

Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement System (CAHPS) Partner Memorandum of Understanding

Between Northern Colorado Continuum of Care and Community Partners

Date: _____

Name of Community Partner: _____

Background

The coordinated entry process is a HUD-mandated system to efficiently and effectively connect the most vulnerable people to appropriate interventions that will rapidly end their homelessness. Coordinated Entry in northern Colorado is referred to as the Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement System (CAHPS) and is overseen by the Northern Colorado Continuum of Care. CAHPS envisions a housing placement system that streamlines housing services so that homelessness in northern Colorado is rare, brief, and non-recurring. The primary objective of CAHPS is to ensure that the highest need, most vulnerable households in the community are prioritized for the most appropriate available housing interventions.

Purpose of Memorandum

To carry out its mission and vision, CAHPS relies on highly engaged community partners, including agencies, organizations, and individuals who interact with the homeless response system to assist households with services and resources. This Memorandum is necessary to set expectations and requirements needed to ensure the highest standard of coordination and care for households interacting with CAHPS and its community partners. This includes but is not limited to engaging in low-barrier, housing first practices, maintaining privacy and security of personally identifying information, understanding CAHPS priorities and practices, and embracing the idea that each household experiencing homelessness are all "our clients".

Housing First Practice

The Housing First approach asserts that providing permanent housing without making judgements on one's "readiness" for housing gives more opportunity for people to realize their personal goals and build upon their individual strengths. People are much more likely to be able to have stable employment, improve their mental and physical health, and be engaged members of the community if they have a permanent place to call home and do not have to be singularly focused on basic survival. Also, having fewer unhoused people in the community lessens the strain and financial burden on public services. People who are housed are less likely to require emergency services, less likely to interact with law enforcement, and less likely to require costly interventions that ultimately return them to homelessness.

In practice, Housing First ensures that people experiencing homelessness can be connected to housing assistance regardless of their willingness to participate in supportive services, like counseling or substance use treatment. It also means that people are still eligible for assistance regardless of their income, current employment status or other financial barriers such as debt and poor credit.



The NoCO CoC and CAHPS embrace Housing First practices as a core tenant of our community response system to homelessness. CoC and ESG-funded agencies are required to provide Housing First informed programming; CAHPS participating agencies are highly encouraged to embrace Housing First practices across programs.

CAHPS Evaluation and Reporting

To remain effective, CAHPS relies on community collaboration and engagement. The NoCO CoC monitors the functioning and efficacy of CAHPS yearly. This includes an annual survey of CAHPS stakeholders on the overall effectiveness of the coordinated entry system as well as other evaluative measures. CAHPS Partner Agencies agree to participate in the annual evaluation process of CAHPS. Additionally, the CAHPS Steering Committee will evaluate CAHPS policies and procedures annually and make recommendations for needed changes for adoption by the NoCO CoC Governing Board.

Duration of Agreement

This MOU is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from the Northern Colorado CoC Governing Board and the CAHPS Partner Agency. It shall become effective upon signature and will remain in effect until modified or terminated by the Northern Colorado CoC Governing Board or the CAHPS Partner Agency.

CAHPS Partner Activities

CAHPS Partners agree to support the following coordinated assessment and housing placement activities in line with their agency/organizational scope.

Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Outreach to those experiencing homelessness and housing instability
- Utilization of the VI-SPDAT, a triage tool that determines the vulnerability of those experiencing homelessness
- Prioritization of those in need of housing assistance, using the VI-SPDAT scores of respondents and agreed-upon prioritization protocols
- Development of a by-name list of persons experiencing homelessness
 - Collect CAHPS program enrollment data and upload it into HMIS
 - Add VI-SPDATs conducted within your agency into HMIS
 - Track client contact in HMIS, so individuals your agency added to the BNL remain active
- Assistance to individuals/families in:
 - Obtaining documents necessary to enter into housing
 - Accessing benefits (Medicaid/Medicare, food assistance, disability benefits, etc.)
- Case conferencing to support assessment, resource referral and housing navigation for households experiencing homelessness
- Development of a real-time list of housing opportunities
- Offering housing opportunities to those experiencing homelessness and assisting individuals through the move-in process
- Providing on-going housing-focused supportive services to ensure individuals can successfully retain their housing



CAHPS scope of practice is outlined in more detail in the CAHPS Policies and Procedures.

