



FLEXIBLE CASELOADS

In the past Hearth Connection has contracted with provider agencies for a specific number of participants, and has paid providers based on a per participant per month rate for intensive case management services. Teams were not allowed to serve more than the contracted number of participants because the Long Term Homeless Supportive Services Fund did not have funds to pay for additional participants. Typically the ratio of case managers to participants was between 1:8 and 1:12.

Some provider teams found that they had capacity to increase caseload sizes. This is due to two factors:

1. The increasing stability and functioning of some long-term participants;
2. The increased experience, expertise and efficiency of a team that has been together for a long time.

Under the previous agreement case managers could not serve more participants even if they were not busy with their caseload. With flexible caseloads the service providers are given the flexibility to increase their caseload size when they feel their current staffing and case mix gives them capacity to serve more participants. It remains flexible so if, in the future, staffing expertise changes or changes in the case mix require higher levels of service, the service providers can reduce caseloads downward again through attrition. This ensures participants continue to receive the level of services they need even when that need changes over time. It also ensures that the full capacity of the teams is being utilized.

Each team is contracted to provide services to a minimum number of participants based on the participant to case manager ratio of previous contracts. The teams may flex up from this minimum, but may not go below the minimum. Contracts were changed from a per participant basis (fee for service) to a grant basis (reimbursement for costs) to accommodate this change in programming.

As a result of these changes, new service level categories were added to Co-Pilot's Self Sufficiency Matrix:

Standard: 3+ meetings a month, weekly phone contact

Medium: 2-3 meetings a month, bi-monthly phone contact

Low: Less than two meetings a month, no more than one phone contact a month

Supported Independence: Minimum of one meeting per quarter to complete necessary paperwork

Exited from program

WHAT IS SUPPORTED INDEPENDENCE?

Supported Independence (SI) is an evolution of service needs for Long-Term Homeless Project participants.

As a participant works with a team, he or she may reach a point where the frequency of intensive services that teams offer isn't needed, but he or she still needs a minimum level of support to remain stable, such as checking in with a team if an issue arises.

As the Metro, NE and Southern Projects have matured, we've struggled to recognize a way to honor the work that teams are doing to work with participants as they transition. There wasn't a "happy medium" between intensive case management and exit. An acknowledgement of the changing needs of participants was created in 2011 with the implementation of flexible caseloads and the additions to the Self-Sufficiency Matrix (see above). Supported Independence (SI) is a way of further responding to the ever changing needs of participants and the way our teams conduct their work.

For participants who fit the spirit of the criteria (needing only a minimum level of support, not needing regular check-ins, possibly ready to transition off services sometime in the future, etc), placement into the Supported Independence category will:

- Help our teams, the Legislature, and our community formally recognize the steps toward independence that participants are able to make as a result of our work;
- Assure participants of an ongoing support system as well as the positive steps they're making toward stability and independence;
- Allow us to further analyze and document the evolution of participant stability.
- Enhance consumer choice and self-directed care by enabling participants to choose various levels of service intensity.

Specifics

Each provider service team with input from the Regional Manager will decide households that fit the criteria for SI and seek participant permission. The SI notation will go into Co-Pilot through the Self-Sufficiency Matrix (SI category has been added effective 12-7-11).

We expect three different outcomes for those in SI:

1. They could stay in that category indefinitely;
2. They could exit the program; or
3. Their service level could increase if a crisis occurs.

Households moved to the SI service level will remain in that category for a minimum of six months, with no time limit or cap for exit. The six month minimum is necessary to allow our case management teams to track the progress and service needs of each participant and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. It is possible to move a household back to a higher service level if a crisis occurs, but households should not be moved to the SI category if a team does not see evidence of the necessary supports and stability to maintain this level of independence.