

Access

Access points are the places—either virtual or physical—where an individual or family in need of assistance accesses the coordinated entry process.

Assessment

The standardized assessment process, including assessment information, factors, and documentation of the criteria used for uniform decision-making across access points and staff.

Prioritization

The factors and assessment information with which prioritization decisions will be made for all homeless assistance.

Placement (referral)

Persons are referred to available CoC housing resources and services in accordance with the CoC's documented prioritization guidelines.

A. Access

Homeless assistance providers that are designated access site across the Continuum of Care (CoC) will provide access to crisis response services for persons experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of literal homelessness. All access points are approved by the NWCoC Coordinated Entry Committee. A list of current access sites is available on the [NWCoC Coordinated Entry Website](#) at the following link. In the NWCoC a “no wrong door” approach has been adopted in which an individual or family can present at any homeless housing and service provider in the geographic area and completes the same assessment process so referral can be consistently made across the CoC. An access site can be an existing agency or point-of-contact where households facing a housing crisis can go or call as a first step to obtaining resources. It is the responsibility of the entire NWCoC community to understand these access sites and how to direct clients to them. It is the responsibility of the NWCoC access sites to market and ensure the communities and partners understand they are a first step to housing resources.

Access, Assessment & Housing Sites in Northwest Minnesota

The following outline procedures for providing Access:

- To ensure that there is sufficient coordination and attention given to certain populations, the CoC may identify specialized access sites, to ensure the appropriate services are offered.
- Each project participating in CES is required to post or otherwise make publicly available a notice (provided by the CoC) that describes coordinated entry. This notice should be posted in the agency waiting areas, as well as any areas where participants may congregate or receive services (e.g., dining hall). All staff at each agency are required to know which

personnel within their agency can discuss and explain CE to a participant who seeks more information. This notice can be found on the [NWCoC Coordinated Entry Website](#).

- The access sites across the NWCoC provide coverage across the entire geographic region.
- The use of virtual meetings, or phone assessments can reduce barriers to access. All CoC access sites have the ability to use translation services. If a need arises to provide access to a client that cannot be met for translation services, or visual or audible impairment the assessor should contact the Priority List Manager and CoC Coordinator for assistance.
- The NWCoC does not require a coordinated entry assessment to access emergency shelter, including shelter for fleeing domestic violence. Upon entry into shelter, shelter clients should be connected to coordinated entry within seven days.
- Access points will use the NWCoC Assessment process to determine any immediate needs that could be addressed to resolve the housing crisis. Clients that access coordinated entry who are in housing, but at imminent risk of homelessness, will be offered access to homeless prevention services.
- Street outreach staff in the NWCoC will be trained on coordinated entry and the assessment process to offer access to coordinated entry. Street outreach staff can provide direct access to coordinated entry, or direct persons experiencing homelessness to the nearest access point and assist with connecting to coordinated entry.
- All members of the NWCoC are responsible for understanding the access locations to ensure clients can easily access an assessor and the homelessness response system.
- If your agency would like to become a site for clients to access the Coordinated Entry System, e-mail the COC Coordinator.

B. Assessment

a. Assessment for Coordinated Entry Services

The NWCoC follows a Progressive Engagement, person-centered approach to ending someone's homelessness. The assessment stage uses information from the client to understand the housing crisis and tailor assistance to each individual or households needs in assessing what works best for them, with their strengths, and in their specific situation.

All persons served by CES will be assessed using the **NWCoC Housing Assessment**. All access points must use this assessment to ensure that all persons served are assessed in a consistent manner, using the same process. The **NWCoC Housing Assessment** documents a set of participant conditions, strengths, needs, and level of vulnerability, allowing the access point and/or assessment staff to identify the appropriate intervention and next steps to resolve the housing crisis and achieve housing stability. Please see [NWCoC Website](#) for a copy of the assessment forms.

The NWCoC Administrative Policy sets the referral criteria for each phase of the assessment.

b. Phases of the Assessment

The NWCoC has adopted a phased approach to the **NWCoC Housing Assessment** to appropriately identify the correct intervention through a Progressive Engagement approach. The assessment process follows Housing First as an evidenced based best practice to provide housing resources without creating barriers to access housing. Figure 5 Phases of NWCoC Coordinated Entry below provides additional detail of each the phases.

Active Listening

This first phase will focus on identifying the immediate housing crisis, and clarifying that the CoC crisis response system is the appropriate system to address the potential participant's immediate needs. This may include presenting the client with options for additional mainstream resources that can solve the crisis. Assessors are encouraged to make warm handoffs by assisting the client to contact other resources. Simply providing phone numbers or brochures is discouraged.

