



Wednesday, April 27, 2022

12:00 PM

Location: Zoom Teleconference

Our Mission:

“A community working together to achieve access to safe and affordable housing for all residents of Genesee County.”

VI-SPDAT – Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistant Tool

I. Welcome and Introduction – Erika Humphrey

**II. CESA – Coordinated Entry System Assessment:
Presented by Travis Buckley – Metro Community Development**

- Travis stated that the CESA is a tool to find out a client’s history. It gauges where a client has been. It collects personal information and length of time experiencing homelessness. If done accurately you can get a firm picture of the client’s history and how they became homeless and what services are best for the client to utilize.
- The CESA also asks what agencies the client does not want to share with. This is an opportunity to engage with the client and inquire about any bad experiences.
- Answering all questions are important. We need to know if they have income, if they have health insurance, or if the client is pregnant. This information is helpful.
- It’s important to check the correct box under the **Current Living Section** of the CESA form. If the answer is other, please explain so we can get clear knowledge of where they come from and help track their history. This will help us understand how the client became homeless and where they are in the transition of homelessness.
- When you get to the question asking for the approximate date homelessness started; I don’t know is not an appropriate answer. Maybe ask questions about seasons (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall) or holidays. For example, did your homelessness start around Christmas? This is important so that we will have an understanding.
- Another question on the CESA that is sometimes overlooked is if the client has a disability. Some clients may not understand what a disability is. Mental health is a disability. Ask the client do you have mental health issues. Ask if they are going to treatment for mental health.
- Travis stated that a person experiencing homelessness is in survival mode. In survival mode you will want to protect the one thing you have control over and for many homeless people that is personal information. These clients will protect the information that is most important to them. So when filling out assessments such as the CESA, the client needs to feel like you care. We are here to help the client. It’s more than just questions and answers.
- The information collected on assessments is very vital to getting a great score. It is very vital so we know who we should put them in contact with and what referrals need to be made.
- Clients need to know we have a heart to care. Let’s as a community work to do what’s best in the interest of the client.

**III. VI-SPDAT – Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistant Tool:
Presented by Misty Bowers – Catholic Charities**

- Misty stated that when she gets ready to start the VI-SPDAT with a client, she makes it clear that the assessment is for housing purposes. She informs the client that she is trying to prioritize and see what housing programs they will qualify for.
- The intent is not to create more barriers but to help the client and eliminate some barriers and get them into stable housing of their own.
- Misty stated that accurately capturing a client’s history of housing and homelessness is important. Just because the client is at a shelter on that day, we should not assume that a shelter is where they sleep at most frequently.

- Listen to what the client says and help them understand what permanent stable housing is and help them determine how long it's been since they have had permanent stable housing.
- On the VI-SPDAT, Part B. Risks, Question 4 letter d), the question is really asking 5 or 6 questions. It's important to listen to the information they share. It's important to break the question down.
- Also in Part B. Risks, they are asking for a number of times. This is not a Yes or No answer.
- Misty stated that she lets her clients know that this assessment is based on a point system and that they need to be honest to ensure they get the assistance they need. Being honest will help determine barriers to achieve housing, what they qualify for, and what referrals are needed.
- Misty stated that when giving the assessment we should remember that sometimes people will deny or hide information for fear that they will not qualify or have services refused.
- If the client answers yes to question 7 about legal issues, we should be referring the client to homeless court.
- The last thing we want to do by asking questions is cause more trauma. Try to be positive. Motivate the client and remind them they are doing a good thing by taking this first step to overcoming homelessness.
- For questions 10 and 11; it does not have to only be things listed. Add anything that will prevent them from having stable housing.
- Questions 12, 13, and 14 are also made up of multiple questions. These questions can also have answers that change the next day. Be mindful that things can change.
- Questions 14 and 27 are very similar questions, in most cases the answer will be the same. Misty stated that those questions go hand and hand.
- In the next section on Wellness, some clients may not give 100% truthful answers for fear of being judged or being denied housing.
- For question 16 on chronic health issues; asthma, bronchitis, and COVID can be considered chronic.
- Question 23 and 24 can be a struggle because some clients deny mental health issues. Talking about it can bring up anger and frustration.
- Misty stated that we can't answer questions for the client but we can remind them of something they said then ask if you can answer the question in a certain way because of the information they previously shared.

IV. VI-SPDAT Turnaround:

Presented by Charmaine Furline – Shelter of Flint

- Charmaine stated that every shelter does client intake and completing assessments differently.
- Shelter of Flint completes the VI-SPDAT in 5 days. The VI-SPDAT is not done in intake. Client intake can take up to two hours.
- Shelter of Flint does the VI-SPDAT after the second interview with the case manager. This gives the shelter an opportunity to build a rapport with the client with hopes of getting more honest answers.

V. Comments:

Debra Hayes – My Brother's Keeper

- Debra stated that Data is Data! We capture as much information as we can on the first day in case we don't see the client again. MBK does the VI-SPDAT as part of intake on day one. If we see the client again, we can update the VI-SPDAT.

Charmaine Furline – Shelter of Flint

- Charmaine stated that some shelters only have one employee to do intake and it is sometimes impossible to complete assessments in the same day. Especially if they are like SOF and have multiple intakes in the same day.

Linda Bielskis – Shelter of Flint

- Linda stated that every shelter has different processes and procedures. We must remember that intakes have to be done on children, so the size of the family will reflect what can get done at initial intake.

Travis Buckley – Metro Community Development

- Travis stated that we don't need a policy dictating when each shelter should uniformly turn in assessments. We need to trust the staff that are working in the best interest of the client. Remember that the VI-SPDAT goes off an acuity score. The client is placed on the QBNL (Quality By Name List) by their acuity score not on first come first serve. Trying to uniform the shelters will put a burden on the staff.

Debra Hayes – My Brother's Keeper

- Debra stated that policy in place gives you something to stand on. We do need to put a policy in place. And maybe leave wiggle room. Just like HUD requires policy. We need to know, how do you this, why you do this, and when do you do this. Policies are necessary and we should not throw that out.

Maurice Bush – Wellness

- Maurice asked; with TBRA (Tenant Based Rental Assistance) clients, since the client is still considered homeless, how do we keep the score to reflect a high acuity score even though the temporary housing may have changed some answers.

Misty Bowers – Catholic Charities

- Misty replied to Maurice's question and stated that the assessments do not need to be redone. Just add an updated homeless verification.