

 **Process Guide**

*Lambton County's*  
**Homelessness Services  
Coordinated Access System**



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# Acknowledgements



This guide was developed by the County of Lambton, Homelessness Prevention and Children’s Services Department in collaboration with community services providers, community agencies, Indigenous partners, people with living/lived experience of homelessness, staff, the Community Advisory Board, the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, the A Better Tomorrow Committee, and support from a number of leaders in coordinated access systems across North America, including but not limited to, Community Solutions, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, Built for Zero Collaborative, HUD Exchange, OrgCode Consulting Inc., City of Hamilton, City of Kawartha Lakes, City of Peterborough, Durham Region, Municipality of Chatham-Kent, Region of Waterloo - Prioritized Access to Housing Stability (PATHS), York Region, and Windsor Essex By-Names Prioritized List Process Guide.

We extend our appreciation to all these groups for their support in the development of this guide. By combining efforts, we are leading the charge to end homelessness in Canada.

If you have any questions regarding this guide, please contact:

*County of Lambton  
Homelessness Prevention and Children’s Services Department*

 **519.344.2062, Extension 2023**

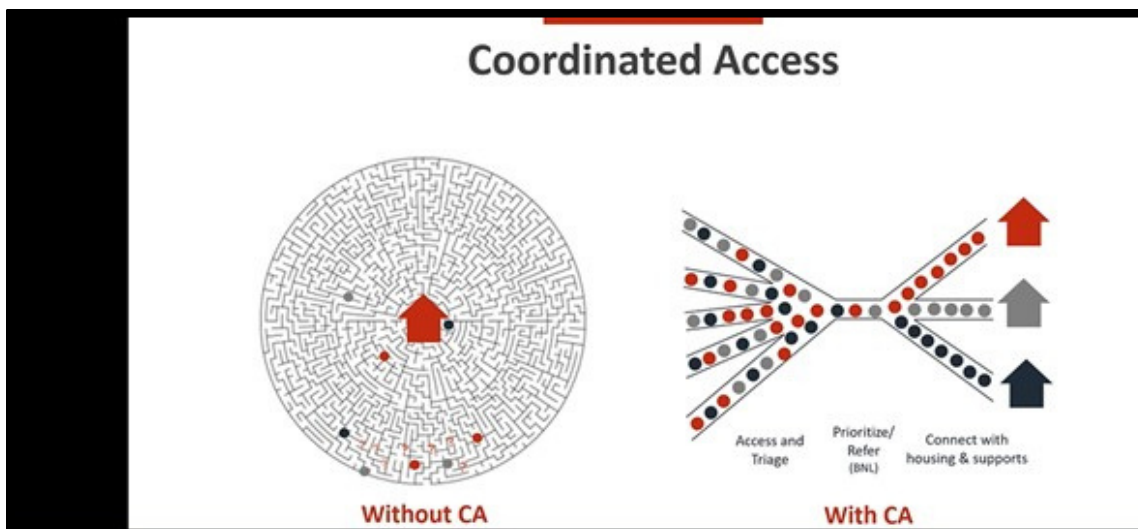


# Purpose

The purpose of the Lambton County's Homelessness Services Coordinated Access System Process Guide is to clarify and direct the process and management of coordinated access and allocation of community resources dedicated to homelessness. This guide will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as Lambton County continues to work towards ending homelessness.

## Goals

- **Produce standards for the operation of Lambton County's Homelessness Services Coordinated Access System (CA)**
- **Establish community expectations and processes for homelessness response**
- **Ensure transparent processes between service agencies, the community, and households experiencing homelessness**
- **Regularly review and update priorities and processes through verifiable data and community experience**



Lambton County's Homelessness Services Coordinated Access System (CA) is designed to organize community level responses to homelessness. Individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis are directed to Community Access Points where trained workers use a common assessment tool to evaluate the household's depth of need (acuity), collect information used to prioritize them for housing and/or support services, and then help to match them to available housing focused interventions.

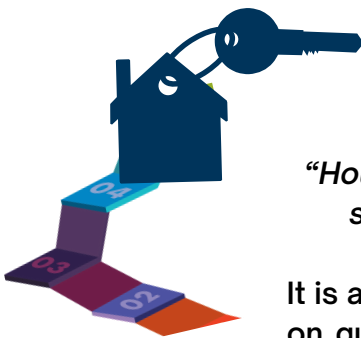
Assessment of an individual's or family's acuity allows each housing intervention to match the level of support intensity that an individual or family may need to resolve their homelessness.



