

**Merced County Continuum of Care Collaborative  
Policies and Procedures  
Coordinated Entry**

# Table of Contents

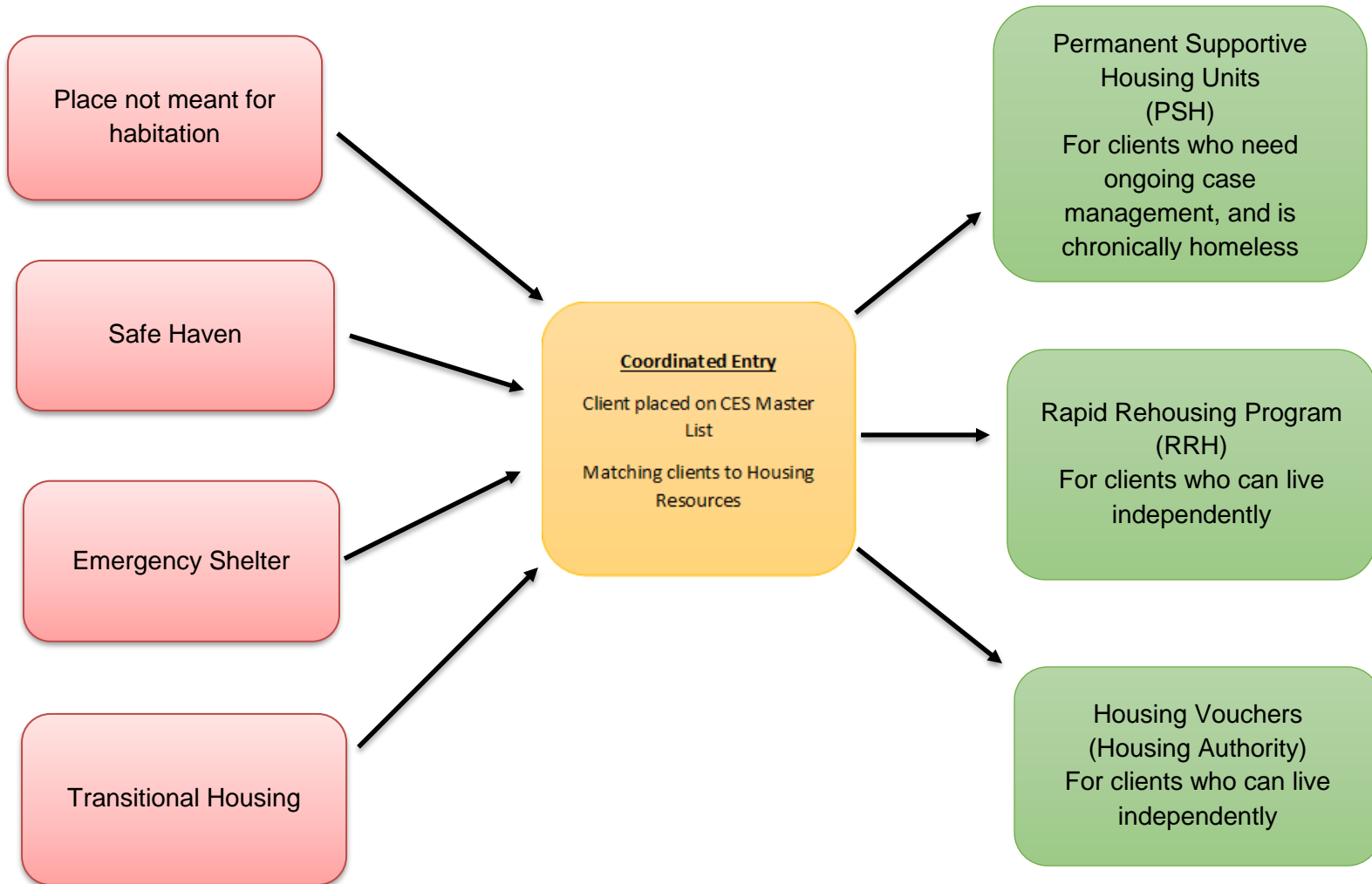
<b>Introduction</b>	3
Geographic Coverage	3
Public Awareness	4
Management	4
<b>Accessing the Coordinated Entry System</b>	4
Emergency Services	5
Domestic Violence	5
Nondiscrimination	5
Persons with Disabilities	6
<b>The Pre-Screening Process</b>	6
Pre-Screening Instrument	6
Performing a Pre-Screening	6
Shelter Placement	7
<b>The Assessment Process</b>	7
Assessment Approach	7
Assessment Instrument	7
Assessor Training	8
Performing an Assessment	8
<b>Eligibility Determination</b>	9
<b>The Prioritization Process</b>	9
Prioritization Factors	9
Priority List	9
Priority Ranking	10
<b>The Referral Process</b>	10
Housing Referrals	10
Referrals for Services	11
<b>Data Management</b>	11
HMIS	11
Privacy Protections	12
Secure Document Management	12
Limited Access	12
Secure Storage	12
Retention and Destruction	12
Other Standards and Requirements	12
<b>Evaluation</b>	12

