Local Homeless Coalition Toolkit

This toolkit was developed by the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care (TX BoS CoC) as a resource for Local Homeless Coalitions (LHCs). In June 2017, Texas Homeless Network (THN) conducted a needs assessment to identify the informational and resource needs of LHCs. The results of that survey informed this toolkit. While information contained is likely to be helpful to individual services providers, the toolkit is specifically oriented to assisting LHCs in collaboratively addressing homelessness.

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Collaboration

Across the sector nonprofit sector there are a variety of ways in which organizations and coalitions can share resources. Examples of collaborative activities include policy development, space sharing, money, staffing, benefits and purchasing, technology, and governance[1]. Beyond collaboration for the purposes of saving resources, strategic cooperation enables missions to be accomplished.

What is needed for Effective Collaboration?

Working together well requires certain elements to be considered. Two particularly critical components for effective collaboration are effective leadership; aligned goals and objectives; and resources and expertise[2]. Ensuring that each of these elements are met contributes to successful collaboration.

Effective Leadership

Foundations of trust enable invested relationships to be formed between organizations. This foundation of trust can be achieved with the guidance of skilled leadership. The interpersonal dimensions of collaboration and benefit of strong leadership should not be ignored.

Aligned Goals and Objectives

Coalitions that clearly understand their goals and objectives are better positioned to identify how those objectives work in relationship to the organizations that comprise the coalition. If each member of the LHC clearly understands their own organization's mission, collaborating with other organizations to identify and work towards accomplishing a collective goal is much more effective. Further

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[1] Carter, Susan. "A Short Overview of Sharing and Collaboration Across the Nonprofit Sector".

[2] Kramer, Peter. "What it Takes to Succeed in a Nonprofit Collaboration". Feb 26, 2013. https://www.philanthropy.com/article/What-It-Takes-to-Succeed-in-a/196069

Information about clearly defining mission statements and examples can be found [here](#) and about bylaws [here](#).

Cooperation vs. Coordination vs. Collaboration

Collaboration allows coalitions to extend their impact by increasing broader social impact and change, and sharing of resources. Local Homeless Coalitions are, at their core, focused around the notion of effective communication and collaboration. A common model for collaboration among organizations is the 3C Model, outline within ["Collaboration Handbook: Creating Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey"](#). This model characterizes nonprofit collaboration into three categories along a spectrum of intensity that starts with cooperation, moves to coordination, and finally full collaboration.

Cooperation is the initial stage occupied by organizations that are working together. The relationships formed at this stage are characterized as low-risk. Organizations at this stage are utilizing connection to increase the effectiveness of each individual organization. Homeless service providers that are informally share information and some resources are cooperating.

Coordination is the second stage. Coordination entails formal relationships, and require greater buy in. The result of this greater time other resource investment is increased organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Homeless service providers that are participating in the more formal institution of Local Homeless Coalitions are participating in Coordination.

Collaboration is the most durable and intrinsic relationship among organizations. More transformational than transactional, partners are working together toward clearly defined collective objectives and outcomes. As a result, collective impact evaluation is most appropriate for partners at full collaboration. More information about coalition and community impact evaluation can be found [here](#). At this point "partners are focused on change beyond their organizational boundaries, in the hope that by collaborating they can create greater social and

systems change than would be possible by an organization working alone"[3]. Organizations that are part of a fully implemented coordinated entry system are engaging in a collaborative community.

[3] Simonin, Bernard et al. "Why and How Do Nonprofits Work Together?". *Philanthropy News Digest*. May 19, 2016. http://philanthropynewsdigest.org/columns/the-sustainable-nonprofit/why-and-how-do-nonprofits-work-together

CoC and Con Plan Opportunities for Coordination

The purpose of collaboration is to transform a community's response to homelessness from a network of separate projects into a coordinated, fully integrated crisis response system. When strategies in the CoC's plan and the Consolidated Plans are consistent, implementation efforts can be shared, resources can be targeted in complementary ways, and CoCs and Con Plan jurisdictions can improve how effectively they meet program goals.

