**HAMPDEN COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE**

**Overview of Coordinated Assessment: VI-SPDAT**

## What Is Coordinated Assessment?

Coordinated assessment is the use of a common tool for assessing the needs of people seeking homelessness assistance. Community-wide use of common assessment leads to decision-making about referrals that is based on consistent criteria of a household’s needs and a comprehensive understanding of each program’s requirements, target populations, and available openings and services.

The goal of coordinated assessment is to better match people experiencing homelessness to the most appropriate types of housing assistance based on an assessment of the needs of households.

HUD requires that Continuums of Care create systems of coordinated assessment for all programs funded by CoC and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG).

## When Does Coordinated Assessment Take Place?

Locally, we have been talking about two key components of coordinated assessment: 1) Front-door assessment, which determines a household’s initial need for diversion, rapid rehousing, shelter, or another intervention; and 2) Back-door assessment, which determines appropriate placement for permanent supportive housing. While a long-term goal is to have all assessment completed as early as possible, the goal of back-door assessment is to assist with prioritization for and proper placement into permanent supportive housing for people with chronic homelessness and/or high service needs. At this time, the Hampden County CoC is focused on implementing coordinated assessment in order to determine appropriateness for a permanent supportive housing placement.

## What is the VI-SPDAT?

The Vulnerability index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) is a coordinated assessment tool in use by hundreds of communities across the country. It brings together two pre-existing tools. The Vulnerability Index is rooted in leading medical research and helps determine the chronicity and medical vulnerability of homeless individuals. The Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) is an intake and case management tool based on a wide body of social science research and extensive field testing. The VI-SPDAT was a key tool used by the 100,000 Homes campaign, which recently met its goal of housing 100,000 chronically homeless individuals.

## Why Should We Choose the VI-SPDAT As Our Coordinated Assessment Tool?

Communities around the country are struggling to implement coordinated assessment and a number are creating new tools. Based on our CoC’s research, the VI-SPDAT appears to be the only widely-used tool created based on research and extensively field-tested. Locally, Friends of the Homelessness and Eliot have piloted the VI-SPDAT and found that the tool’s assessment is reliable—that is, it tends to document what they see as a person’s needs. At this time, the VI-SPDAT appears to be the best tool available and is mentioned by HUD as meeting CoC requirements.