



# Santa Clara County Continuum of Care



## Coordinated Assessment FAQ for Providers who Administer the VI-SPDAT

### *General Information*

#### **1. What is Coordinated Assessment?**

Coordinated Assessment is a consistent, community wide intake process to match people experiencing homelessness to existing community resources that are the best fit for their situation. For a few years, we have used this type of process in the Care Coordination Project (aka Housing 1000). Now, we are expanding to use Coordinated Assessment for all permanent housing programs for people who are homeless in Santa Clara County, including permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing. In January 2018, Coordinated Assessment was expanded to include transitional housing programs as well.

In Santa Clara County's Coordinated Assessment System, all homeless individuals and families will complete an assessment survey, known as the VI-SPDAT, that considers the household's situation and identifies the best type of housing intervention (if any) to address their situation. Permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, and transitional housing programs fill spaces in their programs from a Community Queue of eligible households generated from the standard assessment. This coordinated process will reduce the need for people to traverse the county seeking assistance at every provider separately.

#### **2. What are some concerns about Coordinated Assessment and how will they be addressed?**

Coordinated Assessment on its own cannot address the significant lack of affordable housing in Santa Clara County or the limited capacity in programs responding to homelessness. As a result, people who complete the Coordinated Assessment process will still face long waits for housing and many will never be matched to housing through this process. We hope that the data that comes out of the process will help us advocate for more funding for housing and services for people who are homeless.

#### **3. What does Coordinated Assessment NOT do?**

- It does not guarantee access to housing.
- It does not place people on waiting lists for Section 8 housing, low-income affordable housing complexes, or private housing complexes.
- It will not increase the supply of housing in Santa Clara County.
- The assessment tool (VI-SPDAT) is **not** an application for housing or programs. Additional paperwork will be needed for any individual program once the household is matched to a participating program

### *Common Questions from Clients about the Process*

#### **1. I have already been surveyed by Housing 1000. Why do I need to do another survey?**

The Housing 1000 campaign ended in December 2014, and we have transitioned to a different method for generating referrals to permanent housing in Santa Clara County. The VI-SPDAT survey is different from the survey that was used in Housing 1000, so it is important that you complete the VI-SPDAT even if you have already completed the Housing 1000 survey. Completing the VI-SPDAT survey will not guarantee access to housing or services, but it will provide us with information to best address your housing crisis. Additionally, this survey will help us illustrate the need for more housing in our community.

## 2. I completed the Coordinated Assessment survey (VI-SPDAT). What do I do next?

### Brief Response

Continue to seek housing and utilize services and resources available in the community. Now that we have your information in the Homeless Management Information System Database (also known as HMIS) we will reach out to you **if** we have space available in a program that looks like a good fit for you. **If your contact information changes, please inform your service provider and they can update your information in the HMIS database.** You can also contact a provider on this website: <http://scc.hmis.cc/participating-agencies/>.

### In-Depth Response

First, **please keep your contact and location information as up-to-date as possible.** This process can sometimes take many months or even years, and we want to be able to reach you quickly if a housing opportunity becomes available. Each year many people miss the chance for a housing program because they cannot be located.

If at any point your contact information changes, you should get back in touch with a provider who can update your information in the HMIS database. This can be the agency that gave you the assessment survey or another agency that serves people experiencing homelessness. **A list of agencies can be found at this website: <http://scc.hmis.cc/participating-agencies/>.** You want to make sure it is as easy as possible to get in contact with you if a housing program becomes available for you, so keep in touch!

Second, you should **continue to seek benefits and pursue other housing options.** Keep applying for low income housing. Keep getting on waiting lists. Keep working with a case manager. Keep looking for jobs or going to school.

Finally, don't give up! If you are struggling, ask for help.

## 3. Where am I on the Coordinated Assessment/housing wait list?

### Brief Response

There is no Coordinated Assessment wait list for housing. Coordinated Assessment is a matching program: we use the information you provided in the assessment and in your HMIS intake to match you to the best services for you. Unfortunately, in our community we have extremely limited housing resources, so we might not ever find a match for you through this process.

### In-Depth Response

If you worked with a service provider on a short survey or housing assessment, known as the VI-SPDAT, your responses would have been entered into a centralized database known as HMIS. Your answers to questions on the survey result in a recommendation for services that best match your household's current situation. The survey will determine that some households have a high likelihood of resolving a housing crisis on their own, but may need referrals to one-time or short-term resources. These households will be given referrals from the

service provider who conducted the survey. Other households may require greater assistance over a longer period of time. These households are placed in a pool known as the Community Queue.