HUD has provided guidance on how CoCs and Con Plan jurisdictions may collaborate to reduce homelessness. See the written guide and watch the video. The areas of coordination mandated by federal regulations are detailed throughout the guide and summarized in a chart on page 14. Please refer to the guide while completing this survey.

The TX BoS CoC in conjunction with the LHCs, are designing systems to help people access housing and obtain long-term stability through strategies such as Coordinated Entry (CE), written standards for providing assistance, strategic resource allocation, and performance measurement. Though these activities are required for HUD CoC Program-funded projects and ESG Program-funded projects, all projects serving people experiencing homelessness, including those funded by CDBG, HOME, and HOPWA funds, are crucial to having a coordinated approach for program participants and for communities.

Coordinated Entry (CE) – CE is a process that ensures that people who seek assistance are paired correctly with the kinds of housing and services that meet their needs and that are available anywhere in the community, not only one specific agency. Using CE provides data on housing and service needs, gaps, and assets that can help communities to strategically allocate funding. CoCs are required by HUD to have the CE process operational by January 23, 2018.

Written Standards – CoC written standards and ESG written standards show how CoC Program-funded projects and ESG Program-funded projects intend to allocate resources, prioritize persons who need assistance the most, and establish consistency in the way participants are served.

Resource Allocation – CoCs and Consolidated Plan jurisdictions, including ESG recipients, benefit when all work together to determine community funding priorities and strategies to avoid duplication, identify gaps in funding, and make the best use of available funds.

Performance Measurement – CoCs, CoC Program-funded projects, ESG Program-funded projects, and other homeless assistance stakeholders measure how effectively housing and services are helping people to exit homeless situations and not return to them. The performance of all housing and services projects is critical to understanding the CoC-wide

impact; therefore, project-level performance contributes to system-level performance and goals.

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program -- The ESG program provides funding to:

1. Engage homeless individuals and families living on the street;
2. Improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families;
3. Help operate these shelters;
4. Provide essential services to shelter residents;
5. Rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families; and
6. Prevent families and individuals from becoming homeless.

Six city/county entitlement jurisdictions plus the State of Texas administer ESG funding in the TX BoS CoC.

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) -- The HOPWA Program is the only Federal program dedicated to the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. Under the HOPWA Program, HUD makes grants to local communities, States, and nonprofit organizations for projects that benefit low-income persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Home Investments Partnership Program (HOME) -- The HOME program is the largest federal block grant available to state and local governments to create affordable housing. Each year, HUD uses a formula to assess the housing needs of communities, and fund jurisdictions based on the results. The HOME program can fund a wide range of activities, including addressing homelessness, such as:

- Building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership
- Providing tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) that can pay for rent and security deposits, including for Rapid Re-Housing

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – 1) The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Program provides annual grants on a formula basis to entitled cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. 2) Under the State CDBG Program, states award grants to smaller units of general local government that develop and preserve decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable people in communities, and to create and retain jobs. CDBG funds may be used to address homelessness by funding the development of emergency shelter and transitional housing and public service activities to assist persons who are homeless or to help prevent homelessness.

Consolidated Planning Requirements

Requirements for CoCs

- Applicants for HUD CoC Program funding must submit a certification by the Con Plan jurisdiction in which the proposed project will be located that the applicant's application for funding is consistent with the jurisdiction's HUD-approved Con Plan (578.27(b))

- CoCs may participate in the public comment process of the Con Plan development. They may also help Con Plan jurisdictions to engage the stakeholders required in the planning process.

- CoCs must develop a plan to provide information required to complete the Con Plans within the CoC's geographic area (578.7(c) (4)), to ensure the jurisdictions set priorities informed by a CoC's understanding of need. Some sources of data include the annual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count, the Housing Inventory Count (HIC), and other HMIS data.

