| This policy was selected because it is a real example of how a community approached the task of developing an outreach policy. BFZ data coaching staff adapted some elements to make it more transferable and annotated it to highlight the key components from the guide and suggestions for continuous improvement. These policies may help you overcome the dreaded writer’s block as you start thinking about structure and language for your policy. These examples are available as inspiration or sample text in conjunction with the guide. Feel free to copy language if it’s relevant to your community.  Approved for use by the community in November 2024 |
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## Community Context:

*This example highlights how a community coordinated outreach with one outreach team that connects with single adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness through a combination of referral and canvasing.*

This workshopped policy was based on Metro Denver - Douglas County’s outreach policy. Classified as “suburban,” Douglas County is part of the Metro Denver CoC. Douglas County is the southernmost county in the Metro Denver CoC and sits at the border of two other Colorado CoCs leading to a significant amount of mobility within this county’s unsheltered population. They joined the BFZ network in the summer of 2021 and achieved quality data for Veterans in the fall of 2023. Douglas County uses Clarity Bitfocus HMIS.

## Continuous Improvement Suggestions:

While this workshopped policy covers the major recommendations offered in the [BFZ Outreach Policy Guide](https://login.builtforzero.org/hubs/resources/bfz-outreach-policy-guide/) and meets the BFZ standard for initial quality data, we offer the following additional recommendations if your community seeks to build on this example:

* Involve people with lived expertise and front-line staff to create your policy and procedures
* Include any training and safety protocol staff are expected to follow while in the field

*Reviewing the BFZ Outreach Policy Guide fully will help you to create comprehensive outreach policies and procedures that align with the BFZ quality data standards.*

**OVERVIEW**

The Homeless Engagement, Assistance, and Resource Team (HEART) is a co-responder team that consist of Navigators paired with law enforcement to provide support to those individuals who are experiencing homelessness. HEART prevents the need for law enforcement to respond to calls where no law or code violation is occurring and strengthens the system of support for those experiencing homelessness within Douglas County with a compassionate co-responder approach. 

The HEART assess needs, vulnerabilities, and barriers of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness while ensuring opportunities to gain shelter are provided. Additional case management and enrollment in coordinated entry is provided to ensure a successful transition to emergency shelter and transitional or permanent housing by partners experienced in providing assessment, benefit enrollment, employment services, mental health services, and transportation.

**HOURS OF OPERATION**

HEART operates generally from Monday thru Friday, 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. 

**PROCESS**

HEART identifies those living unsheltered by physically canvassing within Douglas County, responding to requests for assistance from the community and maintaining active relationships with key partners within Douglas County who interact with unsheltered individuals. Our goal is that everyone’s experience with homelessness becomes rare, brief, and for a limited time.

A referral may be completed by anyone in the community at any time. Information on how to contact the HEART can be found at https://www.douglas.co.us/homeless-initiative/heart/. HEART will respond within 24 business hours or less to all requests for assistance.

HEART’s focus is on engagement and realizes that several attempts may be made to the same person to build rapport and trust. Relationship building takes time and HEART offers aide to make safer choices, maintains appropriate boundaries, uses positive reinforcement and partners with the individual to listen to their needs with respect, is knowledgeable and reliable about community resources, and ensures a warm handoff to housing and service providers. 

If an individual experiencing homelessness declines housing services, HEART will continue to build relationships, enter the contact into HMIS, address immediate essential needs, and leave their contact information with the person for possible future contact.

**COORDINATION** 

The HEART meets monthly with a leadership council comprised of Douglas County staff, HEART, and law enforcement to convene strategies, share data and coordinate with all agencies actively providing outreach and in-reach services. Activities at this meeting include response to changes in encampment locations and predicted sweeps, case conferencing planning, coordinated entry and data discussions related to outreach, or cold weather response.

In addition, HEART coordinates with community partners, service providers, and non-profits to prevent duplicative outreach services and to ensure clients receive access to housing opportunities and other essential services. HEART meetings monthly with staff to coordinate services for those on the Veteran By Name List. The HEART also receives a weekly email from local non-profit partners who served anyone in the community who was unhoused the preceding week.

**HMIS**

HEART utilizes the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and Coordinated Entry System for current resource availability and community engagement. This is in alignment and supports the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative’s (MDHI) efforts for a regional approach and supports the Built for Zero (BFZ) platform that homelessness be rare, brief, and for a limited time. Through case management and local non-profit partnerships, HEART connects individuals and families with local organizations for needed emergency shelter, food, water, and for long-term housing options. 

People who are experiencing homelessness are encouraged to complete the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VISPDAT) in order to be added to the Coordinated Entry System. Within the 30 days of enrollment, HEART Navigators will begin to assess client needs through VISPDAT assessments, develop service plans to meet essential and housing needs, and help clients exit the street; if that is what they want.

**CASE MANAGEMENT**

Active HEART clients will have a minimum of one contact from Navigators per month for case management support.

**CASE CLOSURE**

If a household has had no contact with HEART or the Coordinated Entry (CE) system for 60 days with 2 attempted contacts each month, and they have had no services or shelter stays in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for the past 60 days with 2 attempted contacts each month, the household will be removed from the ‘active’ By Name List and placed on the ‘inactive’ By Name List.

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**

The HEART leadership team will review, at least every 6 months, data which includes the following: •Demographic data 

• Number of individuals served

• Number of clients on By Name List

• Calls for service – Number, time of day, day of week

• Online referrals - Number, time of day, day of week

• Phone calls to HEART phone line - Number, time of day, day of week

• Disposition of calls for service

• Service provided

• Housing Outcomes

• Shelter Outcomes

• Point In Time survey of Homelessness (annually)

This data will be used by the HEART leadership team to review program impact, adjust program operations, ensure achievement of outcomes, and make progress towards Functional Zero in Douglas County.