Training

Key staff at CAHPS Partner Agencies should attend CAHPS training at least annually to ensure up-to-date knowledge and understanding of CAHPS policies and practices. Additional training offered includes:

- administering the VI-SPDAT
- data entry and use of HMIS
- expectations for participating in case conferencing
- supporting victims of domestic violence

Training topics and expectations are outlined more in the CAHPS Policies and Procedures.

Marketing CAHPS

To ensure all eligible households have equitable access to CAHPS, it is important that community partners assist in CAHPS marketing efforts. This includes:

- Posting information regarding the CAHPS in accessible locations; agencies may choose to hang up signs, include information in take-home packs for clients, or otherwise provide written information about CAHPS
- Verbally informing eligible clients how, where, and when to access CAHPS
- Answering any questions clients have regarding CAHPS honestly, including informing clients that participating in CAHPS does not guarantee the household will gain housing or will access housing in any specific length of time

Benefits of Participation

Participation in CAHPS benefits individual agencies by offering access to a strong network of community resources, training opportunities, and technical support. Most importantly though, agency participation in CAHPS benefits all people experiencing homelessness in northern Colorado through expanded opportunities for housing. Individuals experiencing homelessness deserve to have the support of a system that believes homelessness is a community issue and it is the community's responsibility to find solutions. CAHPS is one part of the solution.



Access Point Agency Acknowledgement

To further the vision of making homelessness rare, short-lived and nonrecurring, _____ [Agency/Partner Name] agrees to enter into a formal partnership with the Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement System.

As a formal partner:

_____ (Initial) We understand and agree to follow the expectations outlined in the Memorandum.

_____ (Initial) We have received a copy of the CAHPS Policies and Procedures and agree to have all key staff who participate in CAHPS know and understand the policies and procedures.

Our agency serves (check all that apply):

- Single Adults
- Families
- Veterans
- Youth (18-24)
- Domestic Violence Survivors

Access Point Agreement

Our agency agrees to serve as a CAHPS Access Point, following the guidelines and expectations listed in this MOU and in accordance with the CAHPS Policies and Procedures.

Our agency will serve as an Access Point for the following populations:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All populations | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth (18-24) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Families | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence Survivors |

CAHPS Liaison

Our agency's authorized CAHPS Liaison is _____ [Name].

Their email is _____ [email].

Their work phone number is _____ [number].

Available Housing Resources

Our agency does / does not have housing resources that use the coordinated entry system for referral.

List Resources:

- _____
- _____

IMPORTANT NOTE: CoC Program and ESG Program funded agencies are required to participate in CAHPS and 100% of CoC and ESG-funded housing resources must be allocated through CAHPS.

_____ Initial (If CoC or ESG-funded Agency)



Access Point Authorized Agent - Signature Page

Agency Name: _____

Address/City/Zip Code: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____



Non-Access Point Agency Acknowledgement

Only Complete if Agencies is choosing not to serve as an access point for administering the VI-SPDAT.