# Background

The re-visioning of the County of Lambton’s Housing and Homelessness Plan was released in 2019 and provides a road map for the following years: 2020-2024. This document is an update to the original 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan that was released in 2014 and will be refreshed in 2024. The updated plan outlines the Vision: “Every person has an affordable, suitable and adequate home.” As part of the Vision, the key goals of the plan include:

- *Increase, maintain supply and appropriate mix of affordable and adequate housing*
- *Increase access to affordable housing and supports that meet people’s needs to achieve housing stability*
- *Coordinated housing and homelessness service system*
- *Ending homelessness*



## Housing First

*“Housing First” is a philosophy that guides our homelessness support system which states that housing is a basic right for all humans.*

It is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and providing additional supports and services as needed.

*The five core principles of Housing First are:*

- 01** Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements
- 02** Consumer choice and self determination
- 03** Recovery orientation
- 04** Individualized and client-driven supports
- 05** Social and community integration

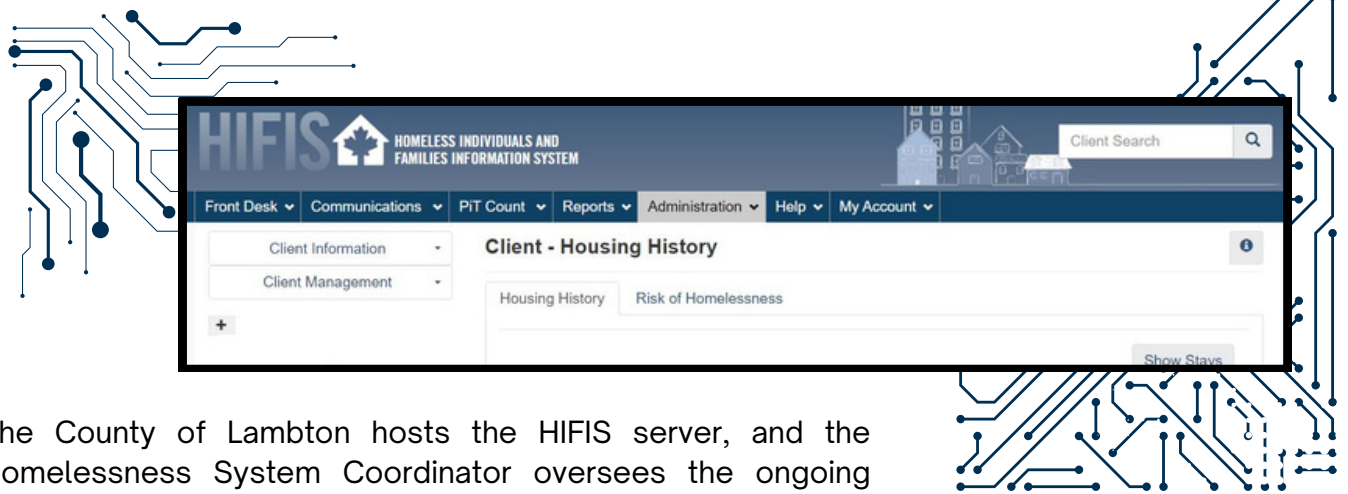


For more information, visit [\*Homeless Hub\*](#).



# HIFIS

The Homeless Individuals & Families Information System (HIFIS) is a secure shared database used by various community partners within the Homelessness Support System to manage all information about individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness in Lambton County. HIFIS allows for comprehensive data collection and case management and helps us understand what is happening in our community and to work collaboratively.



The County of Lambton hosts the HIFIS server, and the Homelessness System Coordinator oversees the ongoing maintenance of HIFIS with input from the HIFIS Working Group. The By-Name List is currently held in HIFIS.

## Built for Zero

*The Built for Zero – Canada (BFZ-C) campaign is led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH). It is a Canada-wide change effort that helps a core group of leading communities work towards ending chronic homelessness – a first step on the path to eliminating all homelessness in Canada. The structured, supportive, data driven approach focuses on creating a sense of urgency, optimizing local homeless systems, accelerating the adoption of proven practices, and driving continuous improvement.*

*In Lambton County, Built for Zero helps drive our work towards our ultimate goal of ending chronic homelessness, leaving no one behind. Built for Zero Lambton County is a transformative community change effort shifting how we:*

- **Act on homelessness,**
- **Provide services, and**
- **Coordinate access to meet our community's needs.**



