



North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care

bos@ncceh.org

919.755.4393

www.ncceh.org/BoS

2025 North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry System Evaluation

Overview

On January 23, 2017, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued [Notice: CPD-17-01 Establishing Additional Requirements for a Continuum of Care Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System](#). The notice states, “CoCs must solicit feedback at least annually from participating projects and from households that participated in coordinated entry during that time period. Solicitations must address the quality and effectiveness of the entire coordinated entry experience for both participating projects and households...” In conjunction with this notice, the North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care (NC BoS CoC) completed the required annual evaluation of the coordinated entry (CE) system in 2025.

During the 2023 CE Evaluation process, the CoC identified areas of the evaluation process that need improvement. In response to these identified sections, North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH) staff worked with the Lived Expertise Advisory Council (LEAC) and Coordinated Entry Council (CEC) to determine how to engage more providers for a wider range of responses, how to align the provider survey with the client surveys, and how to ensure the surveys are confidential and anonymous. On August 19, 2024, the CEC approved a motion for the 2024 NC BoS CoC CE evaluation process and timeframe.

NC BoS CoC Steering Committee approved the surveys during their September 2024 meeting and set the dates for survey distribution on a quarterly basis, beginning in the last quarter of 2024; however, Hurricane Helene delayed the rollout.

On January 27, 2025, the CEC directed regional CE Leads to oversee the distribution and collection of surveys for their respective geographic areas. Each regional CE Lead needed to return all complete surveys to the NCCEH staff by March 31, 2025.

NCCEH staff reviewed all surveys, compiled data, and reported outcomes to the CEC. The CEC will discuss system improvements and help facilitate changes in the CoC using the evaluation. NCCEH staff reviewed 98 shelter and/or street outreach surveys, 51 permanent housing surveys, and 18 provider surveys, which is an overall 16% increase in survey participation from the 2023 CE Evaluation.

Methods

The NC BoS CoC conducted the evaluation of its coordinated entry system in January 2025, with the following timeline for implementation:

1) Permanent Housing (PH): Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing clients who have entered a PH program in the last year will be offered the opportunity to complete the coordinated entry evaluation survey that asks about their experience of the coordinated entry system. The timeframe for PH surveys was January 27, 2025, through March 31, 2025.



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2) Shelters and/or Street Outreach: All people completing the Homeless Assessment and Referral Tool (HART) will be offered the opportunity to complete the coordinated entry evaluation survey that asks about their experience of the coordinated entry system. Every client that receives a HART between March 17, 2025 – March 31, 2025, in the CoC must be offered the shelter and/or street outreach survey.

The evaluation consisted of three elements:

- 1) Surveys to participating provider agencies.
- 2) Surveys to people who are enrolled in permanent housing programs (rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing) and were housed in the last year.
- 3) Surveys to people currently experiencing homelessness. People in shelters and people experiencing unsheltered homelessness were surveyed.

Survey results were analyzed by the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness and the NC Balance of State CoC Coordinated Entry Council.

The provider agency survey asked questions about each aspect of the CE system:

- Prevention and Diversion
- Shelter (Emergency and Domestic Violence)
- Assessment (HART)
- Case conferencing
- Referrals to permanent housing

Participating service providers were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the part of the system in which they participate, meeting the goals of the CoC, and meeting their agency goals. The surveys to people in permanent housing and people currently experiencing homelessness asked about their experience of the CE system, whether the system met their needs, and their satisfaction with service providers.

Summary

This evaluation allows NC BoS CoC to evaluate and continue to improve its CE system. It provides a basic snapshot of how CE is working in the CoC but also poses additional questions the CoC could integrate into future evaluations. This evaluation shows that the CoC has implemented the basic aspects of coordinated entry throughout its geographic area:

- Access points attempt to help people find shelter and emergency services, including domestic violence shelter and services.
- People experiencing homelessness are assessed for permanent housing using the same screening tool, the HART.
- Permanent housing programs take the majority of their referrals from the CE system.



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The CoC could make improvements to its CE system:

- Address capacity constraints in emergency shelters, especially domestic violence shelters, which are reported as 92% full.
- Clarify and standardize CES case conferencing roles to ensure accountability to provide a warm transfer when a household has been identified and referred for a PH slot and/or voucher.
- People experiencing homelessness in the CoC are not offered permanent housing options quickly. The CoC should work to shorten homelessness and expand access to affordable housing.

