

OVERVIEW

ORANGE COUNTY COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM

The Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) is funded by Orange County and the Towns of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough. OCPEH works with collaborating public and private agencies in Orange County to help people find a safe place to stay using the OC Connect Coordinated Entry System (OC Connect) – a single point of entry and shelter diversion system. The OC Connect system determines quickly, consistently and effectively which services or resources will best help people who either are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.

OC Connect is designed to be intuitive and helpful both to the client and to the agencies that serve them. OC Connect is designed:

- ***to improve the system of programs and services for the clients; and***
- ***to help make the work of the agencies that provide those services more efficient.***

For the person experiencing homelessness: OC Connect provides for the person seeking help consistent and uniform access, assessment, prioritization, and referral to determine the most appropriate response for their specific and immediate housing needs. OC Connect is committed to making sure that people experiencing homelessness are pointed to the right resource the first time; that people are guided first through a series of questions (conversation starters) that might reveal whether they can avoid the homeless system and still find a safe place to sleep; and that people who do go through the homeless system realize a faster transition to permanent housing.

For the collaborating agencies who serve people experiencing homelessness: OC Connect improves efficiency and clarity of mission, because coordinated entry through OC Connect will also help prevent duplication of work. OC Connect provides to clients clear expectations about the kind of assistance available and appropriate to their needs.

OC Connect is guided, maintained, and updated by two Committees and one workgroup comprised of OC Connect stakeholders, and coordinated by the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH). Information about the partners who use, guide and maintain the OC Connect system can be found in “Partners and Roles”, Section ____ of this document.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document will provide guidance and direction for the day-to-day operation, management, oversight, and evaluation of OC Connect. In addition to its role as an operations manual, this document also constitutes Written Standards for providing homeless service assistance through OC Connect. These standards have been developed and agreed upon by the OCPEH in consultation with other recipients of Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Continuum of Care (CoC) funds. This document will be updated and revised on an on-going basis as the actual application and practical experience of implementing a coordinated entry system and its design principles are refined and improved.

ELEMENTS OF THE OC CONNECT SYSTEM



When people come to one of the partnering agencies and ask for help finding a safe place to stay, they will be guided through the three OC Connect tools used to determine their options and needs. The first tool is called “Exploring Your Options”, the second is “Program Referral Assessment” and the third tool is the “Resource Database”.

Exploring Your Options: This tool is a guided intake conversation in which the agency representative and the client use a strengths-based approach to create an environment in which they can think creatively to problem-solve, examining every possible option for avoiding entry into the homeless system. While it’s true that OC Connect is for folks needing emergency assistance, research confirms that if communities can keep people out of the homeless system by diverting them to emergency shelter or transitional housing, it’s better both for the people and for the agencies that are helping them find a safe place to stay. The OC Connect Exploring Your Options tool helps people – even those in the midst of a crisis – to think creatively and independently about possible housing solutions to their emergency needs.

Program Referral Assessment: If, after exploring the client’s options agencies determine that more help is needed, OC Connect uses Program Referral Assessment. This tool solves the question of how to get someone back into permanent housing, but not where that person will sleep in the immediate crisis. People who would use the program referral assessment tool would be those who:

- are already experiencing homelessness and they are not seeking shelter;
- are already experiencing homelessness for more than 2 weeks and seeking shelter; and
- are staying in a Shelter or transitional housing and seeking assistance with housing.

Since Orange County doesn’t have the resources to serve everyone, prioritization happens. But it’s also true that regardless of the fluctuation in resource availability, Program Referral seeks to provide the right referral for the household the first time, taking into account:

- the person’s eligibility for programs,
- funding or other availability and
- household need – providing just the “right” amount of assistance.

Using the OC Connect Program Referral Assessment means that partnering agencies, emergency shelter and homeless programs won’t be using their own individual program referral processes – relying instead on a standardized system to assess and prioritize the client’s needs. This is an enormous gain for the client and for the collaborating agencies that work together to help the client.

OC Connect uses the VI-SPDAT scoring system to assess and prioritize client needs. More information about this scoring tool, as well as the prioritization policies, is in Section __ of this Policies and Procedures Manual. Information about the programs to which clients are referred can be found in Section ____.

Resource Database: The OC Connect system also uses a resource database. People who want to explore on their own resources available to them to help address homelessness can do so by looking at the resource database. But generally speaking, people looking for this kind of resource guide will also be referred to either the Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), an Orange County integrated services agency, and/or the Orange County Department of Social Services (DSS) to help them navigate this resource.

