Coordinated Entry Work Group – Work Group #5 [Held April 15, 2016]
Pierce County Community Connections

Context: In February 2015, Pierce County held a Community Meeting, to share the results of Focus Strategies' analysis of our Centralized Intake System and their recommendations for improvement. As a part of implementing those recommendations, Pierce County convened a work group to inform the implementation and re-design of Centralized Intake. Participation in the work group was by invitation and included a cross-section of providers and partners of the homeless response system. The work group received a proposed framework to discuss and provide input.

Additional Materials from the February Community Meeting:
- [Executive Summary of the Focus Strategies Report](#)
- [Community Meeting PowerPoint](#)
- [Community Meeting Q & A](#)

Work Group #5: Priority Tool First-Round Analysis

Desired Meeting Results:

1. Update regarding work completed since last meeting
2. Understand the new coordinated entry system design
3. Orient to pilot prioritization tool and solicit feedback to refine tool design
4. Understand how to remain informed moving forward

Summary of Results from Work Group #5:

Brief Recap of Work since Last Meeting
- Finalized new Coordinated Entry System (CES) process flow
- CES NOFA and award of contracts to CES Partnership
- Draft CES implementation plan
- Draft/testing of the CES prioritization tool
- Hired Community Connections Homeless Unit communication staff

For further information, see also the [Coordinated Entry Launch Memo on our website](#).

Draft Prioritization and Eligibility Tool Summary

Focus Strategies has developed the Prioritization and Eligibility Tool to support Pierce County's re-designed Coordinated Entry System. The purpose of the tool is to provide a straightforward method for identifying those homeless households who are the most vulnerable and have the greatest barriers to resolving their housing crisis. The tool also collects data elements that inform which programs each household is eligible to enter.

The Coordinated Entry Workgroup met between March and August 2015. The work group helped Pierce County and Focus Strategies identify an approach to prioritization and a list of desired prioritization criteria. To create the tool, Focus Strategies drafted specific questions and answer choices that best captured these criteria, attempting wherever possible to take advantage of existing questions already required as part of the HMIS workflow. We also tried as much as possible to find the most objective and least intrusive ways of asking for information.

The table below summarizes the list of questions and answer choices. The CES tool scores most responses to determine the household's level of priority for assistance. A few questions are only asked for eligibility and/or data collection purposes and are not scored. These are noted in the table. Questions are not necessarily asked in the order presented here. Some questions are asked during the initial screening and diversion steps of the CES, before the household has a prioritization interview.

	Question	Response Options	Scored?
Section 1: Living Situation and Housing History			
1	Household type	Single adult, couple no children, HH with children	No
2	Household size	Number of people in household	Yes
3	Household member age groups	Ages of all household members	Yes
4	Do you have custody of children not living with you? If so, how many?	Yes or no; number of children	No
5	Gender	Male, female, transgender	Yes
6	Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual, LGBTQ (list)	Yes
7	Where are you currently staying?	HMIS Universal Data element categories	Yes
8	I am going to read you 3 statements about feelings of safety you have about where you are staying. Please think about your surroundings, the people you are with, and the things that happen. Please tell me which one is the closest to the way you feel.	I never feel safe I sometimes feel safe I always feel safe	Yes
9	On how many separate occasions in the last 3 years have you lived in a place not meant for human habitation, shelter, or motel with an emergency shelter voucher?	Number of occasions	Yes
10	How long have you been homeless this time (lived in ES or place not meant for human habitation)?	Number of days or years	Yes
11	When was the last time you or any adult household member had a lease in your/their own name?	Currently have lease; number of months/years since having lease; never had a lease	Yes
12	How many times has any adult household member had an eviction in the last 5 years (asked to leave a rental or had legal papers filed to ask you to leave)?	Number of times	Yes
13	Does any household member currently have pets, a service animal or therapeutic animal?	If yes, animal type and size	No
Section 2: Armed Forces History			
14	Were you or any household member ever on active duty in the Armed Forces in the United States?	Yes or no	No
Section 3: Health Status and History			
16	Are you pregnant?	Yes or no	Yes
17	Is anyone in your household disabled? If yes, how many of the following conditions do you/they have?	Alcohol abuse, drug abuse or both; chronic health condition; developmental disability, HIV/AIDS, mental health problem, physical.	Yes
18	Do you need access to life sustaining medications, treatments or equipment or assistance with activities of daily living due to an accident, illness or chronic disease?	Yes or no	Yes
19	How many times have you used crisis services (mental health triage/crisis bed, suicide prevention hotline, etc.) and or have you been hospitalized in the past year?	Number of times	Yes
Section 4: Income			
20	Considering all sources of income, what is your household's total monthly income? Think about sources that might include: work, unemployment, worker's comp, SSI/SSDI, VA, retirement, public assistance, recycling, panhandling, drug/sex trade, child or spousal support.	Total monthly income (recorded in system as a % of AMI)	Yes
21	I am going to read you three statements about what you and other household members do for money, food or shelter. After	The way my household gets money, food or shelter is often risky or dangerous;	Yes