Performance Metrics	13
<b>Addenda</b>	14
<b>Policy: Transitional Housing Assistance</b>	15
<b>Policy: Rapid Re-Housing Assistance</b>	15
<b>Policy: Permanent Housing Assistance</b>	17
<b>Policy: VAWA-Related Emergency Transfers</b>	19
Emergency Transfers	19
Eligibility for Emergency Transfers	19
Emergency Transfer Request Documentation	19
Confidentiality	20
Emergency Transfer Timing and Availability	20
Safety and Security of Tenants	20
<b>Standard: Rapid Re-Housing Tenant Rent Contributions</b>	22
<b>List: Coordinated Entry Access Points</b>	23
<b>List: Local Victim Services Providers</b>	24
Domestic Violence	24
Dating Violence	24
Sexual Assault	24
Stalking	24
<b>List: Coordinated Entry Marketing Materials Sites</b>	25
Emergency Rooms	25
Faith Based Organizations	25
Food Pantries	25
Library Systems	26
Police Departments	26
School Systems	27
State Agencies	27

# Introduction

The Merced County Continuum of Care has established a Coordinated Entry process in order to ensure that housing assistance is prioritized based on vulnerability and severity of assistance needs so that people who need help the most can receive it in a timely manner.

As the diagram below illustrates, the Coordinated Entry Process provides multiple pathways to housing (or housing stability) for people who are homeless.



## Geographic Coverage

This Coordinated Entry system covers the entire geographic area of Merced County, CA. Homeless families and individuals can present for services at any homeless housing and service provider in the county. These Coordinated Entry Access Points cover and are accessible throughout the entire CoC.

## Public Awareness

The Coordinated Entry process and associated housing and supportive services are affirmatively marketed to and available to eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, handicap and those who are least likely to apply in the absence of special outreach.

Marketing materials are placed at each organization within the Continuum of Care's geographic boundaries that regularly encounter people who are homeless, or that periodically encounter people in hard-to-reach homeless subpopulations, such as people who are service-resistant.

In addition, materials are furnished to police departments, parks departments, school systems and religious institutions for distribution to individuals and families who are homeless or are unstably housed. A current list of all organizations receiving marketing materials is attached to this policy manual.

Marketing materials include:

- Posters that list Access Points, their locations and phone numbers
- Fliers containing information on Access Points and how the Coordinated Entry process works
- Laminated business cards with Access Points information, for distribution to people needing assistance

The Continuum of Care also issues a quarterly mass email and press release updating the community on the Coordinated Entry process and its achievements. CoC member agencies are also encouraged to place information about the Coordinated Entry process on their websites. A web page template is available for this purpose.

## Management

The Continuum of Care Coordinator manages the Coordinated Entry Process. The Coordinator is responsible for:

- Convening participants on a monthly basis to review recent referrals and permanent housing placements and to facilitate resolution of referral issues as they arise
- Monitoring performance of the Coordinated Entry system, including participants' compliance with these policies and procedures
- Raising awareness of the Coordinated Entry system, including creating, circulating and updating marketing materials, as needed
- Monitoring and updating the CES Master List

## Accessing the Coordinated Entry System

All people in different populations and subpopulations in Merced County, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, veterans, families with children, youth (18-24 years old), and survivors of domestic violence, must have fair and equal access to the Coordinated Entry process.

The Merced County Continuum of Care has adopted a “No Wrong Door” approach to Coordinated Entry. The same assessment approach, including standardized decision-making, is offered at all Access Points and all Access Points are usable by all people who may be experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. Mobile outreach workers also perform Coordinated Entry activities, including assessment and referral, when and where they encounter people who are homeless.

Specialized Access Points have been established to meet the unique needs of people who are or have been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking. A list of current Access Points is attached to this policy and shall be updated from time-to-time. All agencies listed as Access Points shall have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Merced County Continuum of Care as evidence of their understanding of these Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures and their commitment to fulfilling the roles and responsibilities associated with serving as an Access Point.

## Emergency Services

Emergency services, including all domestic violence and emergency services hotlines, drop-in service programs and emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters and other short-term crisis residential programs, must operate with as few barriers to entry as possible. People must be able to access emergency services independent of Coordinated Entry intake and assessment operating hours. Pre-screening is not required prior to emergency services program entry under these circumstances.

When emergency services are provided before a pre-screening is administered, the family or individual must be screened by the end of the next business day.

## Domestic Violence

No one will be denied access to the Coordinated Entry process - or any Access Point - on the basis that he or she is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking. These people, even if they are seeking shelter or services from non-victim service providers, must have safe and confidential access to the Coordinated Entry process and victim services and immediate access to emergency services such as domestic violence hotlines and shelter.

## Nondiscrimination

Organizations participating in the Coordinated Entry process that are recipients of federal and state funds must comply with applicable civil rights and fair housing laws and requirements. Steering participants toward any particular housing facility or neighborhood because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or the presence of children is strictly prohibited. Persons served through the Coordinated Entry process must be informed of the ability to file a non-discrimination complaint if they feel their rights have been violated.

