



# MINNESOTA INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

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July 18, 2014

To: CoC Coordinators, housing and service providers, and statewide partners

From: Cathy ten Broeke, State Director to Prevent and End Homelessness

Re: Coordinated Assessment

In December, the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness adopted and released *Heading Home: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. The plan lays out 12 priority areas of focus with accompanying strategies and actions state agencies are responsible for, in collaboration with community partners, over the next two years. Priority #11 states that ***"we will improve our ability to provide the right services at the right time for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. We will work with local communities throughout Minnesota to develop a Coordinated Assessment (CA) process and tools."*** The plan specifically asks relevant state agencies to:

- Support and guide the identification of common elements of Coordinated Assessment via CoC regions
- Develop technical assistance (as identified by CoCs) to help Coordinated Assessment planning, development, and implementation
- Identify funding needs for implementation
- Identify state-funded homeless programs/funding where participation in the local Coordinated Assessment system will be a condition of funding

A great deal of work, technical assistance, and conversation has been occurring around Coordinated Assessment and there is no doubt that we are making progress toward these goals. Some Continuum of Care regions are testing out assessment tools. There is also some testing being done on functions and modules of HMIS that may enhance each community's ability to implement a coordinated assessment system. It is exciting to see progress happening across the state and I am confident your hard work will lead to meaningful and measurable improvement to our efforts to end homelessness. The Commissioners on the Minnesota Interagency Council strongly believe that a highly functioning coordinated assessment system will not only serve people much more effectively, but has the potential to give us the data we need all across Minnesota to identify and address remaining gaps.

Many of you have been asking about the role of the State in Coordinated Assessment. What will the State expect of regions with Coordinated Assessment? Where can the State help provide support and resources needed to successfully implement Coordinated Assessment systems?

The purpose of this memo is to:

1. Request your input and feedback on the requirements and priorities that State agencies are considering regarding Coordinated Assessment for programs and jurisdictions that receive state funding targeted at ending homelessness; and
2. Express our commitment to work with local regions to ensure that you have the support you need to successfully design and implement Coordinated Assessment.

### **Requirements/Priorities**

State agencies are considering Coordinated Assessment requirements and priorities that will be used to assist in the targeting of State funds that are specifically dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness. We would like to use requirements and priorities consistently across homeless-specific State programs (FHPAP, THP, LTH, etc.). These requirements and priorities may not apply to programs that do not specifically target homeless households (i.e. GRH).

***We would like your feedback and input on Coordinated Assessment requirements and priorities that the State is considering. They are as follows:***

- *Prioritize active participation in local Coordinated Assessment system for all agencies funded by State programs.* The success of Coordinated Assessment depends on the full commitment and participation of all systems and providers dedicated to serving people experiencing homelessness, not only those receiving HUD funding. For this reason, state funding for ending homelessness will be prioritized to those who (among other things) score high in their coordinated assessment participation. “Participation” could be evaluated based upon some of the following elements (these are examples that need further discussion with state staff as well as your feedback on what different or additional elements should be included):
  - XX% of agency’s participants come from Coordinated Assessment referrals
  - Agency does not allow “side doors” into program
  - Agency has aligned eligibility criteria to match Coordinated Assessment program standards
- *Prioritize performance on the four core elements that HUD has required for Coordinated Assessment.*
  - Use a common assessment tool throughout CoC<sup>1</sup>
  - Cover the entire geographical area of CoC
  - Be well advertised
  - Be easily accessible

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<sup>1</sup> The State would support unique assessments per population, but would expect these assessments to share core elements.

- *Require all Continuum of Care regions to use an assessment tool in HMIS that builds off common core elements.* Exactly how this will look is yet to be determined but we see, at the very least, the need for consistency of core data elements in HMIS assessments to ensure that we are able to evaluate systems and gaps across the state, provide some level of consistency for multi-CoC providers, and are able to learn from each other. We will encourage and support additional assessment questions to be unique to local regions and populations served (youth, families, and adults without children).
- *Prioritize data sharing for state-funded programs.* All Continuum of Cares and their programs will benefit from having the ability to data share across the state. This will enhance our ability to make faster and smarter determinations regarding how we can best meet the needs of clients. Clients will still have control regarding whether they will share their data. Certain programs, such as domestic violence programs, will be exempt from this data sharing priority.
- *Require common functionality to be used on HMIS.* We expect CoC regions across Minnesota to agree upon common HMIS functions and modules (waitlist, referrals, eligibility, etc.) This is needed to accommodate multi-region agencies and to inform state-wide evaluation.
- *Prioritize each region's ability to make their referral/waitlist process readily available and transparent to other regions.* People will move from region to region. It will be important for regions to know how each other's systems work.
- *Prioritize client choice.* All clients in every continuum should have an appropriate level of housing choice within their assessed model.

The State is seeking your comments and feedback on these proposed priorities and requirements prior to implementation.

### **Support from the State**

We want to know how the State can best support local planning efforts in moving towards an efficient Coordinated Assessment process that will most effectively serve people experiencing homelessness throughout Minnesota. To this end, the State specifically seeks input on the following questions:

- 1) What questions do you have regarding the proposed state CA requirements/priorities? Where is further clarification needed?
- 2) Which requirements/priorities do you most strongly support? Which cause the most concern? What is missing? What priorities/requirements would you suggest the state consider?
- 3) In what ways can the State best support local planning processes? In what ways can the State best support the identification and development of common statewide elements?
- 4) What resources are still needed in order to fully plan for and implement Coordinated Assessment in your region?

We are eager to assist you in creating the most effective coordinated assessment system possible. To that end, we are offering, in partnership with HUD, Abt, and some of our private sector funders, the opportunity for further technical assistance. I am in the process of identifying and securing additional resources in order to provide the support communities need to move forward on the development and implementation of Coordinated Assessment

**All comments will be accepted until Monday, September 1, 2014 at 4 PM. Comments should be submitted electronically to Amy Stetzel, Project Manager for the Minnesota Interagency Council via Survey Monkey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/V3R3RZP>**

**Please reach out to Amy with any questions regarding the survey at: [amy.stetzel@state.mn.us](mailto:amy.stetzel@state.mn.us)**

Thank you for all of your ongoing hard work for the families and individuals experiencing homelessness throughout our state. I think we live in a very unique state with some of the best and most dedicated providers and coordinators in the country. I am grateful everyday for the opportunity to work with all of you.

All my best,

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