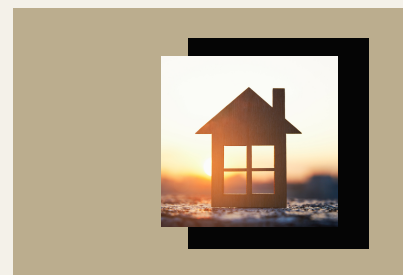
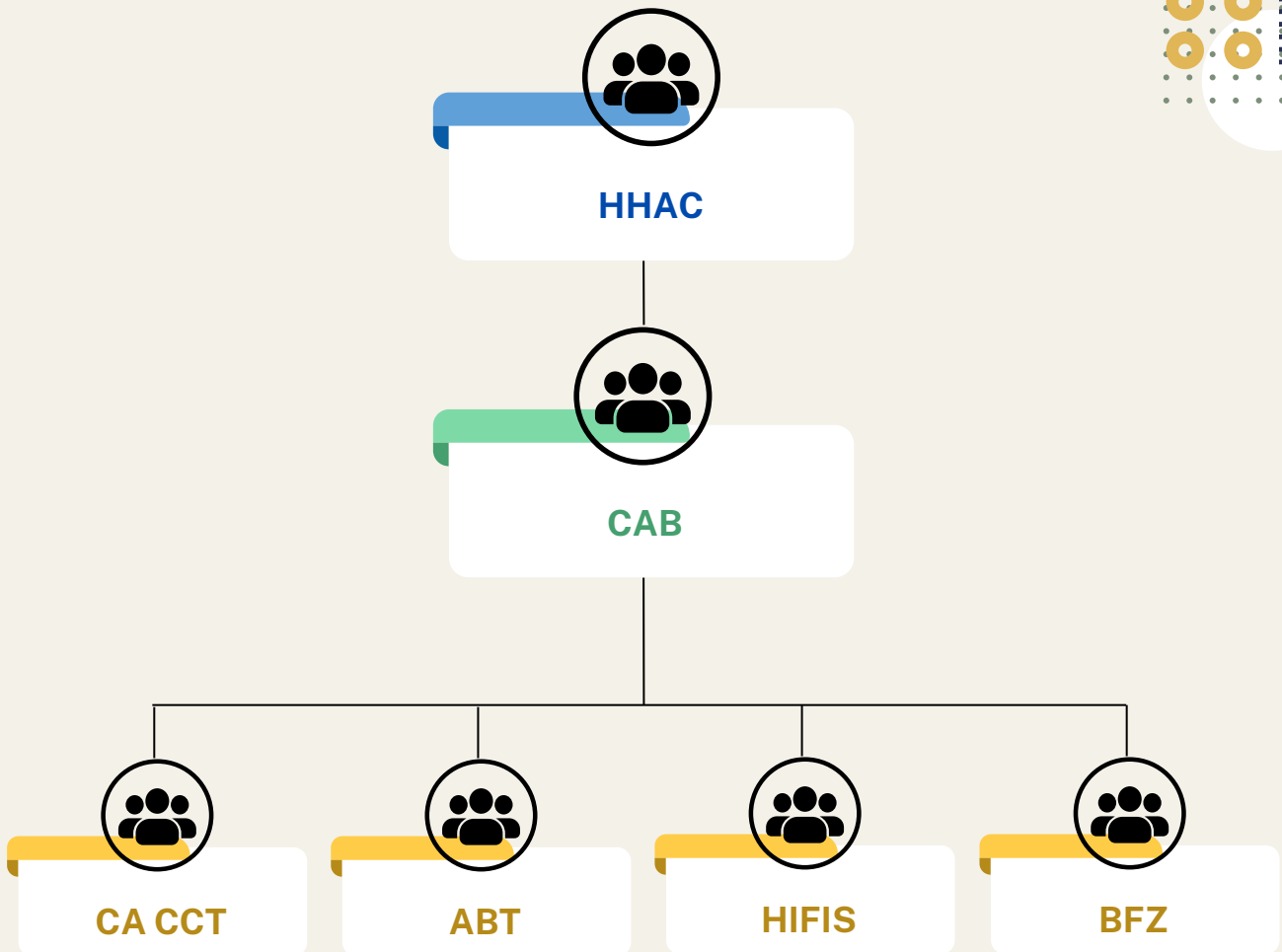
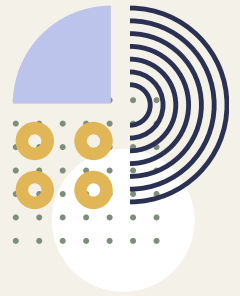
**For more information, visit [BFZ Canada](#).**





# GOVERNANCE

## Structure





# Meet The Committees



## Housing & Homelessness Advisory Committee

The Lambton County Housing & Homelessness Advisory Committee (HHAC) ensures a coordinated approach is taken by staff to implement the recommendations contained within the Housing and Homelessness Plan by collaborating with non-profit, charitable, and other governmental service providers in the community. The Committee also provides advice to the Social Services Division for subsequent reporting and adjustments to the Plan.