## Persons with Disabilities

Access Points must be physically accessible to individuals with disabilities, including people who use wheelchairs. The CoC will also ensure that Access Points are located in areas convenient to people who are least likely to access homeless assistance.

## The Pre-Screening Process

The first phase of the Coordinated Entry process involves pre-screening for diversion or prevention. This step helps the Continuum of Care ensure that only people who need permanent housing end up on the Coordinated Entry Priority List. If prevention or other mainstream services can address the housing needs of a family or individual, a referral to these services must be offered at this point.

There are at least two significant benefits to including this diversion step in the Pre-Screening process. People receive services that are the most appropriate for them and wait lists for permanent housing are shortened.

Pre-screening must occur when a family or individual first contacts in person a provider that is serving as a Coordinated Entry Access Point or, in an emergency or after-hours situation, as soon after that first contact as possible. If a family or individual is fleeing domestic violence or sexual abuse and chooses to be immediately referred to a domestic violence services provider, pre-screening should take place at the domestic violence provider.

## Pre-Screening Instrument

Merced County Continuum of Care's Coordinated Entry process utilizes a pre-screening instrument designed to:

- screen for homelessness/chronic homelessness
- assess housing needs to determine need for diversion/prevention services or emergency shelter
- identify barriers to housing

Based on information supplied during the pre-screening, a family or individual may be referred for prevention services or other mainstream assistance or may move to the Assessment stage of the Coordinated Entry process.

## Performing a Pre-Screening

People who are being screened must be freely allowed to decide what information they provide during the pre-screening process, to refuse to answer questions and to refuse housing and service options without retribution and without limits being placed on their access to other forms of assistance. *Note: collection of specific information may be required to establish or document eligibility for certain programs.*

## Shelter Placement

People that are literally homeless should be offered a referral to a local emergency shelter. People fleeing domestic violence must be immediately offered a referral to a local domestic violence provider. People have a right to refuse these referrals and still continue through the Coordinated Entry process. People do not have to complete a Coordinated Entry assessment in order to receive a shelter referral. However, if the client has the intent to be housed the assessment needs to be completed.

## The Assessment Process

If pre-screen results indicate that a family or individual is appropriate for housing placement, an assessment of the family or individual must be conducted within 3 days of enrollment into the Coordinated Entry program, utilizing the appropriate version of the VI-SPDAT. In the rare event that a permanent housing unit remains vacant, families or individuals whose pre-screening scores indicate they may qualify for placement in that unit should be assessed immediately.

## Assessment Approach

The Merced County Continuum of Care is committed to person-centered Housing First approaches to ending families' and individuals' homelessness. This means that everyone involved in the Coordinated Entry process must work to ensure that people who are assessed are asked about their preferences regarding location and type of housing, level and type of services, and other characteristics of projects where they may be referred, and that these preferences are taken into account when offering referral options.

## Assessment Instrument

No matter at which organization a person enters the Coordinated Entry process, that person will be assessed using the VI-SPDAT, a freely available product of OrgCode Consulting, Inc. Versions of this assessment instrument for single adults, and families are available at <http://orgcode.nationbuilder.com/spdat>. Agency staff administering and scoring these assessments must have successfully completed VI-SPDAT training offered by the Continuum of Care.

The assessment must be completed once a year. If the client has had a life-altering event which will change the client's assessment score, the assessor will notify the Coordinated Entry Specialist prior to conducting a second VI-SPDAT or VI-FSPDAT within the same year.

Staff administering and scoring the VI-SPDAT are prohibited from screening people out of the Coordinated Entry process due to perceived barriers to housing or services, including but not limited to, too little or no income, active or a history of substance abuse, domestic violence history, the type or extent of disability-related services or supports that may be needed, history of evictions, poor credit, lease violations or the absence of previous leases, or criminal record.



## Assessor Training

The Continuum of Care conducts Coordinated Entry training on a quarterly basis, more frequently if needed. The purpose of this training is to ensure that staff assigned to Coordinated Entry clearly understand and can fully comply with the Continuum's assessment and referral policies and procedures. This training includes:

1. Review of policies and procedures, including any variations for specific subpopulations
2. Instruction on how to use assessment information to determine prioritization for referrals
3. Criteria for uniform decision-making and referrals

Coordinated Entry training protocols and materials are reviewed, updated and redistributed to participating organizations at least once per year.

## Performing an Assessment

As noted above, assessments must be performed within 3 days of enrollment into the Coordinated Entry program. Though there are different assessments for families, and single adults, each assessment collects:

- Basic Information (name, date of birth, preferred language, etc.)
- History of Housing and Homelessness
- Risks
- Socialization and Daily Functioning
- Wellness
- Family Unit (if not unaccompanied)

Assessment responses are scored and a total score is generated. A person's total score is used to determine their place on the Continuum-wide priority list for permanent housing. The VI-SPDAT assessment will be active for one year. If the client has a life altering event occurs where the scoring of the client will become higher than a new VI-SPDAT can be completed within the same year. If this occurs the case manager will notify the CES Team during weekly meeting that there will be a duplicate VI-SPDAT within the same year due to a life altering event.