To further the vision of making homelessness rare, short-lived and nonrecurring,
_____ [Agency/Partner Name] agrees to support the Coordinated Assessment
and Housing Placement System in the following ways (check all that apply):

- Refer households identified as experiencing homelessness or housing instability to the CAHPS FindHelp.org screening tool
- Attend Northern Colorado General Membership Meetings and/or CoC sponsored trainings
- Participate in case conferencing*
(*any staff attending case conferencing must complete an orientation and sign a confidentiality agreement)

Non-Access Point Agency Contact

Agency Name: _____

Address/City/Zip Code: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Please email completed Partner Agency MOU Agreements to the CAHPS Coordinator

CAHPS Coordinator
Summer Garcia
summer@unitedway-weld.org



CAHPS MOU Supplemental

Community Partner Expectations - Access Points

Overview

Access Points are strategic locations for individuals and families experiencing homelessness to access the Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement System. Access Points are most often an agency or organization where people experiencing homelessness or housing instability seek social services and resources. Examples may include emergency shelters, street outreach teams, community health providers, resource centers, population specific services (e.g. domestic violence, veteran, youth services), etc.

Access Point Partner Standards

By serving as a CAHPS Access Point Partner, an agency/organization agrees to the following:

- Identify a staff member who has capacity to serve as the agency's CAHPS Liaison. More information on being a CAHPS Liaison is described in this MOU.
- Commit to having the agency's more appropriate staff member(s) regularly attend weekly case conferencing and to participate in case conferencing in a manner outlined in this MOU.
- Demonstrate staffing capacity to perform assessments and have at least two employees trained on administering the VI-SPDAT
- Complete initial CAHPS Partner Training and refresher training for all staff who are conducting VI-SPDAT assessments and/or attending case conferencing.
- Have at least one staff member who will be an enrolled HMIS user for the purpose of entering VI-SPDAT assessments into the HMIS Coordinated Entry Project. These staff members must be trained to use and enter data into HMIS by a member of the HMIS Lead team.
 - Domestic violence service providers or other victim service providers are exempt.
- Enroll newly assessed households into HMIS Coordinated Entry Project within two business days.
- Be easily accessible through transportation, or have the ability to provide transportation in some capacity (bus vouchers, etc.).
- Provide regular hours of operation during which households can access the CAHPS process through screening, triage, and assessment procedures
- Provide and/or refer to appropriate resources for households that cannot access safe housing immediately (emergency shelter, etc.)
- Establish protocols that ensure at a minimum that people fleeing, or attempting to flee domestic violence have safe and confidential access to coordinated entry and that data collection conforms to the applicable requirements of the Violence Against Women Act, CoC Program, and/or HMIS Data Standards. Victims of domestic violence may always be referred to the closest victim service provider for services and housing assessment.

CAHPS Liaisons at Access Points

CAHPS Access Points are required to assign an individual staff person within their agency to serve as a CAHPS Liaison. The CAHPS Liaison serves as the primary point of contact between the CAHPS Coordinator and other agency staff who are involved in carrying out coordinated entry at that location, such as completing VI-SPDATs and attending case conferencing.



The CAHPS Liaison responsibilities include:

- Maintain communication with the CAHPS Coordinator regarding the agency's participation
- Assist the staff within your agency with any questions they have regarding CAHPS
- Ensure there is adequate and appropriate representation from your agency at case conferencing
- Ensure assessors within your agency have gone through all necessary training prior to assessing, including any refresher trainings. CAHPS Liaisons should request access to training from the CAHPS Coordinator.
- Oversee the HMIS coordinated entry data entry responsibilities within your agency
 - Note: CAHPS Liaison's may be the primary person to enter data into the HMIS coordinated entry project (i.e. entering VI-SPDATs into HMIS), OR it can be delegated to another staff person at the agency. Depending on the number of assessors within your agency, and the amount of VI-SPDATs completed on a regular basis, you may be able to assign data entry responsibilities to more than one staff person.
- Respond to communication from the HMIS Lead Team, and inform your agency, when there are updates to the system
- Be responsible for troubleshooting any data entry challenges with the HMIS Lead Team
- Participate in ad hoc CAHPS workgroups, as needed and available

Administering the VI-SPDAT

By serving in this role, an agency agrees to the following:

