

## I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

### A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH) is funded by Orange County and the Towns of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough. OCPEH collaborates with 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, homelessness diversion, and program referral system. OC Connect helps service providers determine quickly, consistently and effectively which resources will best help people in housing crisis.



***OC Connect helps both people experiencing housing crisis and the agencies that serve them.***

- ***For people in housing crisis:*** OC Connect links to resources to resolve housing crises – either by diverting the household from experiencing homelessness, making a shelter referral to address immediate needs, or making a program referral to address transition back to permanent housing.
- ***For homeless service providers:*** OC Connect streamlines the processes for diversion, shelter referral, and housing program referrals. By creating one centralized process and location, OC Connect reduces work duplication at each agency. OC Connect formalizes prioritization, prioritizing households with higher service needs over households with lower service 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 (*See Appendix A, Partners and Roles*).

### B. CONTINUUM OF CARE (CoC) COORDINATED ENTRY (CE) AND EMERGENCY SOLUTION GRANT (ESG) COORDINATION

This document will provide guidance and direction for the day-to-day operation, management, oversight, and evaluation of OC Connect. The CoC is committed to aligning and coordinating CE policies and procedures governing the assessment, eligibility determinations, and prioritization with its written standards for administering CoC and ESG Program funds. *See Appendix B, CoC and ESG Written Standards.*

The written standards have been developed and agreed upon by the OCPEH in consultation with the Data and Grants Workgroup. The Data and Grants Workgroup contains both CoC and ESG grant fund recipients, and updates are completed as needed throughout the year, but at least once annually. The OCPEH Leadership team

reviews recommended updates and revisions 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.

### C. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

1. 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, or 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 remain 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.
2. 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 help people maintain housing.
3. OC Connect uses **prioritization**: allocating limited housing resources, including Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing, to households with the highest service need in our community.
4. OC Connect **applies a consistent process throughout the community** to achieve fair, equitable, and equal access to homeless programs and services within Orange County.
5. 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 substance use or a history of substance use, domestic violence history, resistance to receiving services, the type or extent of 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.
6. 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.

### D. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this document, for those definitions identified in this section as a HUD Definition, the actual definition provided by HUD shall supersede those enumerated in this document.

#### Chronically Homeless (*HUD Definition*)

A person who:

1. Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and

- a. Has been homeless and living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least one year or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years, where the cumulative total of the four occasions is at least one year. Stays in institutions of 90 days or less will not constitute a break in homelessness, but rather such stays are included in the cumulative total; and
  - b. Can be diagnosed with one or more of the following conditions: substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability (as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002)), post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability;
2. Has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility; or
  3. Meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition.

*Chronically Homeless Summary: A person who's lived in a safe haven, an emergency shelter or some other location not fit for human habitation for at least a year. This person might have a substance abuse or mental health issue (or more than one issue), and he or she might have even lived for 90 days or less – on several occasions – in a rehabilitation facility a jail or another institutional setting.*

**Literally Homeless (HUD Homeless Definition Category 1)**

A person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence

1. An individual with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, camping ground; or
2. An individual living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government program for low-income individual); or
3. An individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.

*Literally Homeless Summary: A person who's lived in a public or private place that's not typically used as a place for people to sleep, such as a car, a park or a bus station. This term might also describe a person who's living in a public or private shelter. A person who lived in such a place and then entered an institution (jail, substance abuse or mental health facility) for 90 days or less would also be considered "literally homeless" when he or she exited that institution.*

**At imminent risk of homelessness (HUD Homeless Definition Category 2)**

A person who will imminently lose their housing (within 14 days) and become literally homeless

Homeless under other Federal statutes (*HUD Homeless Definition Category 3*)

A person defined as “homeless” by other federal statute (e.g., Dept. of HHS, Dept. of Ed.)

Homeless because fleeing domestic abuse or violence (*HUD Homeless Definition Category 4*)

A person fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, stalking, dating violence, or sexual assault

At Risk of Homelessness

*Category 1: A person who:*

- a. Has an annual income below 30% of median income for the area; AND
- b. Does not have sufficient resources or support networks immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place defined in Category 1 of the “homeless” definition; AND Meets one of the following conditions:
  - i. Has moved because of economic reasons 2 or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for assistance; OR
  - ii. Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship; OR
  - iii. Has been notified that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance; OR
  - iv. Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost is not paid for by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for people with low-income; OR
  - v. Lives in an SRO or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than 2 persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than one and a half persons per room; OR
  - vi. Is exiting a publicly funded institution or system of care; OR
  - vii. Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with` instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient’s approved consolidated plan.