## Community Advisory Board

The Lambton County Community Advisory Board (CAB) provides a venue for community members to work collaboratively to end homelessness in communities across the County.

CAB offers an opportunity for organizations and homelessness service funders to share information about resources, identify service needs, and provide recommendations to the County of Lambton, the Service System Manager and other funders in the coordination and allocation of homelessness funding.



## Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table

The Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table (CCT) is an integrated case conferencing process comprised of leaders connecting homelessness services in Lambton County. The CCT leverages existing resources and expertise of a collaborative team to achieve optimal housing placements along with warm transfers to programs and supports for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Lambton County. CCT also approves protocols and policies for the Coordinated Access System and makes recommendations, as required.





# Meet The Committees



**ABT**

## **A Better Tomorrow Advisory Committee**

“A Better Tomorrow” (ABT) is a Lived/Living Experience Advisory Committee. ABT’s goal is to ensure service providers, researchers and policy-makers work alongside individuals’ with lived experience to strengthen our collective ability to build equitable homelessness response supports for all in need.



**HIFIS**

## **HIFIS Working Group**

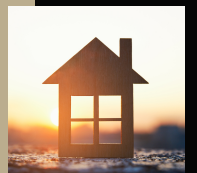
The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) Working Group, hosted by the Homelessness System Coordinator, is the lead group for HIFIS. This working group is comprised of representatives from all agencies using HIFIS, as well as representatives from organizations who are not currently using HIFIS but hope to do so in the future. The HIFIS Working Group discusses best practices, issues, and challenges related to HIFIS.



**BFZ**

## **Lambton County’s Built for Zero Subcommittee**

The Lambton County Built for Zero Subcommittee Team (BFZ) use Built for Zero’s resources (such as scorecards) to monitor activities, report progress, and track next steps for the BNL and Coordinated Access. This team also meets monthly with the BFZ Improvement Advisor to discuss BNL data, trends, improvement projects, and changes ideas to ensure ongoing enhancement of Lambton County’s Coordinated Access System.

