



Recommendations for Coordinated Assessor Training and Request for Feasibility Studies

Submitted by Performance Monitoring Committee

Part I: Suggested Changes to the Current Coordinated Assessor Training

Background

The Coordinated Assessor Training can be streamlined and simplified from the current single-shot classroom training approach.

Initially created by ECHO staff, with changes and additions based on community feedback, this recommendation proposes three core improvements:

1. Remove mandatory minimum wait times whenever possible and replace those wait times with skills testing.
2. Explicitly defining and checking for baseline competencies that come from initial HMIS New User Training (rather than assuming everyone walked away with the same skill-set, or presuming that everyone requires the same amount of “practice time” to get comfortable with those skills)
3. Breaking the current “single-shot marathon” CA Classroom training content into a minimum of two much shorter classroom sessions (one focused on the assessment tool and data technical, and the other focused on the more conversational and skill-based aspects of the training, such as Diversion conversations and Housing Planning) to avoid the “diminishing returns” effect from multiple hours of complex training in a row

Objectives

- People should be able to learn new skills in a self-paced structure and apply their training as quickly as possible in the homeless response system.
- Trainee skills should be tested to ensure consistency and high-quality Coordinated Assessments.

Recommendation 1 - Tiered Training Structure

The Coordinated Entry department proposes a tiered approach to training which is based on three discrete and balanced phases.

1. New User Training (NUT) - This is database-focused training intended to give a user all of the basic skills needed to use the HMIS system on a daily basis. People should be walking away from NUT with the ability to do all basic functions of their jobs in HMIS in

a way that's consistent with their primary service roles and with enough foundation that nothing taught in NUT needs to be retaught in detail at subsequent trainings.

2. Crisis Outreach Training (COT) - This is a resource-focused training intended to give a user all of the baseline skills, knowledge, and systems context to answer the most common types of questions people have at systems access points (such as how to access shelter, what the CA does, and what someone's CA status is). People should be walking away from COT with the ability to not only answer all of those questions, but also to help clients plan through specific next steps to help move their case forward (such as Diversion/Self-Resolution conversations and Housing Resource Planning).
3. Coordinated Assessment Training (CAT) - This is the final training intended to give the user all of the knowledge, technical skills, and systems information needed to be able to complete the full Coordinated Assessment process. People should be walking away from this training with the ability to complete every single step of the Coordinated Assessment process in consistent compliance with all Coordinated Assessment policies, procedures, and expectations.

Recommendation 2 - Skill Testing

The Coordinated Entry department proposes a skill testing structure to ensure readiness, consistency, and quality in order to administer Coordinated Assessments to clients.

Pre- and post-testing - since each of the trainings build upon skills taught in a prior training, attendees must be able to demonstrate they have all of the skills and knowledge from the prior trainings before moving on to the next steps (these competency tests will be replacing any mandatory waiting periods in the current training structure).

At the end of every training session there should be a post-test provided by ECHO to ensure all attendees are walking away with the skills and knowledge necessary to be considered to have "graduated" from that step in the training process. A failed test will require additional training at the same level before being eligible to move on.

Signing up for the next level of training should also involve a pre-testing check to ensure that these skills and knowledge have been used and retained to the level needed to be able to meaningfully engage in the next layer of training.

These tests should be developed, monitored, and revised from a Continuous Quality Improvement mindset with the guidance of the Governance Structure (at a minimum with feedback and guidance from the Crisis Response Committee and the Performance Monitoring Committee for applicable written standards revisions to Coordinated Entry Written Standards, HMIS Written Standards, or the associated Crisis Outreach intervention Written Standards).

Each of the training phases above should be a formal training opportunity provided by ECHO on a regularly scheduled basis. Current versions of these trainings are presently offered with the frequencies below:

- HMIS New User Training is currently available on a monthly basis, with specific weekly times determined by primary role. Sign-up's are available through the ECHO website and coordinated by Brandi Davis, the HMIS Training Manager.
- The current version of Crisis Outreach Training is available on a monthly basis, with sign-up's coordinated by Anthony Curtis, the Crisis Outreach Coordinator on ECHO's Crisis Outreach Team.
- The current version of CAT (Coordinated Assessment Classroom training) is available every other month, with sign-up's through the Coordinated Assessment Access Manager,* and with additional trainings available on an individual per-agency approval basis by ECHO.

*As this position is currently vacant, training is currently being coordinated by Alesandra Dominguez on ECHO's Crisis Outreach team.

ECHO should monitor the need for additional assessors and increase or decrease the frequency of training in the community, and based upon data, match the availability of training opportunities to demonstrated need.

Recommendation 3 – Improve Communication

Stakeholders requested improved communication on the availability of training in the community which would include additional posting on social media, email blasts, and keeping the ECHO website updated. Furthermore, the Coordinated Entry team should establish a fixed schedule for each training tier.

Part II: Request for Feasibility Studies

The Coordinated Entry Workgroup gathered stakeholder feedback within HRS Governance and recommends ECHO conduct the following feasibility studies.

Feasibility Study 1 - Train the Trainer

Developing a train-the-trainer model so that high-performing agencies other than ECHO can designate staff to be responsible for providing the tiered curriculum and proficiency testing for their own training needs and other community partners. The feasibility study should take into consideration the back-end data quality and quality assurance responsibilities for which ECHO is currently responsible. There may be some elements which ECHO cannot outsource; however, ECHO should study which pieces of the curriculum/testing could be incorporated into a train-the-trainer model.

Feasibility Study 2 - Performance Metrics

Developing specific metrics to assess the performance of this recommended CA Training proposal. ECHO would be responsible for tracking and reporting on the measures and findings. The following indicators should be tracked to monitor the future performance of the CA training:

- Survey of training participants to evaluate their satisfaction and their suggestions for improvement.
- Length of time from training request to licensure of assessors. This data point may be limited to time tracking from the second or third tier and excluding HMIS New User Training as most providers must complete NUT but may not become assessors.
- The number of assessors in the community.

Feasibility Study 3 - Refresher Training

Assess the feasibility of implementing a required annual refresher training for the Coordinated Assessment training similar to the annual HMIS Ethics training.

Next Steps

As Coordinated Entry is a core responsibility of the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care, and ECHO is the Lead agency of the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care for HMIS and for Coordinated Entry, ECHO staff will be taking next steps on feasibility of implementing any of the community recommendations for an improved CA Training program. ECHO will report back to HRS Governance with proposed timelines for implementation and answers to the requests for feasibility studies.