Diversion

This phase will focus on identifying the clients existing situation and identify resources that could be used to prevent the client from entering the homeless response system. The Diversion and Rapid Resolution Assessment will assist in determining the appropriate next steps for the client, providing a rapid resolution, assessing for prevention, or referred to the coordinated entry priority list. Clients who are in crisis and unable to access housing should be referred to emergency shelter.

Rapid Resolution

The Rapid Resolution process was designed for clients presenting at access sites who are homeless, and with limited resources can access housing. Assessor and client determined short-term resources will solve the housing crisis. Typically, this involves first/last month rent, security deposits, utility connects, and verification that the client will have long term support through a housing choice voucher, subsidized housing, other long-term support, or sufficient income.

Prevention

Clients who present at access points that are currently housed and can remain housed for fourteen days should be screened for prevention services. The NWCoC uses the Minnesota Prevention and Assessment Tool to screen for eligibility and prioritization for prevention services.

Coordinated Entry Assessment

In this phase the assessor will seek information to refine, clarify, and verify a participant housing barrier. The information from his assessment supports the NWCoC to evaluate the client’s vulnerability and prioritize for referral to available housing programs.

Interim Assessment

Once assessors place a client on the priority list it is the responsibility of that assessor to maintain contact with the client until the client locates housing. An interim assessment can also be completed during the referral process as a housing provider will contact the client. In the event the assessor attempts to complete an Interim Assessment and is unable to make contact, the assessor should make three attempts over five days to make contact. An assessor should use all methods of contact provided by the client. If unable to contact during this phase the person can be exited from the priority list.

Individuals who choose not to participate in data collection upon initial assessment or project entry may later decide that their information can be collected and entered into HMIS. Participant data in HMIS can be updated after an initial CES data collection period and throughout project enrollment to reflect emergence of new information, corrections to previously collected information, or additions of previously unanswered questions. The CoC will continuously work to improve participant engagement strategies to achieve completion rates of required HMIS data elements that are as high as possible.

ASSESSMENT STAGES	DETAILS	WHEN TO COMPLETE	FORM	RESPONSIBLE STAFF
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Active Listening	Designed to assist assessors in understanding what services the client may be looking for and what kind of referrals can be made to mainstream resources. Assessor determines the CoC homeless response system is the appropriate system to address the client's needs. If the client is likely in need of prevention or supportive housing the assessor will move on to the Diversion and Rapid Resolution Assessment.	(Immediately) First point of contact - after person has identified housing crisis or requested homeless services. Can be completed over the phone or in-person.	Active Listening Guide	Assessor
Diversion and Rapid Resolution	<p>Designed to reduce the number of persons entering the homeless response by diverting to mainstream resources or prevention services. This questionnaire will determine if the person should be referred to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Shelter or Crisis Housing • Mainstream Resources • Prevention Services • Rapid Resolution • Coordinated Entry Assessment • Housing Stabilization Services <p>The Diversion and Rapid Resolution Assessment will assist in determining if a prevention screening or Coordinated Entry Assessment is required.</p>	<p>Performed once the assessor determines the client is a likely candidate for prevention or supportive housing resources.</p> <p>Can be completed over the phone or in-person.</p>	<p>Diversion and Rapid Resolution Assessment in (HMIS) or Alternative Assessment</p> <p>NWCoC CES Receipt and ROI</p>	Assessor
Prevention	Aimed at keeping persons who are at risk of homelessness housed (persons who are either doubled up or in their own housing).	ONLY after Diversion and Rapid Resolution Assessment has determined Prevention	MPAT (HMIS)	Assessor

		Services would be appropriate. Can be completed over the phone or in-person.		
Coordinated Entry Assessment	Assessment for linkage to the following, but not limited to supportive housing resources (Transitional Housing (TH), Rapid-Rehousing (RRH), Housing Support, Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Long-term Homeless (LTH) Vouchers). Linkage to resources is based on NWCoC prioritization criteria, client-choice, and peer to peer discussion through case conferencing meetings. NOTE: Being placed on the housing priority list does not guarantee a housing placement. Agencies should do everything possible to resolve the housing crisis without needing supportive housing services (housing with case management).	Only after Triage/Diversion questionnaire has determined supportive housing resources will be necessary. All clients who complete Step 3b are anticipated to be added to the NWCoC Prioritization list. Can be completed over the phone or in-person.	Coordinated Entry Assessment (HMIS) NWCoC Prioritization List (HMIS) NWCoC CES Receipt and ROI	Assessor Once a client is placed on the list it is the assessor's job to maintain contact with that client.
Interim Assessment	The goal of the interim assessment is to ensure a client's situation is kept up to date until the client is housed. Or if the client has self-resolved the client should be removed from the NWCoC Priority List to avoid unsuccessful referrals.	Must be completed a minimum of every 90 days, assessors are encouraged to update every 30 days to ensure accurate referrals.	Coordinated Entry Assessment (HMIS) NWCoC Prioritization List (HMIS)	Assessor