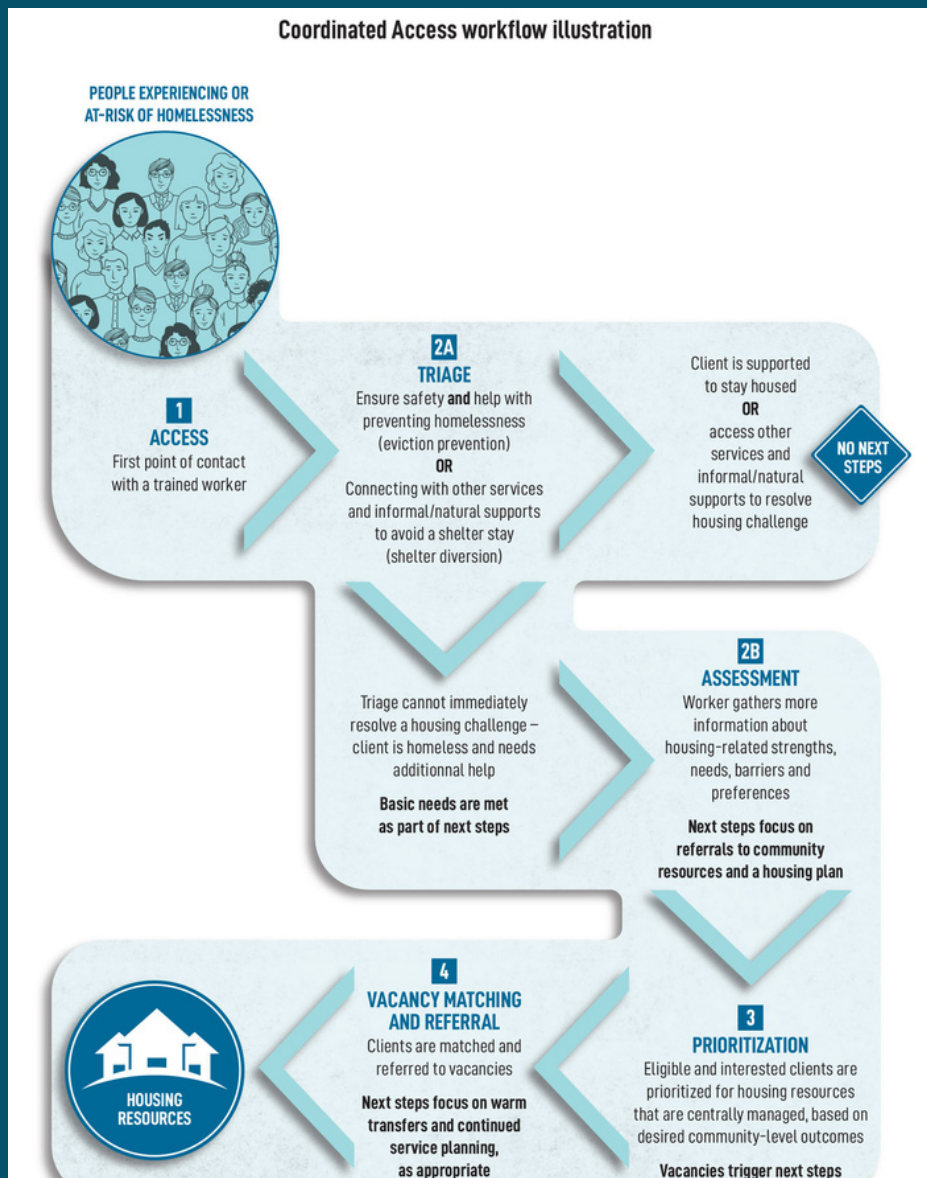


# Coordinated Access System

## OVERVIEW

A Coordinated Access System is a community wide strategy to help prevent homelessness and match individuals and families experiencing homelessness to housing and support resources.

Using a Housing First approach, participating agencies in Lambton County work together to assess people’s housing related needs and connect them to available supports to find and keep housing.



# Coordinated Access System Steps



## 1

### SERVING PEOPLE AT RISK OR EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



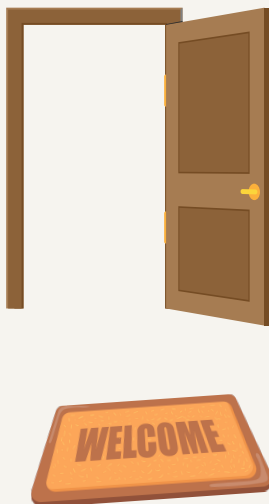
This includes individuals and families who are:

- Unsheltered (sleeping outside, vehicle, etc.)
- Emergency Sheltered
- Temporarily Sheltered (couch surfing, motel, etc.)
- At risk of homelessness



## 2

### COMMUNITY ACCESS POINTS AND COMMON ASSESSMENT



*Agencies trained to identify and assess people who are homeless, and are working with them to:*

- a) Divert from emergency shelter when possible
- b) Assess needs and make connections to landlords, supports and available housing
- c) Continue to assertively engage with the individual and help remove any barriers to securing and maintaining housing



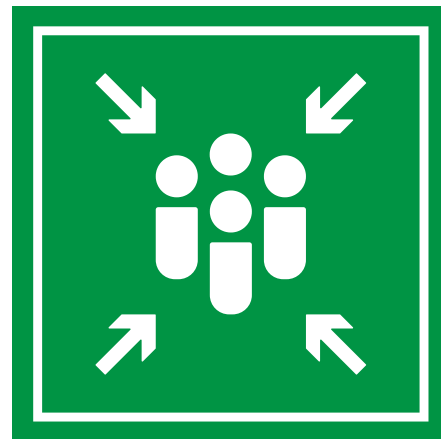
#### Community Access Points in the County of Lambton:

- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
- The Corporation of the County of Lambton,
  - o Social Services Division
- The Inn of the Good Shepherd
  - o The Lodge (Adult Shelter)
  - o The Haven (Youth Shelter)
- North Lambton Community Health Centre
- Sarnia-Lambton Native Friendship Centre
- Sarnia-Lambton Rebound
- Women's Interval Home
- *Temporary Congregate Care Sites*



## 2 a) Community Access Points

When an individual or family presents as homeless in the community, they will be directed to an identified Community Access Point (CAP) to begin the process of intake, assessment, and referral to appropriate supports. Agency staff at CAPs will be trained to help individuals and families be diverted from homelessness wherever possible. The Community Access Point will:



- **Gain consent to collect information in HIFIS**
- **Complete the common Intake documentation**
- **Complete an assessment to determine their unique needs**
- **Identify barriers to finding and keeping housing**

Should a household present as homeless at an agency who is not identified as an access point, they will be connected with the closest, most appropriate CAP for assessment. This connection can be made by assisting the individual or family in locating a more appropriate agency, booking an appointment, or making travel arrangements.

## 2 b) Common Intake and Assessment

Individuals or families that a) meet the definition of homelessness, (b) have been experiencing homelessness for 14+ days, and (c) who reside in/have a meaningful or historic connection to Lambton County should be connected with the Coordinated Access System and added to the By-Name List.

