

Alameda County Coordinated Entry Questions and Answers

What is Coordinated Entry?

Coordinated Entry is a shared and standardized method for connecting people experiencing homelessness to the resources available in a given community. Coordinated entry assesses people's housing-related needs, prioritizes them for resources, and links those in need to a range of types of assistance, including immediate shelter and longer-term housing focused programs.

Is Coordinated Entry Required?

Yes, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the State of California require that every community that receives State or Federal funds for programs serving homeless people use coordinated entry. The coordinated entry design must include a method for assessment and prioritization of access to resources for people experiencing homelessness. At a minimum, every program that receives specific federal and/or State funds such as Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grants must be included in coordinated entry. In Alameda County, local funders may also require or encourage all dedicated homeless resources to be accessed through Coordinated Entry. Some of the other requirements of the system include¹:

- One low-barrier entry point (or a coordinated set of entry points) that is well publicized and easily accessible; *(These may include in-person, phone or internet access)*
- A standardized screening, intake, and assessment process;
- A referral process that matches people to the services available to resolve their homelessness;
- Prioritization based on housing status and history, vulnerability, and service needs (not "first come first served");
- A shared data system among participating programs.

What Kind of Coordinated Entry Approach is Alameda County Planning?

Alameda County is a large and geographically diverse county. Coordinated entry will include multiple access points, or Housing Resource Centers (HRC's), which will work with individuals and families experiencing homelessness in their region. Each HRC is expected to have assessment and triage capacity, direct access to refer households to vacant emergency shelter beds, rapid rehousing (temporary subsidies to be used to assist with rent in a new home) and other resources, and provide links to community-based services. The number and location(s) of the HRC's is still to be determined. Two are already operating, and at least three to four more are likely, to ensure that all regions in the county have access. Within the planning conversation, the special needs of youth, veterans, and people fleeing domestic violence are also receiving consideration.

¹ For more on HUD's recommendations for Coordinated Entry, see <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Coordinated-Entry-Policy-Brief.pdf>

Who is Planning Coordinated Entry?

A wide range of stakeholders is involved in the planning process being led by EveryOne Home. EveryOne Home is a nonprofit organization that serves as Alameda County's countywide coordinating body on ending homelessness. Stakeholders including city and County staff, housing and services providers, people with lived experience of homelessness, and others are part of a Committee that will be working through June 2016 to develop a system design, with updates shared regularly with the community. A network of public funders are also meeting to advance the process and identify resources. The final design and implementation strategy will be reviewed and approved by the EveryOne Home Leadership Board. More information about coordinated entry and how to get involved can be found at www.everyonehome.org.

What Will Change When Coordinated Entry is Operating Fully?

People who are experiencing homelessness will not need to call dozens of places to either find a bed or program or be turned away. Those experiencing homelessness will be directed through a countywide call center to an HRC, or will be reached by an outreach worker for assessment and help getting back into housing. Most shelters, transitional housing programs, rapid re-housing programs and permanent housing dedicated to serving homeless people will take their referrals from coordinated entry. Participating programs will not have "side doors" through which people can skip Coordinated Entry's assessment and prioritization. The coordinated entry approach will also have links to other systems of care, such as programs addressing domestic violence.

Will Everyone Experiencing Homelessness be Served?

Everyone who is experiencing homelessness will be able to be assessed and offered housing problem-solving support and links to community services. Unfortunately, there are not enough shelter beds or housing programs in Alameda County for all who may need them, so the new system will prioritize those with the greatest need and vulnerability, which will be more specifically defined through the EveryOne Home planning process.

When Will the New Coordinated Approach Begin?

While the countywide system is still in development, components of it have already begun to operate. The City of Berkeley has opened a Hub that conducts assessments and provides access to most of Berkeley's programs funded to serve homeless people. Oakland has created a call center which assesses, prioritizes, and matches homeless families with children to homeless services.. The Alameda County Health Care Services Agency helped design a system known as Home Stretch to prioritize access to permanent supportive housing that couples affordable housing with services for very high needs homeless people. EveryOne Home currently coordinates Operation Vets Home as part of a concerted effort to track and end homelessness among veterans. These efforts are expected to link together within countywide coordinated entry by the end of 2016.

For more information about the coordinated entry planning process underway in Alameda County, see www.everyonehome.org