Requirements for Con Plan Jurisdictions:

- Description of the Homeless Strategy
- Resources available to address the needs of homeless persons, particularly
  - Chronically homeless individuals and families
  - Families with children
  - Veterans and their families
  - Unaccompanied youth
- Resources available to address the needs of persons at risk of homelessness
- Jurisdictions must include in their Con Plans a concise summary of the jurisdiction's activities to enhance coordination with the COC
- Jurisdictions shall describe their consultations with all CoCs that serve the jurisdictions' geographic area.

<u>Con Planning Questions for Collaboration:</u>

Consolidated Plan

- Consultation, Screen PR-10
    - *Consultation* with the CoC
        - Allocating funds
        - Performance standards
        - Evaluating outcomes
        - Developing funding and policies and procedures for the administration and operating of HMIS Developing funding and policies and procedures for the administration and operating of HMIS
    - Strategic Plan-Summary of *Coordination* with the CoC
        - Con Plan and AAP consulting
        - CAPER performance evaluation and reporting
        - Coordinated Entry
        - HMIS (for ESG and HOPWA)
        - PIT and HIC and other HMIS data
        - Coordinating CoC Program and ESG Program funding

- Housing Needs Assessment, Screen NA-10
- Homeless Needs Assessment, Screens NA-10 and NA-40
- Housing Market Analysis, Screen MA-30, Homeless Facilities
- Strategic Plan
    - Anticipated Resources, Screen SP-35
    - Institutional Structure, Screen SP-40
    - Homeless Strategy, Screen SP-60

Annual Action Plan

All anticipated resources, including HUD CoC Program funding, Screen AP-15
One-year Homelessness Goals and Action Steps, Screen AP-65

CAPER

All HMIS data for ESG Program-funded projects and HOPWA-funded projects
Affordable Housing, Screen CR-20
Homelessness, Screen CR-25

Coordinated Entry (CE) Process

Summary

"Coordinated entry processes help communities prioritize assistance based on vulnerability and severity of service needs to ensure that people who need assistance the most can receive it in a timely manner. Coordinated entry processes also provide information about service needs and gaps to help communities plan their assistance and identify needed resources"[4].

Critical Points

- Communities that receive Continuum of Care (CoC) Program and/or Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program funding are required to implement a Coordinated Entry process by January 23, 2018.
- Systems Change lays the groundwork for development and implementation of a CE process.
- The TX BoS CoC provides support for communities through the Systems Change Coordinator
- The goal of coordinated entry processes is for assistance to be delivered to persons as need as effectively as possible, in an easily accessible way, no matter where or how people present.

Additional Resource

- The Systems Change Toolkit contains the resources for communities to prepare to fully implement Coordinated Entry.
- The TX BoS CoC Coordinated Entry Written Standards guides communities in developing and operating a CE process.

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[4] Department of Housing and Urban Development. "Coordinated Entry Policy Brief".
https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Coordinated-Entry-Policy-Brief.pdf

Case Conferencing

Summary

"Case conferences may take various forms, but generally constitute any meetings of coordinated entry staff from multiple projects and agencies to discuss cases, resolve barriers to housing, and make decisions about priority, eligibility, enrollment, termination, and appeal." [5]

Critical Points

- Case conferencing helps communities monitor the progress of clients towards housing
- Confidentiality is important when performing case conferencing. Organizations should have participants sign a confidentiality agreement. Some communities also include a reminder of the need for confidentiality in their meeting agendas.
- The Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care does not have a standardized Confidentiality Agreement, but does have clients sign a Release of Information when they are entered into HMIS: https://www.thn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/HMIS-Client-ROI.pdf

Additional Resources

- Introduction to the By Name List: http://community.solutions/the-by-name-list-revolution/
- Case Conferencing Overview: https://bfzcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/Case-Conferencing-Overview-and-Examples.pdf