- There are 4 parts to the Coordinated Access Intake:

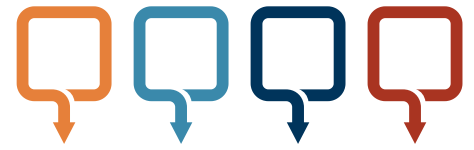


- i. **Consent**
- ii. **Collection of Information**
- iii. **Assessment**
- iv. **Data entry**



### 2 b) Common Intake and Assessment

... Continued



#### Consent

Everyone added to the By-Name List must provide consent using the Client Consent Form. A person may decline to provide consent to be added to the By-Name List. This decision does not prevent access to services. Community partners will continue to engage with the person who declines to provide consent to ensure their access to services and supports.

#### Collection of Information

The kinds of personal information that will be collected and shared about people experiencing homelessness through the Coordinated Access System include: Name (First and Last), Date of Birth, Age, Gender, Marital Status, Contact Information, Current Income, Housing History, and Employment Status.

*This information is collected to:*

- *prioritize programs/resources and housing referrals for people based on their depth of need and housing preferences,*
- *progress towards housing people systematically through making optimal resource allocations and continuous system improvements,*
- *coordinate information for reporting purposes, and*
- *monitor Lambton County's progress towards ending homelessness.*

#### Assessment

The Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) is the current standardized triage tool for Lambton County. All Community Access Points, including staff at emergency shelters, drop-ins, and outreach teams use the VI-SPDAT to assess individuals who have been experiencing homelessness for fourteen (14) days or more.

- *For more information, please refer to the [Homelessness Coordinated Access System A11.224 - Triage & Assessment Policy](#).*

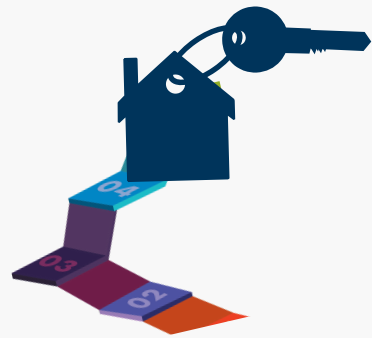
#### Data Entry

Data collected with consent from an individual or family experiencing homelessness will be entered into Lambton County's Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). The Community Access Point (CAP) is responsible for updating the household's information and uploading the original signed Consent Form into HIFIS.

- *For more information, please refer to the [Homelessness Coordinated Access System A11.222 - Timely and Accurate Data in HIFIS Policy](#).*



# Coordinated Access System Steps







## 3

### PRIORITIZATION

Once assessed, people are added to Lambton County's By-Name List (BNL) in HIFIS.

*The BNL is a real-time, up to date list of all people experiencing homelessness in Lambton County.*

*By taking a closer look at the BNL data, we can:*

-  **BETTER UNDERSTAND HOMELESSNESS IN LAMBTON COUNTY BY FOCUSING ON THE FACTS (WHAT WE KNOW), RATHER THAN THE NARRATIVE (WHAT WE THINK)**
-  **TRACK AND ADJUST OUR SERVICES BASED ON NEEDS AND PRIORITIES**
-  **EFFECTIVELY COORDINATE AND PRIORITIZE SERVICE DELIVERY**
-  **IMPROVE THE LIVES OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

- A BNL report includes a comprehensive set of data points that support Coordinated Access and prioritization at a household level, along with an understanding of homelessness inflow and outflow at a system level.










### 3 a) Managing the By-Name List

#### i) Description of Active Clients

Individuals listed on the BNL have a status of "Active". This includes when a household member is:

- *A new intake or newly identified as experiencing homeless.*
- *Returning from inactive status. Examples:*







-  **People returning to homelessness after being housed**
-  **Individuals who withdrew their consent to be added to the BNL, but are now consenting to have their information shared**
-  **A service provider who has managed to connect with a client after 90+ days of being unable to connect with the individual experiencing homelessness**

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#### ii) Description of Inactive Clients

An inactive client is not considered for program matching or placement but can be transferred to active status if they return to experiencing homelessness.

Individuals or families will be moved to the "Inactive List" on the BNL, if they are known to:

-  *have become stably housed*
-  *become deceased*
-  *consent is withdrawn*
-  *are missing or without contact for 90 days or more*
-  *have moved out of the area*
-  *have moved into systems (i.e., hospitalized, correctional facility, etc.)*



For more information, please refer to the [Homelessness Coordinated Access System A11.221 - Inactivity Policy](#).

