

NC 507 HOMELESS SYSTEM DESIGN INITIATIVE

Action Report & Recommendations Summary | December 2022

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In May 2020, the Raleigh Wake (NC 507) Continuum of Care (CoC) in collaboration with HUD Technical Assistance restructured the NC 507 CoC. The NC 507 CoC recognized that most of the challenges facing our community today cannot be addressed by organizations working alone. Healthy, vibrant communities must be supported by a complex, interlocking web of efforts and systems. Through the restructuring, the CoC recognizes *these efforts are demonstrated by the participation in:*

- 1. Quality comprehensive data entry into the HMIS database.**

Real-time data is used to monitor current conditions including a by-name list of people experiencing homelessness.

- 2. Establishing a “centralized or coordinated assessment system.”**

HUD requires each CoC to establish and operate a centralized or coordinated assessment system (referred to as “coordinated entry” or “coordinated access”) to increase the efficiency of local crisis response systems and improve fairness and ease of access to resources, including mainstream resources.

- 3. Planning and governing of the NC 507 CoC.**

The CoC is organized to carry out the responsibilities required by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Why restructure our system design now?

1. Across the country, states are recognizing the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and systemic vulnerabilities on people experiencing homelessness.
2. The disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic against communities of color, those with disabilities, and those living in extreme poverty, has been made undeniably clear in congregate settings such as public nursing homes, jails, prisons and shelters.
3. Given the complex needs of people experiencing homelessness, collaboration, relationships, and connections across systems are needed now more than ever.

ASSESSING SYSTEM FLOW & SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

Effective crisis response systems should adhere to four main standards: (1) an episode of homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring; (2) the system is housing-focused; (3) it is right-sized with the appropriate mix of interventions for those in need; (4) is easy to navigate. The most critical crisis response system performance measures are system capacity relative to the need, bed/unit utilization rates, where people came from when entering the system, how long people are homeless, rates of exit to permanent housing from all project types, and the cost-effectiveness of the program.

As a rule, change is difficult and slow. Our systems were designed to operate as individual programs focused on individual results. The focus is now on the community’s ability to prevent and end homelessness. The best practices identified include:

1. Set system performance benchmarks for each intervention: The first step in solving homelessness is having a shared definition.

2. Measure and reward project performance and reallocate from low-performing strategies to effective strategies.
3. Engage all funders in the strategy and create a funders collaborative: Thinking systemically means recognizing the connections between housing, homelessness, and everything else.
4. Measure and adjust: Analyze performance on a quarterly or biannual basis to assess the degree to which the CoC is making progress on goals and benchmarks, and if the performance improvement strategies are having the intended impact.

ACTION STEPS FOR OUR COC HOMELESS SYSTEM DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

Based on findings from both the quantitative and qualitative NAEH analysis, along with learnings from the two-day System Design Clinic, identified the overall need for a reimagining of our current housing and service interventions such as diversion, rapid rehousing, and supportive housing as well as training, capacity, and infrastructure recommendations (Coordinated Entry) to support the system for the long term.

What NC 507 Can Do Within Our Current Interventions to Improve System Flow

(in order of priority)

1. Invest in diversion/problem solving across the system
2. Reimagine the Coordinated Entry System to engage in effective diversion and prioritize people for shelter, RRH and PSH
3. Scale up and improve Rapid Rehousing (RRH)

Identified Action Items:

Finalize Governance Charter (December 31, 2022)

Establish the 2023-2024 Governance Board (January 1, 2023)

Full System Level Data Report (March 31, 2023)

Set Benchmarks for Each System Level (April 2023)

- Reducing in-flow into homelessness
- Increasing exits to permanent housing
- Decreasing average length of homelessness
- Decreasing returns to homelessness

Set Benchmarks for Each Intervention (April 2023)

- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing
- RRH
- PSH