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[5] Department of Housing and Urban Development. "Coordinated Entry Management and Data Guide". https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/coordinated-entry-management-and-data-guide.pdf

- "Situation Table" (aka Case Conferencing) Free Online Training: https://www.wlu.ca/professional-development/centre-for-public-safety-and-well-being/situation-table.html

Confidentiality Agreement Examples:
- Mississippi BoS CoC: https://msbos.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/bnl-case-conferencing-confidentiality-agreement-rev-3-2017.pdf
- Santa Barbara County CoC: https://www.liveunitedsbc.org/sites/liveunitedsbc.org/files/SB%20CE%20Case%20Conferencing%20Confidentiality%20Agreement.pdf

Right-Sizing

Summary

A right-sized system uses data to make informed decisions about planning and service delivery. The process of rightsizing involves analyzing systems and reallocating resources to maximize results. Right-sizing allows providers to fully utilize resources that are available and effectively operate as a part of a successful community system that is dedicated to accomplishing the goal of ending homelessness.

Critical Points

- Data Collection is a critical element of of the rightsizing process
- Right-sizing requires a systems-based view of the homeless assistance within a community. Each project and service provider operates within a community system. Rightsizing is a process in which that project is adapted to fit a needed role within that system, without unnecessary duplication of services.
- Regular evaluation combined with adaptation through right sizing ensures that assistance for people who are homeless in each community truly addresses the need.

Additional Resources

- [Right- Sizing your Homeless Assistance System](#)

System Performance Measures (SPMs)

Summary

      The SPMs are designed to measure a community's performance as a coordinated system. The measures help communities understand how their system is functioning and if they have selected the right combination of strategies and resources. SPM's provide a collective measurement of the initiatives within a CoC and evaluate a community's progress towards ending homelessness. SPM's also provide collective measurement of the initiatives in a Continuum of Care.

Critical Points

- PIT counts and HMIS are the primary data sources CoCs use to collect system-level performance measures
- Performance data provides information about the progress of multiple projects across the CoC.
- System Performance Measure are a critical factor for allocation of HUD funding to both individual projects and the entire Continuum of Care

Additional Resources

- HUD Introductory Guide to System Performance Measures
- HUD Strategies for System Performance Improvement

Point-in-Time Count

Summary

Every Continuum of Care (CoC) must conduct reliable, unduplicated counts of unsheltered and sheltered homeless population at a single point in time, usually the last week of January. The PIT count is important because it quantifies the extent of homelessness in each geographic region, and across the state. This information is utilized in the submission of a Continuum of Care (CoC) program grant application through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
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Critical Points

- An accurate count assists in supporting local efforts by providing data about community-level homelessness.
- This data can inform LHC actions to address homelessness.
- The PIT creates a connection between individuals who are homeless and providers, allowing providers to know people by face and name
- PIT counts can be used to raise community and political awareness of homelessness

Additional Helpful Resources

- [Information and handbooks for conducting PIT counts from the Texas Homeless Network](#)
- [Conducting The Point in Time Count in Rural Areas (page 40)](#)

Housing Inventory Count

Summary

The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) is a point-in-time inventory of housing programs within a Continuum of Care, conducted on the night as the Point-in-Time Count. The HIC count collects important about beds and units dedicated to serving persons who are homeless, categorized by program type and without regard for funding source.

Critical Points .

- The Housing Inventory Count provides an overview of the number of available beds in the community, and over time.
- The HIC and PIT count produce complementary data. Using results from the HIC and PIT counts together provides information to about community-level gaps between available housing and unmet need.
- Understanding the state of resources and need in the community helps members of an LHC coordinate efforts to be most effective.

