



Frequently Asked Questions & Clarifications: New Coordinated Entry Homelessness Prevention (HP) Procedures

Updated: February 2, 2021

Q: Is it really true that Coordinated Entry Specialists do **not have to conduct a Triage Assessment, VI-SPDAT, nor BNL placement for households that just need rental assistance?**

Correct. Yes, that is true. The new HP procedures streamline and shorten the intake and referral process for households that are seeking rental assistance to avoid becoming homeless. If the household is not already literally homeless - living in a car, park, the streets, a shelter, bridge housing, actively fleeing Domestic Violence with no permanent housing options, etc. (HUD Category 1 or 4) - a CE Specialist should proceed with the new HP procedures if the household is seeking rental assistance.

This scenario also applies to households that are at imminent risk of homelessness (HUD Category 2, see below) and seeking an Emergency Shelter referral (regardless of whether or not they also want a referral to Homelessness Prevention).

In other words, CE Specialists should **only** conduct a Triage Assessment, VI-SPDAT, and BNL prioritization list placement for households that are already literally homeless by HUD Category 1 or 4 definitions.

Q: What questions should CE Specialists be asking during the beginning of the intake to determine whether the household should be given the new Homelessness Prevention intake and referral process, including the HP Excel screening tool?

Before a CE Specialist begins a PA HMIS HP intake, they should ask the Head of Household the following questions to determine their potential eligibility for HP intake and referral:

1. "Are you going to lose your housing in 21 days or less (or 30 days if you are a

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veteran)"?

2. "Do you have any written documentation of this housing loss?" (Ex. eviction notice, certification from a human service case manager, written letter from a leaseholder that a doubled-up household has to leave, etc.)?

If the answer to both questions is yes, then begin the new HP intake, screening, and referral procedures.

If the answer to question 2 is no, explain that some sort of written documentation is required for all HP programs to be eligible.

Q: Can CE Specialists also make Emergency Shelter referrals to households that need rental assistance?

Yes, if and only if the household is at imminent risk of homelessness (HUD Category 2), defined as:

An Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:

- (i) Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance;
- (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; and
- (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing

Q: Are CE Specialists supposed to be making referrals for people who just need utility assistance?

No. Some HP projects (ESG and HAP funded) can provide utility assistance, but the only people who should be referred to Homelessness Prevention programs are at risk of losing their housing due to eviction, a landlord not renewing their lease, the leaseholder where they are doubled-up/couch surfing telling them they have to leave, etc. And to be referred, the household must meet the HUD Category 2, 3, 4 or At Risk definitions of homelessness as well as income eligibility criteria.

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Q: Can a CE Specialist ever complete the new HP intake, screening, and referral procedures for a household fleeing Domestic Violence (the Excel tool says no)?

Rarely, yes. If a Head of Household presents as Category 4 (fleeing DV, human trafficking, sexual assault, family violence, or stalking), our primary objective is to make a warm handoff or referral to a Victims Service Provider (VSP). If and only if the Head of Household either 1) refuses the referral or 2) is already engaged with a VSP and simply wants access to rental assistance, change the Yes to a No for this question and proceed with the procedure. If the HoH wishes to be anonymous in PA HMIS, use the same DV anonymous name in Excel tool and create a case note in PA HMIS that the HoH refused a VSP referral.

Q: Do ESG-funded HP projects have a waiver that allows households with 50% AMI or less qualify for HP (the Excel tool says 30% AMI)?

Yes. There is a COVID-19 pandemic related waiver that allows households at 50% AMI or less to qualify for ESG funded HP projects (not just ESG-CV) through September 30, 2022.

The HP Excel tools are inaccurate - they state that ESG requires 30% AMI or below, as was standard before the pandemic waiver. If a household qualifies for ESG-CV HP because they are at 50% AMI or below, you can refer them to regular ESG HP programs until the end of September.

Q: Do ESG and ESG-CV funded HP programs serve HUD Category 3 (homeless by other federal definitions)?

No.

Q: Do federal stimulus checks/payments count as annual income?

No. The temporary \$600 per week federal enhancement to unemployment insurance provided by the CARES Act should be excluded from annual income. However, HUD notes that regular payments of unemployment insurance (issued by the state) are treated as income, as is customary under program rules. (24 CFR 5.609(b)(5)).

The 2020 Economic Impact Payments are excluded from annual income for purposes of determining eligibility or benefits in a HUD program. 24 CFR 5.609 paragraph

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(c)(9) states that Annual Income does not include temporary, nonrecurring, or sporadic income (including gifts).

Q: Where can I find the Excel HP Screening Tools, Procedures Guidance, and Live Q&A/Training recording?

[Connect to Home: Homelessness Prevention Screening Procedures and Tools | Pennsylvania Continuums of Care \(pennsylvaniacoc.org\)](https://pennsylvaniacoc.org)

Please contact your CE Regional Manager with any additional questions.