Provider surveys

Provider agencies completed 18 surveys, which is a 51% decrease in participate from 2023. Survey respondents included agencies that participated in every part of the CE system. Provider surveys were completed in 11 of the 13 Regions of NC BoS CoC, with no information submitted for regions 8 and 9.

Among emergency shelter households, 45% reported needing to try between one to five shelters before finding one they could access. 96% said shelters were accessible to all types of abilities. Feedback from the HART assessment indicated that while most found the questions approachable, 2% had difficulty understanding them and 4% felt uncomfortable answering all questions. Interactions with staff were overwhelmingly positive, with 96% feeling respected and 24 of 27 open-ended responses specifically highlighting staff compassion and dedication. However, 33% of respondents stated they did not receive assistance in finding permanent housing.

Prevention and Diversion

The first step in the NC BoS CoC's coordinated entry process is to conduct the Prevention and Diversion (P&D) Screen. This screen is intended to accomplish three things:

- 1) Divert households from homelessness by identifying alternative solutions to their housing crisis;
- 2) Identify households that need immediate referral to a domestic violence service provider for safety planning; and
- 3) Refer households to emergency shelter, if they cannot be diverted.

50% of the respondents said the P&D screen generally does divert households from homelessness and allows the household time and space to think through other housing options. Agencies stated the P&D screening tool provides an opportunity for mediation, with 28% of agencies stating they provide meditation assistance. However, 50% stated if the agency could not divert the household, then shelter beds are not available in their community.

When asked if the agency can provide safety planning to households fleeing domestic violence, 57% of respondents stated that their agency does not provide safety planning, but it is available in the community. 92% stated when a client is referred to a domestic violence shelter, they are unable to obtain a bed.



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Respondents indicated many ideas for how to improve the prevention and diversion process. The CoC should consider these ideas and others to improve the prevention and diversion process and to increase access to emergency shelter. The ideas that were the most popular or may be most impactful included:

- Increasing training regarding the prevention and diversion processes.
- More shelters for families experiencing homelessness.
- Ensuring emergency shelters are low barrier and housing focused.
- Work with the DV service providers to ensure survivors of DV, stalking, sexual assault, and human trafficking have a safe place to sleep.

HART

Everyone who experiences homelessness for more than 12-14 days in the NC BoS CoC should be assessed using the CoC-designated assessment called the HART. This tool helps prioritize households who are most vulnerable for permanent housing resources. To confidently prioritize households using the assessment, the HART should accurately reflect the needs of each household.

Respondents identified the following strengths of the HART:

- Comfortable asking all the questions
- Gain initial insight into the household's vulnerability
- Demonstrates strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Learn more about households' barriers to housing
- Provides a baseline for assessing housing needs across the NC BoS CoC

Case conferencing

Case conferencing plays an essential role in the NC BoS CoC's coordinated entry system. Case conferencing meetings should help communities make good decisions about how to serve people experiencing homelessness, providing an opportunity to discuss cases, gathering additional information from multiple service providers, and connecting households to resources needed to end their homelessness.

Case conferencing is only effective if it is well-attended. 95% of agencies said they attend case conferencing meetings. All CoC regions have an option to virtually join case conferencing, which has allowed more participation than previously.

Case conferencing is more effective if clients can be referred or connected to other resources besides CoC- and ESG-funded housing resources. 89% of respondents said their meeting does connect clients to other resources outside of the homeless service system.

Referrals to permanent housing

Most referrals from the CE system to permanent housing programs should be eligible for those programs. A majority (64%) of permanent housing programs said they always and/or usually receive



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eligible referrals. Zero participants stated they rarely or never receive eligible referrals from the CE system.

Some households may be ineligible for a housing program to which they are referred. The NC BoS CoC CE designed the system this way: the system does not collect complete documentation on every household because it would slow the referral process. Instead, the CE system should conduct a basic assessment of eligibility and let the permanent housing provider determine eligibility as they collect supporting documentation. The NC BoS CoC should integrate discussions about eligibility into case conferencing to ensure most referrals are eligible.

