



COORDINATED ACCESS NETWORKS

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2-1-1 INFOLINE

The 2-1-1 Infoline is a single telephone source for information about community services, referrals to human services programs, and crisis intervention. The 2-1-1 website (www.211ct.org) also provides information for individuals and families facing homelessness, including information about mortgage and rental payment assistance programs.

ISSUE

What are coordinated access networks (CANs) and how do they help individuals and families facing homelessness?

SUMMARY

A CAN provides people facing housing crises a single access point to community resources. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance grant programs are the primary source of federal funding for local, regional, and state homeless assistance programs. The [Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing \(HEARTH\) Act of 2009](#) made several changes to the rules governing recipients of these HUD grants, including putting an increased emphasis on service coordination and performance evaluation. Under the HEARTH Act, all

continuums of care (CoC) must establish a comprehensive and standardized coordinated access system for shelter, prevention, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. (A CoC is a geographical administrative unit through which HUD funds are distributed. Each CoC serves as an area's lead agency for community-wide initiatives related to homelessness.)

In a CAN, the 2-1-1 Infoline serves as the gateway to a streamlined process for helping clients facing homelessness. We contacted the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) for more information about the CANs requirements, and CCEH provided an overview of the process, though each CAN has its own individualized framework that conforms to HEARTH's requirements.

The state is divided into eight CAN regions. The first two regions, in Southeastern and Central Connecticut, began taking calls from 2-1-1 in July 2014. The remaining CANs are scheduled to begin taking calls by the end of 2014.

CAN PROCESS

Initial Screening

During the initial over-the-phone screening, the screener assesses if the client (either an individual or a family) needs domestic violence resources and if so makes an appropriate referral. If domestic violence is not an issue, the screener also discusses other mainstream resources that may help the client stay in the home, such as utility and childcare assistance and food banks. Screeners also refer eligible veterans to Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program when appropriate. If these options do not meet the client's needs, the screener refers the client to meet with a CAN intake team.

CAN Intake

When a client meets with the CAN intake team, the team first attempts shelter diversion, which may include (1) mediation between the client and landlord or (2) financial assistance. If shelter diversion efforts are not successful, the team completes a full assessment and refers the client (1) to a shelter or, (2) if a shelter is not available, to the homeless outreach team (HOT).

Housing Placement

Both shelters and HOTs seek to move clients into a permanent living situation as quickly as possible through "rapid rehousing." According to CCEH, rapid rehousing means moving clients "from shelter or emergency situations into housing quickly and creating stability once they are housed. Short-term financial assistance reduces the time families spend in shelter. Follow up assistance in accessing employment and mainstream services, money management, and maintaining housing helps [clients] keep their housing."

If a client needs more intensive assistance, the HOT may refer him or her to the CAN Housing Team. The CAN Housing Team, in collaboration with a community care team, assign the client to housing. The care team provides community-level accountability for all housing placements, including:

1. permanent supportive housing (i.e., affordable housing linked to community based services such as case management and employment support);

2. critical time intervention (i.e., assistance is provided to individuals with mental illness transitioning from hospitals, shelters, prisons, or other facilities);
3. treatment and recovery housing (i.e., housing associated with intensive substance abuse recovery programs); and
4. transitional housing (i.e., short term supportive housing, generally from two to 24 months).

According to data from a New London County pilot CAN program, 54% of families facing homelessness who called 2-1-1 were diverted from shelter placement to mainstream resources. Of the families referred for a CAN intake who attended the appointment, 60% were successfully diverted from a shelter. Only 13% of the families who called 2-1-1 were ultimately referred to a shelter.

BRISTOL/NEW BRITAIN AND SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CANS

The Southeastern Connecticut CAN encompasses the following towns: Bozrah, Colchester, East Lyme, Franklin, Griswold, Groton, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Lyme, Montville, New London, North Stonington, Norwich, Old Lyme, Preston, Salem, Sprague, Stonington, Voluntown, and Waterford. The Bristol/New Britain CAN also includes Berlin, Plainville, and Southington.

We requested information from the CAN coordinators about the processes they follow to provide assistance to clients facing homelessness. According to the information we received, both CANS use consolidated waitlists, rather than several individual ones, in order to facilitate shelter placement. In some circumstances, clients may stay in a shelter overnight if the 2-1-1 CAN intake referral occurs after normal business hours. The CANS also make a coordinated effort to help those in shelter placement move to a more permanent living situation as quickly as possible.

The chief distinction between the Southeastern and Bristol/New Britain CANS is the ability of the CANS to provide temporary hotel stays for families if there are no shelter vacancies. Both plans call for such placements if funds allow. The Southeastern CAN has been able to provide some such placements for families (but not individuals) due to limited funds available from New London County for that purpose. The Bristol/New Britain CAN has not received funds to provide such placements. Both CANS also open warming centers and temporary weather shelters in the event of inclement weather.

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