Additional Helpful Resources

- HIC Final Reports
- PIT and HIC Guides, Tools, and Webinars from HUD

Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS)

Summary

The HEARTH Act of 2009 requires all Continuums of Care (COCs) to use an HMIS system, An HMIS allows social service providers to confidentially collect and aggregate unduplicated data about homeless persons. HMIS allows providers to coordinate assistance, manage operations, and service homeless and at-risk clients while meeting federal and state technical standards for data collection and reporting. This data can be analyzed and used to inform decision-making.

Critical Points

- HMIS provides quantifiable data for coalition and community-wide impact evaluation for advocating and developing programs
- As the lead CoC agency the Texas Homeless Network is responsible for software implementation and data collection for the HUD Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR), Annual Performance Reports (APR's), and other reports. Training and technical support for HMIS is available through THN staff.
- HMIS simplifies reporting through a unified client-resource management system.
- THN implementation materials can be found at: http://thn.org/balance-of-state-continuum-of-care/hmis-implementation-guide

Additional Resources

- HMIS Frequently Asked Questions
- HMIS user guide

Housing First

Summary

"Housing First is a proven approach in which people experiencing homelessness are offered permanent housing with few to no treatment preconditions, behavioral contingencies, or barriers". [6]

Critical Points

- All people experiencing homelessness are "housing ready".
- A Coordinated Entry (CE) process is used to match people experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate housing and service
- People with the highest-needs are prioritized for housing using the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool.
- People who are at risk of, or experiencing homeless should be stabilized in permanent housing as quickly as possible.
- People are more successful in achieving sobriety and acquiring employment while in their own homes.

Additional Resources

- Fact Sheet: Housing First
- Organizational Change: Adopting a Housing First Approach
- Checklist for Assessing Programs and Systems for a Housing First Orientation

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[6]

Types of Housing Interventions

Emergency Shelter

Emergency shelters provide term-limited housing for individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis. The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) grant program provides funding for street outreach and emergency shelters.

Additional Resources
- Information from HUD about the [Emergency Solutions Grant Program](#)

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing provides time-limited stability and support for individuals and families for up to 24 months with accompanying supportive services. This form of housing is not a category of housing preferred for HUD CoC project funds.

Joint Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-housing Component Project (Joint Component)

The joint component project type combines transitional housing with rapid re-housing to allow service providers to provide individuals and families with low-barrier temporary housing and financial support to support and sustain a move into permanent housing. These projects are particularly oriented towards quickly connecting individuals to housing when crisis and permanent housing options are limited.

Additional Resources
- [Overview from HUD on Joint Component Housing](#)

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Permanent supportive housing is an evidence-based intervention that provides a combination of services and stable, long term housing. Housing first has been proven to be highly effective, particularly for people who are experiencing chronic homelessness. Key factors include: no term limit for length of stay, access to voluntary supportive services, and a crisis resolution system in place.

Additional Resources
- [Implementing Housing First in Permanent Supportive Housing](#)

Rapid Rehousing

"Rapid Re-housing is an intervention designed to help individuals and families quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid re-housing assistance is offered without preconditions… and the resources and services provided are tailored to the unique needs of the household."[7]

Additional Resources
- [NAEH Rapid Rehousing Toolkit](#)

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[7] United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. "Rapid Rehousing". December 10, 2015.https://www.usich.gov/solutions/housing/rapid-re-housing

THN Services for Local Homeless Coalitions

Summary

THN offers a variety of support services for Local Homeless Coalitions (LHCs) within the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care. This list is not exhaustive; for additional information, please contact a staff member.

Technical Assistance (TA) is available for...

- Coordinated Entry (CE)
- Point-In-Time (PIT) Count
- HMIS Use and Implementation
- Ending Homelessness for specific sub-populations (Veterans, Youth, Families, and People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness)
- Local Homeless Coalition Development

Additional Services provided by THN

- Providing referrals between communities
- Workshops and training on topics like Project Design, Best Practices, etc.
- Funding consultations
- State and local advocacy and initiatives
- VISTA projects support
- SOAR training and Technical Assistance
- Newsletters to keep up with TX BoS CoC News
- Monthly meetings held via webinar

For Additional Information about THN Staff and Services

- THN Staff Directory http://thn.org/about/staff/

Why Evaluation is Important... Is it Time to Evaluate?

