

**Coordinated Entry Committee Minutes
October 27, 2017**

Present: Heather Eddy-Region 1; Leanne Trappen-Region 4; BJ Stensland-Region 5; Bill Campbell-Region 6; Brian Dale-HUD; Brady Ellis-IHFA; Dana Wiemiller-IHFA; Jennifer Otto-IHFA

Not Present: Steve Bonnar-Region 2; Wyatt Schroeder-Region 3; Justine Murphy-PATH; Ann Fitzsimmons-VA; Pam Thompson-Kootenai Health

Guests Present: Jeff Conroy-SVDP; John Ernst-SVDP; Nancy Tuttle-Salvation Army Nampa; Misty McEwan-SCCAP; Ginny Acevedo-Bannock Youth Foundation; Leslie Foltz-Bannock Youth Foundation; Donna Graybill-VA; Mary Kirn-DHW

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:

1. Minutes from the meeting on 10/10/17 were reviewed and approved.
 - a. A motion to approve the minutes was submitted by Leanne and seconded by Heather. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

2. Fair Housing Update
 - a. Brady provided an update, indicating representatives from the HUD special needs and fair housing offices and USICH conducted a listening session with Intermountain Fair Housing. Federal staff are currently reviewing all comments and will provide a response; however, there is still no confirmed timeline.
 - b. Dana indicated the HUD special needs office is aware that this unresolved issue may impact the CoC's ability to implement coordinated entry by the January 23 HUD deadline.
 - c. Ginny questioned the committee on the concerns about the VI-SPDAT and whether the CoC is unnecessarily focusing on this assessment tool when it's being used in many other communities in the country. She expressed concern about meeting the HUD deadline and whether a decision should be made to implement CE using the VI-SPDAT while still evaluating other potential prioritization tools.
 - d. Misty and Nancy expressed concerns about the potential for a lawsuit if agencies use the VI-SPDAT.
 - i. Heather indicated she works with several agencies in Spokane who have been using the VI-SPDAT for some time without any issues.
 - ii. BJ said she was hoping we would receive clarification from HUD so agencies would not have to use the VI-SPDAT knowing there were pending fair housing concerns.
 - iii. Dana said the fair housing concerns are more acute here in Idaho due to previous experiences with Intermountain Fair Housing Council (IFHC).
 - iv. Nancy said the CoC should avoid using a tool that is known to raise fair housing questions.

- v. Brady reiterated that federal fair housing law is the same across the country; however, enforcement is conducted by IFHC. Coordinated entry is being implemented across the country and HUD has indicated they are not aware of similar fair housing concerns in other communities. He said IHFA has researched fair housing cases in Idaho and said the outcomes have largely resulted in no finding or a settlement. He said settlements in the last few years have totaled approximately \$400,000. He indicated this appears to be a frequent tactic by IFHC and the CoC may want to proceed with the VI-SPDAT if the group believes the assessment does not violate fair housing laws.
- e. BJ asked for an update on the status of fair housing issues with the Boise/Ada County CoC.
 - i. Brady said IFHC participated in the Boise CoC's coordinated entry planning efforts for the past two years. IFHC has not filed a lawsuit against CATCH.
 - ii. Dana added that concerns from IFHC have gone beyond the VI-SPDAT to include prioritization in general.
 - iii. Leanne added that IFHC may not issue a lawsuit for several months or years after agencies believe issues were resolved. She said agencies often settle lawsuits because it's less expensive than litigating. She also said in Region 4 IFHC has asked why certain questions are even being asked during the assessment process if some types of housing are not available in the area.
 - 1. Brady said discrimination can result from how the assessment information is used, not just by asking the questions. People may not be placed in housing if limited options exist, so there is no discrimination or fair housing claim. He reiterated this is why the CE Operating Procedures does not use a system of strict placement based on an assessment score.
 - 2. BJ said she thought laws were different related to CE assessments – that information is not protected the same way as confidential information collected by case managers.
- f. It was agreed that a question-by-question review of the VI-SPDAT would allow the committee to identify both fair housing and trauma-informed concerns.

NEW ITEMS:

- 1. VI-SPDAT Review and Discussion
 - a. Dana reviewed the areas of prioritization included in the HUD Coordinated Entry Policy Brief.
 - b. Bill asked if it's allowable to modify and/or remove questions on the VI-SPDAT.
 - i. Brady said that's likely not allowed although we have not received a definitive answer from OrgCode. He added that, similar questions could be included in a locally developed tool.
 - c. Heather referenced the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) developed by the Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) in Seattle, saying the VAT includes some of the same sensitive areas included in the VI-SPDAT. She