*Category 2: A child or youth who does not qualify as homeless under the homeless definition, but qualifies as homeless under another Federal statute*

*Category 3: An unaccompanied youth who does not qualify as homeless under the homeless definition but qualifies as homeless under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) or that child or youth if living with him or her.*

***At Risk of Homelessness Summary:*** According to HUD, there are three different ways to define whether a person is considered “at risk of homelessness.” In Category 1, a person is at risk of homelessness if his or her income is 30% below the community’s median income and if that person doesn’t have in the community a network of support – such as family, close friends or faith community – who might help house them to prevent them from going to a shelter. Coupled with these two circumstances must be at least one more factor from among the seven

*described in the HUD definition of Category 1, these factors include whether the person has moved 2 or more times in the last 60 days, whether they are currently living with friends and whether they are 21 days or less from losing the right to stay where they live. Categories 2 and 3 help define under what circumstances children or youth can be defined as “at risk of homelessness”, offering them additional access to services if they don’t qualify through protection from other laws.*

1. Disability (HUD Definition) - HUD defines a person with disabilities as a person who:
  1. Has a disability as defined in Section 223 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.423), or
  2. Is determined by HUD regulations to have a physical, mental, or emotional impairment that:
    - a. is expected to be of long, continued, and indefinite duration;
    - b. substantially impedes his or her ability to live independently; and
    - c. is of such a nature that more suitable housing conditions could improve such ability, or
  3. Has a developmental disability as defined in the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 15002(8)), or
  4. Has the disease acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or any conditions arising from the etiologic agent for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV).

To qualify for low income housing under HUD public housing and Section 8 programs, the definition does not include a person whose disability is based solely on any drug or alcohol dependence.

2. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) - A Homeless Management Information System is an electronic web-based data collection and reporting tool designed to record and store person-level information on the characteristics and service needs of people experiencing homelessness throughout a Continuum of Care (CoC) jurisdiction. Usage of the HMIS is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for any program receiving CoC or ESG funds.

3. Homelessness Prevention - Recipients and subrecipients located in HUD-designated High Performing Communities (HPCs) may use CoC Program funds for homelessness prevention assistance for individuals and families at risk of homelessness. The services under this component may include housing relocation and stabilization services as well as short- and medium-term rental assistance to prevent an individual or family from becoming homeless. Through this component, recipients and subrecipients may help individuals and families at-risk of homelessness to maintain their existing housing or transition to new permanent housing. Homelessness prevention must be administered in accordance with 24 CFR part 576. *Agencies in Orange County do not yet have funding to provide homelessness prevention.*

4. Housing First – Housing First is not a “program” but a system-wide orientation that follows a basic principle that supports the fundamental importance of transitioning people experiencing homelessness back to permanent housing as quickly as possible and helping people maintain housing. Orange County’s responses to homelessness reflect this “Housing First” principle.

5. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) – Long-term rental assistance and services designed for people who are chronically homeless, or for people with serious mental illnesses or other disabilities who need support to live

stably in their communities. These services can include case management, substance abuse or mental health counseling, advocacy, and assistance in locating and maintaining employment. PSH uses the Housing First model to move people into permanent housing as quickly as possible and aims to help people retain their housing. Best practice PSH incorporates client choice and a varying level of services that can ramp up or down depending on client needs.

6. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) – Short-term rental assistance and services that helps people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and remain housed. The core components of RRH are housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and case management and services. RRH programs are generally designed to serve people with low to moderate services needs and generally provide 3-6 months assistance for households.

7. Shelter / Emergency Shelter - Facility that provides temporary sleeping places for people experiencing homelessness. Best practice shelters are accessible, i.e. have low barriers to entry, appealing, and housing-focused.

8. SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) – a program funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to connect people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness with SSI/SSDI disability benefits.

