

Minnesota CES Diversion & Prevention Screening Process

June 2015

Screening is the process of assuring the following:

1. the person/household is **eligible** for the services, and meets any priority criteria,
2. there is **no other better resource** in the community that is available and acceptable to the participant (i.e., the program is a good "match"), and
3. the person/household is a **priority for the program**, recognizing that most programs are not able to serve everyone who is eligible.

The initial screening should **NOT** include in-depth psychosocial or other similar assessments, to assure that admissions decisions are not based upon projections of the participant's likely success or failure in the program, but instead are limited to factors necessary to determine eligibility and prioritization for available CoC assistance, as well as to determine whether another intervention, if available, is more appropriate to resolve the housing crisis.

The initial screening should answer the question – “Would this person or household become homeless or remain homeless BUT FOR this particular assistance?”

Core Concepts of Screening:

Who Screens – screening is a specialized intake function. The credentials of the person(s) assigned to screening are less important than the staff's ability to quickly assess and respond to the reactions of people in crisis while obtaining the information needed to establish eligibility. Screeners should be knowledgeable about available community resources throughout the CoC.

How – Screening should be clearly defined so that eligibility is documented and intake decisions are fair, consistent and transparent. All screening protocols should have tools/forms that collect only the information and documentation needed to determine eligibility, assign priority and make an admission decision.

Time Frame – In order to respond to and address the immediate housing crisis, the screening process and admission decision must be as prompt as possible. At a minimum, there should be a formal, expedited process for screening and admission when an applicant will imminently lose their housing or is homeless and unsheltered. Ideally the screener and access point provider will make a decision within hours.

Who Decides – Deciding which applicant will receive needed services, and who will be denied is a very difficult responsibility for staff. All applicants are in need and worthy of help. Where a single staff person is responsible for admission decisions, staff is less likely to have a difficult time making consistent decisions and frequently experiences considerable stress. A team approach be better, as long as the decisions can be made quickly and consistently across all team members. Another option is to require supervisory approval of intake decisions, so the single staff is essentially making a recommendation rather than a final decision.

Service Denials – There will be times when a person or household is not eligible, does not meet the COC or program's priorities, or is requesting assistance the CoC cannot provider. In such cases screener staff should make every effort to redirect the persons to another resource.