SAFETY

It is critically important to note that there are no less than three different points at which agencies ask about and consider whether the person who's come to them is safe from domestic violence, sexual assault or threat of sexual assault. If at any of those points in the intake conversation the client answers "yes" or affirmatively to even one risk, they will be diverted immediately to one of two facilities specifically designed to help and protect victims of domestic violence or sexual assault. Information about these facilities can be found in "Prioritization by Program Type", Section ____ of this document.

CLIENT CHOICE & DIGITAL CONSENT

Clients who come to Orange County partner agencies for help with homelessness are freely allowed to decide what information they provide during the assessment process, to refuse to answer assessment questions and to refuse housing and service options without retribution or limiting their access to other forms of assistance. Clients can also revoke digital consent at any point and for any reason. This element of privacy and choice is at the heart of the OC Connect system's core standards. For more information about OC Connect Core Standards, see Section ____ of this document.

GRAPHIC: The Ideal Coordinated Entry System

PARTNERS & ROLES

The following table provides a view of service providers, each of whom is either an ESG Recipient, a CoC Recipient, or a Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Recipient (or organizations who receive a combination of funding) and who've agreed to coordinate screening, assessment, and referrals for ESG projects consistent with agreed-upon standards by serving on at least one of the three stakeholder committees or workgroup – the HOME Committee, The OC Connect Planning Committee or the Data and Grants Workgroup. As of January 2018, these are the current partner agencies:

Agency	ESG Recipient	CoC Recipient	HUD-VASH or SSVF Recipient	OC Connect Planning Committee	HOME Committee	Data & Grants Workgroup
Cardinal Innovations		X			X	X
Chapel Hill Police Department					X	
Community Empowerment Fund				X	X	
Durham VA Medical Center			X		X	
Community Link	(Not in Orange Co.)	X			X	X
Freedom House					X	
Inter-Faith Council for Social Service	X	X		X	X	X
Lutheran Family Services					X	
Peter Elst LLC (peer support)					X	
Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Dept.					X	
Orange County Dept. on Aging					X	
Orange County Dept. of Social Services	X				X	X
Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness		X (planning grant)		X	X	X
UNC Horizons					X	
UNC Hospitals					X	
Volunteers of America			X		X	

PARTNERS & ROLES, *continued*

The following three committees/workgroup are charged with assessing and prioritizing client needs on a by-name list, coordinating ongoing evaluation and improvements of OC Connect; and reviewing and promoting data quality, working on annual CoC application, setting standards for homeless program performance and implementing program performance improvements.

- **HOME Committee**
 - **Purpose:** review monthly a by-name list, case conference client needs, and prioritize referrals for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)
 - Meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month, 9-noon at Southern Human Services Center, 2501 Homestead Rd in Chapel Hill
- **OC Connect Planning Committee**
 - **Purpose:** work on coordinated entry system level issues, coordinate evaluation and ongoing system improvements
 - Meets first and third Thursday, 3-4:30 pm at CEF, 208 N. Columbia St. Suite 100
- **Data & Grants Workgroup**
 - **Purpose:** review and promote excellent data quality for all projects serving people who are homeless in Orange County, work on annual CoC application, shape and implement data elements of coordinated entry process with OC Connect and HMIS, set standards for homeless program performance, and implement a program performance improvement process
 - Meets on the third Monday of each month, 3-4:30 pm at Southern Human Services Center, 2501 Homestead Rd in Chapel Hill

In addition to the agencies who serve on the HOME Committee, the OC Connect Planning Committee and the Data and Grants Workgroup, other agencies agreed to coordinate referrals for services through OC Connect. Those additional organizations include:

- Carrboro Police Department
- Chapel Hill Department of Housing & Community
- Chapel Hill Fire Department
- Compass Center
- Hillsborough Police Department
- Orange County Emergency Services
- Orange County Department of Housing & Community Development
- Orange County Rape Crisis Center
- Orange County Sheriff's Office

CORE STANDARDS

Partnering agencies have agreed that the following principals constitute core values that shape and inform the OC Connect Coordinated Entry System.