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	Question	Response Options	Scored?
	I read them, please tell me which one is closest to the way you feel.	sometimes risky or dangerous; not risky or dangerous.	
Section 5: Legal Domains			
22	Do you currently have US citizenship or legal immigration status?	Yes or no	No
23	How many times in the past five years has someone in your household been arrested or picked up by police? (More than a warning or citation in the field).	Number of times	Yes
24	Is anyone in the household currently on probation or parole?	Yes or no	No
25	Has anyone in the household ever been convicted of any of the following offenses?	Sex offense; arson; manufacturing of methamphetamines [Note, these are critical felonies from Service Point System].	Yes

Analysis of Prioritization and Eligibility Tool Results

Overview

The Prioritization and Eligibility Tool is in development and is being field tested by the Pierce County CES providers - Associated Ministries (AM) and Catholic Community Services (CCS). This document summarizes preliminary results from the testing of the tool.

Methodology and Purpose of Analysis

Pierce County staff extracted Priority Tool data collected in HMIS in January and February 2016. CES provider staff collected the data from clients calling in to AP4H seeking homeless system assistance and from clients on the existing Placement Roster. CES staff asked clients to answer the questions in the Prioritization Tool and these responses were record in HMIS. We sent the data to Focus Strategies for scoring and analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate whether the tool is working as intended and identify any adjustments needed to the questions, response choices, or scoring system.

Composition of the Data Sample

The data provided to Focus Strategies includes Prioritization Tool responses for 170 unique households:

- 66% were families with children and 34% were single adults

- Heads of household were 68% female and 32% male

- 5% were veterans

- 8% were transition age youth (age 18 to 24)

- 19% were chronically homeless

- There were no unaccompanied minors in the data set

Focus Strategies did not conduct an analysis to determine whether the sample is representative of the overall homeless population in Pierce County. However, based on our review of Point in Count data, we know this sample under-represents single adult households and over-represents families with children. There is also an over-representation of female heads of household. We expect the second round of testing to be a more representative sample of the overall homeless population. Unfortunately, race and ethnicity data were not available for this analysis, but will be in the second round of testing.

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Score Distribution

The total scores from the Priority Tool ranged from a low of 9 to a high of 153, with a median score of 69. A high score on the tool is indicative of high vulnerability and a high number of barriers to housing. Low scores on the tool primarily indicate a lower vulnerability and barriers. However, there are some low scores that reflect missing data on the questions that could have been scored. Overall, it appears that the Tool is functioning as intended - the scores were well distributed and the scoring patterns did not suggest any unexpected results.

Variables Impacting Scores

The intent of the Tool is to prioritize households based on specific vulnerability factors. To test whether this is happening as intended, we examined whether specific factors were related to the overall score in a way that was statistically significant. We found that most of these variables are behaving as expected. The graph below illustrates some of these relationships. For example, being chronically homeless and having evictions, medical conditions or critical felonies are all related to having a higher priority score.
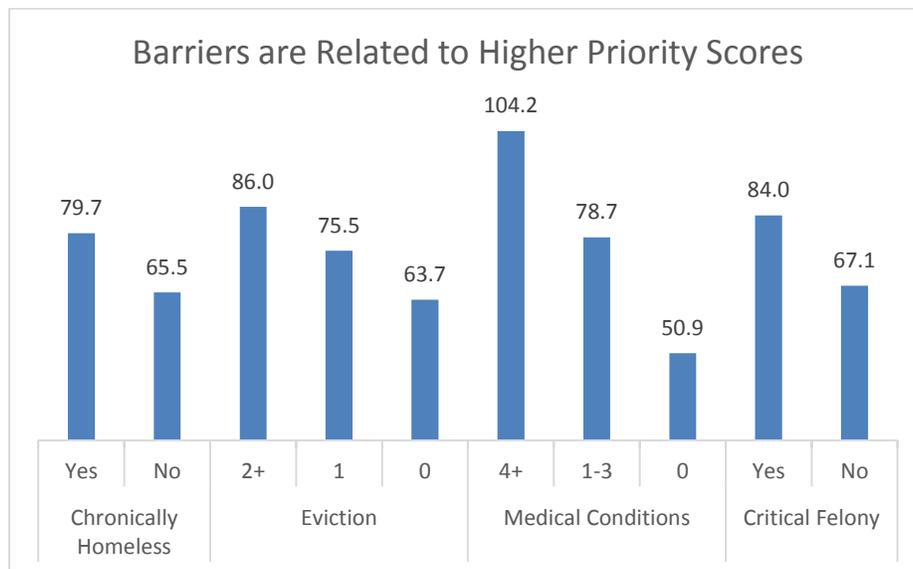
We also tested whether factors that should NOT affect prioritization had any impact on the score. The tool should not prioritize based on demographic characteristics or population type, so there would be no reason to see any significant differences in scores on these factors. Again, we found the tool is behaving as intended. There were no significant differences in the scores of female- and male-headed households, veteran and non-veteran households, or single adults versus family households. As previously noted we were not able to analyze race and ethnicity of household members but will do so in the next round of testing.

