

## DAKOTA COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES

### SOCIAL SERVICES

<b>POLICY #</b>	3015
<b>SECTION:</b>	Adult Services
<b>POLICY TITLE:</b>	Crisis Housing Eligibility Determination, Assessment and Housing Stability Support
<b>PURPOSE:</b>	The purpose of this policy is to clarify the crisis housing, assessment and housing stability support policy and procedures

#### HOUSING CRISIS SERVICES

Dakota County provides eligibility determination, assessment, and housing stability support to qualifying households experiencing a housing crisis.

#### DEFINITIONS

See definitions policy (#3016).

#### COORDINATED ENTRY - STEP 1 (PHONE SCREENING/INTAKE)

Requests for housing services and assistance are screened through the Coordinated Entry (CE)/ Intake Team at 651-554-5751. Intake listens to the person's needs, explains program eligibility, and determines whether the client is voluntarily requesting services. When talking to people, the Intake staff identifies if other service options and resources have been explored and if there is an emergency/crisis housing need.

Intake will document the presenting issues and barriers identified by the person requesting services, e.g. domestic abuse, employment, financial, health issues, and/or transportation. For non-crisis housing issues, staff will make referrals to other programs or services, as needed. Common referrals include: identifying the county of financial responsibility and connecting to support there, directing the person to contact their current case manager to assess support available as part of their case plan, referral for Public Assistance, including emergency assistance, and assistance in resolving current conflicts either through direct advocacy or referrals to an advocacy agency. If there is an immediate concern about a family's safety, mental health, chemical health, or physical safety, Dakota County Crisis Response Unit or Law Enforcement services will be notified. Voice mails will be returned in 24 hours. The Intake Unit will have specific procedures and tip sheets to assist with decision-points for referrals.

Dakota County's Coordinated Entry process is coordinated with the Suburban Metro Coordinated Entry process (see Policy #3017). Intake staff complete a *Step 1* screening form to assess for homelessness services that follows the CE initial assessment process.

#### *Coordinated Entry Role with Prevention -*

Coordinated Entry staff will communicate paperwork requirements (e.g. "prevention packet") and a referral will be made for Housing Assessment services. These referrals are routed to the

Housing Unit Supervisor for assignment to an assessment worker. See homelessness prevention policy #3020).

#### *Coordinated Entry Role with Emergency Shelter -*

Intake staff will communicate eligibility and paperwork requirements to clients and manage the Dakota Woodlands shelter wait list. These referrals are routed to the Housing Unit Supervisor for assignment. Intake will facilitate initial hotel placements for people who are eligible. When a family moves to an emergency shelter or an emergency hotel placement, a referral will be made for Housing Stability Assessment services.

### **CASE ASSIGNMENT FOR HOUSING STABILITY ASSESSMENT**

Eligible referrals for assessment will be assigned by the Housing Unit Supervisor within 3 business days after receiving the report from the Coordinated Entry/Intake Worker. Housing assessment is a non-mandated service, billable in certain circumstances. Immediate or same-day response will occur if a person needs resources or assistance to prevent homelessness provided required documentation is received. For situations requiring same day response, the Intake Worker will immediately alert the Housing Supervisor to review the concerns. The Housing Supervisor will either directly, through assignment or referral, make an appropriate immediate response, such as:

- Make available to the client necessary resources (e.g. emergency funding, same day assessment appointment);
- Engage Crisis Response Unit;
- Arrange for emergency shelter, within available options consistent with County policy.

### **HOUSING STABILITY ASSESSMENT - WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### ***Initial Contact***

Upon assignment, the worker has 3 working days from assignment to contact the client and up to 7 working days to meet with the client.

#### ***Service Coordination***

When a person is assigned for Housing Assessment and they have a case manager through Dakota County Social Services or a contracted agency, the Housing Assessment worker will contact the open case manager and coordinate with them on assessment activities. If a person is not open to other Dakota County Social Services and has a minor child/children and has been placed in emergency shelter, a written referral (copy of the SSIS Intake) is emailed to the Dakota County Child and Family email address. The Housing Assessment worker will contact the designated Child and Family worker to coordinate assessment activities.