- OC Connect supports **client choice**: participants are freely allowed to decide what information they provide during the assessment process, to refuse to answer assessment questions and to refuse housing and service options without retribution or limiting their access to other forms of assistance. Clients can revoke digital consent at any point and for any reason. This element of privacy and choice is at the heart of the OC Connect system's core standards.
 - Participants will maintain their place on the HOME Committee list, the coordinated entry prioritization list, when they reject referral options.
 - Programs may require participants to provide certain pieces of information to determine program eligibility only when the applicable program regulation requires the information to establish or document eligibility.
- OC Connect uses **Housing First**, a principal that supports the fundamental importance of transitioning people experiencing homelessness back to permanent housing as quickly as possible and helping people maintain housing.
- OC Connect uses **prioritization**: allocating limited housing resources, including Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing, to the most vulnerable households in our community.
- OC Connect **applies a consistent process throughout the community** to achieve fair, equitable, and equal access to homeless programs and services within Orange County
- OC Connect **will not screen 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, resistance to receiving services, the type or extent of a disability-related services or supports that are needed, history of evictions or poor credit, lease violations or history of not being a leaseholder, or criminal record.
- OC Connect **does not require disclosure of specific disabilities or diagnosis** – this information may only be obtained for purposes of determining program eligibility to make appropriate referrals.

ACCESS

Partners of the OC Connect Coordinated Entry System and the community partners who have agreed to coordinate referral to services through OC Connect have agreed on at least the following accessibility benchmarks:

- OC Connect is designed to be available to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, disability, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identify, or marital status.
- All people have fair and equal access to OC Connect, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, veterans, families with children, youth, and survivors of domestic violence.
- All physical locations are accessible to individuals with disabilities, including accessible physical locations for individuals who use wheelchairs, as well as people in the CoC who are least likely to access homeless assistance.

HOURS & LOCATIONS

- OC Connect will operate within the hours listed below. Persons are ensured access to emergency services during hours when OC Connect intake and assessment processes are not operating by leaving a message on the centralized phone number. When participants leave a voicemail, a service provider will call them back to complete intake and assessment within 14 hours.
- People seeking homeless services can go in person to explore options for services and housing referrals during non-holidays:
 - Chapel Hill, Monday-Friday, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), 208 N. Columbia St. Suite 100
 - Hillsborough, Wednesdays, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm, Orange County Dept. of Social Services (DSS), 113 Mayo St
- People seeking homeless services can call the Homeless Hotline 24 hours a day during these times to explore options for services and housing referrals. The hotline calls will be forwarded to agencies:
 - REGULAR, Monday-Friday
 - 12:00 am – 6:00 am, IFC HomeStart
 - 6:00 am – 10:00 am, voicemail
 - 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, Community Empowerment Fund
 - 3:00 pm – 12:00 am voicemail
 - REGULAR, Saturday-Sunday & HOLIDAYS
 - 12:00 am – 6:00 am, IFC HomeStart
 - 6:00 am – 12:00 am, voicemail

	OC Connect Coverage						
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 AM	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC
2 AM	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC
3 AM	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC
4 AM	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC
5 AM	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC
6 AM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
7 AM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
8 AM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	👤 DSS Hillsborough	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
9 AM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	👤 DSS Hillsborough	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
10 AM	Voicemail	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 DSS Hillsborough 👤 / ☎ CEF Chapel Hill	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	Voicemail
11 AM	Voicemail	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 DSS Hillsborough 👤 / ☎ CEF Chapel Hill	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	Voicemail
12 PM	Voicemail	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 DSS Hillsborough 👤 / ☎ CEF Chapel Hill	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	Voicemail
1 PM	Voicemail	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 DSS Hillsborough 👤 / ☎ CEF Chapel Hill	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	Voicemail
2 PM	Voicemail	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 DSS Hillsborough 👤 / ☎ CEF Chapel Hill	👤 / ☎ CEF	👤 / ☎ CEF	Voicemail
3 PM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	👤 DSS Hillsborough	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
4 PM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	👤 DSS Hillsborough	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
5 PM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
6 PM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
7 PM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
8 PM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
9 PM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
10 PM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
11 PM	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail	Voicemail
12 AM	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC	☎ IFC

NEED TO MAKE THIS GRAPHIC MORE READABLE

STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT PROCESS

I. Assessors

People who have experienced homelessness for 14+ days and are interested in housing referral can come to the OC Connect System through agencies across Orange County. The list of agencies that have agreed to offer standardized assessment are:

- Chapel Hill Police Department
- Community Empowerment Fund (CEF)
- Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC), inclusive of IFC Community House and IFC HomeStart shelters
- Orange County Department on Aging
- Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Office
- Orange County Department of Social Services
- Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCEPH)

II. Scoring System

Orange County uses a scoring system called **The Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)**. This is a pre-screening tool that helps the agencies listed above – and many others around the country – determine during the intake process the health and social needs of the people who come to them for help with homelessness. Through a series of about 30 simple questions presented by a person at the agency where the client has presented and answered by the person seeking help, VI-SPDAT matches people with the support and housing interventions appropriate to the level of severity (acuity) of their respective situations; and it helps make these assessments for service consistently and quickly. Once the survey is completed, the client's needs are scored.

