



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING



MEMORANDUM

FROM: Steve DiLella, Individual & Family Support Programs

TO: Connecticut Homeless Shelter Providers

CC: Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Deputy Commissioner Shante Hanks, Leigh Shields-Church, Kara Capobianco, Beau Anderson, Richard Cho (CCEH)

DATE: March 13, 2020

RE: Changes to CAN Appointments for COVID-19

Dear CAN Providers:

For ongoing updates pertaining to the homeless service system, please see CCEH's [Coronavirus and Homeless Resource Guide](#). Ongoing updates are also available on the [State of Connecticut website](#). The following protocols and updates will be in effect until the Declaration of Public Health and Civil Preparedness Emergency enacted by Governor Lamont on March 10, 2020 is lifted. We recognize that some of these measures seem extraordinary, but our hope is that over preparedness will offer the greatest safety to clients and staff. This is an unprecedented time for our Coordinated Access Network system, and decisions are being made in an effort to **prevent** the spread of COVID-19. We anticipate we may need to phase practices in overtime as public health officials anticipate that the number of individuals impacted by the virus increase in the coming weeks.

As we move to emphasize prevention and preparedness regarding the containment of the COVID-19 virus, **the following CAN protocols will be implemented for the period of time that the State of Connecticut has entered into a State of Emergency (effective immediately through March 10, subject to revision):**

- Conduct CAN appointments via phone / teleconference, rather than in-person, whenever possible.
 - Several CANs currently have call back protocols for special populations. This process models existing practices, but should now be expanded to a broader population.
 - 211 has the ability to create call back appointments in HMIS scheduling, and will inform the caller that CAN staff will be contacting the household within a specified time frame to be determined by the CAN (ex: within the next 4 hours, within the next business day).
 - Each day, CAN staff will call through the list of call back appointments (starting with the earliest to the latest).
 - By Tuesday, 3/17, one person identified as the CAN Lead should reach out to Laura Robidoux to discuss any specific instructions for your region. For the most part, existing protocols do not need to be changed.
 - Statewide, this process should be implemented no later than Wednesday, 3/18.

- Explain to households that the State is attempting to minimize the use of congregate living settings to prevent the potential spread of COVID 19. Shelters are to be used as an absolute last resort. If the person has anywhere else to stay, even temporarily, it is safer for the person.
- For households who identify that they **do not** have phone access, DOH is requesting that CANs maintain availability for face-to-face appointments. We anticipate that the number of face-to-face appointments will be minimal. Communities may need to consider moving the location of face-to-face appointments in the event of agency closures or to avoid settings that have large numbers of people. When conducting face-to-face appointments, please keep in mind prevention habits such as social distancing, hand washing, etc. In the event that agencies begin to mandate staff work from home, please be in communication with DOH and 211 about plans to ensure the most vulnerable continue to have access to the CAN system.
- As a reminder, shelters do not need to run at 100% capacity and it is advisable to reduce census so as to increase the space between beds and persons.

Processing Appointments in HMIS

- When transitioning to a process in which CAN appointments will be conducted primarily by phone, questions arose about carrying out normal procedures such as obtaining the HMIS Release of Information. In consultation with CCEH, the HMIS lead agency, we have determined that for the **period of time in which the Declaration of Public Health and Civil Preparedness Emergency is enacted**, the verbal consent obtained by 211 at the time of initial phone contact will meet the permission standards required to enter a household's personally identifiable data into HMIS. If the individual or household enters into shelter, we ask that shelter staff obtain a signed HMIS Release of Information.
- CAN staff will enter the following language into a case note regarding the HMIS Release of Information (copy & paste):

“Due to the State’s Declaration of Public Health and Civil Preparedness Emergency enacted by Governor Lamont on March 10, 2020, the client’s verbal consent to enter personally identifiable information into HMIS will meet the standard of obtaining a signed HMIS Release of Information. If the household enters into shelter, the shelter provider will complete the written HMIS Release of Information.”
- Process the appointment in HMIS as you regularly would.
 - If you are not able to make phone contact with someone by the end of the day their appointment, please identify the appointment outcome as a “no show.”

As always, if you have any immediate concerns, please contact either Kara Capobianco (kara.capobianco@ct.gov) or Leigh Shields-Church (leigh.shields-church@ct.gov). Thank you for all of your efforts as we remain diligent in creating a safe environment for our guests and staff.