The Housing Service Coordinator will also coordinate with other formal and informal supports consistent with the person's individualized plan.

#### ***Housing Stability Assessment (HSA) and Documentation***

A Housing Stability Assessment is completed within 30 days of case assignment. Client face to face visits are required every 30 days at minimum and are often more frequent during the Assessment period. The Housing Assessment worker should maintain a chronological flow of service assessment in their SSIS notes and notes should follow best practices for person-

centered documentation. The worker should document in SSIS notes any unsuccessful attempts to meet the above timelines. The assessment worker will complete the VI-SPDAT if not already completed or scheduled for completion. The worker and client will sign a *Service Model and Expectations* form, which outlines the responsibilities of both the worker and client.

The following information should be reflected in the **HSA and Housing Stability Goals & Action Plan**:

- Client's individualized goals and expectations
- Services and strategies needed to obtain goals
- Worker responsibilities to assist client
- Informal community resources available to client
- Client strengths/abilities to attain goals
- Anticipated time frames to achieve goals
- Documentation of eligibility for housing subsidy and/or ongoing services as determined by standardized assessment (VI-SPDAT)
- Client and Worker Signature

Housing Service Coordinators are expected to reflect 100% SSIS time reporting with a minimum of 70% client-related documentation. The following information below should be reflected in the Housing Service Coordinator **SSIS** case notes:

- Chronological flow of service assessment
- Action activities by case manager implementing services including: assist, support, educate, etc.
- Details of specific stabilizing resources provided to client and client's participation
- Services provided are related to goals identified in Housing Goal plan
- Internal procedures were followed for Purchase of Service Requests
- Contact notes reflect client progress
- Periodic assessment of client functioning
- Case notes include case consultation and supervision

### **HOUSING STABILITY ASSESSMENT - INTERVENTIONS**

Below are typical service coordination interventions provided by the Housing Service Coordinator in the assessment phase of service delivery. The worker may provide one or more interventions depending on the presenting situation.

- Coordinate with other case managers who are involved; clarify roles and responsibilities
- Facilitate access to homeless prevention funds (e.g. FHPAP, United Way, etc.). See Dakota County Homeless Prevention Policy (#3020)
- Facilitate the following Coordinated Entry processes:
  - Completion of standardized housing assessment tool – VI-SPDAT
  - Eligibility Determination for housing subsidies
  - Placement on the Coordinated Entry housing wait list
  - Referral to housing navigator services.

- Assist in Coordinating Eligibility for other support services (e.g. MH Case Management, Waiver Program, EEA- financial/medical, Housing)
- Housing search and placement
- Eligibility determination for ongoing housing stability support services (VI-SPDAT score determines priority for available resources)

Housing stability assessment is a time-limited intervention and the length of service involvement may vary. The length of time of an open HSA case should be no more than 90 days, with the HSA reviewed at least every 30 days.

## **HOUSING STABILTY SUPPORT – ELIGIBILTY DETERMINATION**

Eligibility for ongoing housing stability support services are as follows:

- People whose placement in Dakota County homeless shelter was directly facilitated by Dakota County’s Coordinated Entry (CE) system and VI-SPDAT score indicates a case management level of service  
**OR**
- Households receiving a housing assistance voucher or subsidy administered by the Supportive Housing Unit that requires case management services (**see Appendix 1**)  
**AND**
- Dakota County is the responsible county for providing Social Services under Minnesota Statute (see Policies 3016 and 3019)

If the above criteria is met and the person is in need of ongoing supports to assist the individual in securing and maintaining housing, the Housing Unit Supervisor will determine ongoing housing stability support service assignment to the Dakota County Housing Team *or* to a Dakota County Vendor under Contract with Dakota County. Per county policy, housing stability support services will be provided Dakota County or Dakota County contracted staff, within the limits of staff availability and funding. Housing stability support is a non-mandated service and voluntary service.

