



## San Francisco Coordinated Entry for Homeless Adults Overview of the Primary Assessment

### Purpose of the Primary Assessment for Adults

The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) has worked with Focus Strategies to develop a Primary Assessment to support the implementation of the Coordinated Entry (CE) System for adults experiencing homelessness. The Primary Assessment is one of several steps in the CE process. It provides a standardized and consistent method for assessing adults experiencing homelessness and identifying who will be prioritized to receive an HSH-funded housing resource.

### Information Collected by the Primary Assessment

The Primary Assessment for adults is a custom San Francisco questionnaire which asks a short set of questions that capture information about a person's current housing status, history of homelessness and length of time experiencing homelessness, health conditions, vulnerability, and barriers to obtaining housing. The questions are written to be as minimally personally intrusive as possible while capturing key information. Many questions are not designed to be yes/no but provide answer choices that reflect a range of current conditions and acuity.

### How the Primary Assessment is Used for Prioritization

Each question in the Primary Assessment is scored. Responses are weighted such that higher levels of vulnerability, longer homeless histories, and greater housing barriers receive higher scores. The resulting composite score generates a *relative* priority distribution based on all the people who have been assessed. The score is **not** intended to indicate a need for a specific type of housing intervention. A higher score indicates higher priority compared to others assessed, but no specific score is intended to indicate that someone can only benefit from or is appropriate for only one type of housing or program model.

*Priority Status* refers to the people who score on the Primary Assessment at a level that makes them likely to receive a referral to HSH-funded housing within 2-3 months. The threshold score that determines Priority Status is not pre-determined and can change based on the amount of housing inventory available and the target maximum amount of time people will be expected to wait for a housing referral.

## How the Primary Assessment Was Developed and Tested

The Primary Assessment was developed by HSH and Focus Strategies, drawing upon experience with tools Focus Strategies has developed in other communities, lessons learned from the San Francisco Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Pilot, San Francisco community input, as well as HSH's experience with developing and implementing the Assessment used in San Francisco's Coordinated Entry for families with children. The tool design was tested in October and November 2017 using a test data set collected from approximately 250 adults experiencing homelessness.

The testing process evaluated whether the Primary Assessment generated a normal distribution of scores that is sufficient to make meaningful distinctions. The testing showed that chronic homelessness, disability and number of disabilities are positively correlated with higher scores, as intended by the design of the assessment. It is also analyzed disparities in results based on race, ethnicity, age, gender and sexual orientation. The results of the testing process showed that race, gender and sexual orientation were not related to priority score. Age and Latinx ethnicity were related to somewhat lower scores, however since the test was done on a subset of clients who were disproportionately chronically homeless this may reflect differences in the chronically homeless population that will not be present when the entire adult population is included. This is something to be looked at with a larger data set and evaluated and potentially adjusted for in the next version of the Assessment. Age in particular will be analyzed in the next round of assessments and adjustments to questions, or to weighting, may be recommended. The testing results are detailed in a report that is available on the HSH website.

## Next Steps: Fall Assessment Blitz and Roll-Out of Coordinated Entry for Adults

In Fall 2018, as the Adult Access Points for the Adult Coordinated Entry System are launching, HSH and partners will conduct an "assessment blitz." During the blitz, approximately 2,000 adults will be assessed using the Primary Assessment. The information from the blitz will be used to determine the starting parameters for Priority Status. Adults on current HSH priority lists will be assessed, including Priority One households from the San Francisco Continuum of Care Pilot, households in the Direct Access to Housing Community Referral pool, and other groups of high needs adults experiencing homelessness. Approximately 400 of the individuals assessed during this period will be transition-age youth (TAY), between the age of 18 to 24. Additional testing will be done to analyze the results for TAY and determine whether any modifications are needed. Results will also be analyzed to assess for any disparities related to race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

During the assessment blitz, referrals to HSH funded housing resources will continue to follow existing policies and practices. Once the Assessment Blitz data is in, and Priority Status threshold is set, adults will begin to be matched to all of the City's housing resources for homeless adults using the Coordinated Entry process, and all old lists will be retired and replaced by one Coordinated Entry prioritized pool. This is anticipated to begin in November 2018.