May 31, 2024

Homeless Strategic Initiatives (**HSI**) has recently completed a report on Coordinated Entry Systems/ Coordinated Access (CES/CA) in the Portland Metro region with an emphasis on Multnomah County. HSI contracted with the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) for this project.

In 2013, HUD began requiring Continuum of Care entities (COC's), usually cities, counties or nonprofits, to implement Coordinated Entry Systems (CES) that used a standardized assessment tool for prioritizing local homeless individual's placement into HUD-financed housing and referral to other services. Many COC's around the country, including the City of Portland, adopted the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). Over the last several years COCs around the country began acknowledging the limitations of this assessment tool which are described in the attached report.

Multnomah County, through the Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS), is the local COC and has initiated an effort to evaluate the efficacy of the VI-SPDAT and potential changes to the CES process. Additionally, since the inception of HSI three years ago, HSI has been concerned with a steady stream of anecdotal information from various providers that the CES prioritization process was significantly contributing to inadequate service provision for individuals with higher acuity behavioral health and medical needs.

The functioning of the local CES is not just some mundane bureaucratic matter. The CES conducts thousands of assessments and refers thousands of homeless people to various housing and services every year. A low functioning CES can contribute to a cascading series of problems experienced by housing, shelter, and supportive service providers. Conversely a more effective CES can catalyze higher performing systems of care for the homeless in our communities

Based on this information HSI contracted with CSH to conduct a review of CES innovations around the country, convene local providers to accumulate more systematic information regarding the functioning of the JOHS CES operation, and to make recommendations for change towards higher effectiveness, in the form of a slide show presentation.

While this report centers on the CES in Multnomah County, it should be noted that Metro and other local counties are also currently evaluating their CES functions. This evaluation of Coordinated Entry/Access was supported with funding from the Oregon Community Foundation.

Our mission at HSI is to promote a more effective system of care by educating decision makers and providers with accurate and helpful information in the areas of behavioral health, housing and homelessness in the greater Portland region.