Coordinated Entry (CE) Diversion Pilot Program
Questions & Answers
Updated October 2020

CE Diversion Pilot Program Guidelines, Forms and more: https://www.commerce.wa.gov/coordinated-entry-diversion-pilot-program/

ELIGIBILITY AND DOCUMENTATION

Is income eligibility calculated based on the net income? Yes. For households receiving Flex Funding, the combined household net income must not exceed Very Low (50%) Income Limits for the county, which can be found here: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2020/select_Geography.odn

Income is money that is paid to or on behalf of any household member. Income includes the current net income of all adult (18 years and older) household members and unearned income attributable to a minor. Income eligibility determinations are based on the household's net income at program entry.

Net income is the amount earned after subtracting taxes and other deductions from gross income.

Do we need income documentation to verify they meet the income eligibility? Yes, and there are many ways to document this. The following are allowable documentation methods:

- Recent pay stubs or payment statement
- Bank statements
- 3rd party mailed, faxed or email verification of income
- 3rd party verbal verification of income
- Self-declaration

Is self-declaration for income ok? Yes.

Is housing status documentation required? No, documentation of housing status is not required.

CLIENT SERVICES

Do we need to use targeted prevention tools to prioritize? No. There are no prioritization requirements for this program. A problem-solving conversation should be offered to all households experiencing a housing crisis that seeks assistance from the CE Diversion Pilot Program. Programs may need to prioritize households receiving flex funding. If this is the case, this decision and method should be made in partnership with the local Coordinated Entry process.

Is it allowable to provide flex funding to households enrolled in homeless system permanent housing type projects? No. In general, households are not eligible if they are engaged in existing permanent housing programs.

This program is meant to fund services as part of a phased approach to the community coordinated entry process and divert people from the homeless system, not provide support to other homeless system programs. The flex funding provided by this program is to be used by program participants, not to supplement or provide flex funding to existing homeless system programs.

For example, if a household is housed and enrolled in a rapid re-housing program, can we use flex funding from this program to pay an expense for the household? No. Flex funding provided by this program is to be used by CE Diversion pilot program participants, not to supplement or provide flex funding to existing homeless system programs.

==New October 2020:== **Can our program only serve households identified as a priority group in our funding proposal?** You can serve any household that meets the eligibility criteria, which may not 100% align with your program's proposal. *For example, your program proposed to expand outreach to Spanish-speaking community members. Can you serve people who do not speak Spanish? Yes, but ensure that you provide targeted outreach to Spanish speaking community members as you proposed to do.*

Do ensure that your program does what it proposed in the funding application. If your program encounters barriers to this, please reach out to your grant manager.

==New October 2020:== **How is diversion different from prevention?** This question depends on how you define diversion and prevention. In the context of this program, diversion is a service strategy that resolves a housing crisis and diverts or redirects the household away from the homeless service system. Because program eligibility is very broad, households with housing crisis may fit into both traditional categories of "homeless" or "at risk." You may find that diversion services resolve homelessness or prevent homelessness. There can also be cases that resolving the crisis with diversion services prevents the household from becoming imminently at risk of homelessness. This all depends on the housing crisis that the household is experiencing. All are positive outcomes.

In this program, we must work with ambiguity. Grantees are trusted to handle uncertain situations professionally and reasonably. We recognize that ambiguity is inevitable when working in partnership with people experiencing a crisis. Because this is a pilot program, grantees can feel comfortable doing things differently, responding creatively and learning together.

ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

Are pet deposits an allowable flex funding expense? Yes, pet deposits are an allowable expense. Flex Funding is direct financial assistance provided to clients or on behalf of clients as needed to ease the transition out of crises.

Is rent assistance an allowable flex funding expense? No. There are specific programs within the homeless crisis response system that offer rent assistance, including rapid re-housing or homelessness prevention.

The goal of diversion is to identify safe housing options and solutions based on their available resources, not those of the homeless crisis response system. If diversion does not resolve the housing crisis, programs should refer households to the next step of the coordinated entry process so that they can be connected with more intensive services such as rapid re-housing or homelessness prevention programs.

Are utility payments an allowable flex funding expense? Yes, utility payments are an allowable expense. Flex Funding is direct financial assistance provided to clients or on behalf of clients as needed to ease the transition out of a crisis. Additionally, it is allowable to make utility payments to a household's friend or family to resolve the housing crisis.

