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Vacancy Matching and Referral Policy

Policy Statement	This policy and protocol details guidelines and best practices for right-matching clients to available housing resources.
Purpose	The Community Entity (CE), City of Hamilton, is required by the federal Reaching Home program to clarify how vacancies are filled from the Coordinated Access Resource Inventory according to agreed-upon prioritization and referral protocols.
Indigenous Clients	<p>Indigenous-identifying clients choosing to access mainstream services will be prioritized first. Those identifying as Indigenous are not required to use mainstream triage and assessment tools in order to receive services. Indigenous clients' names are not required to appear on the By-Name List (BNL). Progressive engagement to obtain consent should be conducted according to agency practice in a way that is culturally considerate and respects individual autonomy.</p> <p>The process of prioritizing Indigenous clients in the mainstream coordinated access system will be informed by the Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership and Indigenous service partners. Amendments to this policy will be directed by the Indigenous CE.</p>
Unsheltered Populations	The CE will review unsheltered individuals on the By-Name List bi-weekly. VI-SPDATs completed by the Street Outreach team will be reviewed and cross-referenced with the By-Name Priority List (BNPL) to ensure those unsheltered are represented and prioritized according to their needs and community prioritization criteria. Clients are not required to stay in shelters in order to receive housing supports.
Vacancy Matching & Referral	Vacancies for City-funded Intensive Case Management, Rapid Re-Housing, and Transitional Living programs will be filled according to referrals made from the BNPL. The CE will develop the BNPL bi-weekly, drawing from the wider BNL of all people known to be experiencing homelessness by applying community prioritization criteria based on Indigenous ancestry, chronicity, level of acuity, and demographics. Urgent health & safety protocols are in place to ensure those experiencing hidden

	<p>homelessness or heightened risk due to their housing status are able to be prioritized to receive immediate support.</p> <p>City funded homelessness programs operate from a client-centered philosophy. This means that clients and their personal choices must be understood, acknowledged, and honoured to the best of the program’s ability. Key to support this model is setting clients up for success by clearly communicating expectations and responsibilities of clients, program staff, and the Coordinated Access System as a whole. Clients should be clear on what to expect from the programs supporting them and any opportunities and/or limitations related to their unique housing goals.</p> <p>Clients are not required to accept a referral or offer of housing supports or accommodations. Clients have the right to decline service without any repercussions to their prioritization status or eligibility for further or alternate supports. In such cases, agencies will continue to work with clients to build trust, support basic needs, and encourage further action towards achieving housing.</p>
<p>Dispute Resolution</p>	<p>Disputes may be brought forward by clients to agency staff, whose first response will be to support clients in addressing their concerns as per organizational processes. If an issue cannot be resolved by the organization where the dispute is presented, agency management will engage Housing Services staff on matters related to Coordinated Access as outlined below.</p> <p>The following procedures will be used to resolve case specific and systemic disputes raised by both clients and staff of the Coordinated Access System.</p> <p>Case Specific disputes could be related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy of assessment scores • Prioritization on the By-Name Priority List, or • Selection for housing or program vacancies <p>Case specific disputes will be addressed using the steps below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workers discuss issues with one another and seek resolution. 2. Workers involve their respective supervisors and Housing Division staff to seek resolution. A face-to-face meeting is preferred. 3. Managers/Directors will resolve the dispute.

	<p>Systemic Disputes could be related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative or procedural differences. • Differences in service philosophy, principles or policies. • Resource shortages, which may require harmonization of systems. <p>Systemic disputes will be addressed using the steps below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Front line staff identifies the nature of the dispute 2. Front line staff informs their supervisor and/or Manager/Director 3. Managers/Directors discuss the issue and forwards the issue to Housing Services Division via the Check-in Table and/or the Coordinated Access Steering Committee 4. The Coordinated Access Steering Committee recommends a strategy for resolution of differences
Applicability	<p>This policy applies to all City funded homelessness programs and all staff members contracted there within to provide related coordinated access services.</p>
Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By-Name List: a real-time list of all people known to be experiencing homelessness in the community who have provided consent. This real-time actionable data supports triage to services, system performance evaluation, and advocacy for the policies and resources necessary to end homelessness. • By-Name Priority List: Identifies individuals who meet community prioritization criteria to connect them with designated housing supports first. • Community Entity: lead decision-making body that coordinates efforts to achieve federal, provincial, and local outcomes. • Coordinated Access Resource Inventory: list of all available housing resources and their eligibility requirements. This may include units and housing affordability resources for permanent housing, housing-based case management supports, etc. • HIFIS: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is a web-enabled Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) that allows multiple service providers to implement coordinated access using real-time information about people experiencing

	<p>homelessness and the resources they need to find and keep a home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent Health & Safety Criteria: Refers to urgent cases where people who are experiencing homelessness are at heightened risk of harm due to their homelessness, health status, or immediate safety concerns that require time sensitive and urgent support (e.g. terminally ill, pregnant etc.). • Prioritization: the action or process of determining relative importance or urgency.
<p>Responsibilities</p>	<p><u>Community Entity (CE)</u></p> <p>The CE is required to develop policies that detail consent, confidentiality and data sharing, triage and assessment protocols, priority populations and vacancy matching and referral protocols. These policies will be made accessible to funded agencies and be publicly available for reference.</p> <p>Ability to document how vacancies for City-funded programs are filled according to agreed-upon community prioritization and referral protocols.</p> <p>The City is further required to specify how individual choice in housing resources will be honoured. This includes processes specific to dealing with referral challenges, concerns, and/or disagreements (including refusals of referrals).</p> <p><u>Agency</u></p> <p>Programs provide housing supports to clients experiencing homelessness and those at risk of losing their housing according to respective contractual obligations.</p> <p>Programs must take clients prioritized from the By-Name Priority List (BNPL) first -unless clients present with urgent health and safety needs consistent with the definition outlined in the Coordinated Access Prioritization policy.</p>
<p>Accountability</p>	<p><u>Community Entity (City of Hamilton)</u></p> <p>The CE is accountable for the creation of Coordinated Access policies and standards, processes for monitoring prioritization and referrals, as well as generating a BNPL bi-weekly to share with agency partners. The CE is responsible for receiving disputes and convening resolution efforts.</p>

	<p>Outcomes related to timely referrals of priority populations will be analyzed and reported by the CE to the federal government, City Council and general public and will be regularly reviewed with system partners.</p> <p><u>Agency</u></p> <p>Coordinated Access programs are accountable to the City for supporting clients referred exclusively from the BNPL. Agencies must ensure that client choice and preference is honoured when connecting clients to programs. It is important that clients are engaged once referred to a program and that case managers work with clients to ensure right-matching to housing and broader community supports occurs to reduce the likelihood of recidivism.</p>
<p>Related Documents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamilton’s Coordinated Access Guidelines • Hamilton’s Systems Planning Framework • Coordinated Access Policies • Revisioning Coordinated Access: <i>Fostering Indigenous Best Practices Towards a Wholistic Systems Approach to Homelessness</i> • Urban Indigenous Strategy • Hamilton’s Housing and Homelessness Action Plan