



# **Serving the Most Vulnerable Households Using Coordinated Entry Data**

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# Welcome!

A word cloud of various languages and cultures, including: SVEIKI, Bunã zil, SELAM, HEJSAN, SZIA, HEJ, ALIO, NOROC, Tjänar, GUTEN TAG, SANNU, Cześć, HEJSAN, HEJ, ALIO, NOROC, Tjänar, SERVUS, HELLO, CIAO, BONJOUR, PRONTO, SZERVUSZ, BONGHJORNUNU, DAR FIA, Olá, Aliô, HALOO, HI, DIA DUIT, SALVE, HALLO, IENS, OHA, ZDRAVO, MERHABA, WELKOMING, Hylô, HALLO, RAVO, SALUT, RAVO.

# Session Description

**How does a Continuum of Care (CoC) know if it is serving the most vulnerable households in its community?**

This session will review how data can support assessment and prioritization processes, ensuring that a Coordinated Entry System (CES) is equitable and supportive of vulnerable households, including survivors of domestic and sexual violence.



# Learning Objectives

- Participants will understand the data and outcomes they should examine to determine if the CES is truly equitable and serving the most vulnerable households
- Participants will understand how changes to the needs and vulnerabilities of people experiencing homelessness can transform their CES
- Participants will be given a process to consider in re-examining their CES to serve vulnerable households



# Poll #1

**Where is your CoC in terms of your Coordinated Entry System right now (select all that apply):**

1. Our system is working well and serving everyone equitably
2. Our system has many households on waiting lists that are inefficient and don't move quickly
3. Our system has gaps in processes, partnerships, and/or capacity that prevent us from serving those who are most vulnerable in an equitable manner
4. Our system needs a large transformation

# Poll #2

**Where is your CoC in terms of your prioritization and assessment processes right now (select all that apply):**

1. Our system has an effective prioritization process that is equitable and serves those who are most vulnerable
2. Our system does not have an effective prioritization process to truly serve those who are most vulnerable
3. Our system is reviewing our current prioritization and assessment processes
4. Our system has made intentional shifts to our prioritization and assessment processes due to COVID, addressing inequity, etc.
5. We have not examined our system since COVID-19

# Prioritization



**PRIORITIZATION**



# Defining Prioritization

**Prioritization** = person's needs and level of vulnerability are quantified *in relation to other people who are also seeking homeless assistance.*

Uses information learned from assessment

Manages the inventory of housing resources

Is equitable and standardized in approach

Ensures persons with the greatest need and vulnerability receive priority/access to the supports needed to resolve their housing crisis



# Prioritization Criteria

- Prioritization criteria may include any of the following factors:
  - ✓ Length of time experiencing homelessness
  - ✓ Severity of Service Needs
  - ✓ Linked/Engaged with Service/Treatment Provider
  - ✓ Vulnerability to Exploitation/Other Safety/Risk Factors
  - ✓ Other locally determined factors
- May be different for families, single adults, survivors of domestic violence, and persons seeking homelessness prevention services
- Prioritization policies should not be seen as static and should be refined as resources and needs begin to shift



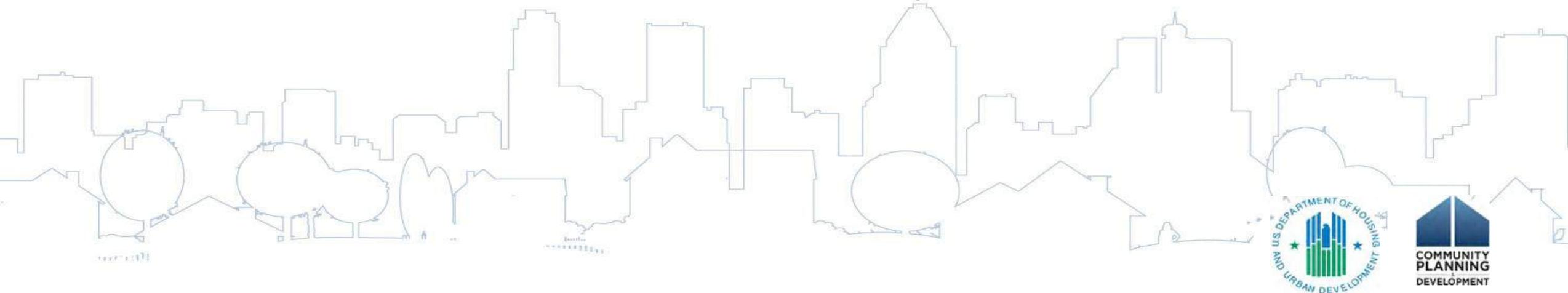
# Aligning Prioritization with Federal Civil Rights Laws, including Fair Housing Act

