

6.2 Assessment

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a standardized and phased assessment process within the Coordinated Entry System (CES) in Memphis/Shelby County. This process aims to accurately identify the needs and preferences of those experiencing a housing crisis, ensuring they are connected to the most appropriate interventions while minimizing the need for them to repeat their stories.

FORMS

APPENDIX B HUD Homelessness Definitions

POLICY

The CoC's CES will provide a standardized assessment process to all CES participants, ensuring uniform decision-making and coordination of care for persons experiencing a housing crisis.

Memphis/Shelby County's Coordinated Entry System (CES) utilizes a phased assessment process. It is strongly suggested by HUD to collect information in phases, initially only collecting the information essential to ascertaining the person's immediate needs and connecting them with appropriate interventions; and to capture information as needed and limit how frequently the person being assessed must repeat their story. The goal is to build an accurate and concise picture of that person's needs and preferences in order to connect them to an appropriate intervention.

1st Phase CES assessment(s):

Youth (YHDP) Assessment (18-24)

The YHDP assessment was specifically developed to gather initial information of youth (18-24) experiencing homelessness. As a special population, determined by HUD, this screening has youth specific questions to assist with their CES navigation.

CES Pre-Questionnaire (everyone else, other than youth)

CES Pre-Questionnaire is about 10 questions that are data driven. The questions are a cumulation of necessary information to conduct basic case conferencing at routine CES meetings to further decide the most appropriate housing and resource needs and eligibility.

2nd Phase CES assessment(s):

Memphis Vulnerability Assessment (MVA)

The CoC's CES process for clients (who are not fleeing domestic violence) provides a standardized assessment process to all CE participants, ensuring uniform decision-making and coordination of care for persons experiencing a housing crisis. The standardized assessment tool used for Coordinated Entry, outlined below, follows the guidelines for establishing a Coordinated Entry System outlined by HUD.

Who Qualifies for a CES enrollment and CES assessment(s)

The Memphis/Shelby County CES has adopted the practice that a person or household must be at minimum literally homeless to receive a CES enrollment and assessment(s). The definition of literally homeless is determined by HUD and varies by population. HUD's HEARTH Act Final Rule on Homelessness defines literal homelessness as:

1. Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a subset for an individual who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;
2. Individuals and families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence; and
3. Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member.
4. *Who Can Administer the Memphis Vulnerability Assessment (MVA)?*
5. Assessors who administer the Memphis Vulnerability Assessment (MVA) to clients who are not fleeing domestic violence are generally housing provider staff, outreach

workers, or those who are key players within the CES. Anyone can administer the assessments once they are trained on CES processes and procedures. Assessors are also trained in how to quickly and safely refer a client fleeing domestic violence who may present at a CES access point.

6. All staff administering assessments are expected to use culturally and linguistically competent practices. The CoC will incorporate cultural competency and linguistic competency training into the required annual training protocols for participating projects and staff members using standards of practice from models provided by organizations and associations like the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA). Assessments will include questions for all persons that reduce cultural and linguistic barriers to housing and services for special populations, including immigrants, refugees, youth, individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ persons.

When to administer the MVA after the completion of the CES Questionnaire

When completing the CES Questionnaire, you immediately do the 2nd phase assessment if they:

can meet their Activities for Daily Living (ADLs)

AND

are a Veteran

are pregnant

Single parent with 3+ dependents under 6 years old

have dependents with a documented disability

they are fleeing DV/IPV/Trafficking

If the participant answers NO to the Daily Activities question on the CES Questionnaire, no matter their circumstances, they do not receive a MVA.

If they answer YES to the Daily Activities question and is a veteran, pregnant, family with 3 or more dependents, families who have 2 or more dependents under the age of 10 or any of the dependents have disabilities.

All CES Questionnaire and MVA clients will be reviewed at routine CES meetings.

Privacy and Assessments

An HMIS consent form is attached to each assessment. The client's consent is required for the release and sharing of information, and for entering the client into the HMIS CES. If a participant completes the assessment, but does not want their data in HMIS, the CE Lead Agency will need to be given the data by the assessor so that a unique identifier can be used on the By Name List for connection to supportive housing.

Client's Right to Decline Answers

CoC CES clients are free 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.

During the assessment, clients are not required to disclose information, including a specific disability or diagnosis. The disclosure of a specific disability or diagnosis (or the refusal to disclose such) will not impact an individual or household's placement into the CES, nor will it affect the individual's place on the priority list. Assessment score, length of time homeless, chronic status, and supportive documentation forms will all be used to determine eligibility and match appropriateness. Information regarding a specific diagnosis or disability may only be obtained for the purposes of determining program eligibility to make appropriate matches from XES, e.g. accessible units, physical limitations, first floor vs. upper floor vacancies, and congregate vs. scattered-site settings.

Special Populations Risk Assessment

The CES will include a local domestic violence hotline, which is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to ensure that all persons who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence or sexual assault have immediate access to crisis response services. All persons will have access to this hotline regardless of which access point they initially contact for services and assistance through the CoC's CES.

All CoC providers shall incorporate a safety risk assessment as part of initial CES triage and intake procedures, evaluating, to the greatest extent possible, the physical safety and well-being of participants and prospective participants.

Assessments for Domestic Violence Survivors

It is HUD's position that any level of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking is inherently dangerous and life-threatening. Therefore, HUD did not intend the phrase "dangerous or life-threatening" outlined above in the definition of literal homelessness to be interpreted as a level of violence that must occur before an individual or family can qualify as homeless. HUD interprets the intent behind section 103(a)(6) of the McKinney Vento Act as including all individual and families fleeing, or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. These domestic violence subpopulations are to be assessed separately from those who are entering CE and are not fleeing domestic violence or assault. Clients within this population are to receive a brief risk assessment to best assess their needs while protecting their privacy.

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- **Phased Assessment Approach:** The CES utilizes a phased assessment process to collect only the most essential information at each stage. This approach helps address immediate needs and limits the frequency with which participants must repeat their information.
- **Standardized Assessments:** The policy mandates the use of standardized assessment tools, such as the Youth (YHDP) Assessment for youth and the CES Questionnaire for other populations, to ensure uniform decision-making and care coordination across the CES.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Competency:** All assessors are trained to use culturally and linguistically competent practices during assessments, ensuring inclusivity for special populations such as immigrants, refugees, individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ persons.
- **Eligibility for Vulnerability Assessment:** Only individuals or households that meet the HUD definition of literally homeless are eligible for CES enrollment and assessments. This ensures that resources are prioritized for those in the most urgent need.
- **Privacy and Consent:** Participants must provide consent for their information to be entered into HMIS, with specific provisions in place for protecting the data of domestic

violence survivors. Clients have the right to decline answering specific questions without affecting their access to housing resources.

- **Client Rights:** Clients are informed of their right to refuse to answer questions or to reject housing and service options without retribution. Their eligibility and prioritization within the CES will not be impacted by their decision to withhold certain information.
- **Risk Assessment for Domestic Violence Survivors:** A dedicated risk assessment process is in place for survivors of domestic violence, ensuring their safety and privacy are protected while assessing their needs for housing and support services.

This policy is designed to provide a consistent, respectful, and effective approach to assessing and addressing the needs of individuals in housing crises, ensuring they receive the most appropriate support and housing interventions.