Types of Evaluation

Choosing the appropriate type of evaluation is important. Selecting the appropriate method of evaluation requires your coalition to decide which questions need to be answered. There are three primary approaches to evaluation.

Processes/Activities: Is the coalition operating smoothly?

Programs/Performance/Systems: Is the coalition achieving its specified objectives?

Impacts/Community Changes: Are the coalition's activities having the intended effect on the community?

> "Outcomes should be consistent with what could reasonably be accomplished and not overly idealistic. Reasonable and realistic doesn't mean you won't strive for more, but in terms of carrying out an evaluation the more clearly defined and measurable the outcome the better". [8]

Preparing to Evaluate Your Coalition

Evaluation[9]

1. Select the appropriate evaluation design

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[8] Gajda, Rebecca and Jennifer Jewiss. "Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation". http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=9&n=8

[9] Harrell et. al. "Evaluation Strategies for Human Services Programs". The Urban Institute. May 1, 1996. https://www.bja.gov/evaluation/guide/documents/evaluation_strategies.html

2. Develop a [Logic Model](#)[10]

3. Review the coalition's readiness for evaluation

Steps for Evaluation[11]

1. Identify key stakeholders and what they care about

Engage coalition stakeholders in the evaluation process. Who is directly involved? Who is affected by the effort? Who will be benefited by this evaluation? This can include members of the Local Homeless Coalition, those being served etc.

2. Describe the coalition's framework or logic model

What are the goals of the coalition?

3. Focus the evaluation design -- what the evaluation aims to accomplish, how it will do so, and how the findings will be used?

There a wide variety of methods of evaluation, including surveys, community level impacts, observations, interviews, and more. Determine with stakeholders what the evaluation aims to accomplish, and what method of evaluation is appropriate

4. Gather credible evidence -- decide what evidence is, and what features affect credibility of the evaluation

Determine what you are looking to evaluate and the data you need to collect.. Will you use HMIS? Gather other community level indicators? What is success and how will you measure it?

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[10] Butterfoss, Frances D. "Evaluation Coalitions & Partnerships". July 15, 2010. http://fhop.ucsf.edu/sites/fhop.ucsf.edu/files/custom_download/Coalition_Evaluation_Webinar.pdf

[11] "Evaluating the Initiative". The Community Toolbox. Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. 2017. http://ctb.ku.edu/en/evaluating-initiative

5. Outline and implement an evaluation plan

Involve all key stakeholders as possible. While conducting the implementation be sure to document

6. Make sense of the data and justify conclusions. Indicate how each aspect of the evaluation will be met

Interpret the results of the evaluation.

7. Use the information to celebrate, make adjustments, and communicate lessons learned.

Put the results from the evaluation into practice. Address deficiencies and celebrate successes.

For additional information about evaluation see the [Community Toolbox](#) from the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas

Community Impact Evaluation

Summary

As multiple actors from different sectors collaborate to solve a complex social problem, collective impact is generated. The structured approach facilitates collaboration among different agents. Evaluation of this collective community impact assesses the extent to which progress toward addressing the complex social problem is being accomplished.

Critical Points

- Using a variety of indicators, such as gaps assessment and surveys can provide a more holistic assessment.
- Collecting and sharing data is critical for collective impact evaluation.
- There are a variety of different forms that effective performance measurement can take.
- Effective performance measurement and evaluation requires a time investment.
- Systems performance measures provide information about collective impact across the entire CoC.

Additional Resources

- Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact
- Framework for Evaluating Collective Impact

Coalition Evaluation

Summary

Regular evaluation is important for Local Homeless Coalitions, as in any collective effort or organization. Process evaluation focused on the internal affairs of the coalition can provide valuable feedback about the efficiency and effectiveness of the coalition. This information should be used to inform coalition planning and decision making.

