**SMAC Coordinated Entry (CE) Assessor Tip Sheet**

The tip sheet is intended to provide additional guidance and/or suggestions to SMAC CE assessors in conducting the VI-SPDAT with participants. This tip sheet was created by the experiences and practices of SMAC CE certified assessors. The tip sheet will provide helpful suggestions in addressing challenging situations that you may encounter as an assessor. This tip sheet should not be used to replace the VI-SPDAT instructional/training video by Iain DeJong.

**Tip #1: Step 2 Supplemental Questions**

This is the opportunity to collect as much information as the participant is willing to share. The accuracy and thoroughness of this information helps the Priority List Manager make appropriate referrals. Unlike the VI-SPDAT, there is no script to follow. The information collected may be helpful further into the assessment.

**Tip #2: Homelessness History Logs**

If you are attempting to contact the participant to schedule an appointment to complete the VI-SPDAT, encourage the participant to document their history of housing and homelessness prior to the appointment. It saves time, but it’s also elevates some stress and pressure for the participant to recall their history on the spot.

**Tip#3: Encourage the Participant to Provide Accurate Information**

Participants may be hesitant with the information they share in fear that it will hurt their chances of connecting to housing. Share with the participant that the questions in the VI-SPDAT are intended to determine what level of services they may benefit from. The more forthcoming they are with their answers; it’s possible that more doors to housing resources will open. The VI-SPDAT is not seeking to disqualify or prevent them from connecting to housing.

**Tip#4: Family, Single, or TAY VI-SPDAT….which one to use?**

Households can be very diverse and may require more than just one assessment. Below are SMAC’s best practices in determining which VI-SPDAT to use:

* Two Adult Household: Both adults should complete the singles assessment. The highest score will be used for placement on the list.
* Adult Parent (s) with Adult Child(rent) 18-24: Adult parent should complete the singles assessment and the adult child (18- 24) should complete the TAY. If the household includes multiple children (minors and/or adult children) use the family assessment if the household includes minors and the TAY for any adult child(ren) 18-24.
* Parenting Youth (24 and under): Complete the family assessment
* Pregnant Single Adult: Single assessment and encourage the participant to report the change after the birth of the child
* Youth 24 or under: TAY

**Tip#5: Contradicting Information**

This is where the information collected in the Step 2 Supplemental Questions can be helpful. Inform the participant; if they shared information with you prior to the assessment that may contradict one of their answers during the assessment that you will point this out. Let them know that you are not trying to persuade them to change their answer (as they can answer however they want) but you want to make sure that they understood the question.

I.e., During the VI-SPDAT, the participant answers No to the Q: Is there any person, past landlord, business, bookie, dealer, or government group like the IRS that thinks you owe them money? In the Step 2 Supplemental Questions, the participant shared with you that they have an eviction on their rental record and currently owes a landlord money.

Response: Remind the participant of the information they shared with you in regards to the eviction. Re-read the question and record their answer.

Also note, participants will unintentionally overlook their debts with collection agencies, outstanding utility bills, and child support arrears

**Tip#6: Clarifying Questions**

If you observe a participant who is confused by a question…ask the participant if they need you to clarify the question. VI-SPDAT instructions suggest that it is acceptable to provide clarification if the participant does not understand the question. I.e., Q: If there was space available in a program that specifically assists people that live with HIV or AIDS, would that be of interest to you?

Participants will often interpret this question as if we’re asking about their comfort level living in housing with people who are HIV+ or living with AIDS. This question is inquiring about their status and if they would be eligible for this specific housing option because they are HIV+ or living with AIDS.

**Tip #7: VI-SPDAT, Please say Yes or No**

Prior to the start of the assessment, remind the participant that the majority of the questions will require either a Yes or No response. Ask them to minimize their answers to just Yes or No. To soften this request, let them know that the questions are sensitive in nature and you don’t want them to have to relive anything that they don’t want to nor will you ask them for any details in regards to their answers.

* Prior to the start of the assessment, let the participant know that the first few questions will require either a multiple choice answer or a number and you will let them know when the questions switch over to just Yes or No.
* If a client begins to explain their answers, preface the next question with Yes or No. You can also remind the participant that you can only indicate Yes or No on the assessment.

**Tip#8: VI-SPDAT Language**

We can’t change or deviate from the questions in the VI-SPDAT, but it’s okay to omit language that we do not use in our region. For example, drunk tank.

**TIP#9: Interpretation of Questions**

The interpretation belongs to the participant; however they choose to apply the question to their life circumstances. I.e., trauma is defined by the participant; being attacked could be interpreted as physical or verbal. Let the participant process these questions as it applies to their life.

Please refer to the VI-SPDAT training manual for more specific details on the questions.