CoC- and ESG-funded permanent housing programs should be taking all their new admissions directly from the CE by-name prioritization list. 63% of permanent housing programs take the majority of their referrals from CE, with 27% stating not many and/or few households are taken through CE. There are some permanent housing programs with other sources of funding, that are not required to take all referrals from CE, which could account for some referrals taken outside of CE. However, all CoC and ESG-funded permanent housing programs should be able to identify households from the by-name list.

Surveys of people living in permanent housing

People living in permanent housing have been through every aspect of the coordinated entry system. The NC BoS CoC asked participants to evaluate their experience moving through the CE system. 51 people completed surveys, which is a 55% increase from 2023. Providers offered surveys to all households housed in the last year and were completely optional and confidential. The survey asked respondents to evaluate the services they received while they were experiencing homelessness. The overwhelming majority of people said being connected to permanent housing was the most helpful service they received. Emergency shelter, connection to DV shelter, and food were also important.

Among the households placed in permanent housing, 56% secured stable housing within one to three months following their assessment, while 31% had endured homelessness for three to six months prior to being housed. Before receiving housing, 45% were living in unsheltered locations such as streets, cars, tents, or abandoned buildings. Feedback from the HART assessment was overwhelmingly positive, with no participants reporting discomfort or confusion in responding to questions. Client satisfaction was high with 19 out of 21 open-ended responses expressed strong appreciation for permanent housing case workers, especially for the case management and support provided.

Surveys of people currently experiencing homelessness

The NC BoS CoC collected surveys from people in emergency shelters and people living unsheltered. These surveys were confidential and completely optional. The access point offered the chance to complete a survey after the provider assessed the client using the HART.



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Most surveys collected were from people in emergency shelters, with 55 shelter surveys completed. 40 respondents completed the unsheltered survey.

When asked what type of assistance would be most helpful, 94% of people stated that help getting into a housing program and/or food as their top priority.

Timeliness

The NC BoS CoC asked questions in every survey about how quickly the CE system connects people to permanent housing and services. For many people, the CE system quickly connects them to permanent housing, but approximately 33% of households in emergency shelter and 85% of households living unsheltered were not connected to permanent housing after 6 months.

Unfortunately, people currently experiencing homelessness seem to have overly optimistic views of how long it will take to find permanent housing. The CoC should train provider staff to communicate the process and expected timeframe of finding affordable housing, so people currently experiencing homelessness have a more accurate expectation.

Emergency shelter responses overwhelmingly stated the lack of affordable housing as why the CE system may not connect people to housing in a timely manner.

The CoC does not have enough resources to provide every person experiencing homelessness a referral to a CoC- or ESG-funded program. However, the resources the CoC does have should always receive timely referrals from CE. Permanent housing programs reported only waiting 1 to 2 weeks for a referral from CE.

These answers indicate that the CE system works relatively quickly, but some improvements could be made to decrease the time between referral and permanent housing placement.

The CoC could improve the timelines of referrals in CE in a few ways:

- Attempt to secure additional CoC and ESG housing resources.
- Attempt to secure additional permanent housing resources, like preferences through Public Housing Authorities or Housing Choice Voucher programs.
- Explore additional (non-traditional) housing provider partnerships.
- Implement a progressive approach to housing in which most households are offered rapid rehousing assistance then moved to permanent supportive housing as necessary.
- Help shelters implement more housing-focused services to facilitate self-resolution.
- Identify and reduce barriers at case conferencing meetings to quickly fill open permanent housing slots.



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Grievances

The NC BoS CoC's coordinated entry system provides a process to file grievances if a participant has felt mistreated or discriminated against in the CE process. Most of respondents were aware of this process, with 92% citing they did not feel discriminated against.

All survey respondents were offered the option to file a complaint. Only one respondent stated a complaint with staff and BoS CoC staff reached out to help resolve the complaint; however, additional information was not provided.

Response rates

To strengthen the Coordinated Entry System, it is essential to ensure that all regions are adequately represented, with particular focus on increasing participation from regions 8 and 9. Additionally, implementing targeted outreach efforts and providing technical support to underserved areas will help address regional disparities and improve system-wide equity and efficiency.

Response Bias

Client surveys seemed more positive than expected and very few grievances were filed. Although it is probably true that most clients who receive services in the CoC are happy with those services, clients may have also felt pressure to answer positively for fear of losing services. Surveys should have been confidential and anonymous, but the CoC should ensure all clients understand that their surveys will not be seen by their service provider and will not affect their housing or services in any way.