*Note: collection of specific information may be required to establish or document eligibility for certain programs.*

Information collected before or during the assessment process may not be used to screen people out of housing referrals due to perceived barriers to housing or services, including but not limited to, too little or no income, active or a history of substance abuse, domestic violence history, the type or extent of a disability, disability-related services or supports that are needed, history of evictions or poor credit, lease violations or lack of a leasing history, or criminal record. During the assessment process, participants must be informed of the ability to file a non-discrimination complaint.

# Eligibility Determination

Information collected during assessment will be used to determine eligibility for certain programs and services in the Continuum of Care. This is a different process than prioritization, detailed below. Though assessment data cannot be used to discriminate, in certain circumstances some projects may use disability status or other protected class information to limit enrollment, but only if Federal or State statute explicitly allows the limitation. For instance, some permanent housing programs require a mental health disability, and HOPWA programs require an HIV diagnosis.

## The Prioritization Process

### Prioritization Factors

The Merced County Continuum of Care utilizes OrgCode's VI-SPDAT to prioritize referrals to available housing resources. The VI-SPDAT uses the following factors to determine vulnerability:

- Risk of harm, as evidenced by recent encounters with healthcare and crisis services, law enforcement and the criminal justice system, legal issues and risk of exploitation
- Issues with socialization and daily functioning, such as money management, meaningful daily activity, self-care and social relationships
- Wellness, as reflected by status of physical health and mental health, and any medications, substance abuse, tri-morbidity, abuse or other trauma

The VI-SPDAT assigns a score to each client, based on these factors. These scores, length of homelessness, along with the dates that each family or individual most recently entered the Coordinated Entry process, determine each family's or individual's ranking on the Priority List.

Data collected during the assessment process must not be used to prioritize households for housing and services on a protected basis, such as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, familial status, disability, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status.

### Priority List

The Priority List is maintained in real time within Merced County HMIS. It is very important that people be added to the Priority List as soon as their assessments have been completed, and removed from the Priority List as soon as they have been referred to housing or have otherwise exited the Coordinated Entry process.

Priority List, referral and housing placement activity is monitored on a monthly basis to ensure that Coordinated Entry policies and procedures are followed. Client information in the Priority List is covered by the same privacy and security protections prescribed by HUD for HMIS practices in the HMIS Data and Technical Standards.

If the client has had no activity utilizing Merced County services in the last 90 days or longer, the client will be moved down to inactive on the Priority List. If the client re-enters the facilities or services, the client will then be added back onto the active portion of the CES Priority List.

## Priority Ranking

As mentioned above, each family and individual on the Priority List has a VI-SPDAT score that is used to determine the type of housing to be offered to them, and their place in line for that housing. Complete lists of current priority ranking criteria are contained in the Continuum of Care's Rapid Rehousing Assistance and Permanent Housing Assistance Policies.

## The Referral Process

The Merced County Continuum of Care has incorporated a person-centered approach into its referral policies and procedures. People have the right to decline a referral to housing that they feel does not meet their needs.

## Housing Referrals

When a vacancy in Permanent Housing, and/or Rapid Re-housing exists, that vacancy must be filled from the Coordinated Entry Priority List. There are no exceptions to this rule. Perceived barriers to housing or services must not be used to reduce or eliminate a household or individual's referral options.

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS**

In order to serve as a CES Provider, agencies must have a signed HMIS partner agency agreement, comply with the Written Standards, and meet the following requirements:

- Provide housing and service inventory data or anticipated housing and service inventory data to CES Administrator within three (3) business days of any changes to the number of available units. Accept housing referrals in accordance with the Merced CoC Written Standards and CES Policies & Procedures document.
  - Agree to use the CES as the only referral source for filling vacancies in designated housing and/or services projects.
  - Locate clients when they are referred to their housing program within ten (10) business days in collaboration with Access Points or providers who are serving the client.
  - Document instances when a client declines the housing opportunity in HMIS, or a standard form, and notify the CES Administrator.
  - Verify documentation of client eligibility provided by Access Points or other case management provider, or collect and submit required eligibility documentation if not provided by the Access Point or CES Administrator.
- Notify CES Administrator when a client referred is not eligible for the housing opportunity.

The following guidelines must be used when preparing referral options:

- If an individual's VI-SPDAT score is equal to or greater than 8, the individual is recommended for referral to a Permanent Housing program
- If the VI-SPDAT score is between 4 and 7, a Rapid Re-housing referral is appropriate
- Scores of less than 3 indicate that other options (transitional housing, etc.) should be pursued
- If a Family VI-FSPDAT score is equal to or greater than 9, the individual is recommended for referral to a Permanent Housing program
- If the VI-FSPDAT score is between 4 and 7, a Rapid Re-housing referral is appropriate
- Scores of less than 3 indicate that other options (transitional housing, etc.) should be pursued

When filling a vacancy from the Coordinated Entry Priority List, a provider may choose to offer the housing opportunity to a family or individual directly, or may reach out to staff at the Access Point where the family or individual was pre-screened. Should the family or individual or Access Point not respond within five business days, the housing opportunity may be offered to the next qualifying family or individual on the Priority List.

