



## **Consolidated Homeless Fund Partnership**

# **Family Shelter Hotline and Waitlist Frequently Asked Questions and Answers**

*Updated November 28, 2012*

**Operated through United Way's 211**



**United Way of Rhode Island**

## Family Shelter Waitlist FAQs

### What hours will 211 Operators be available to enter clients into the Family Shelter Waitlist?

Monday through Friday 9-5, except all major Holidays. We hope to offer some weekend and holiday coverage, with staff availability.

### How will calls be handled when they are not around (say very early in the morning or late evening)?

Calls will be triaged by the other 211 staff workers (those who need shelter that night will receive assistance from 211 to find a bed), those who wish to enter the waitlist will be told to call back during Monday – Friday 9-5.

### What do the 211 Waitlist Operators need from the shelters?

211 Waitlist Operators will need family shelters to provide accurate and complete information on bed availability (especially when trying to triage shelter calls that need housing that night).

### What do we tell families that call or show up for shelter?

Contact 211 for the new Family Shelter Hotline and Waitlist.

We understand that there will be a difficult transition period. We ask that providers be understanding and keep an eye out for anything we can do to improve the process.

If clients arrive in person late in the evening and early morning, when 211 Family Shelter Operators are unavailable, shelters will be asked to use their discretion in handling those situations (do we house tonight on an emergency basis, then have them call in the morning, triage, divert?). Hopefully, once this is up and running we can increase the number of Family Shelter Operators (to include late evenings/early mornings) and develop improved policies for handling unique situations.

### How will 211 Waitlist Operators handle clients looking for shelter that night?

They will start by focusing on shelter diversion (inquiring about other options, etc). If the family cannot be diverted, they will triage the call and attempt to locate a bed for that evening (see flowchart).

211 staff will keep a running list of bed capacities for the family shelters and will work to match any incoming calls needing shelter that night, with a bed in the system. As discussed previously, this may include temporary overflow at all family shelters, until more permanent arrangements can be made.

211 staff will call or email shelters to discuss potential clients needing shelter.

### Will shelters still be able to choose who they wish to enter their program?

Yes, however shelters shall NOT discriminate. It is the expectation of the CHF Partnership that providers will work to assist the most vulnerable families (most vulnerable being those living in their car or places not meant for human habitation, high vulnerability scores, etc).

## **What will the process look like for families who are able to be diverted from shelter tonight and will be entered into the waitlist?**

All families who consent will be entered into the Family Shelter Waitlist in HMIS. They will be given resource information for all applicable needs and explained the new waitlist system.

As beds become available (and are not filled by those needing a bed that “night”), shelter providers will select families from the waitlist.

## **How will shelter providers access the waitlist?**

All family shelters will have access to this bin (in HMIS). The waitlist itself will be a custom report in reportwriter (not ART), which will contain up to the minute live information.

1. [Log into HMIS](#)
2. [Click Reports on the Left Toolbar](#)
3. [On the reports dashboard, scroll all the way down to the bottom and click report writer](#)
4. [Click the magnifying glass next to "2012 Family Shelter Waitlist"](#)
5. [Click Download FULL Report](#)

## **Do I need to record any transactions I have with the client in HMIS?**

Yes. When you call a client (to prep for shelter entry or ask a question), please complete one of the “Contact” text boxes at the bottom of the client summary page, under the clients records. When filling out the text box, please include your program’s name, the date, and any important notes. Keep tracking of contacts here will allow us to reduce duplication, if two shelters are working to enroll the same client.

## **I have an open bed, how do I take the household from the Waitlist?**

1. [Log into HMIS](#)
2. [Locate the client’s record in HMIS](#)
3. [On the Client Summary Tab, scroll down to the State Family Waitlist \(if it does not show up, call RICH, to fix\).](#)
4. [Scroll to the bottom of the page and select “No” under the “Client still actively searching for shelter?” question & select your shelter from the dropdown list under “Shelter Placed Into”.](#)
5. [Save.](#)
6. [Go through normal workflow for family shelter entries.](#)

## **How long will families have to wait on the waitlist?**

Movement and bed availability vary shelter by shelter, so it is difficult to say. Once the process has been underway, we will have data that we can share with families. As indicated previously, the shared goal is to target the MOST NEEDY, so 211 and shelter providers will work together to target and locate the best fit for clients.

Lastly, families will also be informed during their first call that if their situation worsens, they may always call 211 regardless of whether or not they are already in the shelter waitlist, to try to locate shelter for that specific night.

**How will shelters contact families they have selected from the waitlist?**

They will review the waitlist report in HMIS and use the contact information provided (email and phone). 211 staff will do their best to inform clients of any required documents (IDS, etc) and policies that a family shelter may require.

**What are the expectations of the families, after they are done with the call?**

Families will be instructed to contact 211 weekly to indicate that they still need shelter. [The waitlist will be cleared every SUNDAY NIGHT.](#)

**How will we know the shelter waitlist is current?**

The report will be purged every week (with clients calling back to inform they still need shelter and would like to remain active on the list). Any interactions with 211 or other shelter providers will be visible in the waitlist report.

**Who should I contact with suggestions, issues, or questions?**

211 or Caitlin Frumerie at [Caitlin.Frumerie@doa.ri.gov](mailto:Caitlin.Frumerie@doa.ri.gov) .