

An Introduction to Hamilton's By-Name Priority List

The City of Hamilton supports a Housing First approach in ending homelessness. Implementing a **By-Name Priority List** is a recognized best practice to effectively support a System of Care for the homeless serving system within a Housing First framework. With a By-Name List, the City will be able to *quantify* and *qualify* the resource needs of Housing First programs. Ultimately, the List will ensure that service providers are coordinated and have access to a roster of people who require housing in real-time.



Who & What

A By-Name Priority List is a real time, up to date database of all people experiencing homelessness in Hamilton. People are ordered by unique identifiers such as their name and by a ranking of their risks and vulnerabilities. Other important information captured on the List includes indigenous status, gender identity, age, and other personal information which may assist in effectively matching a person with the appropriate housing resources.

The value of the List is rooted in real-time accuracy, and therefore must always be up-to-date. Documented processes for 'adding' & 'removing' people from the List are critical components of creating and maintaining a By-Name List.

Why

Its fundamental purpose and value is to prioritize Hamilton's most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness; as it informs us, as a system, who to serve first and with what service interventions. The alternative approach is to continue to serve people on a first-come-first-serve basis; an approach which ultimately results in an inefficient allocation of scarce resources as it tends to reward clients most able to navigate the ins and outs of a complex system, not the people who need the supports the most.

Using the By-Name List, Housing First providers will receive consistent, timely and pre-qualified client referrals through a collaborative and coordinated process.

Additionally, a strong By-Name List will be used to track progress towards ending homelessness and plan for the future by informing real time targets for reaching a point where we can end homelessness. In order to have a By-Name List serve this purpose, it needs to include all people experiencing homelessness in Hamilton at any given time everywhere in the city. Given that, it is critical that partners are on the same page about the By-Name List in Hamilton.

How

In absence of a centralized intake, system-wide partners who provide front-line engagement with clients experiencing homelessness will perform a standardized assessment (e.g. VI-SPDAT¹), which will include a consent to service. The client information will be added to the By-Name List and prioritized based on assessment results. As individuals are added to the List, they will be referred to an appropriate Housing First supportive program. To facilitate the referral of new prioritized clients, a best practice is to have bi-weekly case conference meetings between Housing First providers & referral agencies, to review and case-plan for all new clients.

At this point in time, the City will own the List and City Staff will administer the processes of maintaining and operating it – this includes “adding” new individuals to the List, helping facilitate new client referrals to Housing First programs and managing administrative components related to client information.

To begin, the List’s scope will be exclusive to clients who qualify for Housing First; however, the aim is to expand to include all people experiencing homelessness.

Next Steps

1. While this provides a high-level overview, processes by which the By-Name Priority List will function are still under review and development
2. City Staff are currently in the process of developing a detailed implementation plan
3. City Staff are committed to communicating more details to our community partners early in 2017

¹ The Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) was developed as a pre-screening tool for communities. It assesses the vulnerability of people experiencing homelessness on a 17 pt. scale.