



GUILFORD COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE

Working to End Homelessness in Guilford County

Coordinated Entry

Confidentiality Agreement

As a “participant” in the Guilford County Coordinated Entry Partnership (hereafter referred to as the “Partnership”) and its case conferencing process, you may have access to view, update or modify sensitive information about clients that have been assessed through the Coordinated Entry System (CES).

During the Partnership case conferencing meetings, clients’ clinical and legal information is shared for purposes of assessment and connecting to housing and other needed resources. All case conferencing participants must maintain the confidentiality of all sensitive client information. Sensitive information includes but is not limited to:

- Client names, nicknames or any other identifying information
- Client address, location or whereabouts
- Client personal finance information including social security numbers, financial data or related information
- Client health information including information on medical conditions, treatment or history
- Any other identifying client information discussed during the case conferencing process. Any information collected, accessed, or viewed, whether it is verbal, written, electronic, printed or any other form, as part of the Guilford County Partnership case conferencing process is to be treated as confidential and must not be disclosed.

Sensitive information will not be shared with prosecutors, the police, debt collectors, or a private landlord seeking eviction, unless that party has a lawful warrant or similar order from a Court. In the event you are unsure if information can be shared, **DO NOT DISCLOSE INFORMATION**.

The Coordinated Entry Partnership shares the following principles of confidentiality and agrees to uphold these principles in our work together:

- Confidentiality principles allow for protecting each client’s right to privacy of personal and health information, while permitting access to information necessary to improve access to housing help.
- Confidentiality means that a staff person is free to talk about the work that they do (the program, position, etc) and the work of the Coordinated Entry Partnership, but only permitted to share clients’ names or identifying information when permission is given through a signed Release of Information.
- All information specific to clients, or that could be identifying, should be treated as confidential. General information about programs, policy statements or aggregate reports that are not identified with any individual or family are generally not classified as confidential.

- Confidentiality covers all methods of communication including, by email, phone, in-person, text, by all staff (volunteer and paid).
- Confidentiality means considering how everyday activities and the workplace environment ensure client privacy, such as printing and file access, phone conversations that might be overheard, etc.
- All clients should be given the option to have their information shared to help them access housing resources more quickly.
- A trusting relationship between a client and a service provider depends on assuring clients of confidentiality so that
 - Clients safely receive the help they need for the immediate situation
 - Clients feel confident in reaching out for help in the future
- All Coordinated Entry Partners must have their own internal written policy on client confidentiality. Staff at each agency are required to follow their agency's confidentiality policies at all times.
- Additional information about confidentiality and HMIS data sharing is included in the Coordinated Entry Partnership Agreement and the local HMIS Data Sharing Agreement. All HMIS users are required to receive HMIS security training.
- **“Need to Know”**: Clients regularly share personal, private and health information during professional working relationships. It is not likely that all this information will need to be shared in order to support access to housing resources. Partner staff agree to exercise the utmost discretion and judgment to keep information sharing to the minimum required amount needed:
 - To determine the services that are necessary for a client
 - To facilitate obtaining resources to support a client's housing and related needs
 - To coordinate services on behalf of a client and prevent duplication
- **“Nothing about me, without me”**: When sharing information, staff are encouraged to slow down, remind themselves of their specific support or coordinating role, and consider how to share information in a way that is respectful and client-centered. Sometimes clients are not present when their information is shared; in these situations, it can be helpful to ask, *what/how would I share if the client was here right now?*
 - If a staff person feels that client confidentiality has been breached during Coordinated Entry, they should first address the issue with their supervisor. The Coordinated Entry Committee will also review confidentiality principles and policies as needed, but at least annually.

HIPAA¹

Because some Coordinated Entry Partners are health care providers or business associates, all information shared as part of Coordinated Entry should be done so in a manner that is compliant with state and federal law related to privacy and security of individually identifiable health information, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Protected personal health information includes:

- an individual's demographic data

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/index.html?language=es>

- individual's past, present or future physical or mental health or condition (this includes information about disabilities, substance abuse, etc.)
- the provision of health care to the individual or the past, present, or future payment for health care
- Individual common identifiers (name, address, birth date, social security number).

42 CFR Part 2²

42 CFR Part 2 are federal regulations that apply specifically to substance abuse and treatment and outline which information about a client's treatment may be disclosed with and without the client's consent. Some Coordinated Entry Partners may be programs covered by 42 CFR Part 2, and therefore, substance abuse education, prevention or treatment information maintained and shared as part of Coordinated Entry should be done so in a manner that follows 42 CFR Part 2. This set of regulations is incredibly important, as the fear of the stigma revolving around substance abuse often prevents individuals from seeking adequate services.

VAWA and Victims of Domestic/Sexual Violence

Domestic and Sexual Violence organizations participating in the Coordinated Entry Partnership may be receiving federal funding as part of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and/or Family Violence Prevention & Services (FVPSA) program. Therefore, all information shared as part of Coordinated Entry should be done so in a manner that is compliant with VAWA and FVPSA requirements; the Coordinated Entry release meets these requirements as it is written, informed and reasonably time-limited.

The Coordinated Entry Release of Information (ROI) Form

The Guilford County COC has created a standard Release of Information form that meets both HIPAA and 42 CFR Part 2 requirements. This form is a tool for clients to provide permission for their personal and health information to be shared and re-shared to secure help with housing.

- A staff person must review this form with a client. For help, use the Staff ROI Review tool.
 - Each adult in a household must sign their own permission form.
 - Providing permission to share information is voluntary. Clients may choose not to share some or all of their information. Not sharing information may delay or limit access to resources. For example, a client may need to set up intake appointments with multiple organizations.
 - Clients should be given a list of all the Coordinated Entry Partners that will have permission to receive and share information about the client. Remember, not all information about a client needs to be provided to all providers at all times. Staff should review how and when information is typically shared.
 - Clients should know how to revoke their permission.
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Acknowledgment: As a participant in the Guilford County case conferencing process I understand that I will have access to sensitive information. I agree that information obtained during the case conferencing process is NOT to be released to anyone who is not a Guilford County COC case conferencing partner. By signing this document, I attest to the fact that I have read and comply with the terms of the Guilford County Partnership Agreement. Unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information received through Guilford County Partnership Case Conferencing may be a violation of State and Federal Privacy Laws and punishable by law as a criminal violation and may result in disciplinary action, legal action and may result in dismissal from participation in the case conferencing process.

Name: _____

Agency: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____