9. Street Outreach – Street Outreach programs connect people experiencing homelessness with housing and services using a relationship-based model. Street outreach programs provide services directly or by collaborating with other agencies. *Agencies in Orange County do not yet have funding to provide homelessness prevention.*

10. Transitional Housing (TH) – Long term temporary housing and supportive services, usually lasting 6- 24 months, that uses the Housing Ready model of skill building prior to permanent housing placement.

11. Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) - Tool used by trained staff to determine vulnerability (also called acuity or service need) for people experiencing homelessness. The tool asks very personal questions about housing, health, social needs, family situation and safety and produces a score that indicates the level of service need for a household. Staff is trained to administer the VI-SPDAT and understand its context through OC Connect.

#### **E. GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE**

OC Connect covers the entire geographic area of Orange County, North Carolina, which includes the Towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill and Hillsborough.

#### **F. AFFIRMATIVE MARKETING AND OUTREACH**

All persons participating in any aspect of OC Connect such as access, assessment, prioritization, or referral will be afforded equal access to CE Services and resources without regard to the person’s actual or perceived membership in a federally or locally protected class such as race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, marital status, veterans status or disability. Additionally, all people in different populations and subpopulations in the OC Connect geographic area, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, veterans, families with children, youth, and survivors of domestic violence, shall have fair and equal access to C services.

Each project participating in OC Connect is required to post or otherwise make publicly available a notice (provided by OC Connect) that describes coordinated entry. This notice shall be posted in the agency waiting areas, as well as any areas where participants may congregate or receive services. All staff at each agency should have knowledge of how to discuss and explain CE to a participant who seeks more information.

#### **G. SAFETY PLANNING AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

All persons who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking shall have immediate and confidential access to available crisis services within the defined CE geographic area.

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 has 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 an appropriate facility specifically designed to help and protect victims of domestic violence or sexual assault. Currently, these are the Compass Center and the Orange County Rape Crisis Center. Information about these facilities can be found in “Standardization Prioritization”, Section IV.A of this document.

#### **H. NONDISCRIMINATION**

OC Connect system must adhere to all jurisdictionally relevant civil rights and fair housing laws and regulations. OCPEH is responsible for monitoring agencies compliance with all CE requirements including adherence to civil rights and fair housing laws and regulations. Failure to comply with these laws and regulations will result in a monitoring finding on the project, which may affect its position in the local CoC rating and raking process. Recipients and sub-recipients of CoC Program -funded projects must comply with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of Federal civil rights laws and Orange County Civil Rights Ordinance, including the following:

1. **Fair Housing Act** prohibits discriminatory housing practices based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, veterans’ status or familial status.
2. Section 504 of the **Rehabilitation Act** prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.
3. 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.
4. Title II of the **Americans with Disabilities Act** prohibits public entities, including, 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.
5. 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.
6. In addition, agencies in Orange County shall not discriminate based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

## **II. ACCESS**

Partners of OC Connect 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.

### **A. ACCESS MODEL**

OC Connect adopts a “no wrong door” approach to CE, which ensures that no matter which homeless assistance provider a person goes to for assistance, they will have access to the same resources, referrals, and assessment and prioritization processes.

### **B. DESIGNATED ACCESS POINTS**

As part of the “no wrong door” approach, any homeless assistance agency within the community is able to refer persons presenting for services to OC Connect. *See Appendix C, OC Connect Access Points*)

OCPEH designates homelessness assistance providers to provide access to crisis response services for persons experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of literal homelessness. All designated access points shall execute OC Connect Participation Agreements with OCPEH to ensure CE access.

### **C. SPECIALIZED ACCESS POINTS FOR SUBPOPULATIONS**

OC Connect recognizes that there are individuals re-entering the community from criminal justices institutions (jails, prisons, etc.) experiencing housing crises. To ensure that there is sufficient coordination and specialized attention given to these individuals, OC Connect has identified a specialized access point at the Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department.

### **D. ACCESS COVERAGE**

OC Connect’s entire geographical area is accessible to CE processes through defined location-specific access points or through a Homeless Hotline that is accessible throughout the OC Connect geographical area. *(See Appendix D, OC Connect Access Coverage)*. Overnight coverage is provided through the Homeless Hotline and can be contacted from any location within Orange County.