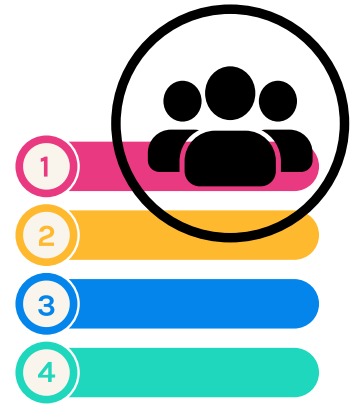




### 3 b) By-Name Priority List

To obtain the By-Name Priority List (BNPL), the BNL may be filtered and/or sorted by:

- *local priority groups*
- *standardized triage tools (such as the VI-SPDAT)*
- *length of time experiencing homelessness*
- *age*
- *gender identity*
- *whether people are currently sheltered or unsheltered*
- *whether people are currently active in the system (accessing services) depending on the eligibility criteria for programs accepting referrals*



Households with missing information are still added to the By-Name List and prioritized. However, the lack of information may prevent an accurate prioritization. In addition, households may not be referred to services if they are missing information. Service providers are encouraged to collect as much information as possible to best support the client, including completion of the VI-SDAT.

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### *Benefits of having a BNPL*



1. Have actionable person-level data
2. Understand system Inflow and Outflow
3. Have the ability to triage and prioritize access to services
4. Evaluate system performance
5. Advocate for policy and resource changes
6. Monitor progress toward ending chronic homelessness in Lambton County



For more information, please refer to the [Homelessness Coordinated Access System A11.226 - Vacancy Matching & Referral Policy](#).



# Coordinated Access System Steps



Business development is essential for growth and success in any industry. Whether you're starting a new business or looking to expand an existing one, it's important to have a solid

## 4

### VACANCY MATCHING & REFERRAL



#### Matching to Available Resources

The Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table (CCT) uses the By-Name Priority List (BNPL) to match available support, program and/or housing resources, as they become available, prioritized to meet an individual or family's depth of need.

These resources may include affordable housing, supportive housing, transitional housing, rent supplements, support workers, financial assistance, rental search support and more.

#### Resource Inventory for Coordinated Access

- A Resource Inventory is a collaborative list of available programs, supports and housing resources accessed through the coordinated access system.
- It includes Service Providers funded by the same source or different sources.
- "Secondary" eligibility criteria specific to each resource are also identified. *For example, the Coordinated Access Resource Inventory includes information about program spaces. (e.g., Rapid Re-Housing) along with population types (e.g., young people, 16-24)*
- *Vacancies are filled equitably from the Coordinated Access Resource Inventory.*

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# Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table (CCT)



The Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table (CCT) is an integrated case conferencing process that connects homelessness services in Lambton County. As part of an inclusive community for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, the County of Lambton partners with service providers and other homeless-serving agencies to ensure programs, and supports are delivered using a person-centered, equitable, and collaborative approach.

- *By using existing resources and expertise, the CCT aims to eliminate barriers to permanent housing placement and housing retention to support the County of Lambton’s goal of ending chronic homelessness.*

## ***Ensuring Equitable Access***

It is the intention of the vacancy and matching referral process that individuals have equitable access to appropriate housing outcomes matched with their individual level of need.



- *The selection process described in the Vacancy & Matching Policy ensures Lambton County's agreed-upon prioritization criteria is applied to fill caseload, program and/or housing placement opportunities using a fair, transparent, and equitable process.*



For more information, please refer to the [Homelessness Coordinated Access System A11.226 - Vacancy Matching & Referral Policy](#).



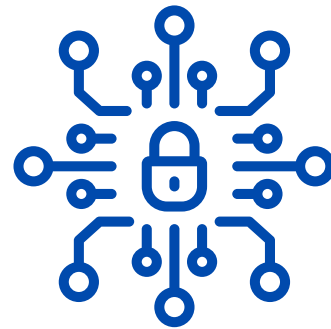


## Database Management

### **Confidentiality Considerations**

Sharing personal client information between service providers is fundamental to the Vacancy Matching and Referral process.

*All personal information will be confidential and subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.*



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Currently, agencies have their own confidentiality practices when it comes to data management. Agency partners in the Coordinated Access System have processes in place to share client information with other service providers.