- CoCs are prohibited from using the prioritization process to discriminate based on *race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), familial status, and disability*
- It would be a violation of [Fair Housing](#) and federal civil rights laws if prioritization is based solely on a score produced by an assessment tool that consistently provides a higher score to persons with *specific* disabilities over those with other disabilities, or that provides scores that rely on membership in a protected class
- For more information, see HUD's FAQ:  
<https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/3464/my-coc-needs-to-prioritize-households-to-meet-the-requirements-of-hud>



# For More on Prioritization...

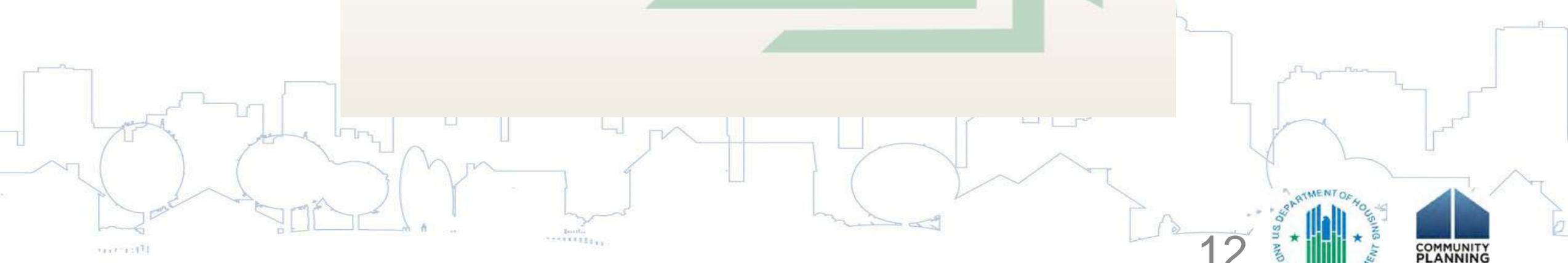
Come to NHSDC session “Understanding the  
Prioritization and Data Connection: Prioritization  
101” on Wednesday at 1:30!



# Assessment



**ASSESSMENT**



# Assessment Tools

- Assessment tools are helpful to capture consistent information about clients, but **they should not dictate prioritization**
- Assessment tools gather information that can be used to prioritize households for services and make decisions around vulnerability
- There are no “HUD-endorsed” assessment tools and all should be used within the context of the local community and client needs
- Consult [HUD’s 2015 Report](#) on what is known about assessment tools
- Inequities have been found in various assessment tools which suggests that asking people sensitive questions can lead to inequitable outcomes
- How will we ensure that future prioritization processes do not replicate disparities we find in our CES?

**Simply replacing one assessment tool  
with another tool is a mistake**



# Housing Problem Solving

**Housing Problem Solving is the philosophy that is adopted into approaches like diversion, rapid exit, rapid resolution, etc.**

- Conversations with people to identify safer alternatives and creatively pursue them
- Opportunity to house more people
- Needs to be established systemwide as the first phase of the assessment process



# Indicators for Assessing

Vulnerability

Service Needs

Barriers/Lack of Supports

Strengths

# Indicators for Vulnerability

Living in an unsheltered situation, especially youth & children

History of victimization while experiencing homelessness or unstably housed (assault, trafficking, sex work)

Prior interaction with foster care system and/or juvenile justice system as a child or young person

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

What else?

# Indicators for Service Needs

Inability to complete activities of daily living (ADLs)

History/record of heavy healthcare use & needs

History/record of hospitalizations and/or in-patient respite treatment (psychiatric, substance use)

Inability to maintain housing on one's own (pay bills/rent, maintain physical space, etc.)

What else?

# Indicators for Housing Barriers

Lack of lease holding history

Eviction history

Violent, drug-related, or sex offense history

Criminal history

Lack of employment history or current employment

Lack of credit or bad credit history

What else?

# Indicators for Strengths

What does the individual/household possess that can be leveraged to assist in this crisis? What strengths can be capitalized upon?

Family strengths

Community strengths

Cultural strengths

Individual strengths

What else?

