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www.cucs.org**AN OVERVIEW:
SINGLE POINT OF ACCESS
(SPOA) HOUSING PROGRAM****What is Single Point of Access (SPOA)?**

The SPOA Housing program utilizes a centralized database to connect eligible applicants with appropriate vacancies in the mental health housing system in Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island. SPOA significantly expands our capacity to gather data on housing needs and the availability of services for consumers with special needs, as well as to improve access to housing and related services for people with psychiatric disabilities. SPOA collects information on the housing referral process and movement through the housing system. The overall goals of the program are to improve access to housing and related services for people with psychiatric disabilities and to collect data on housing needs and the availability of services for consumers with special needs.

What is the role of NYS Office of Mental Health?

As a central element of the NYS OMH Evidence Based Practices Initiative, OMH has developed similar SPOA programs in counties throughout New York State. Along with consumer and provider representatives, OMH has worked to design and implement New York City's SPOA program.

What is the SPOA Housing Program and who is eligible to participate?

The SPOA program began in August 2001 in Brooklyn. The pilot expanded to the Bronx in January 2003, Staten Island in March 2003, Queens in April 2003 and Manhattan in September 2003. As of September 2003, SPOA is a citywide SPOA system, encompassing all five New York City boroughs. Applicants are eligible for SPOA if they have a serious mental illness and are not NY/NY I or II eligible. An applicant may be eligible for SPOA if they have NY/NY III eligibility because they have a serious mental illness and are being discharged from a NYS-operated psychiatric center or NYS-operated transitional residence or residential treatment facility and are at risk of homelessness (NY/NY III Pop B & C). In addition, the applicant must have requested Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, Queens or Staten Island as a borough preference or have a last known address in the five boroughs, or have family in New York City.

What is the role of the Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS)?

CUCS has been contracted to provide administrative support for the SPOA Housing program. Using an extensive database that tracks housing vacancies and services offered

by housing providers, CUCS assists consumers and their referring workers in locating a program that most closely meets applicant's needs and preferences. CUCS' team of Housing Consultants review each HRA Housing application, consults with the referring worker, and then using the housing database generates three housing referrals for each applicant. CUCS also tracks and reports placement information to NYS OMH. In addition, CUCS provides training for referral sources and housing providers on the technical and clinical aspects of the housing referral process and participates in SPOA case planning meetings.

How does SPOA impact consumers?

Some mental health consumers have been unable, for various reasons, to access housing in our existing mental health housing system. Under the SPOA program, consumers with special service needs may be eligible to receive OMH funded enhanced services, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will be accepted into a housing program. In addition, SPOA guarantees the consumer will be interviewed by all SPOA referred housing providers. SPOA will significantly expand information available about who is getting access and who is not getting access to mental health housing. The data gathered will help to determine what types of services should be developed in the future to better meet the housing needs of all mental health consumers.

How does SPOA impact housing providers?

Housing providers interview all applicants with complete HRA Housing Application packets that have been referred by SPOA. Providers will continue to assess and accept/reject applicants using their own agency criteria. Housing providers will have the opportunity to request enhanced services to assist a consumer in transitioning into community based housing. In cases where all three providers decline an application, CUCS will coordinate with the providers and referral source to schedule a SPOA case planning meeting.

How does SPOA impact referral sources?

Referral sources continue to have the ability to request a specific residence or make referrals outside the SPOA process. For individuals who are eligible for the Single Point of Access Program, referral sources submit the complete HRA 2010e application packet along with the HRA approval letter to CUCS. CUCS housing consultants will consult on the case offering any necessary technical assistance and provide three referrals to the referring worker. SPOA applicants are guaranteed three interviews. The process of determining which housing programs best match an applicant's needs is collaborative and incorporates consumer preferences and referral source recommendations. By centralizing and standardizing the process, SPOA is intended to make referrals more efficient and expedient. In addition, SPOA offers enhanced services funding to facilitate access to housing for people that present extensive needs.

What types of enhanced services are available?

In order to accommodate the diverse needs of consumers, OMH has not developed a pre-set menu of enhanced services. OMH is willing to consider funding any reasonable request for a service that would help a consumer succeed in housing funded by OMH. The purpose of the enhanced funding is to assist a consumer: transition into community based housing; retain his/her housing; or transition from licensed housing to more independent housing. Examples of enhanced services that can be requested include, but are not limited to, specific training for staff to effectively serve the consumer; emergency purchases to address the immediate needs of the consumer; temporary additional staffing (peer staff); or specialized assessments in order to develop an individualized service plan to maintain the consumer safely in housing (e.g. consumers with a history of fire setting). All requests for enhanced services will be reviewed and approved/rejected by OMH. All funding for enhanced services will be connected to the consumer, so that funding will be discontinued if the consumer leaves the program or no longer requires the service.

What is the purpose of and who attends SPOA case planning meetings?

In cases where an applicant is rejected after an interview by all three housing providers, the Referral Source may request a case planning meeting by notifying CUCS. CUCS coordinates the date for the case planning meeting with those who will be present at case planning meetings, including: an OMH representative, representatives from each of the three housing provider agencies that received referrals, CUCS representatives, and when applicable, representatives from other agencies available to provide services. The consumer and a representative of the referring agency are strongly encouraged to participate. When necessary, a conference call can be arranged to facilitate consumer/referral source participation. The case planning meeting may result in any of the following: an approval for enhanced services resulting in housing placement, a decision to generate new referrals to housing programs, or the development of an alternative service plan.