## Referrals for Services

Referrals for prevention and other, mainstream services may be made following Pre-screening, and between placement on the Priority List and housing placement. The process of prioritizing access to ESG prevention funds must be developed collaboratively by the CoC and the recipient of ESG funding for Merced County.

### Provider Right to Refuse

Provider has the right to refuse services to a client if:

- Client displaying aggressive behavior towards provider employee(s)
- Client giving verbal threats towards provider employee(s)
- Client vitalizing provider property
- Client displaying sexual harassment towards provider employee(s)

## Data Management

### HMIS

Organizations participating in Coordinated Entry, with the exception of domestic violence services providers, are required to use the CoC's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to collect and report data on persons served in the Coordinated Entry process. Organizations that access HMIS must participate in the Coordinated Entry process. Domestic violence services providers must use a comparable database (as defined in HUD's HMIS Data and Technical Standards), which is not linked to the CoC's HMIS.

## Privacy Protections

To protect personal privacy, Coordinated Entry staff should collect only enough participant information to prioritize and make referrals to available housing and support services. Disclosure of specific disabilities or diagnosis must not be required unless needed to determine program eligibility or to make appropriate referrals.

Personal information must not be shared between organizations participating in the Coordinated Entry process unless the affected individual has consented to information sharing, and that consent has been properly documented. Services must not be denied to participants who refuse to allow their data to be shared unless Federal statute requires collection, use, storage and reporting of a participant's personally identifiable information as a condition of program participation.

## Secure Document Management

When physical documents (printed assessments, priority lists, referral forms, etc.) containing personal information are created during the Coordinated Entry process, the following best practices must be followed.

### Limited Access

Access to these documents must be granted only to people who need the information contained in these documents to do their work.

### Secure Storage

These documents, when not in use, must be securely stored and protected either in locked cabinets or a locked room.

### Retention and Destruction

These documents must be completely destroyed (shredded or burned) when they are no longer needed or when the document retention period adopted by the organization that holds the documents expires, whichever is longer.

## Other Standards and Requirements

Where there is a conflict between a Coordinated Entry privacy protection and a law, licensing requirement or professional standard, the most stringent of the two applies.

## Evaluation

The Merced County Continuum of Care and participating providers continuously work to evaluate and enhance the Coordinated Entry process, and adapt it to changing community needs. A formal evaluation is conducted annually.

Evaluation input is collected through:

- Focus groups
- Analysis of HUD System Performance Measures and other pertinent data
- Comments and suggestions made in Continuum of Care meetings
- Anonymous surveys of provider executives, staff, and clients

This information is compiled in a formal evaluation report that is delivered to the Continuum of Care, which may approve changes to Coordinated Entry processes, policies and procedures based on the report's recommendations.

## Performance Metrics

Reports on key Coordinated Entry success measures will be published each quarter. Metrics will include:

- Number of families and individuals placed in housing
- Average length of time on priority list
- Average and median assessment scores
- Who didn't get housed, and why

# Addenda

Documents related to the Coordinated Entry policy follow this page.

# Policy: Rapid Re-Housing Assistance

“Rapid re-housing is an intervention, informed by a Housing First approach that is a critical part of a community’s effective homeless crisis response system. Rapid re-housing rapidly connects families and individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through a tailored package of assistance that may include the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services. Rapid rehousing programs help families and individuals living on the streets or in emergency shelters solve the practical and immediate challenges to obtaining permanent housing while reducing the amount of time they experience homelessness, avoiding a near-term return to homelessness, and linking to community resources that enable them to achieve housing stability in the long-term. Rapid re-housing is an important component of a community’s response to homelessness. A fundamental goal of rapid rehousing is to reduce the amount of time a person is homeless” – HUD

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Rapid-Re-Housing-Brief.pdf>

“Target Populations: Rapid re-housing is an effective intervention for many different types of households experiencing homelessness, including those with no income, with disabilities, and with poor rental history. The majority of households experiencing homelessness are good candidates for rapid re-housing. The only exceptions are households that can exit homelessness with little or no assistance, those who experience chronic homelessness and who need permanent supportive housing, and households who are seeking a therapeutic residential environment, including those recovering from addiction.” – HUD

<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Rapid-Re-Housing-Brief.pdf>

The Merced County Continuum of Care utilizes OrgCode’s VI-SPDAT to prioritize referrals to available housing resources. The VI-SPDAT uses the following factors to determine vulnerability: risk of harm, issues with socialization and daily functioning, and wellness. The VI-SPDAT assigns a score to each client, based on these factors. These scores, length of homelessness, along with the dates that each family or individual became homeless, determine each family or individual’s ranking on the Priority List.