A household needs more than $1,500 to resolve their housing crisis. Is there flexibility in the flex funding cap? Yes. If the need exceeds $1,500, the program staff must document a brief written statement regarding why the exemption was required. This documentation must be provided to Commerce upon request.

New October 2020: Is paying someone's security deposit an eligible flex funding expense? No. Security deposits are considered rent assistance, and rent assistance is not allowable. There are specific programs within the homeless crisis response system that offer rent assistance, including rapid re-housing or homelessness prevention.

New October 2020: If we temporarily put someone in a hotel with other housing funds, could we still use diversion funds to relocate a household to another state? Yes, being in an emergency shelter is an allowable housing status. The household would still need to be at 50% AMI to receive flex funds.

HMIS

What HMIS project should I use? You can find the appropriate HMIS project in your agency, not the coordinated entry agency used by your county. We used this naming convention for your HMIS project: **[ORG]BoS CE Diversion**.
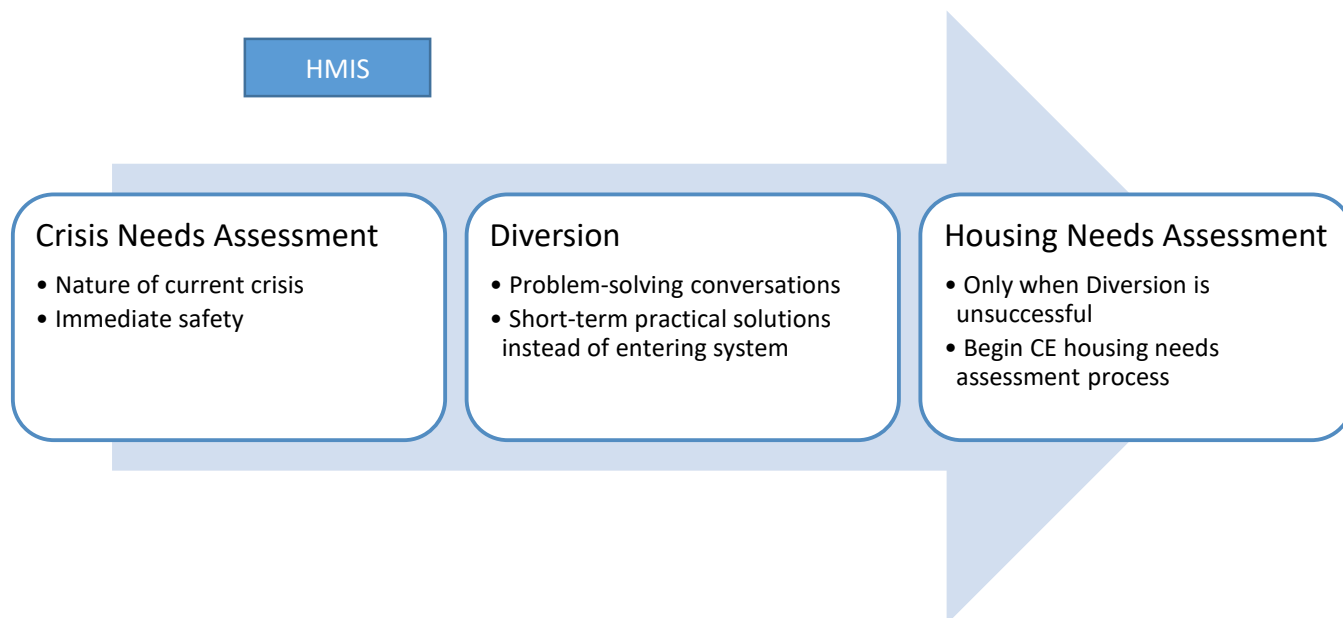
Should we enter the entire household into HMIS or just the head of household? For this program, you are only required to enter the "head of household" or household representative in the HMIS project. We are collecting information about the household type using a custom HMIS element. Please select the most appropriate household type from the following drop-down options:

- **Household without children** – Select this response for a single adult or household of adults, like a couple.
- **Household with children** – Select this response for a family with children with at least one minor child.
- **Households with only children** - Select this response for an unaccompanied minor child under the age of 18

Do people who are "couch-surfing" or at-risk households go in HMIS? Yes, please enter each household served by the program into your HMIS project.