## **HOUSING STABILITY SUPPORT - DEFINITION AND SERVICE EXPECTATIONS**

When a household is determined eligible for housing stability services will be delivered consistent with the requirements of the funding stream.

Upon assignment, the Housing Stability worker has 3 working days to contact the client and 7 working days from the point of initial contact to meet with the client. A Housing Stability (HS) Plan is completed within 30 days of case assignment. The length of time of an open HS case should be open is dependent on the client’s situation and their type of funding (see **Appendix 1** for a grid of funding types and case management expectations). Services extending beyond program guidelines will be reviewed with the Housing Unit supervisor every 6 months to assess ongoing needs. The Housing Stability worker should maintain a chronological flow of service assessment in their SSIS notes and notes should follow best practices for person-centered documentation. The worker should document in SSIS notes any unsuccessful attempts to meet the above timelines.

The following information should be reflected in the **Housing Stability Plan**:

- Client's individualized goals and expectations
- Services and strategies needed to obtain goals
- Worker responsibilities to assist client
- Informal community resources available to client
- Client strengths/abilities to attain goals
- Anticipated time frames to achieve goals
- Documentation of eligibility for HS and/or ongoing services as applicable
- Client and Worker Signature

The Housing Stability plan is the basis of the agreement between the Housing Stability worker and the client for services provided. In addition, the Housing Stability worker and client sign the ***Housing Stability Service Model and Expectations*** form that outlines the goals of service delivery and expectations consistent with the model described in this policy.

The Housing Stability worker may also use other tools to assist in planning with the client, such as a self-sufficiency tool.

#### **HOUSING STABILITY SUPPORT: SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL**

Housing services are voluntary. Assessment and housing stability services are possible only when the family or individual is an active participant, making choices about the array of services needed and wanted. Action steps should be directed by the person and focus on their strengths and needs. By establishing a collaborative relationship with the client or clients, the Housing worker can understand the context of individual needs and partner with the household to determine which services would be most helpful. Plans are unique and flexible. They change over time to meet the person where they are at. The person is the center of their plan. The role of the Housing Stability worker is to leverage services and supports needed to maintain housing, building on the strengths and resources of the clients (broker model). Linkage to community-based and mainstream services is a critical component of service planning.

Housing stability support focuses on housing stability and placement, with an emphasis on the arrangement, coordination, monitoring and delivery of services related to the housing needs and improving housing stability. Planning is done in the context of the individuals' unique needs and desires and focuses on what can be addressed within a set time frame and with available resources. Once housing is stabilized – whether through prevention and rapid re-housing assistance, the Housing worker can help the household identify other resources needed to maintain this stability. If a household needs and desires ongoing services, the Housing worker can make the appropriate referrals. However, long-term needs are not a focus of Dakota County housing stability services.

Housing Service Coordinators will use tools and best practices (e.g. Housing First) consistent with funder and agency expectations. As housing stability best practices evolve, so will Dakota County's practices. Housing Service Coordinators will receive annual training in best practices.

## Appendix 1: Housing Stability Support Expectations, by funding type

<b>Funding Type</b>	<b>Minimum Contract Frequency and Type</b>	<b>Length of Engagement</b>
<b>HUD/ESG</b>	Monthly check-in, face to face or by phone	Up to 2 years or longer if an extension is granted.
<b>FUP</b>	Monthly check-in, face to face or by phone	Through first year lease renewal term or up to 2 years (only required up to the first renewal)
<b>Long-term Homeless Vouchers</b>	Monthly check-in, face to face or by phone	Minimum of three months but up to length of voucher, based on client request
<b>Young Parent Vouchers</b>	Quarterly face to face contact for grant period and monthly phone contact	Up to 2 years
<b>United Way</b>	Monthly check-in and income verification, by phone or email	During assistance period
<b>FHPAP</b>	Monthly contact and income verification, by phone or email	During assistance period

### APPROVAL

As approved by:

Andrea Zuber, Social Services Director

Dakota County Social Services

### AUTHORITY/REFERENCE

**REVISED**

12/22/2015