1. When a Rapid Re-Housing provider is able to accept a new client or clients, Coordinated Entry Specialist staff must select the family or individual with the highest VI-SPDAT score in the Rapid Re-Housing score range (4 to 7).
2. If more than one family or individual shares the highest VI-SPDAT score, agency staff must select the family or individual with the earliest homeless start date.
3. When VI-SPDAT scores and homeless start dates are equal, preference must be first given to families, and then to veterans.
4. Rapid Rehousing consumers may be allowed to locate their own housing. If an agency opts to locate available housing units on behalf of its clients, any housing preferences expressed by a



family or individual must be taken into account before a housing placement is recommended. Families and individuals have the right to refuse housing placements and referrals.

Families and individuals are removed from the Priority List if they refuse one permanent housing placements, or are unresponsive to three contact attempts within a single 90-day period. A family or individual who has been removed from the Priority List will be immediately restored to the List after completing a Coordinated Entry assessment or the client states they are ready for housing services again.

Emergency Transfer Priority: The Merced County Continuum of Care requires that housing providers allow tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to request an emergency transfer from the tenant's current unit to another unit. The ability to request a transfer is available regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The ability of housing providers to honor such request for tenants currently receiving assistance, however, may depend upon a preliminary determination that the tenant is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and on whether HP has another dwelling unit that is available and is safe to offer the tenant for temporary or more permanent occupancy.

# Policy: Permanent Housing Assistance

“HUD encourages CoCs and recipients of non-dedicated and non-prioritized CoC Program-funded PSH to offer housing to persons experiencing chronic homelessness first, to the maximum extent possible. For all other CoC Program-funded PSH, where the CoC adopts the orders of priority established in the Prioritization Notice and incorporates them into their written standards, households should be selected in the following order:”

**Order of Priority 1** - A household should be prioritized first in non-dedicated and non-prioritized PSH if the following are true:

1. Household is eligible for CoC Program-funded PSH meaning that there is a household member with a disability and they are coming from a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter. This includes persons exiting an institution where they have resided for 90 days or less but were living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter immediately prior to entering the institution; and
2. The household has been identified as having severe service needs.

<https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/programs/continuum-of-care-coc-program/permanent-supportive-housing/what-is-the-order-of-priority-for-coc-program-funded-psh-beds-that-are-not/>

The Merced County Continuum of Care utilizes OrgCode’s VI-SPDAT to prioritize referrals to available housing resources. The VI-SPDAT uses the following factors to determine vulnerability: risk of harm, issues with socialization and daily functioning, and wellness. The VI-SPDAT assigns a score to each client, based on these factors. These scores, along with the dates that each family or individual became homeless, determine each family or individual’s ranking on the Priority List. Any housing preferences expressed during the Assessment process are also noted on the Priority List and are used when determining housing placement options.

1. When a Permanent Housing provider is able to accept a new client or clients, staff at the agency with the available unit must select the family or individual with the highest VI-SPDAT score in the Permanent Housing score range 8 or greater who meets the eligibility requirements for the available unit. Or a VI-FSPDAT score of 9 or greater.
2. If more than one family or individual shares the highest VI-SPDAT score and meets the eligibility requirements of the project, agency staff must select the family or individual with the earliest homeless start date.
3. When VI-SPDAT scores and homeless start dates are equal, preference must be first given to families, and then to veterans.
4. Any housing preferences expressed by a family or individual must be taken into account before recommending a housing placement. Families and individuals have the right to refuse housing placements and referrals.

Families and individuals are removed from the Priority List if they refuse one permanent housing placements, or are unresponsive to three contact attempts within a single 90-day period. A family or individual who has been removed from the Priority List will be immediately restored to the List after

completing a Coordinated Entry assessment or the client is states they are ready for housing services again.

Emergency Transfer Priority: The Merced County Continuum of Care requires that housing providers allow tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to request an emergency transfer from the tenant's current unit to another unit. The ability to request a transfer is available regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The ability of housing providers to honor such request for tenants currently receiving assistance, however, may depend upon a preliminary determination that the tenant is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and on whether HP has another dwelling unit that is available and is safe to offer the tenant for temporary or more permanent occupancy.

# Policy: VAWA-Related Emergency Transfers

## Emergency Transfers

**The Merced County Continuum of Care** is concerned about the safety of tenants in the county, and such concern extends to tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. In accordance with the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA),<sup>[1]</sup> HP allows tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to request an emergency transfer from the tenant's current unit to another unit. The ability to request a transfer is available regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.<sup>[2]</sup> The ability of a housing provider to honor such requests for tenants currently receiving assistance, however, may depend upon a preliminary determination that the tenant is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and on whether the housing provider has another dwelling unit that is available and is safe to offer the tenant for temporary or more permanent occupancy.

This plan identifies tenants who are eligible for an emergency transfer, the documentation needed to request an emergency transfer, confidentiality protections, how an emergency transfer may occur, and guidance to tenants on safety and security. This plan is based on a model emergency transfer plan published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Federal agency that oversees that housing providers are in compliance with VAWA.

## Eligibility for Emergency Transfers

A tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, as provided in HUD's regulations at 24 CFR part 5, subpart L is eligible for an emergency transfer, if: the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant remains within the same unit. If the tenant is a victim of sexual assault, the tenant may also be eligible to transfer if the sexual assault occurred on the premises within the 90-calendar-day period preceding a request for an emergency transfer.

