	THE CORPORATION OF THE COUNTY OF LAMBTON		
	Department:	**Homelessness Prevention and Children's Services**	
	Topic:	*Operations' Policy & Procedure*	**Section A11** / **Policy # 225**
	Subject:	Homelessness Coordinated Access System, **Prioritization Policy**	
	Effective Date:	January 23, 2023	*Approved By:* Ian Hanney
	Revision Date:	N/A	

- *Disclaimer: If there is a discrepancy between this electronic policy and the written copy held by the policy owner, the written copy prevails.*

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1 SUBJECT

Homelessness Coordinated Access System, **Prioritization Policy**, in Lambton County.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish and clearly define the Coordinated Access process used to prioritize homeless or at risk of homeless persons within the Lambton County Homelessness

System of Care (LCHSC). This protocol outlines how prioritization is based on a specific and definable set of criteria that are documented and applied consistently throughout the LCHSC for all populations. The primary goal is to ensure housing/program opportunities are matched to individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the greatest need. This policy includes the factors and assessment information with which prioritization decisions are made.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

The County of Lambton is committed to preventing and ending Homelessness using the principles of "Housing First". As part of this commitment, the Prioritization Policy and protocol procedures describe an equitable process for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to be prioritized for housing and support services on the By-Name List (BNL).

Prioritization requires a person's needs and level of vulnerability being documented and quantified in relation to other people who are also seeking homeless assistance including:

➢ Using information learned from assessment,

➢ Managing the inventory of housing resources,

➢ Ensuring persons with the greatest need and vulnerability receive priority or accelerated access to the supports they need to resolve their housing crisis.

4 SCOPE

The outlined procedures will be followed by agencies within the Lambton County Homelessness System of Care (LCHSC) on a regular basis. The protocols apply to all Case Conferencing and Coordinated Access activities using the County's By-Name List (BNL).

Local prioritizations to determine which households have priority access to homeless system resources are based upon a local set of criteria.

5 DEFINITIONS

5.1 Acuity Scale
An acuity scale is used to determine the appropriate level, intensity, and frequency of case managed supports to sustainably end a person's homelessness. Overall, a higher number represents more complex, co-occurring issues that may impact overall housing stability.

5.2 By-Name List (BNL)
A BNL is a real-time, person-specific list of all people known to be experiencing homelessness in our community. Each household has provided consent to be on Lambton County's BNL. *Note: It is also known as the Unique Identifier List (UIL).*

5.3 By-Name Priority List (BNPL)
The BNPL is a key component to the Coordinated Access System, and it is a subset of the BNL. As part of the matching and referral process, the BNPL is used to prioritize persons and families based on their need level using a standardized process and common assessment tools. Overall, the BNPL helps community partners know every person experiencing homelessness by name, understand their unique needs, and then prioritize them for the most appropriate and available supports and housing.

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5.4 Chronic Homelessness

Chronic homelessness refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness AND who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Have a total of at least 6 months (180 days) of homelessness over the past year;

- Have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days).

5.5 Client

A client is a consumer of a service provider's resources; this excludes HIFIS users and staff members.

5.6 Community Access Points (CAPs)

CAPs are identified agency locations in Lambton County who have regular contact with those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Community Access Points ensure that anyone experiencing homelessness in Lambton County has equitable access to available housing and supports that are appropriate to their needs.

5.7 Coordinated Access

A coordinated access system is the process by which individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness are directed to community-level access points where trained workers use a common assessment tool to evaluate the individual or family's depth of need, prioritize them for housing support services and then help to match them to available housing focused interventions. See, https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/directives-eng.html#h2.3-h3.4

5.8 Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table (CCT)

The Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table is a community group comprised of community collaborators. The CCT meets on a regular ongoing basis to review the BNPL, assess available supports and services, problem-solve systemic barriers to accessing supports and services and determine when a support and/or service is available for a program match.

5.9 Coordinated Access Resource Inventory

The Coordinated Access Resource Inventory is a list of all available housing resources and their eligibility requirements.

5.10 Employee

An "employee" is defined in this policy as someone who is working for or affiliated with the County of Lambton, Homelessness Prevention and Children's Services Department. All employees shall comply with this policy and all applicable privacy legislation as it relates to their particular employment responsibilities.