### **E. ACCESSIBILITY OF ACCESS SITES**

OC Connect will ensure that all CE services are physically accessible to persons with mobility barriers. All CE communications and documentation will be accessible to persons with limited ability to read and understand English.

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.

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.)

OC Connects designates the OC Connect Planning Committee to serve as the primary point of contact for ensuring that all CE materials are available in English and Spanish. In addition, OC Connect participating agencies will, to the greatest extent practicable, provide communication accommodation through translation services to effectively and clearly communicate with persons who have disabilities, as well as any person with limited English proficiency. The Planning Committee will provide visual and audibly accessible CE materials when requested by agencies or participants in CE.

#### **F. EMERGENCY SERVICES**

1. OC Connect initial screening and assessment 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.
2. People seeking homeless services can go in person to explore options for services and housing referrals during non-holidays:
  - a. Chapel Hill, Monday-Friday, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, Community Empowerment Fund (CEF), 208 N. Columbia St. Suite 100
  - b. Hillsborough, Wednesdays, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm, Orange County Dept. of Social Services (DSS), 113 Mayo St
3. 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 Homeless Hotline calls will be forwarded to agencies:
  - REGULAR, Monday-Friday
    - 1:00 am – 6:00 am, IFC HomeStart
    - 6:00 am – 10:00 am, voicemail
    - 3:00 pm – 12:00 am voicemail
  - REGULAR, Saturday-Sunday & HOLIDAYS
    - 1:00 am – 6:00 am, IFC HomeStart
    - 6:00 am – 12:00 am, voicemail

#### **G. PREVENTION SERVICES**

OC Connect will ensure that all potentially eligible Homelessness Prevention participants will be screened for homelessness prevention assistance, regardless of the access point at which they initially seek assistance.

Homelessness Prevention access points and general homeless assistance access points will coordinate information and referrals back and forth to ensure persons at imminent risk of literal homelessness are provided with coordinated access to homelessness prevention services regardless of where the participants first contacts the CoC. In the current funding period the CoC did not have any homelessness prevention services funds.

However, OC Connect worked with the Department of Social Services and faith-based partners offering prevention services.

#### H. STREET OUTREACH

Street outreach teams will function as access points to OC Connect, and will seek to engage person who may be served through CE but who are not seeking assistance or are unable to seek assistance via projects that offer crisis housing or emergency shelter.

Street outreach teams will be trained on CE and the assessment process, and will have the ability to off OC Connect services to participants they contact through their street outreach efforts. Street outreach teams will be considered an access point for OC Connect.

### III. ASSESSMENT

#### A. STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT APPROACH

OC Connect will provide a standardized assessment process to all CE participants, ensuring uniform decision-making and coordinated care of persons experiencing housing crisis.

All persons served by OC Connect will be assessed using The Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). The VI-SPDAT documents a set of participant conditions, attributes, need level and vulnerability, allowing the access point and/or assessment staff to identify a service strategy to OCPEH who manages the CoC prioritization list.

1. 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 is:
  - Chapel Hill Police Department Crisis Unit
  - 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)
  - Local Re-Entry Council
2. Points System - Orange County uses a points 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, the 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.

VI-SPDAT score referral range:

- Score of 10-22 – 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 links to mainstream resources as best fits their needs
3. Once Scores Are Assessed - Households with scores of 4 and higher are also eligible to be placed on the HOME Committee list with their consent. The HOME Committee reviews monthly this by-name list to case conference client needs, and to prioritize referrals for PSH and RRH. **OCEPH staff reprioritizes this list twice per month** to give each household a unique prioritization number that encompasses:
- households with higher VI-SPDAT scores,
  - longer lengths of time homeless, and
  - people living unsheltered vs. in emergency shelter or transitional housing programs.
  - Age

OCEPH distributes the updated HOME Committee list before the monthly HOME Committee meeting, adding service connected 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 moved to inactive

Agency staff prioritizes housing voucher availability based on vulnerability but are looking for individualized housing solutions for all people on the HOME Committee list. OCEPH 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 those with the highest acuity 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.

## B. PHASES OF ASSESSMENT

All projects participating in CE will follow the OC Connect assessment protocols. The assessment process will progressively collect only enough participant information to prioritize and refer participants to available CoC housing and support services.