People who have experienced homelessness will qualify -- according to their VI-SPDAT score -- for either **Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Re-Housing**, or links to other local resources that might better fit their needs.

VI-SPDAT score referral range:

- **Score of 10-17** – prioritized for **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)**
- **Score of 4-9** – prioritized for **Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)**
- **Score of 3 or lower** – no formal program referral, households will be assisted with case management and links to mainstream resources as best fits their needs

III. Once Scores Are Assessed

Households with scores of 4 and higher are also placed on the HOME Committee list. The HOME Committee reviews monthly this by-name list to consider case conference client needs, and to prioritize referrals for PSH and RRH. **OCEPH staff resort this list each month** giving each household a unique prioritization number that encompasses:

- (1) households with higher VI-SPDAT scores,
- (2) longer lengths of time homeless, and
- (3) people living unsheltered vs. in emergency shelter or transitional housing programs.

OCEPH distributes the updated HOME Committee list before the monthly HOME Committee meeting, adding households who have presented at intake agencies for services during the previous month, and who scored 4+ on the VI-SPDAT. OCEPH also distributes the list after each HOME Committee meeting, updating households who have been housed or removed from the list.

STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT PROCESS, *continued***III. Once Scores Are Assessed, *continued***

Agency staff prioritize housing voucher availability based on vulnerability but are looking for individualized housing solutions for all people on the HOME Committee list. OCPEH is working on materials to provide clarity and information for households on the HOME Committee list about the purpose of the list and how to obtain updated information while maintaining client confidentiality and privacy.

When primary program referral is not available, service providers will work with households to find other community options that are available to transition to permanent housing.

For example: A household with a score of 11 would be prioritized for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). But if no PSH vouchers were currently available, this household would be referred to Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) if RRH funds are available; or for **Section 8 Public Housing**, if units/vouchers are available; or for **SOAR*** if a person in the household has a disability and does not yet receive SSI/SSDI; or for SNAP benefits if the household is eligible, etc.

Service providers on the HOME Committee meet regularly to case conference the by-name list of the most vulnerable people seeking housing, working together to prioritize primary referrals and other community options to transition households to permanent housing as quickly as possible using Housing First principles and methods.

***SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR)** is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and is a national program designed to increase access to the disability income benefit programs administered by the Social Security Administration for eligible adults who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder.

GRAPHIC - 2 questions to solve with each experience of homelessness

1. Where am I going to lay my head tonight? –this will be solved with either shelter stay or diversion
2. How to get back to permanent housing? – household will either self resolve, or get prioritized for a program referral

PRIORITIZATION POLICIES

*For program types with multi-level prioritization criteria, individuals/households will be referred to actual open slots in programs from the HOME Committee list – the person highest on the list will receive the housing referral. Please note that there are at least three points in the OC Connect system at which people are given an opportunity to share whether they have concerns for their safety. If at any of those points the client reflects concern for any element of their safety, they **MUST BE DIVERTED** to either Compass House or Orange County Rape Crisis Center (see IV, Prioritization by Program Type).*

The HOME Committee list is prioritized by

- **VI-SPDAT score** – higher scores prioritized
- **Length of time homeless** – longer times prioritized
- **Living situation** – unsheltered situations prioritized over sheltered homeless
- **Age** – older adults prioritized over younger adults

If households fall into multiple prioritization categories (i.e. they have a high VI-SPDAT score and they are Chronically Homeless), they shall be prioritized based on the highest level of priority for which they qualify.

Orange County has adopted HUD Notice CPD-16-11 to prioritize people experiencing chronic homelessness:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5108/notice-cpd-16-11-prioritizing-persons-experiencing-chronic-homelessness-and-other-vulnerable-homeless-persons-in-psh/>

Orange County separates barriers to housing entry and barriers to housing maintenance when considering program referrals. Barriers to housing maintenance are addressed while clients are in housing using the “Housing First” model (see Core Standards, page 4).