Critical Points

- Each coalition is in a unique community and has distinct needs and strengths.
- Coalition evaluation often requires revisiting foundational aspects of the coalition identity such as mission statements, purpose, and bylaws. If evaluation reveals that these elements are no longer current for the coalition, the revision process can be beneficial.
- Frequent evaluations help organizations ensure that time and other resources are being used effectively.
- Engaging a broad section of stakeholders is critical for effective evaluation.

Additional Resources
- [Are You Ready to Evaluate?](#)
- [Powerpoint for Coalition Evaluation](#)

Resources for Rural Communities

Summary

Rural communities face unique challenges when addressing homelessness. Coalitions that cover a service area spanning a broad geographic distance have may not meet in person regularly. Additionally, visibility of homelessness is can be lower in rural communities, presenting additional barriers to providing service.

Critical Points

- Collaboration and leveraging resources is invaluable for addressing homelessness, particularly in rural communities.
- Although there may be less options for community partners and resources, coordination among groups may be deeper and more substantive.
- Access to human capital can be a challenge for rural communities. In particular, the loss of a dynamic leader can impact the entire community.
- Community-based organizations like libraries and community colleges often have technology that can be used to video conference and otherwise connect coalition members.

Additional Resource

- [Rural Governance and Capacity Building](#)
- [LIst of Potential Partners for Collaboration (page 45)](#)

Chronic Homelessness

Summary

Chronic Homelessness, as defined by HUD, refers to an individual who has a disability and has been living in a place not meant for human habitation or an emergency shelter for either 12 months continuously, or on at least four occasions in the last three years that together total at least 12 months.

Critical Points

- People who are experiencing chronic homelessness have complex needs that are best addressed through supported housing.
- Committing to coordinated entry and prioritizing people experiencing chronic homelessness for supportive housing maximizes outcomes.
- Coordinating and diversifying applications for funding will maximize available resources. While CoC program funding does pay for some supportive housing services, mainstream sources such as Medicaid may be a more appropriate choice to maximize program funding.

Additional Resources

- 10 Strategies to End Chronic Homelessness
- Flowchart of HUD's definition of Chronic Homelessness
- Services in the CoC Program: A Guide to Assessing Value and Finding Funding Alternatives

Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

Summary

Ending Veteran homeless is an attainable goal. Collaboration by actors at the local, state and federal level is critical for achieving this objective.

Critical Points

- Communities across the United States have successfully ended Veteran homelessness.
- Ending Veteran homelessness requires coordination from multiple actors, including service providers, Veterans services, and the community. Person-level data collection and sharing and a fully implemented coordinated entry process support this coordination.
- The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program is a grant program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that can help providers service this community.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH) is another supportive housing program supported by HUD and VA.

Additional Resources
- Ten Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness
- Building Community Partnerships to Effectively Serve Veterans Experiencing Chronic Homelessness Webinar
- Criteria and Benchmarks for Ending Veteran Homelessness
- Official Guide to the SSVF Program
- HUD-VASH program

Victims Service Providers

Summary

As a particularly vulnerable group, it is critical that Local Homeless Coalitions fully include victims service providers and survivors of domestic violence in coalition plans and activities. There are certain privacy requirements specific to DV providers that must be kept in consideration.

Critical Points

- Victims service providers have different data reporting requirements in order to prevent clients from being identified.
- The inclusion of trauma-informed care is important for victims service providers provision, as with all other homeless service providers.
- DV providers should still be included in coordinated entry (CE) processes, but with adapted requirements for data sharing, HMIS use, and physical safety.
- CE requirements, found here **(Link)**, include requirements specifically tailored to DV providers, in consideration of these unique challenges.
- Clients have a right to refuse to have their information shared via HMIS

Additional Resources

- Coordinated Entry and Victims Service Providers

Youth Homelessness

Summary

Individuals up to age 24 who are unaccompanied by a parent, guardian, or spouse, or who are with their own children are experiencing youth homelessness. Youth experiencing homelessness may lack social supports, a stable residence or source of income, and access to the support networks needed to successfully transition into adulthood.