When people come to a partnering agency 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”.

1. *Exploring Your Options:* This tool is a guided intake conversation in which the agency representative and the client use a strengths-based approach to think creatively to, examine every possible option for avoiding entry into the homeless system. While it’s true that OC Connect is for folks needing emergency assistance, research shows that if communities can keep people out of the homeless system by diverting them away from 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.
2. *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 are seeking shelter; and
  - are staying in a Shelter or transitional housing and are 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:

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

Using the OC Connect Program Referral Assessment means that partnering agencies, emergency shelters 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 found in Section II.A. Information about the programs to which clients are referred can be found in *Appendix B, ESG and CoC Written Standards, Section VI Referrals*.

3. *Resource Database:* The OC Connect system also uses a resource database, which allows people to explore on their own the different resources that are available to them to address homelessness. Most people 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.

### **C. ASSESSMENT SCREENING**

OC Connect may collect and document participants' membership in civil rights protected classes but will not consider membership in a protected class as a justification for restricting, limiting, or steering participants to particular referral options.

### **D. ASSESSOR TRAINING**

OC Connect is committed to ensuring that all staff assist who assist with OC Connect operations receive sufficient training to implement OC Connect in a manner consistent with the vision and framework of CE, as well as in accordance with the policies and procedure of its CE system.

The CoC will provide at least annual training for persons who will manage access point processes and conduct assessment for CE. Training will be offered at no cost to the agency or staff, and will be delivered by an experienced and professional trainer who is identified by the CoC. Topics for training will include the following:

- Review of CoC's written Ce policies and procedures, including variations adopted for specifications;
- Requirements for use of assessment information to determine prioritization;
- Training on the use of the CE assessment tool; and
- Criteria for uniform decision-making referrals.

### **E. PARTICIPANT AUTONOMY**

It is crucial that person served by OC Connect have the autonomy to identify whether they are uncomfortable or unable to answer any questions during the assessment process, or to refuse a referral that has been made to them. In both instances, the refusal of the participant to respond to assessment questions or to accept a referral shall not adversely affect their position on the HOME Committee list.

Note: Some funders require collection and documentation of a participant's disability or other characteristics or attributes as a condition for determining eligibility. Participants who choose not to self-identify in these instances may be limiting potential referral options.

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. (See OC Connect Guiding Principles, Section I.C.)

### **F. NONDISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT AND APPEAL PROCESS**

The CoC is committed to ensuring that no information is used to discriminate or prioritize households for housing and services on a protected basis such as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, familial status, veterans' status, disability, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status.

- a. Process to File Nondiscrimination Complaint:

1. Nondiscrimination Complaints should be submitted in writing within 10 days of the issue arising. The Nondiscrimination Complaint should contain a detailed account of incident and, if any, proposed solutions.
  2. Client or agency nondiscrimination complaints can be sent to the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH)
    - via email to [Croot@orangecountync.gov](mailto: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)
- b. 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
  - Provide 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 any of the above steps.

#### **G. PRIVACY PROTECTIONS**

All participant information collected, stored, or shared in operation of OC Connect functions, regardless of where those data are stored, shall be considered personal and sensitive information worthy of full force of protection and security associated with data collection, stored, or shared.

**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. *See Appendix E, OC Connect Consent Form.*

**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 F, Confidentiality Agreement.*
- Requiring all staff administering OC Connect to be trained, inclusive of privacy trainings

#### **H. DISCLOSURE OF DISABILITY OR DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION**

Throughout the assessment process, participants must not be pressured or forced to provide CE staff with information that they do not wish to disclose, including specific disability or medical diagnostic information.

### **IV. PRIORITIZATION**

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 Center or Orange County Rape Crisis Center. (See Standardized Prioritization, Section IV.A)

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
- Health and Wellness sub score on the VI-SPDAT – higher sub score prioritized

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 now prioritizing 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 Guiding Principles, Section I.C).

#### **A. STANDARDIZED PRIORITIZATION**

CoC will use data collected through the CE process to prioritize homeless persons within the CoC’s geographic area.