- Agreeing to offer the screen/triage to any client of the agency that meets the guidelines established by the Northern Colorado CoC
 - Agencies that serve a specific population (e.g. veterans, domestic violence survivors, families) may opt to only conduct VI-SPDATs for households within that population
- Pre-screening households with the Diversion/Prevention Tool to determine if homelessness can be avoided
- Ensuring any staff or volunteers conducting the VI-SPDAT have been adequately and appropriately trained. See CAHPS Policies and Procedures for more guidelines on training.
- Ensuring any staff or volunteers conducting the VI-SPDAT are surveying clients with consistency and fidelity to the original instrument
- Ensuring all Releases of Information are completed prior to administering the VI SPDAT
- Ensuring all paperwork (Releases of Information and the VI-SPDAT) are kept in a secure location until they can be transferred to the local by-name list
- Enrolling the assessed household in the HMIS coordinated entry project within 2 business days.

Expectations for participating in case conferencing include:

- Sending at least one staff person (preferably the same staff person) to each case conference.
- Informing the group (either at the case conference or to the by-name list manager outside of the case conference time) of any known changes in the housing status or location of individuals on the by-name list.
- Assist in connecting individuals to housing referral contacts, as appropriate.
- Using Housing First principles when assigning resources and discussing individual's housing



situations.

More expectations for participating in case conferencing are outlined in more detail in the CAHPS Policies and Procedures.

Housing Resources

“Housing Resources” refer to openings in certain housing programs, vouchers, and other available housing assistance that receive referrals through the coordinated entry process. Some housing resources, such as CoC and ESG-funded programs, are required to be assigned through CAHPS. Other housing assistance programs voluntarily choose to use CAHPS to receive some or all of their referrals.

Contribute housing resources to those available through CAHPS:

Agencies who use CAHPS to receive referrals to their available housing resources are expected to:

- Communicate in writing to the CAHPS Coordinator any basic eligibility requirements for that resource.
- Communicating in writing any other specifications or expectations attached to that resource.
- Accept referrals from the case conference team; limit refusals of referrals that meet the eligibility requirements of the housing resource

More information related to Housing Resources are outlined in more detail in the CAHPS Policies and Procedures

Community Partner Expectations - Non-Access Points

Virtual Access to CAHPS

To increase access to the CAHPS process for all households experiencing homelessness and housing instability, individuals and other community service providers may use an online CAHPS access tool on FindHelp.org.

Community partners who either do not have the capacity to serve as a full CAHPS Access Point or who work less directly with people experiencing homelessness are highly encouraged to use the FindHelp.org access tool so that households can be connected to and assessed by a Resource Navigator and enrolled into the CAHPS process if appropriate.

Non-Access Point Partner Standards

Community service providers and other entities/organizations that interact with and provide services to people experiencing homelessness may also be a CAHPS Partner without being a full CAHPS Access Point. This may be appropriate if the entity/organization does not have the capacity to meet the Access Point standards outlined above or if the organization does not foresee completing a large number of VI-SPDAT assessments.

By serving as a CAHPS Non-Access Point Partner, an agency/organization agrees to the following:



- Identify a point of contact to receive important communications about the Northern Colorado Continuum of Care (NoCO CoC) and CAHPS.
- Have key staff trained on using the FindHelp.org access tool and commit to offering to complete the access tool with any individuals/households who are found to be experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- Agree to assist when necessary with contacting individuals/households regarding possible referrals to housing resources and other housing related opportunities.

Other optional, but highly encouraged activities include:

- Have key staff attend weekly case conferencing meetings.
 - NOTE: To attend case conferencing meetings, staff must be oriented on case conferencing protocols and must sign a confidentiality agreement.
- Have key staff attend NoCO CoC sponsored training.
- Attend NoCO CoC general membership meeting

Please email completed Partner Agency MOU Agreements to the CAHPS Coordinator

CAHPS Coordinator
Summer Garcia
summer@unitedway-weld.org