- expressed concerns about the subjectivity of the VAT and the reliance on the opinion of the case manager or screener who is conducting the assessment.
- d. Bill reiterated his concerns about the assessment not being trauma informed or strengths-based and referenced the Canadian evaluation of assessment tools circulated to committee members. He also referenced HUD information regarding a person-centered approach to minimize psychological harm and impacts. He said he's okay with using the VI-SPDAT in order to keep the CE process moving forward, but wants to continue evaluating alternatives.
 - e. Ginny said she also supports a trauma-informed process, but recognizes the need to balance other expectations and deadlines.
 - f. BJ also stated providers support coordinated entry and are not attempting to block implementation.
 - g. The committee discussed issues related to the following questions:
 - i. Question 4 - dislike the use of "drunk tank" in 4f. IFHC had concerns with 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d as targeting people with disabilities and that 4d asks about the nature of a disability. Committee agreed these types of questions were acceptable.
 - ii. Question 6 – IFHC believes persons with disabilities would be more likely to answer yes.
 - iii. Question 7 – judgmental, not strengths-based. Question whether information is necessary before housing placement.
 - iv. Questions 8 & 9 – Both are objectionable and not trauma-informed. Questions may be more appropriate for case management. This question could be appropriate for youth. IFHC believes women are more likely answer yes to these questions. Committee was split on the acceptability and relevance of the questions.
 - v. Question 10 – dislike the references to a bookie or dealer – not trauma informed.
 - vi. Question 13 – IFHC believes this asks about the nature and extent of a disability. Committee agrees this question could raise fair housing concerns.
 - vii. Question 15 – IFHC believe persons with disabilities may be inclined to answer yes.
 - viii. Question 16 – IFHC believes the question gets to the nature and extent of a person's disability. Committee suggested limiting the question to ask only about chronic health conditions without naming anything specific.
 - ix. Question 18 – IFHC believes it's only appropriate when screening for housing restricted for people with disabilities. Committee suggested removing the word "physical" from the question.
 - x. Questions 21 & 22 – Question assumes the person has a drug/alcohol problem. Committee debated the merits of these types of questions in an assessment and questioned if they would be answered honestly. The Committee determined there is value in the questions and framing questions when administering the assessment is important so clients understand the purpose and will be more inclined to answer honestly. The committee suggested removing the word "your" from question #21.
 - xi. Question 23 – IFHC believes this asks about the nature and extent of a disability. The committee believes the question has merit, but suggested providing examples, rather than asking about specific conditions.

- xii. Question 24 – The committee agreed this question was not acceptable.
 - xiii. Question 25 – The question is confusing and the committee suggested re-wording for clarification, including a “for example” list. IFHC believes the question asks about the nature and extent of a disability.
 - xiv. Question 26 – The question asks two things and the answers could be different. The committee agreed the question should be eliminated. IFHC believes the question asks about the nature and extent of a disability.
 - xv. Question 27 – The question seems redundant, but allows a client to answer yes in order to address other traumas not previously referenced in the assessment.
- h. Bill referenced a questions included in the family SPDAT he found objectionable and extraneous.
 - i. Dana indicated only the Single VI-SDPAT was provided for review. Other tools do not offer different versions for families or transition-aged youth.
 - ii. The committee agreed specific questions for youth could be included in a new assessment.
 - i. Ginny referenced the potential risks of using a locally-developed assessment/prioritization tool rather than a standardized assessment. She said defending a local tool and the associated scoring is riskier than using a standardized assessment. She suggested the committee use a different standardized tool rather than crafting its own.
2. Brady suggested continuing a discussion on the VAT, referenced earlier in the meeting.
 - a. Dana said the questions/script is not available for review. Based on the response/scoring sheets, it appears the tool is much more subjective and would likely require more highly trained and educated staff to administer the assessment.
 - b. Heather expressed concern about the potential for subjectivity, or bias, by those conducting the assessment, particularly if they already know or have a relationship with the client being assessed.
 - c. Nancy asked about the role of case conferencing in making housing placement decisions.
 - i. Dana reiterated that a methodology for case conferencing can be determined by each region. Discussions can include a by-name client list or a numbered list without names.
 - ii. Heather said they intend to use case conferencing as a way to discuss placement for some of the most difficult cases.
 - d. Nancy and Heather both indicated they would prefer to use an objective assessment tool with direct yes/no questions, indicating removing subjectivity makes the process easier for everyone involved.
 - e. Misty said IFHC has issues with one-third of the questions on the VI-SPDAT.
 - i. Nancy said most of IFHC’s concerns were related to the nature of a disability, but the assessment questions don’t ask for specifics. The questions provide examples of conditions as reference.
 - ii. Mary said DHW asks many similar questions when assessing their clients. She indicated the questions seem appropriate for case conferencing but may not be necessary for housing.

1. Nancy indicated the questions are not just for housing, they are intended to understand the severity of service needs and level of vulnerability in order to prioritize.
 - f. Bill referenced the Canadian evaluation of assessment tools and that the evaluation ranked the VAT as the top tool and that the VAT has been tested for validity and reliability.
 - i. Donna said she believes the VAT is a better tool to assess a client's needs and vulnerability; however, she is not sure it could be administered consistently with validity and reliability because of the education, skill and training that appears to be necessary for staff.
 - ii. Bill referenced the validity testing sources for the VAT.
 - iii. Ginny said some assessments require certain credentials and the committee should confirm the credentials required for the VAT and the associated costs.
 - g. Jennifer reiterated that only the access points see client level data. Other agencies only see a score. She also referenced the weighted scoring included in the operating procedures to remind the committee that referral and placement decisions are not made solely on the results of a prioritization assessment.
3. Dana summarized the committee's discussion and asked to confirm next steps, given that some agencies are willing to implement with the VI-SPDAT while evaluating alternative tools; however, other agencies are not willing to use the VI-SPDAT at all.
 - a. Misty confirmed SCCAP will not use the VI-SDPAT.
 - b. Dana reiterated that all HUD-funded agencies must utilize a standardized assessment process which makes implementation difficult in regions that will not use the VI-SPDAT.
 - i. Misty indicated some agencies may choose to forfeit federal funding.
 - c. BJ confirmed the assessment process and tools are not prescribed by HUD.
 - d. Nancy mentioned that clients figure out how they need to answer questions in order to receive services.
 - i. Heather and others agreed this can happen with any assessment tool.
 - e. Bill stated he's supportive of moving forward with implementation using the VI-SPDAT while evaluating other tools.
 - f. Dana committed to gathering additional information on the cost and training requirements for the VAT for the next committee meeting and to include additional participants in future committee meeting notices.
4. Meeting adjourned.