1. 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
  - Priority 2: Highest VI-SPDAT score
  - Priority 3: Length of time homeless
  - Priority 4: Living situation (sheltered vs. unsheltered)
  - Priority 5: Health and Wellness VI-SPDAT Sub-score
2. 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.

3. 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 Homeless Hotline for a referral 919-245-2222.
- **Men:** IFC Community House continues to have beds available for men, 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.

4. 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 – 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:*

5. **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 September 2019, 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
6. **Street Outreach:** The CoC does not have a street outreach program as of September 2019; but is working to establish this needed program. 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

## B. EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emergency Services are a critical crisis response resource, and access to such services will not be prioritized.

## V. DATA SYSTEMS

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT PROCESS

Data must not be collected without the consent of participants, according to the defined privacy policies adopted by the OCPEH.

As part of the assessment process, participants will be provided with a written copy of OCPEH’s “NC HMIS Client Release of Information and Sharing Plan”, which identifies what data will be collected, what data will be shared, which agencies data will be shared with, and what the purpose of the data sharing is. Participants will have the option to decline sharing data; doing so does not make them ineligible for CE. *See Appendix G, Client Release of Information and Sharing Plan*

OCPEH provides mandatory reporting that 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. *See Appendix H, Mandatory Reporting*

## VI. EVALUATION

### EVALUATION OF CE SYSTEM

Regular and ongoing evaluation of the CE system will be conducted to ensure that improvement opportunities are identified, that results are shared and understood, and that the CE system is held accountable.

The CE will be evaluated using HMIS data on a quarterly basis. Results will be published on the public CE System website, after they have been reviewed by the CE Planning Committee. The CE Planning Committee has selected the following as key outcomes for CE.

- Reduction in the length of time homeless (system and project level)
- Reduction in the number of persons experiencing first-time homelessness (system and project).
- Increase in the number of placements into permanent housing (system and project level).

APPENDIX A, PARTNERS AND ROLES

**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 September 2019, 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
Chapel Hill Police Department					X	
Community Empowerment Fund				X	X	
Community Link	(Not in Orange Co.)	X			X	X
Durham VA Medical Center			X		X	
Freedom House					X	
Inter-Faith Council for Social Service	X	X		X	X	X
Lutheran Family Services					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
Orange County Rape Crisis Center					X	
Peter Elst LLC (peer support)					X	
UNC Horizons					X	
UNC Hospitals					X	
Volunteers of America			X		X	



## **Coordinated Entry Policies & Procedures**

**Approved by OCPEH Leadership Team 9/24/19**

## **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:** monthly review of the by-name list, case conference client needs, and make assessments for program referrals
  - 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 fourth Tuesday, 3:30-5 pm at CEF, 1315 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
  
- **Data & Grants Workgroup**
  - **Purpose:** review and promote excellent data quality for all projects serving people who are experiencing homelessness 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 Sherriff's Office



## **Coordinated Entry Policies & Procedures**

**Approved by OCPEH Leadership Team 9/24/19**

Appendix B, OCPEH EMERGENCY SOLUTION GRANT AND CONTINUUM OF CARE WRITTEN STANDARDS

See Appendix B in separate attachment.

APPENDIX C, DESIGNATED ACCESS POINTS

As part of the “no wrong door” approach, any homeless assistance agency within the community is able to refer persons presenting for services to OC Connect.

- Chapel Hill Police Department Crisis Unit
- 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)
- Local Re-Entry Council

APPENDIX D, OC CONNECT ACCESS COVERAGE

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

**APPENDIX E, 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: ) , 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.

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**APPENDIX F, HOME COMMITTEE CONFIDENTIALTY AGREEMENT**



**HOME Committee  
Volunteer 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 and Committee operation. You must treat this information as confidential and not share with anyone unless specifically authorized. The Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (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/HOME Committee plans and operations

All information collected, accessed, or viewed, as your work with the 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 that 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/HOME Committee 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 or 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 HOME Committee 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 materials by email and general notifications?

YES                  NO

If yes, email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX G, CLIENT RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND SHARING PLAN**

**3.4 NC ESG HMIS / DV Database  
CLIENT RELEASE OF INFORMATION & SHARING PLAN  
Identifying Information  
SECTION 1**

This form is about the North Carolina Statewide Homeless Management Information System. We call this NC HMIS or the “System”. Many shelters and other helping programs use the NC HMIS system. The NC HMIS System keeps information about clients that get help here.