When should we enter people into the program's HMIS project? Enroll the household when you are engaging in diversion services, like a problem-solving conversation. For example, if your initial conversation with someone results in a quick referral to a community resource, we would not consider that person to be engaging in diversion services. When you begin working in partnership with the household using problem-solving, personal advocacy, negotiation, mediation or other services - enter them into HMIS.

It may be difficult to determine when you move from a crisis needs assessment to diversion services in some cases. You will need to use your best professional judgment to determine this.

HMIS

Crisis Needs Assessment
- Nature of current crisis
- Immediate safety

Diversion
- Problem-solving conversations
- Short-term practical solutions instead of entering system

Housing Needs Assessment
- Only when Diversion is unsuccessful
- Begin CE housing needs assessment process

What information is required for data entry into HMIS?

Element Name	Number	Data Collection Stage
All Universal Data Elements	3.01-3.917 A and B: *Name, SSN, DOB, Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Veteran Status, Disabling Condition, Destination, Prior Living Situation*	Per data standards manual
Domestic Violence: *Domestic Violence Victim/Survivor should be indicated as 'Yes' if the person has experienced any domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence.*	4.11	Project Start
Sexual Orientation	R3	Project Start
Pregnancy Status	R10	Project Start
Household Type	Custom Element	Project Start

Service Name	Cost/no cost/etc.	Data Collection Stage
Problem- Solving Conversation	(no cost)	Per occurrence
Application Fee	$ amount	Per occurrence
Moving Expenses	$ amount	Per occurrence
Storage	$ amount	Per occurrence
Transportation	$ amount	Per occurrence
Emergent Needs	$ amount	Per occurrence
ID and Documents	$ amount	Per occurrence
Employment	$ amount	Per occurrence
Legal Services and Fees	$ amount	Per occurrence
Interpreter / Translation Services and Fees	$ amount	Per occurrence
Other (no cost)	text box or notes	Per occurrence
Other (cost)	$ amount	Per occurrence

Like other HMIS projects, clients can choose not to answer certain questions or choose not to consent to have their personally identified information in HMIS. This choice is fine! Please see the program guidelines section 5 for more information about data collection.

Also, please refer to HUD's HMIS Data Standards Manual and Data Dictionary for more information about selecting correct responses to specific elements:
https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3824/hmis-data-dictionary/

If we are connecting the household to non-pilot program financial resources, do we need to track that in HMIS? No, that is not tracked in this program's HMIS project. This may be captured in subsequent HMIS project enrollment records.

When do we exit the household from the HMIS project? Exit the household in the following circumstances:

- The housing crisis has been resolved.
- Diversion has been unsuccessful, and the household has been referred to the next step in the coordinated entry process.
- There has been no contact for 30 days or more

How do I know what Destination response to select? In all cases, select the Destination that identifies where the household will be staying just after exiting the project. If you are exiting the household because there has been no contact, the destination is unknown and "No Exit Interview Completed" should be the response selected for the Destination element.

Note that the client's Destination is about where they are staying, not necessarily about why they are staying there. The destination will depend on the specifics of the situation, but it is important to select a destination response that reflects the situation's true nature. For example, clients who are exiting to school, the military, or certain employment opportunities may have different responses for Destination depending on the specifics. If the client is moving into a dorm or Army-supplied housing, 'Rental by Client, with other ongoing housing subsidy' can be selected, consistent with the notion that

these units are not owned by the client and have conditions of tenancy, and have a value ascribed to them. If the client is moving into housing with a relative during schooling, 'Living with Family, Permanent Tenure' can be selected, consistent with the notion that the client may stay with the family member for as long as needed to complete school.

If a client moves in with family or friends, select the response that includes the destination's expected tenure (permanent or temporary). There is no specific timeframe used to differentiate between 'permanent' or 'temporary.' Rather, the determination should be made based on whether the situation reflects family reunification or whether the family member or friend has placed any limitation that indicates the stay is intended to be temporary (e.g., a specific time limit). 'Other' should be used only as a last resort if the client's destination truly cannot be even loosely described by any of the available options. Any response of 'Other' will not count in any HMIS-based reporting as a positive outcome.

Can we re-enroll someone who comes back needing more assistance after they have already been exited? Yes. If the household engages in diversion services after being previously exited, create a new project enrollment.

New October 2020: **When should HMIS consent forms be collected?** This should happen when you determine the household will be served with these funds. You can use telephonic consent, which is described in the guidelines. Only the head of household needs consent since they are the only person being entered.