A tenant requesting an emergency transfer must expressly request the transfer in accordance with the procedures described in this plan.

Tenants who are not in good standing may still request an emergency transfer if they meet the eligibility requirements in this section.

## Emergency Transfer Request Documentation

To request an emergency transfer, the tenant shall notify the housing provider's management office and submit a written request for a transfer to her/his housing provider. The housing provider will provide reasonable accommodations to this policy for individuals with disabilities. The tenant's written request for an emergency transfer should include either:

1. A statement expressing that the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence if the tenant were to remain in the same dwelling unit assisted under the housing provider's program; OR

2. A statement that the tenant was a sexual assault victim and that the sexual assault occurred on the premises during the 90-calendar-day period preceding the tenant's request for an emergency transfer.

## Confidentiality

The housing provider will keep confidential any information that the tenant submits in requesting an emergency transfer, and information about the emergency transfer, unless the tenant gives the housing provider written permission to release the information on a time limited basis, or disclosure of the information is required by law or required for use in an eviction proceeding or hearing regarding termination of assistance from the covered program. This includes keeping confidential the new location of the dwelling unit of the tenant, if one is provided, from the person(s) that committed an act(s) of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking against the tenant. See the Notice of Occupancy Rights under the Violence Against Women Act For All Tenants for more information about the housing provider's responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of information related to incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

## Emergency Transfer Timing and Availability

The housing provider cannot guarantee that a transfer request will be approved or how long it will take to process a transfer request. The housing provider will, however, act as quickly as possible to move a tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to another unit, subject to availability and safety of a unit. If a tenant reasonably believes a proposed transfer would not be safe, the tenant may request a transfer to a different unit. If a unit is available, the transferred tenant must agree to abide by the terms and conditions that govern occupancy in the unit to which the tenant has been transferred. The housing provider may be unable to transfer a tenant to a particular unit if the tenant has not or cannot establish eligibility for that unit.

If the housing provider has no safe and available units for which a tenant who needs an emergency is eligible, the housing provider will assist the tenant in identifying other housing providers who may have safe and available units to which the tenant could move. At the tenant's request, the housing provider will also assist tenants in contacting the local organizations offering assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking that are attached to this plan.

## Safety and Security of Tenants

Pending processing of the transfer and the actual transfer, if it is approved and occurs, the tenant is urged to take all reasonable precautions to be safe.

Tenants who are or have been victims of domestic violence are encouraged to contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, or a local domestic violence shelter, for assistance in creating a safety plan. For persons with hearing impairments, that hotline can be accessed by calling 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).

Tenants who have been victims of sexual assault may call the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network's National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE, or visit the online hotline at <https://ohl.rainn.org/online/>.

Tenants who are or have been victims of stalking seeking help may visit the National Center for Victims of Crime's Stalking Resource Center at <https://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center>.

**Attachment:** Local organizations offering assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

---

[1] Despite the name of this law, VAWA protection is available to all victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

[2] Housing providers cannot discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic, including race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability, or age. HUD-assisted and HUD-insured housing must be made available to all otherwise eligible individuals regardless of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.

# Standard: Rapid Re-Housing Tenant Rent Contributions

To be determined

# List: Coordinated Entry Access Points

*(Add agency names here, following execution of the Coordinated Entry System Access Point Memorandum of Understanding)*

## **New Direction**

Turning Point Community Programs

209-726-2700

200 E 15<sup>th</sup> Street Merced, CA 95341

<https://www.tpcp.org/programs/new-direction/>

## **Merced Rescue Mission**

Main Office: 209-722-9269

Main Office: 644 W 20<sup>th</sup> Street Merced, CA 95340

<https://www.mercedcountyrescuemission.org/>

### Multiple Sites:

- Hope Respite Care (Hospital Referral Only)
  - Merced
  - Los Banos
- Distributive Bridge
  - Merced
  - Los Banos
  - Livingston
  - Atwater
- Bridge to Hope
  - Los Banos
  - Merced
- Transition to Hope (Clients with Income Only)
  - Merced
  - Los Banos
- B St Navigation Center

## **D St Navigation Center**

Merced County Community Action Agency

209-725-8188

317 E 15<sup>th</sup> Street Merced, CA 95341

<https://www.mercedcaa.com/>



# List: Local Victim Services Providers

## Domestic Violence

### **Valley Crisis Center**

209-725-7900

Open 7 days a week 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.

1960 P St, Merced, CA 95340

<https://www.valleycrisiscenter.org/>

## Dating Violence

### **Valley Crisis Center**

209-725-7900

Open 7 days a week 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.

1960 P St, Merced, CA 95340

<https://www.valleycrisiscenter.org/>

## Sexual Assault

### **Valley Crisis Center**

209-725-7900

Open 7 days a week 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.

1960 P St, Merced, CA 95340

<https://www.valleycrisiscenter.org/>

## Stalking

### **Valley Crisis Center**

209-725-7900

Open 7 days a week 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.