We collect personal information directly from you as a way of providing the best services to meet your needs. We only collect information that we consider to be appropriate. The collection and use of all personal information is guided by strict standards of confidentiality.

**The information will be used by us and other helping agencies according to the sharing plan attached:**

- Allow us to work with other agencies to help you
- Help case managers work together to provide you complete service
- Reduce the number of times you have to tell your story
- Allow us to continue receiving funds to provide services
- Allow us to apply for additional funds for services
- Allow us to see what are the most common needs and whether or not we are meeting those needs

**Finding Your Record:**

- I know that the only information other agencies can see without my permission are my name, year of birth, gender, veteran status, and partial SS#. This information is used to find my record in the System and make sure that I have one and only one record. My name does let other participating agencies know that I have been helped by an agency somewhere in North Carolina. It does not identify the agency, what services I received, or where I received services.

- There may be a reason why sharing my name, year of birth, gender, veteran status, and partial SS# on the open part of the system may put a family member or me at risk. If that is true, I have initialed below that this information should **NOT** be left visible.

Name, Year of Birth, Gender, Partial SS#, Veteran Status: \_\_\_\_\_,

- I know that if I have already received services from an organization using the System and I have left my name visible, I will have to ask that organization to also close my “Profile/Name”. The name is usually left visible in our System to allow service providers to better coordinate services.

- I know that there is a list of all the agencies in the NC HMIS System that I can find on the Internet at [www.NCHMIS.org](http://www.NCHMIS.org). These agencies must follow strict privacy laws. The agencies in the system may change from time to time.

- I know that no additional information about me can be shared unless I sign the attached Sharing Plan agreeing to share additional information.

## Client Release of Information & Sharing Plan

### SECTION 2 – Sharing Plan

**Put your initials next to the statements that you understand and agree to:**

- I have received a copy of this Agency's Privacy Notice/script that explains NC HMIS and my rights and responsibilities associated with how information is kept and shared through this system.
- I understand that my written consent allows the information listed in the Sharing Plan to be shared among the agencies listed in the Sharing Plan. All sharing agencies where I am receiving services may update that information as I provide additional or new information. The purpose of sharing my information is to better coordinate care for me and my family.
- I understand that the confidentiality of my records is protected by law. I understand that this agency will never give information about me to anyone outside the agency without my specific written consent through a Sharing Plan or as required by law (The regulations are the Federal Law of Confidentiality for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patients, (42 CFR, Part 2) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA), 45 CFR, Parts 160 & 164) and certain North Carolina laws.
- I understand that Agencies included in my Sharing Plan must follow strict privacy guidelines.
- I can withdraw my consent to share at any time; however any information already shared with another agency cannot be taken back. I also understand that the request to discontinue sharing will have to be coordinated between sharing partners. I should tell any agencies that I am seeing included on the Plan when I withdraw my consent.
- I understand that I have the right to see my information, request to change it, and to have a copy of that information from the servicing agency by written request.
- I understand that the refusal to share information in this system will not be used to deny me services such as emergency assistance, outreach, shelter, or housing assistance.
- I understand that some of my information may be disclosed for academic research purposes without identifying information included. My name and other identifying information may be used to match records but will not be released to be used directly in the research unless I sign a separate consent when identifying information is a requirement for the Study (example: so a researcher can contact me).

The following Sharing Plan describes what information will be shared with other agencies and the specific agencies included in the Sharing Plan.



### Sharing Plan

**What information is shared about you?**

Shared Information:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Shared Information Continued:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

This agency routinely shares information with the helping organizations or programs listed below. Please note that any organization or program listed below can share your information with the other organizations listed on this Release.

**What helping agencies can see additional information about me?**

Name of Agencies Participating in Sharing

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Name of Agencies Participating in Sharing

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

**Yes, I agree to share according to the Sharing Plan.**

**No, I do not agree to the Sharing Plan.**

Client signature: \_\_\_\_\_, Date: \_\_\_\_\_,

Signature of guardian or authorized-representative (when required): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to client: \_\_\_\_\_ Date signed by guardian/authorized representative: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX G, MANDATED REPORTING

### 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.