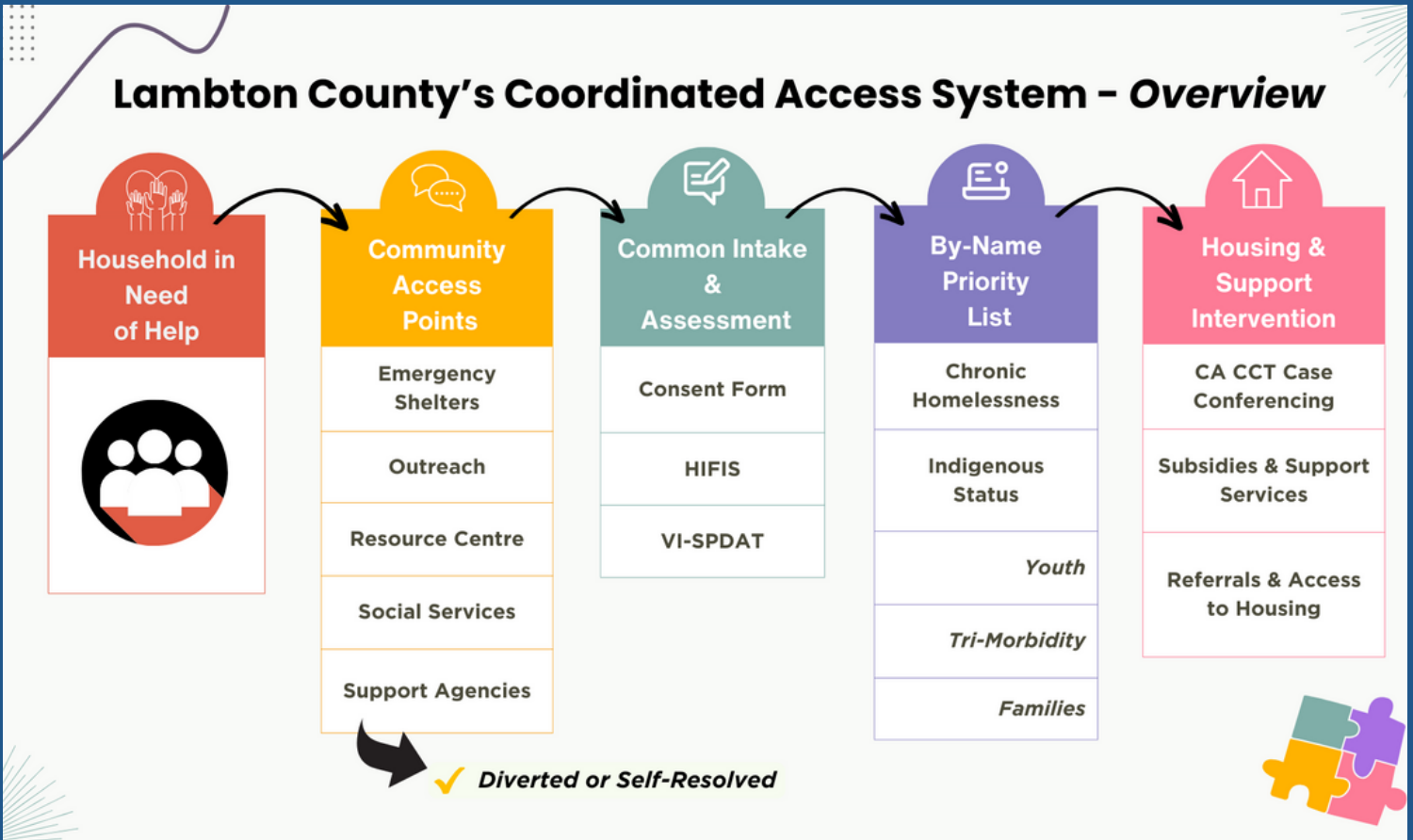


To ensure that information is collected, stored, and protected with the highest standards as part of the Coordinated Access System, the following measures have been implemented:

- *All agencies using HIFIS must sign a legal Data Sharing Agreement*
- *To become a HIFIS user, a Manager must complete a HIFIS User Request Form for their respective staff member*
- *To use HIFIS, a Confidentiality and User Agreement must be signed by both the HIFIS user and their respective Manager*
- *HIFIS training must be completed by every HIFIS user*
- *Based on the Terms of Reference for the Lambton County Coordinated Access Community Collaborative Table (CCT), all CCT members must sign the Coordinated access Community Collaborative Table (CCT) and workbook – Oath of Confidentiality agreement*
- *HIFIS user activity is audited randomly to ensure appropriate use and to improve data quality*
- *HIFIS users are asked to ‘Attest’ for their agency when accessing an individual’s file for the first time*
- *HIFIS users are unable to perform new actions with clients whose consent forms are expired*
- *Inactivity after 15 minutes will result in the HIFIS user being logged out*
- *Access to HIFIS modules is restricted to assigned staff roles*



# Summary



# Feedback



## CONTACT INFO

*Any suggestions, questions, or concerns related to the Coordinated Access process, including the By-Name List, or the Vacancy Matching and Referral process may be sent via email to the Homelessness System Coordinator at the County of Lambton:*



[hifis@county-lambton.on.ca](mailto:hifis@county-lambton.on.ca)  
[Subject=CA Guide - Feedback](#)



[www.lambtononline.ca](http://www.lambtononline.ca)

