**Priority List Policy**

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| **CONTEXT** | Most communities have more people in need of homelessness assistance than they can serve, particularly for persons who need supportive housing placement. Therefore communities need to make tough decisions regarding how those limited resources are allocated. A priority list process, also a community to make intentional commitments to this process and ensure that limited and valuable resources such as supportive housing are easily accessible for the communities’ priority populations. |
| **POLICY** | The Priority List is a list of homeless individuals who are seen regularly by street outreach, are continually experiencing unsheltered homelessness and are assigned to individual workers for continued engagement and services. The purpose of the policy and practice is for outreach workers to deepen the engagement relationships and better assist persons to access needed resources and end their experience of homelessness. |
| **PURPOSE** | To provide teams with criteria and procedures for identifying and assigning individuals to the priority list. To outline expectations for outreach work with priority list individuals. |
| **PROCEDURE** | **Background:**  The Priority List is a list ofhomeless individuals who are identified by outreach workers or supervisors as meeting any of following criteria:   * Those with whom outreach workers are familiar through repeated engagements (at least 3 face to face contacts over the preceding month); * Those who the Community or other stakeholders have identified as benefitting from consistent engagement * Those who are at high risk to themselves or others * Those who have been identified for the Community’s priority list by stakeholders outside the outreach teams.   The Priority List enables the Community and the outreach teams to:   * Track the progress and outcomes for a specified group of **homeless** individuals known to outreach workers over time; * Gauge the number and locations of individuals regularly engaged by outreach teams; and * Have knowledge of the types of housing/services required to address the needs of this group.   It is also the mechanism whereby outreach and case manager supervisors become familiar with the work of their staff, the individuals being engaged, and the types of needs that present in this population.  Depending on the worker role, each worker should have a minimum of 20 individuals on their priority list at any time. Each worker discusses their Priority List caseload in depth with their immediate supervisor on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Unsheltered individuals do not have to agree to be part of the priority list to be a priority for a community and for outreach workers. Unsheltered individuals not have to share their name, and may be identified by location, appearance or behavior. An agency-wide list with all the above information is then compiled by the workers’ supervisor and brought to an all-team supervisor meeting with Community for review each month.  An all-agency case review is held monthly with appropriate leadership such as a community’s Homeless Services Coordinator and supervisors of the outreach teams and case managers from each of the (5) agencies. This meeting includes discussion and consultation regarding the on-going work, the long-term goal, and the steps required to reach this goal for each individual on the list. Decisions will be made regarding any changes in the priority list assignment, based on a determination of the team activity, location of the individual, relationship with the individual, specific circumstances of the individual situation, and numbers of individuals on workers’ priority list caseloads. Communities can track the need for outreach worker capacity, based upon the ability for outreach teams to have a 20-person individuals priority list and include all known unsheltered persons.  **Procedures**  Once identified as meeting any of the above criteria, individuals will be assigned to an outreach worker’s priority list using the following procedures:   1. Outreach worker will first check the existing priority list to ensure that the individual is not already on another worker’s list 2. If the individual is not already assigned to another worker, the outreach worker will discuss the individual situation with supervisor to determine if they meet the criteria for placement on the priority list 3. The outreach worker will contact [local managed care or other health related entity] to learn of the individual’s health care needs and challenges as evidenced by a treatment history and to determine if the individual is assigned to a case manager.    1. If the individual is identified as a recipient of case management services, then the outreach worker should contact the unit and obtain the contact information to establish coordination with assigned support.    2. If the individual is assigned to a case management team, the outreach worker will make contact with the team to discuss the individual’s situation. The Outreach worker should contact the assigned team to share location and any helpful engagement strategies. The team should establish engagement plan. Within 30 days of the contact, the individual should be assessed for removal from the priority list. 4. The supervisor will discuss the individual at the following monthly priority list meeting with the OCE director or a community’s Coordinator of Homeless Services and other agency supervisors. Based on this discussion, a decision will be made whether to place the individual on a focus list, and which worker/team would be the most appropriate to follow the individual. 5. The Community will identify individuals in need of engagement and assign to the appropriate team when necessary   **Expectations:**  Outreach workers will work towards obtaining and recording as much of the following information as possible:   * Individual’s name; Persons who do not share a name but are regularly seen can be placed on the priority list with a description. * Worker assigned; * Location (where the individual regularly stays/is engaged either on the street or in temporary shelter); * Recovery Plan (Should address efforts to end street homelessness for the individual) * Individual’s DOB and SSN; and * If individual identifies as a Veteran * If individual’s name appears on another outreach worker's priority list * Last face to face outreach contact   Outreach workers are responsible for the validity of the contact with individuals on their list.  Workers are expected to:   1. Visit and or search for individual on their priority list at least once a week(contacts can increase at times that the supervisor or outreach worker determines that individual is vulnerable or at risk) 2. Discuss the individual’s situation regularly with supervisors, bringing to the supervisor’s attention any issues requiring further follow-up and/or advocacy   Supervisors are expected to:   1. Review priority list with all workers on team and provide support and assistance in resolution of the stated goals of the individuals on the priority list. 2. Report details at regular community wide meetings for every individual on priority list 3. Review potential additions and removals from priority list with the Community Homeless Services Coordinator.   Individuals may be removed from the priority list for the following reasons:   * If the whereabouts of the individual are unknown for a period of more than 90 days, the supervisor advocates the removal of the individual from the list; Exceptions can be made but should be discussed with the Homeless Coordinator. * During this 90-day period the worker should attempt to locate individual by checking outreach database for outreach contacts, should contact healthcare services, should contact the Community shelter system, and Criminal Justice System to inquire about potential incarceration. * The Community will then determine the individual’s status on the priority list   Additional reasons for removal include: assignment to intensive case manager; permanent supportive housing; placement in long-term residence, etc. The individual has been stable in placement for at least 60 days. |