GRAPHIC: Barriers to housing entry vs. housing maintenance

GRAPHIC: Simplified System Map

PRIORITIZATION BY PROGRAM TYPE

I. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): OC Connect prioritizes households using the priorities outlined in the HOME Committee Prioritization Policies, and adding to those priorities consideration of whether the household has experienced chronic homelessness:

- **Priority 1: Chronic homelessness** – PSH is first prioritized for people experiencing chronic homelessness as defined below in SECTION XX: Definitions on pg. XX
- **Priority 2: Highest VI-SPDAT score**
- **Priority 3: Length of time homeless**
- **Priority 4: Living situation** (sheltered vs. unsheltered)
- **Priority 5: Adult age**

GRAPHIC: Chronic homeless first, then other priorities used in that order for people exp. CH

II. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH): OC Connect prioritizes households per the following criteria

- Priority 1: Same as Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) when PSH is not available
- Priority 2: Highest VI-SPDAT recommended score range of 4-9
- Priority 3: Length of time homeless
- Priority 4: Living situation (sheltered vs. unsheltered)

Rapid Re-Housing case managers will use best practice program models, including case management paired with financial assistance and progressive engagement, to work with each household individually to determine the amount of rent, if any, the household must pay while receiving Rapid Re-Housing assistance using these factors:

- Amount of household income (if any)
- Amount of household expenditures
- Any other factors affecting household's ability to enter and maintain permanent housing including arrears to past landlords, utilities, and others
- Given that the community need for Rapid Re-Housing services outstrips community resources and national data show RRH can be successful in most cases with less than 6 months assistance, RRH case managers will attempt to transition each household as quickly as possible to self-sufficiency while not jeopardizing the household's long-term stability
- Rapid Re-Housing programs work with shelters to transition people into permanent housing as quickly as possible.

III. Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing: Households will be referred by OC Connect to IFC HomeStart and IFC Community House and out-of-county shelters to be placed in these programs as beds are available, not prioritized based on severity of service need or vulnerability.

IFC Community House is the one transitional housing program in Orange County that serves as an emergency shelter for single men and does not have separate prioritization or operational procedure, thus Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing are listed here together.

- **Women & Families:** IFC HomeStart has beds available for single women and for families as they present and/or identify, including families headed by single fathers and two parent-headed families in addition to families headed by single mothers and all others, regardless of family composition.
 - **Single women call the Homeless Hotline** for shelter referral, 919-245-2222
 - **Families call Orange County DSS** for a referral 919-245-2800.
- **Men:** IFC Community House continues to have beds available for men 18 and older, call the **Homeless Hotline for shelter referral at 919-245-2222.**
- **Seasonal:** IFC Community House & HomeStart have seasonal beds and are available for single men and single women when weather.com predicts overnight low of 39 degrees or less.

- **For women, 3 beds available:** call HomeStart at 919-932-6025 between 1-5 pm to sign up; If staff person says space is still available, they will instruct you on when to arrive that evening; Eat dinner before coming.
- **For men, 17 beds available:** Call Community House at 919-967-1086 (option 0) to reserve a spot; or go to Community Kitchen by 7 pm for a ride to Community House. Eat dinner before coming.

OC Connect will work with households to secure out-of-county shelter beds at

- **Urban Ministries of Durham,**
- **Allied Churches of Alamance County,**
- **Wilmington Street shelter in Raleigh,**

and other shelters as dictated by client need and client choice.

IV. Households Fleeing Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault: Households fleeing, or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking will be connected immediately to the domestic violence service provider **Compass Center** and the victim service organization **Orange County Rape Crisis Center** for safety planning, even when households are seeking shelter or services from non-victim service providers. With client consent, OC Connect screens for safety concerns in three different places in the VI-SPDAT intake survey. People fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence and victims of trafficking have safe and confidential access to OC Connect and victim services – including access to the comparable process – Corey – what comparable process? used by victim service providers, and immediate access to emergency services such as crisis hotlines and shelter.

NOTE: Agencies in Orange County do not yet have funding to provide either street outreach or homelessness prevention. The Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness and its partnering agencies do, however, remain current and informed about best practices in these areas of work, with the intention of adding both elements of service to the community in the near future. Following is a summary of services proposed for a future date:

Homelessness Prevention: The CoC does not currently fund homelessness prevention services with ESG or CoC funds. The CoC works with DSS and faith-based partners offering prevention and guides people at risk of homelessness to a regularly updated Google doc listing emergency financial assistance. Each prevention program currently determines program eligibility and prioritization. The CoC will work with these agencies to bring prevention services under the coordinated entry umbrella. At that time, the CoC will take referrals for prevention services through OC Connect. OC Connect will prioritize using prevention funding for shelter diversion, then by the immediacy of the spell of imminent homelessness. People will be prioritized for other prevention services based on funding availability.