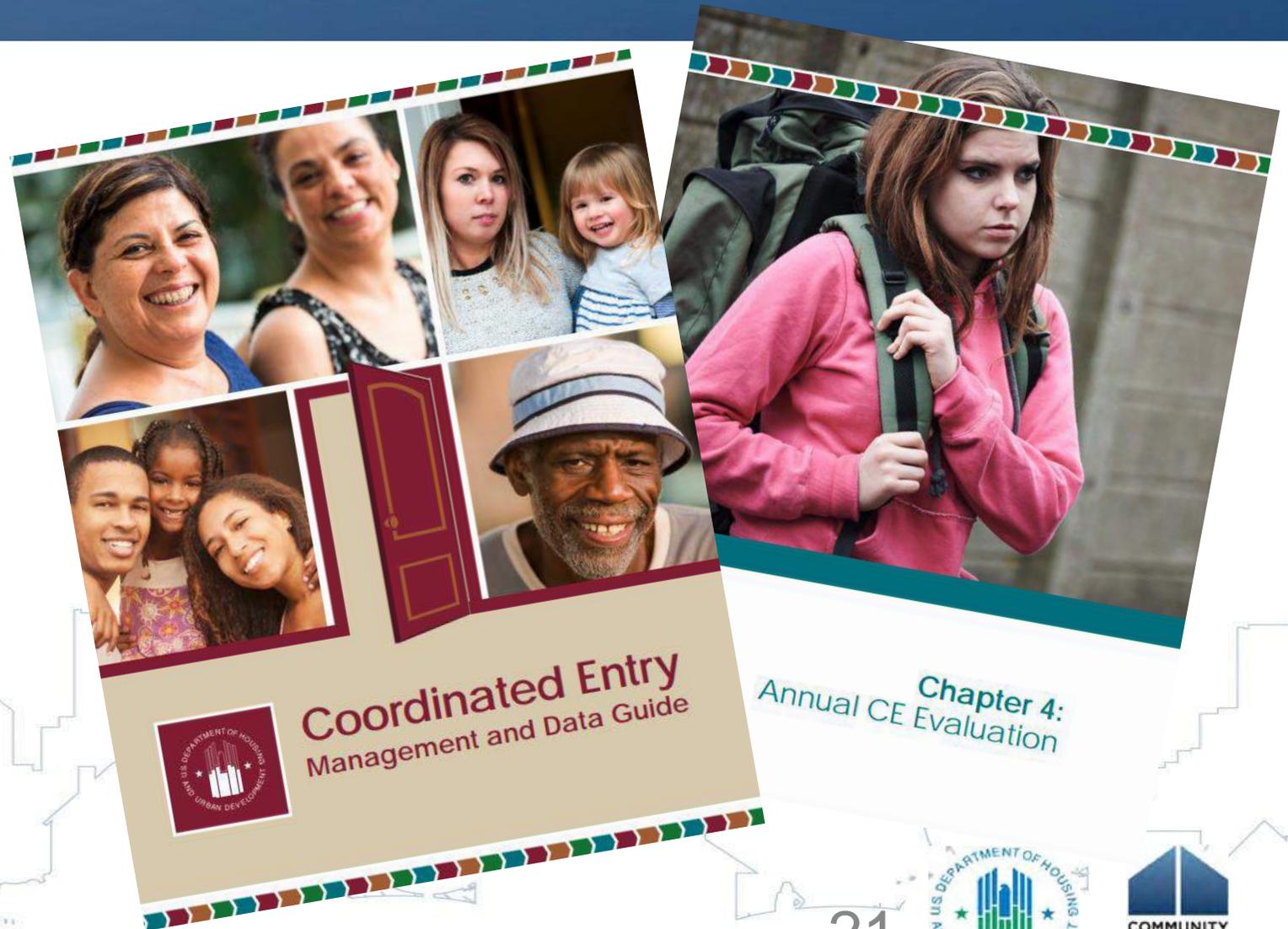
# Poll #3

## Where is your community at with evaluating Coordinated Entry?

1. We've done regularly-recurring, comprehensive Coordinated Entry evaluations and have made strategic changes to our system based on these evaluations
2. We have done Coordinated Entry evaluations of our system but they are either not regularly-recurring or we have not made pivots to our system based on these evaluations
3. We are either planning on doing a Coordinated Entry evaluation or are currently in the process of doing a Coordinated Entry evaluation
4. Coordinated Entry evaluation...we should get on that

# Coordinated Entry Evaluation and Monitoring

Requirements and best practices for coordinated entry evaluation and monitoring are presented in chapter 4 of HUD's CE Management and Data Guide



# Coordinated Entry Evaluation

1. Evaluation questions: what do you want to know about how assessment and prioritization (and other aspects of CE)? e.g.:
  - “Is the assessment tool administered consistently across access points?”
  - “How does an individual prioritization factor influence who is actually prioritized?”
  - “What are the demographics of those who are prioritized for housing, and how do they differ from our homeless population as a whole?”
2. Collect and compile data:
  - Quantitative data from HMIS and/or other data systems
  - Qualitative data from focus groups, interviews, observations, and document review
3. Analyze data
4. Propose and implement improvements based on findings

# Example: Consistency of Assessment Administration

Evaluation question: “Is the assessment tool administered consistently across access points?”