FIGURE 5 STAGES OF NWCoC COORDINATED ENTRY

c. Assessor Training

The CoC will provide at least annual training for persons who will manage access point processes and conduct assessments for CES. Training will be offered at no cost to the agency or staff, and will be delivered by an experienced and professional trainer who is identified by the CoC. Topics for training will include the following:

- Review of CoC's written CES policies and procedures, including variations adopted for specific subpopulations;
- Requirements for use of assessment information to determine prioritization;
- Training on the use of the CES assessment tool; and
- Criteria for uniform decision-making and referrals.

An outline of access to training for the NWCoC CES can be found as Appendix B Training Access of this procedure manual.

d. Discrimination Complaint and Appeal Process

The Coordinated Entry Receipt must include the point of contact for filing and addressing any discrimination complaints, which can be filed by participants if they believe the nondiscrimination policy has been violated in their case during the CES process. Additionally, this form will describe and provide contact information on how to access the appeal process if they are not satisfied with or have any questions regarding how their complaints are handled. This form must be reviewed at the access point by CES staff, and must be signed by each participant.

e. Privacy Protections

A participant's request for housing crisis response assistance initiated through phone or email communication will be considered notification of intent and inferred to be client consent to collect, use, and disclose that PII collected via phone or email. CES participating agencies shall obtain written client consent from the participant when the person comes in and additional data are collected during an in-person assessment.

The CoC must protect all participants' personally identifiable information (PII), as required by HUD's HMIS Data and Technical Standards, regardless of whether or not PII is stored in HMIS. All CES participating projects will ensure participants' PII will only be collected, managed, reported, and potentially shared if those data are able to be secured in compliance with the HUD-established HMIS privacy and security requirements. Training for CES users on data privacy is provided by the HMIS System Administrator.

As part of the assessment process, participants will be provided with a copy of the NWCoC Release of Information form, which identifies what data will be collected, what data will be shared, which agencies data will be shared with, and what the purpose of the data share is. Participants have the option to decline sharing data; doing so does not make them ineligible for CES. A copy of the NWCoC Release of Information can be found on the [NWCoC Coordinated Entry](#) website under forms.

An individual being assessed through coordinated entry has the right to refuse the entry of their data into the HMIS system. When this happens use the NWCoC Alternative Assessment process. For creating an entry/exit client record in the HMIS, follow the instructions provided by the HMIS or your HMIS Alternative Database provider for entering clients records without personally identifiable information.

f. Completing the NWCoC Assessment

All of the forms for the NWCoC Assessment are stored on the [NWCoC Coordinated Entry](#) website under forms. Each form includes detailed instructions that guide the assessor through the document based on answers from the client.

Detailed instructions for completing the assessment process, including instructions for entering data into HMIS can be found in Appendix C Diversion and Coordinated Entry Data Instructions of this document. This document is also stored on the NWCoC Coordinated Entry website under implementation.

g. Completing the NWCoC Alternative Assessment

The NWCoC has developed an Alternative Assessment system for Victim Services providers, youth under age 18 who do not have parental consent, and persons unwilling to **share** data in HMIS. This Alternative Assessment system is also used for individuals who refuse entry into the HMIS. If an individual refuses entry into the HMIS system it does not impact the individual's ability to receive services.

If a client does not want to consent to their record being shared statewide in HMIS, you will still create and enter data in the client's record in the system with identifiable information, including their name and SSN. The MN HMIS ROI is only asking clients to consent to having their HMIS data *shared statewide*. Imagine it as a record in a filing cabinet in your office that will then only be visible to HMIS users at your agency. In this case the client's record will simply need to be manually "closed" to the statewide data sharing visibility group in HMIS. When a client's record is closed their information will only be accessible to users at your project and agency.

Assessors can access the Alternative Assessment through e-mailing the NWCoC Priority List Manager. This is to maintain secure access to the Alternative Assessment system. The Alternative Assessment system does not collect personally identifiable information from the client. Collaboration between the Assessor and Priority List Manager will be required to offer services, without sharing any personally identifiable information. Instructions for completing the Alternative Assessment are