- As of January 2018, there are no private (i.e. non ESG -funded) homelessness prevention services that participate in OC Connect. People will be prioritized for referrals to these programs based on the same methodology above
- No separate access point(s) for homelessness prevention services exist in Orange County. The CoC will work with all agencies providing prevention services, regardless of funding source, to coordinate how persons will be prioritized for referrals , or

Street Outreach: The CoC does not have a street outreach program as of January 2018 but is working to establish this needed program type. Once operational, people experiencing homelessness will be referred to Street Outreach per Priority 1 of the HUD Homeless definition: Persons residing on the streets, in vehicles or

other places not meant for human habitation that have refused or are unlikely to engage with other homeless service providers in the community; or people residing on the streets, in vehicles or other places not meant for human habitation and are matched to transitional housing, rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing but are not yet housed.

All street outreach will offer clients:

- *The same standardized process as persons who access coordinated entry through site-based access points, using OC Connect, the coordinated entry process*
- *A relationship-based model, which uses harm reduction methods*
- *Close coordination with PSH, RRH, IFC Community Kitchen and shelter staff, Outreach Court, Emergency Service, law enforcement*

GRIEVANCES

Rights: OC Connect will protect participants' rights and inform participants of their rights and responsibilities explained to them verbally and -- if requested -- in writing when completing an initial intake. At a minimum, rights will include:

- The right to be treated with dignity and respect
- The right to appeal housing referral decisions
- The right to be treated with cultural sensitivity
- The right to have an advocate present during the appeals process
- The right to request a reasonable accommodation in accordance with the project's tenant/person selection process
- The right to accept housing/services offered or to reject housing/services;
- The right to confidentiality and to be informed about when confidential information will be disclosed, to whom, and for what purposes, as well as the right to deny disclosure
- The right to file a grievance for violation of nondiscrimination policies – see Section ## for nondiscrim info...

Process to File Grievances: Grievances about OC Connect referrals and procedures could come from clients trying to access services, participating agencies, similar homeless service organizations, housing programs, and victim service organizations. If it's a program issue, grievances should be filed at the agency level.

Please note that each partnering agency also has its own grievance policy. All grievance policies – both those for OC Connect and for the partnering agencies – will be posted at each agency.

People submitting grievances of any sort are asked to submit them within 10 days of the decision or problem arising.

Client or agency grievances can be sent in writing to the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH)

- via email to Croot@orangecountync.gov or
- via mail at PO Box 8181, Hillsborough, NC 27278 (please note: if an agency is submitting the grievance, it must be received on that agency's letterhead)

Grievances must include:

- A detailed account of the grievance

- Why/how the agency or household believes OC Connect, the HOME Committee, or others were in error
- Proposed solution(s)

OCPEH staff or another designee will reply to any grievance within 3 days, stating:

- Confirmation of receipt of grievance
- Details of the next steps regarding the decision and appeals process for both the aggrieved party and others
- A timeline with deadlines and/or meeting dates

OCPEH will carbon copy (cc) the State ESG Office on this initial reply and on any further correspondence relating either to the grievance decision or appeals.

Decisions and Appeals: OCPEH will identify a group – either a sub-group of the HOME Committee, Coordinated Entry Planning Committee or other appointed group – to hear grievances and to determine a decision.

Within 15 days of initial filing of grievance, the group identified by OCPEH will respond in writing with:

- A summary of its understanding of the grievance
- A recap of activities since the grievance was filed
- The decision of the group
- If needed, any further steps or actions to be taken by the agency or OCPEH, including a timeline with dates for additional appeals

OCPEH or other Orange County homeless service agencies will offer assistance to anyone who needs accommodations to complete the above process. For example, clients can make grievances verbally to OCPEH staff, etc.