- Use HMIS or other data to find average assessment score for each access point.
- Identify outliers.
- Determine action to correct outliers, such as: re-training assessors, finding new assessors at site, or removing site as access point.

Assessment Location	Ave. Score (1-15)
Access Point A	8.3
Access Point B	7.1
Access Point C	6.9
Access Point D	4.5
Access Point E	9.1
Access Point F	7.6

# Example: Individual Prioritization Factor

Evaluation question: “How does history with the criminal legal system, a prioritization factor for our CoC, relate to who is actually prioritized?”

- Locate data on client criminal history and prioritization status
  - Criminal history could be assessment item or collected elsewhere
- Simple analysis: compare percentage of clients prioritized for housing with criminal history and without
  - Not a robust analysis but can suggest areas of concern
- Advanced analysis: regression analysis on variables including criminal history to see if factor is associated with prioritization
  - Note: must have larger data sets
- If needed, determine corrective action, like:
  - Add more “weight” to this prioritization factor
  - Exploring other assessment methods around this factor

# Framework for Moving Forward



# Develop a Strategy Designed to Pursue Equity

Be honest about your local decision-making structures (who holds power?)

What are your community's goals?

Embrace an iterative process

How can data help understand your community and its needs?

Leverage housing problem solving

Continually revisit and revise

Execute change



# Disrupt Old Decision-Making Structures

- Meaningfully interrogate current decision-making structures
  - Who holds power and how can this be more equitable?
- Group should meet frequently and be empowered with authority to make decisions and move strategies forward
- Ensure that this group:
  - Is **representative** of those experiencing homelessness in the community
  - Includes **voices of lived experience** of homelessness
- New structures must be responsive to the needs and lived reality of people who have previously been denied a seat at the table
  - When are meetings scheduled?
  - How are people reimbursed appropriately for their time?



# Focus on Community Goals

**Keep the work centered on broad community goals that are locally defined and contextualized**

When prioritizing the most vulnerable for housing, what does “vulnerable” mean locally?

- “Vulnerability” may change over time as the needs of people change

When prioritizing to maximize equity, how do we define “equitable” locally?

- Race equity intersected with other disparities in our systems



# Data

## Accurate & Reliable

- Understand how assessment is working and how changes may impact equity and efficiency

## Decision Points throughout CE

- Who is languishing on our list? Who is getting opportunities for housing? Who is actually getting and staying housed?

## Talk with People

- Utilize focus groups or interviews of people experiencing homelessness to understand how the process is working and how it might be improved upon



# Execute Change

- Changing your prioritization and assessment process can be a major shift that requires layers of decision-making
- Simplify the process wherever possible ([COVID CE Guidance](#) is a great example)
- Test questions/processes in a way that can be iterative and based on community feedback – don't set yourself up to get stuck
- Do systemwide housing problem solving as a first step – integrate this approach into all aspects of the homeless response system



# Continuously Revisit & Revise

Assume this will not be your final CE design

Ensure changes address disparities and do not exacerbate them

Revise goals in light of changing information and/or initial outcomes

Monitor and pivot/shift when necessary



# Poll #4

## How well does your Coordinated Entry system incorporate Victim Services Providers?

1. They are fully integrated
2. They are mostly integrated
3. They are somewhat integrated
4. They are not at all integrated

# Survivor Considerations

CoCs should understand data around DV/SA

Build trust and partnerships to obtain this data and understand how to craft a CES that works for all persons

Consider that assessment and prioritization may not account for unique needs and complex vulnerabilities

CES should not be a pass/fail test – it's a process

# Survivor Considerations

## Options

- Survivors need a range of options that are responsive to their unique circumstances

## Trauma-Informed

- A trauma-informed CES is critical, as is housing problem solving and Housing First policies

## Safety & Confidentiality

- Work with VSPs to ensure that assessment and processes help determine what type of safe housing or supports are needed (may not be housing that is needed)

## Crisis Response

- Address the immediate crisis first and be creative

# Putting It All Together

## The prioritization-assessment recalibration process

Start by considering and deciding on prioritization factors for your community

Ensure that the assessment process is tailored to collect the information needed for prioritization and referral

Use coordinated entry evaluation and monitoring to ensure your system is serving the most vulnerable clients with equitable outcomes

Start the process over again: implement system changes to prioritization and assessment based on findings

# Questions



# CES Questions – Let's Talk

## We want to hear from you

- Are the most vulnerable households being served?
- Are you moving the needle? How do you know? If not, are disparities such as racial bias baked into the process or your system?
- Do you understand your data related to service outputs and outcomes?
- How have you understood the disparate impact of COVID-19 when disaggregated by race as it relates to your homeless response system?
- What are your next steps?

# Rate this Session!