1960 P St, Merced, CA 95340

<https://www.valleycrisiscenter.org/>

## Human Trafficking

### **Valley Crisis Center**

209-725-7900

Open 7 days a week 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.

1960 P St, Merced, CA 95340

<https://www.valleycrisiscenter.org/>

# List: Coordinated Entry Marketing Materials Sites

## Emergency Rooms

### **Mercy Medical Center ER**

#### **Dignity Health**

209-564-5000

Open 24 Hours

333 Mercy Ave Merced, CA 95340

[https://locations.dignityhealth.org/emergency-room-mercy-medical-center-merced?utm\\_source=LocalSearch&utm\\_medium=Facility&utm\\_campaign=CentralCalifornia&utm\\_term=MercyMedicalCenterMerced-EmergencyRoom](https://locations.dignityhealth.org/emergency-room-mercy-medical-center-merced?utm_source=LocalSearch&utm_medium=Facility&utm_campaign=CentralCalifornia&utm_term=MercyMedicalCenterMerced-EmergencyRoom)

### **Memorial Hospital ER**

#### **Sutter Health**

209-826-0591

Open 24 Hours

520 W I Street Los Banos, CA 93635

<https://www.sutterhealth.org/find-location/facility/memorial-hospital-los-banos-emergency-department>

## Faith Based Organizations

(add religious institutions that agree to circulate marketing materials)

## Food Pantries

### **Merced County Food Bank**

209-726-3663

2000 W Olive Ave Merced, CA 95348

Open Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

<https://mmcfb.org/>

### **Bethel Community Church**

209-383-5779

810 T Street Merced, CA

### **Catholic Charities**

209-383-2494

336 W Main Street #1 Merced, CA 95340

<https://ccdof.org/>

**Salvation Army Merced/ Atwater**

209-383-4225

1440 W 12<sup>th</sup> Street Merced, CA 95341

<https://merced.salvationarmy.org/>

**Salvation Army Los Banos**

209-827-4945

1231 4<sup>th</sup> Street Los Banos, CA 93635

<https://losbanos.salvationarmy.org/>

## Library Systems

**Merced County Public Library**

209-385-7484

2100 O Street Merced, CA 95340

Hours May Vary

**Los Banos Public Library**

209-826-5254

1312 S 7<sup>th</sup> Street Los Banos, CA 93635

Hours May Vary

**Atwater Public Library**

209-358-6651

1600 Third Street Atwater, CA 95301

Hours May Vary

**Livingston Public Library**

209-394-7330

1212 Main Street Livingston, CA 95334

Hours May Vary

**McCandless Delhi Community Library**

209-656-2049

16881 Schendel Ave, Delhi, CA 95315

Hours May Vary

## Police Departments

**Merced Police Department**

209-385-8836

470 W 11<sup>th</sup> Street Merced, CA 95341

**Merced County Sheriff's Office**

209-385-7445  
700 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street Merced, CA 95340

**Los Banos Police Department**

209-827-7070  
945 5<sup>th</sup> Street Los Banos, CA 93635

**Atwater Police Department**

209-357-6384  
750 Bellevue Rd Atwater, CA 95301

## School Systems

**Merced County Office of Education**

209-381-6600  
632 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street Merced, CA 95341  
<https://www.mcoe.org/Pages/Home.aspx>

## State Agencies

**Employment Development Department**

**EDD**  
209-726-5407  
1205 W 18<sup>th</sup> Street Merced, CA 95340  
<https://www.edd.ca.gov/>

**Department of Motor Vehicles**

**DMV**  
800-777-0133  
1313 W 12<sup>th</sup> Street Merced, CA  
<https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/>

**US Social Security Administration**

888-632-7069  
600 W Olive Ave Merced, CA 95348  
<https://www.ssa.gov/>

**California Highway Patrol – Atwater**

**CHP**  
209-356-6600  
1500 Bell Dr Atwater, CA 95301  
<https://www.chp.ca.gov/home/>

**California Highway Patrol – Los Banos**

**CHP**

209-826-3811

706 W Pacheco Blvd Los Banos, CA 93635

<https://www.chp.ca.gov/home/>

# Action plan

Merced County Continuum of Care will continuously review and further develop its Coordinated Entry process during its first year of operation. Suggested actions include:

## Weekly

- CES Meetings

## Monthly

- Review and updates on referrals made

## 90 days

- Review Quarterly Performance Metrics and System Performance Measures
- Adjust referral rules, if needed
- Determine who else needs to be at the table
- Quarterly Mass email and press release updating the community on the Coordinated Entry Process and its Achievements

## 180 days

- Review Quarterly Performance Metrics and System Performance Measures
- Adjust referral rules, if needed
- Review and adjust Coordinated Entry training materials, if needed
- Review assessment needs

## 1 year -

- Review Quarterly Performance Metrics and System Performance Measures
- Adjust referral rules, if needed
- Review and adjust Coordinated Entry training materials, if needed
- Set parameters and expectations for new assessment based on local needs and priorities