Critical Points

- Youth who are experiencing homeless often have different needs than homeless adults do, and are especially vulnerable to criminal victimization, as well sexual and economic exploitation.
- Engaging youth in the decision-making process and in the development of projects leads to better participation in those projects and more participant-oriented projects.
- There are state and local education agencies in each school district that are responsible for addressing child and youth homelessness that serve as resources for youth experiencing homelessness.

Additional Resources

- [Promising strategies for youth-specific program models](#)
- [Strategies for engaging mainstream sectors with youth homelessness](#)
- [Family and Youth Services Bureau](#)
- [Region 13 Homeless Education Program](#)
- [Sharing Data about Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Youth Homelessness](#)

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC)

Summary

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) "is an overall approach, at the individual, organizational, and systemic level, that uses respect and consideration of trauma histories to create safety and hope for clients". While not specifically dedicated to addressing trauma, TIC is "informed about, and sensitive to, trauma-related issues present in survivors". [12] The foundation of TIC "stems from the recognition that trauma frequently underlies and/or co-occurs" with conditions related to mental and behavioral health[13].

Critical Points

- TIC is not the addition of a service. Instead, it is a holistic shift in the service framework.
- It is critical for trauma survivors to be supported, empowered, and both physically and emotionally safe.
- TIC can improve service delivery outcomes.

Additional Resource

- [Harnessing the Learning Community Model to Integrate Trauma-Informed Care Principles in Service Organizations](#)
- [Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches in Access to Recovery Programs](#) (applicable across multiple service areas!)

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[12] "Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches in Access to Recovery Programs". SAMHSA

[13] Morrsion et. al. "Harnessing the Learning Community Model to Integrate Trauma-Informed Care Principles in Service Organizations". McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research.

Vulnerability Index–Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)

Summary

The VI-SPDAT is an assessment tool used to assess needs of people in homeless situations in the TX BoS CoC Coordinated Entry (CE) Process. This tool is combination of the Vulnerability Index and the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool that "provides information on the priority of an assessed homeless person's support and housing needs"[14] by identifying co-occurring social and medical factors that play a significant role in a person's homeless situation.

Critical Points

- The VI-SPDAT is person centered. High value and weight is given to clients' goals and preferences.
- The VI-SPDAT is Intended to be conducted conversationally
- The VI-SPDAT was developed with consideration for trauma. The tool was developed intentionally, for the purpose of conducting an assessment without traumatizing clients.

Additional Resource

- [Coordinated Entry Written Standards](#)
- [VI-SPDAT and F-VI-SPDAT trainings](#)
- [The SPDAT and VI-SPDAT: Tools Grounded in Evidence](#)
- [9 Reasons Why the VI-SPDAT is the Standardized Assessment Tool of Choice](#)

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[14] "The SPDAT and VI-SPDAT: Tools Grounded in Evidence". Community Solutions.

Acronyms and Definitions

AAP – Annual Action Plan

BoS – Balance of State

CAPER - Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report

CoC – Continuum of Care

CoC Policies and Procedures - principles that guide the CoC in operating the CoC and meeting CoC requirements.

Con Plan – Consolidated Plan

HMIS – Homeless Management Information Services

LHC – Local Homeless Coalition

Performance Measures - criteria used to assess projects and determine how well they are performing. For example: "Number and percentage of successful exits from RRH to permanent housing destinations,"

Performance Standards - the results that are expected on the performance measures for satisfactory project performance, or how well projects need to perform in order to have an acceptable level of performance. For example: "At least 80% of households exit to a permanent housing destination."

Written Standards - guidelines for delivering CoC Program-funded assistance.