PRIVACY

OC Connect uses a digital consent process to obtain participant consent to share and store participant information for purposes of assessing and referring participants through the coordinated entry process. This process includes the use of a consent form and that form will be updated as partner agencies shift over time. Please see the OC Connect consent form as of January 19, 2018 in APPENDIX A. It is important to note that client consent is at the

Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness protects all data collected through the coordinated entry process by

- All computers running OC Connect are required to have password protection
- Maintaining all written OC Connect materials in locked cabinets
- Not collecting any information not necessary for service or program referral
- All people attending the HOME Committee meeting are required to sign the confidentiality policy, see APPENDIX B
- Requiring all staff administering OC Connect to be trained, inclusive of privacy trainings

NONDISCRIMINATION

Orange County has developed and operates a coordinated entry that permits recipients of Federal and State funds to comply with applicable civil rights and fair housing laws and requirements. Recipients and sub-recipients of CoC Program and ESG Program-funded projects must comply with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of Federal civil rights laws, including the following:

- **Fair Housing Act** prohibits discriminatory housing practices based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or familial status.
- Section 504 of the **Rehabilitation Act** prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.
- Title VI of the **Civil Rights Act** prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.
- Title II of the **Americans with Disabilities Act** prohibits public entities, which includes State and local governments, and special purpose districts, from discriminating against individuals with disabilities in all their services, programs, and activities, which include housing, and housing related services such as housing search and referral assistance.
- Title III of the **Americans with Disabilities Act** prohibits private entities that own, lease, and operate places of public accommodation, which include shelters, social service establishments, and other public accommodations providing housing, from discriminating on the basis of disability.
- In addition to federal policies, agencies in Orange County shall not discriminate based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

Orange County wants to ensure effective communication with people with disabilities. Recipients of Federal funds and CoCs must provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services necessary to ensure effective communication (e.g. Braille, audio, large type, assistive listening devices, and sign language interpreters.)

Process to File Nondiscrimination Complaint: People submitting nondiscrimination complaints are asked to submit them within 10 days of the issue arising.

Client or agency nondiscrimination complaints can be sent to the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH)

- via email to Croot@orangecountync.gov or
- via mail at PO Box 8181, Hillsborough, NC 27278 (please note: if an agency is submitting the grievance, it must be received on that agency's letterhead)

Nondiscrimination complaints must include:

- A detailed account of the complaint
- Proposed solution(s), if any

OCPEH staff or another designee will reply to any nondiscrimination complaint within 3 days, stating:

- Confirmation of receipt of complaint
- Details of the next steps
- A timeline with deadlines and/or meeting dates with the goal of resolving the matter effectively and quickly.

OCPEH or other Orange County homeless service agencies will offer assistance to anyone who needs accommodations to complete the above process.

MANDATED REPORTING (this definition provided by NCCASA)

North Carolina law requires any person or institution to report reasonable belief that a juvenile, a disabled adult or an elderly person is being abused, neglected or in need for any other reason of protective service. Reports should be made to the Director of the County Department of Social Services in the county in which the child, disabled adult or elderly person resides or is found. Reports may be made orally or in writing and should include:

- the name and address of the juvenile, disabled adult, or elderly person;
- the name and address of the juvenile, disabled adult, or elderly person's care-taker;
- the age of the juvenile/disabled adult/elderly person;
- the names and ages of other juveniles, disabled adults, or elderly people in the home;
- the present whereabouts of the juvenile, disabled adult, or elderly person;
- the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency and;
- any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful.

If the report is made orally or by telephone, the reporter must include his or her name, address, and telephone number. By remaining anonymous, a reporter obstructs the department's ability to seek additional information and therefore forfeits his or her right to receive notification about the outcome of the investigation.

Because of these reporting requirements, agencies offering homeless services ensure all front-line staff members have full training and understand North Carolina law on mandated reporting.

As the coordinated entry system, OC Connect does not contain specific mandated reporting information. If agencies have specific mandated reporting procedures, these should be followed.

APPENDIX A: Digital Consent Form

The client must always be given a copy of this form after signing.

In the following cases, minors have the right to release information without a parent's signature and have the same rights as adults:

1. Emancipated minors;
2. Minors receiving substance abuse treatment; and
3. Minors receiving treatment for pregnancy, emotional disturbance, and sexually transmitted diseases.

If the client prefers Spanish, print this [Spanish Version](#) for them for them to read and sign, and then fill out the form below with their responses.

OC Connect: Consent to Exchange Information

The **HOME Taskforce** (Housing in Orange Made Effective) connects people experiencing homelessness to appropriate services and housing. This group is coordinated by the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness and includes representatives from Cardinal Innovations, Carramore, CASA, Chapel Hill Police Department, Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), Community Link, Durham VA (Veteran Affairs) Medical Center, Freedom House, Inter-faith Council for Social Service (IFC), Law Office of Judith Romanowski, Lutheran Family Services, Orange County Department on Aging, Orange County Department of Social Services (DSS), Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA), Peer support agencies licensed through Cardinal Innovations, Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Office, Orange County Emergency Services (EMS), Outreach Court, Piedmont Health Services, UNC Center for Excellence in Community Mental Health, UNC Horizons, UNC Hospitals, Durham Continuum of Care, and Volunteers of America. The purpose of this form is to provide your consent for the members of the HOME Task Force to exchange information about you to coordinate their services to better help you.

