**Priority List Procedures**

Targeted, data-driven efforts have the most impact on addressing unsheltered and chronic street homelessness, and prioritizing housing and service resources for an identified group of highly vulnerable people can help a community meet its goals. This document proposes a set of procedures for creating a priority list and includes examples of processes for adding and removing individuals from a list. States, counties, cities or other localities will need to consider data privacy factors as they develop this process uniquely for their community.

**Creating a Priority List**

1. ***Identifying existing lists and data sources***

The variety of funding sources and policies that drive competing priorities within the homelessness system often lead to the creation of multiple ‘priority lists’ in any one community. Many of these lists will be outdated, or will not have been updated once individuals were housed. The first step for most communities driving towards a **single** focus list will be to understand what lists currently exist, from what data source, and the utility of these lists for ongoing prioritization. Filling out the table below will help structure this exercise.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Existing List 1* | *Existing List 2* | *Existing List 3* |
| Organization Operating/ Owning List | *E.g. Office of Supportive Housing, City* |  |  |
| Data Sources for List | *E.g. HMIS* |  |  |
| Frequency of Updates | *E.g. Weekly* |  |  |
| Last Update to List | *E.g. Jan 2018* |  |  |
| Process for Adding Individuals |  |  |  |
| Process for Removing Individuals |  |  |  |
| Organizations with Access to View List |  |  |  |

1. ***Criteria for inclusion in a new universal priority list***

Inclusion may be based on federal or state definitions, such as the HUD definition of chronically homeless individuals as “either (1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR (2) an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.”[[1]](#footnote-1) These definitions will likely lead to higher numbers of people on the list. However, a community may instead decide to create a smaller priority list based on local factors that could include considerations such as:

* Is there a subset of individuals who would prioritized through existing coordinated entry processes? E.g. individuals scoring in the most vulnerable decile using the VISPDAT or other tools
* Is there a subset of individuals who are the highest or mostly costly utilizers of services across multiple systems, such as homeless outreach, healthcare, and criminal justice? For more information on this approach, see [CSH’s FUSE initiatives](http://www.csh.org/fuse).
* Is there a vulnerable population that is a political priority? E.g. individuals with a history of incarceration and with mental health conditions

The table below may help to structure community priorities for consideration.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Notes* |
| Existing Coordinated Entry Priorities |  |
| New Coordinated Entry Priorities (if Applicable) |  |
| Political Priorities |  |
| Federal Funding Priorities |  |
| State Funding Priorities |  |
| Local Funding Priorities |  |
| Previously Agreed Priorities |  |
| Priorities for New List, Based on Above Considerations |  |

1. ***Checking for Overlap between Existing Lists and Priorities***

It always makes sense to use existing lists rather than reinventing the wheel, *if and only if* that list prioritizes individuals based on the priorities laid out in step 2 and if the list is accessible and regularly updated. If one of the existing lists meets these aims or can be adjusted in updating or other processes to meet the criteria, the community should consider using that list.

1. ***Creating Processes for a New List***

When creating a new list, it will be important to define its parameters in a number of ways, including:

* Storage location and accessibility
	+ Where will the list be stored?
	+ How will the list be shared in real time?
		- If electronically on a cloud or other platform, are there privacy procedures in place to outline how data is shared or accessed?
		- If shared through weekly or other email updates, who will be responsible for sending these out? How much resource and time will it take?
* List ownership
	+ Who will be responsible for updating the list with new individuals?
		- If updated by numerous individuals or provider organizations, who will check the data quality and any discrepancies between individuals?
		- If updated automatically, what is the process for entering the information that is used to determine eligibility? Who will check data update frequency and quality of that information?
	+ Who will be responsible for updating the list to remove housed individuals?
		- What are the reasons people are removed from the list? These might include: moved into housing, death, changed vulnerability level or did not meet other local eligibility criteria
* List content
	+ What information will be stored on the list besides identifying information? Types of information may include:
		- Last known location
		- Assigned case manager
		- Assigned housing
		- Known mental health concerns
		- Known substance use/ alcohol concerns
		- Existing family
		- Emergency contact
	+ What information will be stored on the list when an individual leaves?
		- Place of residence (home address) if known
		- Type of residence
		- Restrictions or requirements for maintaining residence (if not Housing First)
1. ***Compiling and Distributing the New List***

The procedures governing the priority list should be laid out in Standard Operating Procedures that guide activities community wide. Those standards that may include:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Date Drafted* | *Author* | *Next Steps* |
| Definitions |  |  |  |
| Background/Aim of List |  |  |  |
| Initial List Process |  |  |  |
| List Maintenance |  |  |  |
| Circulation & Use |  |  |  |

**Examples of Processes Related to a Community List**

***List Maintenance Procedures***

The List will be updated quarterly through both a recommendation process and a data run process, as well as updated on a real-time basis through Vulnerability Index surveys. A vulnerability assessment tool has been created for outreach workers to use to complete a recommendation.

 The schedule will be as follows.

* 1. Data Runs for Chronic Homeless Histories will be conducted every March, June, September and December.
	2. Focus List meetings for the month of March, June, September and December, will be a review of all recommendations received in the previous 3 months.
	3. Names of people who score 1+ on the Vulnerability Index will be added to the Large List and names of people who score 4+ on the Vulnerability Index will be added to the Small/Outreach List on a real-time basis.
	4. Names that need to be added to the lists from data runs, Vulnerability Index surveys, or the recommendation process can be added prior to the first of the following month.
	5. The list will be revised each January 1st, April 1st, July 1st and October 1st and distributed.

*Data Run Process:* On a quarterly basis, either the community’s HMIS system or ideally a community wide Social Services data system or data warehouse will run a standardized population-based report to determine, over the last quarter, how many persons met the longevity portion of the chronic homeless definition. The data will be cleaned and names who were not already on the lists who have been seen on the street in the past six months, who have 20 or more outreach contacts, and who meet SSI/SSDI eligibility will be added to the List.

***Circulation and Use Procedures***

Outreach teams are to be given the List of no more than 100 names. Names of individuals who are housed, who are already connected to case management, or who have not been seen in the past six months, will be flagged by outreach teams. The data will be updated for any discrepancies against these reports.

Individuals on the List who have not been seen in the past six months and are not connected to other services will be assigned to each outreach team based on which team had the most recent contact with the individual. Outreach teams will be instructed to find, engage, assess, and plan for placement into permanent housing all assigned individuals.

1. “ September 2007. Office of Community Planning and Development Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs. “Defining Chronic Homelessness: A Technical Guide for HUD Programs”. <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/library/tgchronichomeless.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)