Conclusion and Next Steps

In general, the Priority Tool is behaving as designed and as expected. The tool produced total scores with a large range and enough variation to be sensitive to differences among the assessed households. Households with more objective vulnerability and barriers to housing receive higher prioritization scores. To further test the tool, Focus Strategies will next analyze a larger data set that includes a more representational sample. We will also investigate whether there are associations between race, ethnicity and priority score.

Summary of Work Group Feedback & Next Steps

	Question	Answer Choices	Feedback/Concern	Next Step
3	Household member age groups	Ages of all household members	Currently there are priority points for any household member under 18. Add priority points for postpartum mothers (any household with children under age 2)	Work group seemed to be in favor. FS to add priority points.
4	Do you have custody of children not living with you? If so, how many?	Yes or no; number of children	This needs more nuance since some parents may not currently have custody but are seeking to regain.	PC will consult with child welfare and New Phoebe House to refine the wording of this question.
5	Gender	Male, female, transgender	Only LGBTQ minors (under 18) receive points; expand to under 25?	Unresolved – work group seemed to be in favor.
6	Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual, LGBTQ (list)		
7	Where are you currently staying?	HMIS Universal Data element categories	CES screens out all but Category 1 and 4, so why score this?	FS to remove this as a scoring factor. Check to see impact on distribution. Maybe add points for chronicity questions.
8	I am going to read you 3 statements about feelings of safety you have about where you are staying. Please think about your surroundings, the people you are with, and the things that happen. Please tell me which one is the closest to the way you feel.	I never feel safe I sometimes feel safe I always feel safe	If the client is in shelter when tool administered, should we ask them about the last place they stayed? Or where they stayed before entering shelter?	FS to recommend a way to re-word. Maybe ask them to think about where they stayed for last 2 weeks.
12	How many times has any adult household member had an eviction in the last 5 years (asked to leave a rental or had legal papers filed to ask you to leave)?	Number of times	Work group discussion: what are we asking? Is this about legal evictions (housing barrier) or more broadly - being asked to leave housing but not legally evicted (vulnerability)?	There seems to be some consensus this is trying to identify both housing barriers and vulnerability, so we should keep the wording about being asked to leave and make it clear to assessors that these do not have to be legal evictions to count. Don't change. Provide clear training.
17	Is anyone in your household disabled? If yes, how many of the following conditions do you/they have?	Alcohol abuse, drug abuse or both; chronic health condition; developmental disability, HIV/AIDS, mental health problem, physical.	Can we ask this differently to yield more accurate responses? For example: has anyone told you have any of these conditions?	Current question is HUD/Service Point language. PC to check about whether this can be changed in HMIS.

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	Question	Answer Choices	Feedback/Concern	Next Step
18	Do you need access to life sustaining medications, treatments or equipment or assistance with activities of daily living due to an accident, illness or chronic disease?	Yes or no	Does this question fully capture people who might have a range of different physical/mental impairments from health condition, mental health or chronic substance use? Can this be broadened to better capture vulnerability related to inability to manage ADLs (not limited just to health conditions)?	FS to explore re-wording this question. This is a two part issue. One is about connecting people to needed health programs; other is just capturing vulnerability more broadly.
19	How many times have you used crisis services (mental health triage/crisis bed, suicide prevention hotline, etc.) and or have you been hospitalized in the past year?	Number of times	Add detox/drug treatment to this list.	Work group consensus to add. FS to add to Tool 2.0.
21	I am going to read you three statements about what you and other household members do for money, food or shelter. After I read them, please tell me which one is closest to the way you feel.	The way my household gets money, food or shelter is often risky or dangerous; sometimes risky or dangerous; not risky or dangerous.	Some people (esp. youth) will say in Q20 that they get money from drugs or sex, but then say in Q21 that the way they earn money is not risky. Should assessor override the client response? Or should we just ask a question that lists risky behaviors like VI-SPDAT?	Work group consensus was to adapt VI-SPDAT question and just ask people to answer yes or no to whether they engage in any of the behaviors.
25	Has anyone in the household ever been convicted of any of the following offenses?	Sex offense; arson; manufacturing of methamphetamines [Note, these are critical felonies from Service Point System].	Sex offense - should we ask follow-up questions?	Difference between Level 1 and Level 3 sex offender. Is it only registered sex-offender? The ones that need to register get more priority.

Continued Opportunities for Info and Updates
- We are launching a quarterly newsletter! Make sure we have your email address.
- Updating Community Connections website to make it more user friendly.
- We will hold another Community Meeting in Q4 to report on CES implementation/learnings thus far
- We will publish & email this final work group summary
- We always welcome feedback, feel free to reach out to staff anytime

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