I understand what information will be released, the purpose for the release of the information, and that there are statutes and regulations protecting the confidentiality of the information to be released. I understand further that the federal privacy law (45 CFR Part 164) protecting health information may not apply to the recipient of the information and, therefore, may not prohibit the recipient from redisclosing it. Other laws, however, may prohibit redisclosure.

I understand the terms of this release and voluntarily give my authorization. I understand that I may refuse to sign this authorization form and understand that my treatment, payment, enrollment in a health plan, or eligibility for benefits will not be conditioned on any of the entities listed above receiving my signature on this authorization.

I further understand that I may revoke my authorization by giving written notice to my caseworker or the Homeless Programs Coordinator, Corey Root (croot@orangecountync.gov, 919-245-2496). Such revocation does not affect the validity of the consent for information disclosed prior to the revocation. If not revoked earlier, this authorization expires automatically one year from the date it is signed or upon (Date you wish consent to expire: 11/28/2011), whichever is earlier. (date specified by client or dictated by the purpose of the authorization)

I, **BrandyCayton**, hereby authorize the exchange of information to/from Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness/ HOME Task Force.

Please **initial below** indicating which information regarding your treatment may be exchanged. Release of information is limited to the minimum necessary to accomplish the purpose for which the request is made.

☐ I authorize periodic exchange of information between the above noted agencies, including information related to assessment/diagnoses, medical history, treatment history.

☐ I authorize the exchange of information even if such exchange contains information related to mental health treatment.

☐ I authorize the exchange of information even if such exchange contains information related to substance abuse.


☐ I authorize the exchange of information even if such exchange contains information related to HIV/AIDS or sexually transmitted diseases.


☐ Other (specify):

I have read and understand the information in this Consent to Exchange Information form.

You may sign using either:


1. Your Name followed by your birthdate: BrandyCayton 12/30/1981
2. Your DV Agency #
3. Your OC CONNECT ID #

Signature:  Date:

Signed By:  (Specify if signature is that of client, parent(s), legal guardian, or personal representative)

If not signed by client, explain representative's authority to act on behalf on client:

(Witness signature is required only if the above client signature has been signed by a mark, DV # or, OC Connect #)

Witness Signature:  Date:

THE INFORMATION RELEASED IS CONFIDENTIAL AND REDISCLOSURE IS PROHIBITED EXCEPT AS SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZED BY STATE OR FEDERAL LAW.

1. Save
2. Print Results
3. Close

Revoke Consent

APPENDIX B: HOME Committee Confidentiality Agreement



HOME Committee Confidentiality Agreement

As part of the work with the HOME Committee you may have access to view, update, or modify sensitive information about partners' clients. You must treat this information as confidential and not share with anyone unless specifically authorized. OCPEH defines sensitive information as:

- Client names, nicknames, or any other identifying information
- Client address, location, or whereabouts
- Client personal finance information including social security numbers, financial data, or related info
- Client health information including information on medical conditions, treatment, or history
- Information on the OCPEH/100,000 Homes Task Force plans and operations

All information collected, accessed, or viewed, as part of the OCPEH HOME Committee is to be treated as confidential in written, electronic, printed, and all other forms. Information is the property of the OCPEH and should not be released, shared, or discussed without prior authorization. This includes communication in any form with clients, co-workers, outside agencies, or any other party. In the event of you are unsure if information can be shared, **DO NOT DISCLOSE INFORMATION**. Contact your immediate supervisor or the Homeless Programs Coordinator at OCPEH to obtain approval. Unauthorized disclosure of OCPEH/100,000 Homes Task Force information may result in disciplinary or legal action or may result in dismissal.

As a participant in the OCPEH's HOME Committee, I understand that I may have access to sensitive information as defined by OCPEH. I agree to maintain the security and confidentiality of client and related HOME Committee information. I will not disclose, share, publish, copy, or distribute any HOME Committee information without express permission. I will not disclose or share my username or password to OCPEH's OC Connect client notes, and will report any questions, issues, or suspicious activities to my supervisor or to the Homeless Programs Coordinator.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Signature: _____

Would you like to be added to the HOME Committee email group to receive meeting notices and meeting materials by email? YES NO

If yes, email address: _____