- ✓ Assess the household's current situation to determine appropriate housing interventions;
- ✓ Determine eligibility and prioritization for RRH, PSH, TH programs;
- ✓ Collect necessary household information to assist the participant with the creation of an action plan to obtain new housing with a primary focus on barriers to obtaining rental housing.

The **EMPLOYMENT READINESS SCALE™** is designed to assess participants' strengths and challenges in relation to becoming successfully employed, identify the types of employment assistance that would be most helpful, measure changes as a result of interventions, and predict employment outcomes. Participants can be assessed up to five (5) additional times by different providers, so that they can continue to document their progress even after they have transitioned from the Navigator to a housing case manager or employment provider. The Employment Readiness Scale™ is used by multiple housing and employment services providers throughout the county to make referral and services coordination easy.

The **FENN-JORSTAD SELF-SUFFICIENCY MATRIX®** is a tool to help Navigators and other providers of social services track the progress that program participants are making toward self-sufficiency. The Matrix includes sixteen (16) life domains, ranging from safety to substance use. All CE participants should be assessed with the Matrix initially during action planning with the Navigator, intermittently as their situation changes, and at exit. All Matrix results must be inputted into the CE HMIS.

VII. Uniform Process and Assessment Tools





VIII. IIF-Management Information System and Data Sharing

An IIF-Management Information System (IIF-MIS) is utilized by the CE system to store client demographic data and information on program services and enrollments so that individuals and families do not have to endure duplicative assessments by providers. It is also used to provide data on client outcomes, which are routinely entered by homeless prevention and homeless housing Navigators, housing service providers, and shelter staff in the course of their work.

CE Navigators use the IIF-MIS as a referral platform to housing and services providers. The IIF-MIS also provides a communication platform for CE sites to view client assignments and share information on the households they are serving, which promotes greater coordination of services and reduces unnecessary duplication.

IIF-MIS Data Collection Platform versus HMIS
IIF-MIS is a data collection platform; it is not a separate database from the Snohomish County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). It is a collection of different menu items, screens, forms, and workflows under the “Investing in Futures – Coordinated Entry” workgroup in the database.

Coordinated Entry Policies

I. Fair Housing

Fair Housing and civil rights laws must be complied with; immediately upon working with any individual or family, IIF Navigators must provide the individual or family with information, in writing, on their rights and remedies under applicable federal, state, and local fair housing and civil rights laws. If the County encounters a condition or action that impedes fair housing choice, the County shall work with the applicable jurisdiction(s) that provided the Certification of Consistency with the Consolidated Plan to address and remedy the violation(s).

II. Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications

Navigators and Housing Providers must provide reasonable accommodations and modifications to persons with disabilities to ensure equal access to housing. The duty to provide reasonable accommodation requires Navigators and Providers to make changes to rules, policies, and procedures to allow a person with a disability to use and enjoy a dwelling. Navigators and Providers, however, are not required to undergo an undue financial burden and administrative hardship or make a fundamental alteration in the nature of the programs.

III. Active Client List

IIF Housing Navigators must maintain an Active Client List, which is the list of all individuals and families who are in need of housing with whom the Navigators is working. Navigators must make a meaningful attempt to contact households on their active client lists **no less than every 30 days**. Households who do not maintain contact must be exited. Navigators must assist households on their Active Client List with obtaining eligibility documentation (i.e., verification of chronic homelessness, etc.) and other documentation that may be needed to obtain housing and housing stability (i.e., identification, etc.).

IIF Housing Navigators must make a meaningful attempt to contact households on their active client list **no less than every 30 days** to ensure that the individual's or family's eligibility information is up-to-date and that the individual or family is still homeless and in need of the next available housing resource. Individuals or families who do not respond to their Navigator's outreach attempts by maintaining at least **one (1) contact every 90 days**, must be exited from the IIF Housing enrollment.

IV. Prioritization

The IIF Housing Assessment determines a household's prioritization for housing in accordance with the adopted Orders of Priority (Attachment A); the IIF Housing Assessment identifies chronically homeless individuals and families with the longest histories of homelessness, the most severe service needs, and other indicators of vulnerability, such as frequency of crisis services utilization, current problematic substance use, and the existence of certain chronic health conditions.

V. Homeless Eligibility Documentation and Verification

Shelter staff and IIF Housing Navigators are responsible for assisting homeless households in gathering documentation of eligibility as applicable, such as homelessness, disability, social security cards, picture

identification, and income/benefits. Flexible funds are available to assist households to obtain birth certificates or other documentation necessary for the household's housing application with the goal of further removing barriers to housing access. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Homeless Housing Provider to obtain all documentation necessary to document a household's eligibility.

VI. Homeless Housing/Program Openings

Homeless Housing Providers (Providers) must notify the Housing Referral Coordinator of any housing/program openings **as soon as possible**, by posting the opening in the IIF-MIS housing availability roster. For rapid rehousing, this means as soon as the Provider has the capacity to serve an additional household(s). For other homeless housing programs, this means when the Provider is aware of a pending vacancy.

VII. Housing Referrals

Providers must use the CE System to fill homeless housing/program openings. The CE System's Housing Referral Coordinator refers households to fill these openings in accordance with the adopted Orders of Priority; Providers are responsible for ensuring that referred households meet any eligibility requirements. Upon receiving a referral from the Housing Referral Coordinator, Providers must contact or attempt to contact the referred household within **two (2) business days**. The Housing Referral Coordinator will respond to each vacancy by referring an eligible household within **three (3) business days** of the date the opening is posted.