5.11 HIFIS

The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is a comprehensive data collection and case management system designed to better understand what is happening in our community and to work collaboratively. *Note: It is a type of Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS).* See, https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/homelessness/hifis.html

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5.12 HMIS

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals, families, and persons at risk of homelessness.

5.13 Homelessness

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. See, [Canadian Definition Of Homelessness](#)

5.14 Homelessness Service Provider

Homelessness Service Providers are organizations in the Lambton County Homelessness System of Care that have staff who directly interact with clients to help them address their housing challenges.

5.15 Prioritization

Prioritization related to homelessness is the action or process of deciding the relative importance or urgency of giving precedence to those with the greatest vulnerability or barriers to housing.

5.16 Tri-Morbidity

Tri-morbidity describes the complex comorbidity of chronic physical illness, mental illness, and alcohol and/or drug misuse within the homeless population.

5.17 VI-SPDAT

The Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) is a short, self-reported triage/pre-screening tool used to quickly determine a client's acuity. It is used to evaluate the individual or family's depth of need (acuity), prioritize their housing and/or support services' needs, and help match them with available housing/program focused interventions.

6   BACKGROUND

To prevent and end homelessness, Lambton County must know the current scope of challenges and potential gaps in service to resolve. Quality-driven, reliable data enables goal setting with corresponding action since outputs, outcomes, and impacts can be measured using data points.

HIFIS is a comprehensive data collection and case management system designed to better understand what is happening in our community and to enhance collaboration between service providers. In Lambton County, HIFIS is used by agencies within the Lambton County Homelessness System of Care (LCHSC).

The LCHSC is composed of various community organizations who provide services to persons who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. The LCHSC includes agencies such as the County of Lambton, emergency shelter providers, transitional housing providers, and street outreach providers.

A Coordinated Access approach allows collaboration and service providers to actively work to prevent and divert households from an experience of homelessness. It involves working together to assess the household's situation, setting priorities and direct-matching housing/supports that best meet the participant's needs.

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7   RESPONSIBILITIES

All Employees and Homelessness Service Providers are responsible to comply with this policy and all applicable policies, laws, and regulations regarding the Homelessness Coordinated Access System.

7.1   Community Entity (CE) - County of Lambton

The Community Entity (CE), County of Lambton, is the lead decision-making body that coordinates efforts to achieve federal, provincial, and local outcomes. The CE is required to create the Coordinated Access policies and standards, processes for monitoring prioritization, matching and referrals, as well as bi-weekly generating a BNPL to share with agency partners. The CE is responsible for receiving disputes and convening resolution efforts.

Outcomes related to timely referrals of priority populations will be analyzed and reported by the CE along with being regularly reviewed with system partners.

7.2   Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table (CCT)

The CCT assists people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Lambton County with referrals and warm transfers to programs and supports, including available and appropriate housing opportunities.

7.3   Homelessness Service Provider

Every participating service provider has a duty to protect clients' confidentiality and ensure clients understand how their personal information will be used, and who will have access to it.

It is the responsibility of every participating service provider to:
- ➢ Provide Coordinated Access Inventory updates on a timely basis.
- ➢ Ensure all referrals to Intensive Case Management (ICM), Rapid Rehousing (RRH), and Transitional Housing Programs are drawn from the BNPL.
- ➢ Ensure recommendations for prioritization are made in alignment with local criteria.
- ➢ Attempt to connect for at least 30 days with all clients referred through the BNPL.
- ➢ Ensure clients are aware of their options, clarify their expectations, and ensure accurate completion of the common assessment tools to support triage and potential referrals through the BNPL.
- ➢ Support all clients in identifying and achieving housing/program goals by facilitating connections to community resources, financial supports, and housing listings.

7.4   Homelessness System Coordinator – County of Lambton

- Update the Coordinated Access Resource Inventory.
- Extract and review the BNL regularly.
- Monitor accuracy and completeness of the BNL.
- Notify relevant staff or agencies if any information is inaccurate and/or incomplete.
- Filter the BNL to the BNPL sorted by locally defined prioritization criteria.
- Identify the top five (5) prioritized clients per the BNL.
- Collaborate with BNL Leadership and the CCT to identify a housing/program that is a "Best Match".

