



**Orange County  
Coordinated Assessment & Centralized Intake System**

**How Can My Agency Prepare for CA/CI?  
September 24, 2014**

To successfully implement CA/CI requires a number of changes at both the program and system level. These include not only changes in how homeless people initially enter the system, but also in how they then move from system entry to a housing referral and an exit from homelessness. Entry points have to be designed to effectively target those who are literally homeless and have the greatest needs, while diverting those who are not homeless and have lower needs for assistance. Shelter and housing programs must eliminate access barriers so that they can accept referrals of literally homeless people from the entry points. At a system level, the inventory of units has to shift to better match the population of homeless people. It is also essential for a smoothly functioning CA/CI that all programs shift to real time data entry on both their clients and their bed availability. The system can only function effectively when the entry points can access up-to-date intake and assessment information for all clients and see what vacancies are available in what programs.

Some steps providers can take now to begin preparing for CA/CI are described below.

**1. Identify and Reduce Program Barriers**

When CA/CI is implemented, programs will have to remove access barriers that prevent homeless people with the greatest needs from entering shelter and housing. To begin preparing for this shift, providers can:

- Review agreements and contracts with funding sources to identify those eligibility requirements that are required and those that are internally established by your agency.
- Begin thinking about what sorts of policy or programmatic shifts will be needed to lower barriers. For example:
  - Shift from sobriety requirements, drug testing, and other substance abuse related barriers toward strict “no use on the property” rules.
  - Replace service participation requirements with strong client engagement practices and train staff on motivational interviewing and other strengths based approaches to service delivery.
  - Remove minimum income requirements and strengthen policies to help participants develop a plan to increase income, including applying for benefits for which they may be eligible.

**2. Assess Feasibility of Target Population Shifts**

Currently the OC system has a mismatch between its homeless population and bed inventory, with a relatively larger proportion of beds for families than for single individuals and people who are chronically homeless. Over the next several years, the system will be “right-sized” to better match needs. Steps providers can take now include:

- Review your existing mission, funding sources, and physical plant (if applicable) and assess feasibility of shifting existing units from family use to single use or to serve people who are chronically homeless or have high housing barriers;
- Identify any needed policy and programmatic changes this will involve, such as changes to your outreach strategy, eligibility requirements, staffing ratios, staff training, etc.
- If you have a Rapid Re-Housing program, consider whether this program could be more deeply targeted and serve more people. Would your agency be able to house people with a lower amount of funds per household if you had specialized training on working with landlords, mediation between clients and their family members, or other topics? Could you shift your service delivery model to provide more services after clients are housed rather than requiring a particular level of “stability” or savings/income before they move into housing? What other programmatic shifts would be needed?

### **3. Shift to Diversion**

A key element of CA/CI is to reduce the flow of people entering shelter or other temporary housing by diverting those who can be helped to remain in place or move directly to another housing situation. To prepare for a system-level shift to diversion, providers can begin with the following activities.

- If you currently provide prevention assistance, conduct a review of the program to assess current targeting and whether people with the greatest likelihood of becoming homeless are being served. Data from other communities shows that most people who enter shelters do not have their own lease but rather are living informally with friends or family. If you require families to have a lease in order to receive assistance, you are likely screening out those most likely to become homeless.
- Evaluate the implications of shifting prevention activities toward a diversion model in which you serve people who have already become homeless or actively seeking emergency shelter but who could be re-housed at very low cost rather than serving people at-risk of homelessness.
- See above in regards to rapid re-housing. Can your existing rapid re-housing program shift to include diversion? Many of the activities and forms of assistance offered in rapid re-housing can also be used to divert people who are homeless but can quickly secure other housing with a small amount of help.

### **4. Real Time Data Entry**

The CA/CI implementation group discussed real time data entry in the spring, and will be prioritizing this topic in the fall. Focus Strategies has analyzed a number of CA/CI tools both inside and outside HMIS and it is clear the most workable approach is to use tools inside the Adsystem system (along with excellent training and policies that match system goals). Implementation will require real time data entry and sharing of both client information and bed availability.

- Assess your agency’s current resources and policies relating to data collection and data entry and evaluate what it will take to shift to real time data entry. What conversations do you need to have with your board and staff? What additional resources might be needed?