VIII. Low-Barrier and Housing First

Low-barrier and housing first are approaches that allow eligible homeless individuals and families to enter homeless housing without barriers, such as income or sobriety requirements, or service participation requirements. Provider application and admission policies must be as streamlined and short as possible to move eligible individuals and families into permanent housing as quickly as possible.

Snohomish County has adopted a housing first approach in filling CE housing vacancies, with the exception of housing programs that are funded to provide recovery-based client services. In practice, this means individuals and families are referred to program openings without imposing requirements regarding real or perceived barriers or willingness to accept supportive services. Housing programs are expected to use a strengths-based approach, including embracing harm reduction practices and adjusting intake policies, procedures, and requirements wherever necessary to ensure that highly vulnerable, high-barrier individuals and families have a meaningful opportunity to complete the intake process and access programs. Likewise, CE Navigators facilitate successful referrals by supporting housing programs' efforts to engage individuals and families.

Providers must *not* screen participants out based on the following:

- Having too little or no income;
- Active or history of substance abuse;
- Having a criminal record with exceptions for state-mandated restrictions; or
- History of domestic violence (e.g., lack of a protective order, period of separation from abuser, or law enforcement involvement).

IX. Provider Denials

Providers shall accept all referrals of eligible households. Providers are responsible for ensuring that referred households meet eligibility requirements and for gathering eligibility documentation. Referred households may be returned to the Housing Referral Coordinator only in the following circumstances:

1. If the household does not meet the project's eligibility requirements, as established by the funder; or
2. If the household fails to complete an intake appointment. See **Participant Right of Refusal or Failure to Engage**.

The Provider must immediately notify the Housing Referral Coordinator if either of the above occurs. The Housing Referral Coordinator may follow-up with the Provider and/or Navigator to understand the circumstances if a referral is returned.

X. Participant Right of Refusal or Failure to Engage

The Snohomish County CE System is person-centered and based on client choice. Individuals and families have the right to refuse any housing resource that is offered to them. Refusing a resource does not impact eligibility for future referrals. However, Navigators must ensure that participants understand that the CE process does not operate as a point in time waitlist and that referrals are made to programs based on a household's eligibility and prioritization relative to other homeless households who need housing assistance. Households should not assume that they will be prioritized for future openings and plan accordingly.

While Providers are expected to make every effort to engage CE individuals and families, with the assistance of the household's assigned Navigator (and outreach navigator, if necessary) housing units must not stay vacant longer than needed. For this reason, housing programs may discontinue working with a referred household and ask for an additional referral if the household fails to complete an intake appointment and provide eligibility verification after a total of **four (4) contact attempts over the course of ten (10) business days** have passed since the initial attempt. If this occurs, Providers must notify the Housing Referral Coordinator and assigned Navigator. The assigned Navigator is responsible for notifying the household that the opening/housing is no longer available to them.

XI. Filling Vacancies outside of Coordinated Entry

Externally filling a vacancy outside of the CE System is not permitted unless it is initiated by the Housing Referral Coordinator and shall be unique to that particular housing/program opening. If the Housing Referral Coordinator is unable to identify an eligible household, the Housing Referral Coordinator will notify the Provider that the Provider is permitted to fill the unit with an eligible household, outside of the CE System. This is intended to be the last effort to ensure that CE makes the best use of available housing resources.

XII. Grievance Policy

Immediately upon working with any individual or family, Navigators must provide the individual or family with the Coordinated Entry Grievance Policy. All individual's or family's concerns and grievances must be resolved promptly and fairly, in the most information and appropriate manner. Providers shall inform individuals and families of the following process for filing a grievance.

1. **HOUSING PROGRAM GRIEVANCES** are grievances that are related to the individual's or family's experience(s) with a homeless housing program. These grievances shall be redirected back to the Provider to follow the Provider's grievance policies and procedures.

2. **FAIR HOUSING GRIEVANCES** are grievances that are related to discrimination.

For additional information on fair housing laws, contact:

Volunteers of America Dispute Resolution Center (DRC)

(425) 339-1335

<http://www.voaww.org/Get-Help/Conflict-Resolution-Services/LandlordTenant-Services/Understanding-Fair-Housing>

The DRC does not investigate fair housing complaints.

To file a formal fair housing complaint, contact:

U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development

(http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp)

File a complaint online:

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/housing_discrimination

(206) 220-5170 (800.877.0246)

TTY (206) 220-5185

Washington State Human Rights Commission

(www.hum.wa.gov)

File a complaint online:

<http://www.hum.wa.gov/discrimination-complaint>

(360) 753-6770 (800.233.3247)

TTY (800) 300-7525

3. **COORDINATED ENTRY GRIEVANCES** are grievances that are related to CE policies and/or procedures.

Grievances related to CE policies and/or procedures shall be directed to:

Debbi Knowles, Supervisor, Office of Community & Homeless Services

Snohomish County Human Services Department

3000 Rockefeller Ave, M/S 305, Everett, WA 98201

(425) 388-7116

debbi.knowles@snoco.org

Contact

Questions about these Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures may be directed to:

Leila Bettys, Housing Referral Coordinator
Snohomish County Human Services Department
(425) 388-7303
leila.bettys@snoco.org