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7.5 Staff as Assigned - County of Lambton

- Extract and review the BNL regularly.

- Monitor accuracy and completeness of the BNL.

- Notify relevant staff or agencies if any information is inaccurate and/or incomplete.

8 PROCEDURE

8.1 Prioritization Process

Overview

Prioritization factors were identified through research and best practices. The priority criteria were further refined by the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, which is comprised of agencies within the Lambton County Homelessness System of Care (LCHSC).

8.1.1 Community Prioritization Criteria

The following community prioritization criteria are tracked in HIFIS, shown on the BNPL, and are used to prioritize placement in Lambton County:

Priority	Criteria
1	**Chronic Homelessness**
2	**Indigenous Status**
3 *(Flexible in order as all equal priority)*	**Youth**
	Tri-Morbidity *(includes Mental Health & Addictions)*
	Families

8.1.2 VI-SPDAT

A client's VI-SPDAT score does not directly impact their prioritization on the BNL but rather indicates the level of supports they will require.

Single Youth & Single Adults	Low Acuity	Mid Acuity	High Acuity	Very High Acuity
VI-SPDAT	0-3	4-7	8-13	14-17

Families	Low Acuity	Mid Acuity	High Acuity	Very High Acuity
VI-SPDAT	0-3	4-8	9-15	16-22

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While individual programs and services in the LCHSC may hold inclusionary or exclusionary criteria related to acuity score, below describes the level and type of support generally offered to households by acuity score.

- **Low score (0-3)**

  No Formal Housing Intervention: Individuals who do not require intensive supports, but may still benefit from access to affordable housing, housing listings and community level resources to resolve their own homelessness.

- **Medium Score (4-7)**

  Rapid Re-Housing: Individuals or families with moderate health, mental health and/or behavioral health issues, but who are likely to be able to achieve housing stability with short-term to medium access to financial and/or support services.

- **High Score (8-13)**

  Permanent Supportive Housing: Individuals or families who need permanent housing with ongoing access to services and case management to remain stably housed.

- **Very High Score (14+)**

  Permanent Supportive Housing: Individuals or families who need permanent housing with ongoing access to services and supports (possibly 24/7) and case management to remain stably housed.

8.1.3 Tie Breaker

In instances where two (2) or more people have the same priority, the following consideration will be used where a tiebreaker is needed:

  i. **Acuity:** VI-SPDAT Score

  Note: Acuity is not a stand-alone scoring consideration.

8.2 The Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table (CCT)

The CCT will prioritize program offers based on local priorities in addition to specific program eligibility criteria.

Prioritization factors will be re-visited by the Lambton County Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee (HHAC), centred on findings from CCT, on a periodic basis to determine the most accurate indicators for Lambton County based on available data. Adjustments to these priorities will be made based on the data collected through the BNL.

8.3 Missing or Inaccurate Client Information

Missing or inaccurate information must first be corrected by an authorized HIFIS user.

Once the client information is accurate, the client will automatically be added to the BNL via HIFIS and will show on the BNPL only if the local prioritization factors are met.

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Regardless of whether clients are prioritized for program supports through the BNPL, all clients will continue to be supported through frontline resources and connected with relevant community services while on the BNL.

9   DOCUMENTATION

Documentation is confidential and all records shall be maintained by the Service Providers and County of Lambton staff.

10   EVALUATION

As part of Quality Improvement, the Homelessness Prevention and Children's Services Department may conduct regular reviews of the local Prioritization process to ensure relevance is maintained and identify potential gaps in service.

11   ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

a)   A11.223 Coordinated Access – Intake Policy
b)   A11.224 Coordinated Access – Triage and Assessment Policy
c)   A11.226 Coordinated Access – Vacancy Matching and Referral Policy
d)   Lambton County's - BNPL Prioritization and Referral/Matching Guidelines
e)   Lambton County's - Homelessness Services Coordinated Access System - Process Guide
f)   County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan, 2020-2024
g)   Lambton County's Quality By-Name List (BNL)

12   POLICY HISTORY

Revised By	Date	Prepared By
• Policy created.	• January 11, 2023	• Nancy Kalbfleisch

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