Being on the Community Queue means you may be matched to housing resources such as permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing or transitional housing. The Community Queue is the only way that you can be considered for those resources. You can ask your provider to check if you are on it. Unfortunately, housing resources are very limited. While many people do receive housing through this process, most people do not. It is still important to participate since new resources are being added regularly and you may qualify.

It is also important to know that the Community Queue is not a traditional waiting list and is not “first come first serve.” The order of the Community Queue depends on many different factors about each individual or family, including what type of housing service would be most helpful and who might be in the greatest need at that time. Because new people are assessed each day, the Community Queue changes frequently.

#### **4. Will Coordinated Assessment match me to housing?**

Most people who complete the VI-SPDAT survey will NOT receive a housing referral through this process. There is simply not enough housing in Santa Clara County to meet the need. You should continue to seek housing as you normally would through other resources. We will use Coordinated Assessment to help match people to existing programs in the community, but until the supply of housing increases significantly it is just not possible to meet the need. It is still important that you complete the assessment survey because we will use information gathered from the assessments to advocate for the development of more housing programs.

#### **5. When will I get housed?**

No one is guaranteed to receive housing as a result of completing the VI-SPDAT survey. Given the lack of housing available in our community, most people will not receive a housing referral for a long time, if at all. Don't stop seeking housing on your own and continue to make use of other services and resources in the community. Coordinated Assessment is just one other way that we might be able to identify referrals for you. If space becomes available in a program that looks like a good fit for you we will reach out to you.

#### **6. How come my friend got housed before me?**

The VI-SPDAT survey helps us figure out which type of housing program is best for you. We use that information along with other information in your HMIS intake to identify programs that you are likely eligible for and that look like a good fit for you. Because each program has different eligibility requirements we can't house people in the order they do the assessment. People who have received housing referrals through this program have been matched to programs that are a good fit for them, but that might not be a good fit for you. Coordinated Assessment can only match people to existing housing programs. We hope to use information gathered through assessments to advocate for the development of more housing for people who are homeless, but until more housing is developed most people will not receive housing referrals through Coordinated Assessment.

#### **7. If I report honestly about my past (criminal, credit, substance abuse, OR mental health history), will that hurt my chances for a housing opportunity through the community queue?**

No. You will never be denied access to a program through the Community Queue because of your past or current issues related to credit, criminal history, substance abuse, or mental health. Giving an honest answer about your challenges with maintaining good credit, sobriety, or physical/mental well-being may help match you to the best housing option available to you. The VI-SPDAT survey is designed to assess these different concerns and determine what type of program will meet your household's needs. If you are selected from the Community Queue, housing providers will work with your household to find a unit that meets your needs.

## **8. Can my citizenship status prevent me from getting housing?**

You will not be asked about your citizenship status during the VI-SPDAT survey process. Some housing programs require legal residency to be enrolled in the program, but many do not. If you are referred to a program for which you are ineligible, you will be placed back on the Community Queue and may be eligible for a different housing program when space becomes available.

## **9. Will my information be kept confidential?**

You will be asked to sign a release of information in order for your provider to enter your survey responses into a secure database, HMIS. Your information can be viewed by providers within the system to assess your needs and match you to a housing opportunity. Your information will not be shared for any other purposes.

## **10. In order to get housing, will I need to attend multiple appointments that will cause me to miss other appointments or time at my job?**

The process to get on the Community Queue is meant to be as easy as possible. You should be able to take the VI-SPDAT survey during a single visit to an access point provider. After that, you will not need to take the survey again for another year, unless your situation significantly changes. Significant changes may include changes to income or benefits, health or disabling conditions, family composition, exposure to imminent danger or risk of severe physical harm. It is also very important that you keep your contact information as up-to-date as possible with your provider so we can reach you quickly if a housing program opening becomes available for you. You will not need to take any other steps unless you are matched to a housing opportunity.

This survey process puts you into consideration for many housing programs at one time. In the past, you would have had to go to different places to sign up for each individual housing option. Now by completing the VI-SPDAT survey, you will learn if you may be eligible and could be put on the central Community Queue for many different programs at once.

If you are matched from the Community Queue to a housing program, there may be additional appointments and some paperwork at that time to confirm that the program is the right fit for you. Because housing resources are limited, it can take many months, or even years, to be matched to a housing program.