A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

When Someone in Orange County Asks for Housing Help, What Should Happen?

Walking through the Coordinated Entry System (CES) Evaluation together, and imagining what comes next



Tuesday, October 20, 2026
9:00-Noon, Delhi Center, Santa Ana

OC COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM

Samueli FOUNDATION

element CONSULTING GROUP

Who are we?

Evaluation team includes national experts working alongside Orange County experts.

Tom Albanese, LSW
Project Manager

Lianna Barbu
Principal Evaluator

Tanesha Travis
Community Engagement Lead

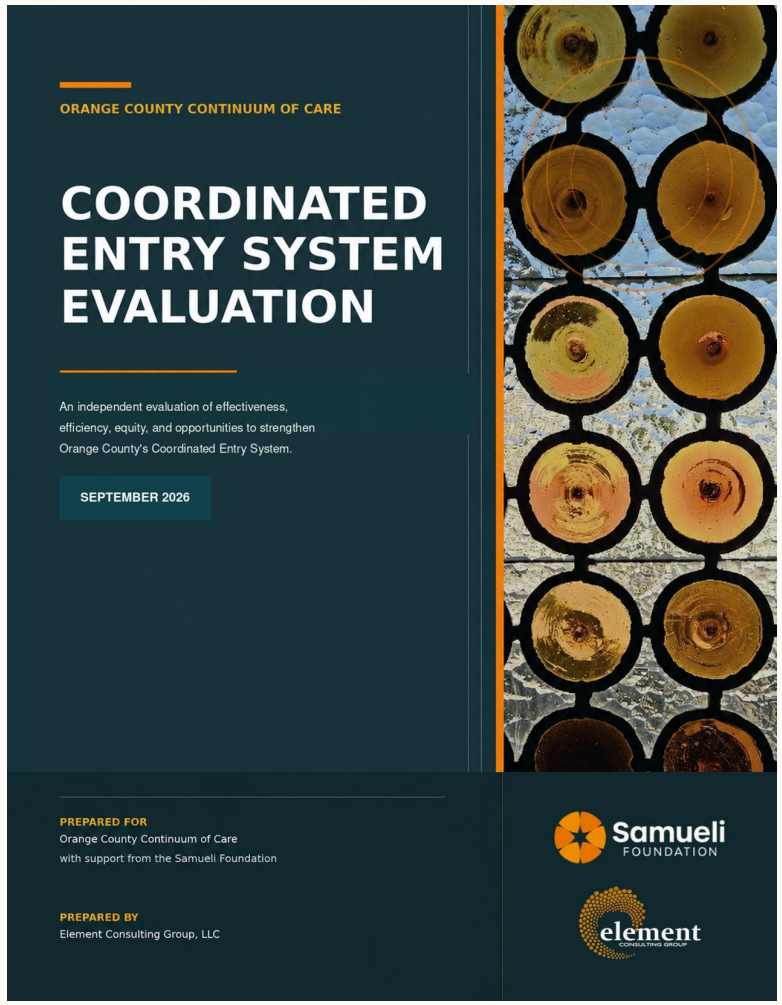
Brooke Spellman
Evaluation Advisor

Heather Stratman
Evaluation Advisor

Caroline Roddey
Evaluation Team

Independent analysis, grounded in Orange County knowledge and experience.

What was done?



Use as reference

Start with sections relevant to your role; use detailed chapters to trace findings to evidence.

Read in context

Sections 3–9 integrate requirements, performance, stakeholder experience, equity, interpretation, and recommendations. No single measure tells the whole story.

Consider recommendations

Section 12 consolidates recommendations; Appendix E lists responsible entities and relative investment as reference context.

Findings and recommendations are interconnected.

Operational improvement and resource development must occur together: better CES processes cannot create housing capacity, and additional resources cannot reach full impact without effective CES operations.

Room Logistics & Questions

Thank you for joining today's session!

Idea Garden	**For thoughts and questions.**
Background	**Review CES Evaluation Report and companion materials and 10/8 findings webinar on new landing page**
Personal Needs	**Take care of yourself!** • Restrooms • Refreshments



Find Someone Who… Bingo

ACTIVITY · 8 min

works in street outreach	works in South County	works at a hospital or clinic
has answered a 211 call	works for a city	funds community programs
works with youth or schools	is a landlord or developer	serves older adults
has helped someone get an ID	has lived experience and is willing to share	knows what CES stands for

How to play

1. Find someone who fits a square. Say hello and ask them to sign it.
2. Each person can sign your card only once.
3. Get three in a row? Shout “BINGO!”
4. First three BINGOs win a prize.

By the End of Today, You Will Know Three Things

1



What CES is

Orange County's **shared** front door for housing help, in plain words.

2



What we learned

What's working, and where people get stuck along the way.

3



Where you fit

How you, your group, or your organization can help shape what comes next.

Today is the start of a conversation, and your voice helps decide where it goes.

Our Time Together this Morning

Welcome	about 35 min	Bingo · Stand Up If… · One Word · lived-experience voices
Part 1: What is CES?	about 15 min	The any-door hub · Myth or Fact?
Part 2: What we learned	about 65 min	The Right Help Game · Guess the Number · Who haven't we heard from?
Break	15 min	Snacks · Where Do You Help? dot wall · drop a question card
Part 3: Shaping what comes next	about 35 min	Your questions, answered · Four Corners
Closing	about 10 min	Ready, set, go!

About half of today is talking, moving, and making something together.

How We'll Be Together Today

Your experience counts

Every kind of knowing matters here.

Make space, take space

If you talk a lot, listen more. If you're quiet, we want to hear you.

Stories stay, lessons leave

Share the lessons you learned, not thed stories or who who told you.

Curious, not blaming

We're looking at a system, not judging people.

JARGON BUSTER



Hear a word you don't know? Hold up your orange card. Anyone. Anytime. Even when it's the presenter or yourself!

Whoever used the jargon says it again in plain words.

Stand Up If…

ACTIVITY · 3 min

…you work or volunteer with people facing housing loss

…you have lived experience of homelessness or housing loss (only if you're comfortable)

…you've tried to help someone find housing and didn't know where to start

…you work for a city, the County, a funder, or a faith or community group

…you had heard of CES before today

…you believe Orange County can do better. Everyone up!



How to play

Stand up when a statement fits you. Look around and see who's here. Then sit back down.

Can't stand? Raise a hand.

Start with One Question

If you lost your housing tonight, what would you want to happen?

Take 30 seconds. Where would you go first? Who would you call? What would you need someone to say to you?

Hold that answer. We'll come back to it all day.

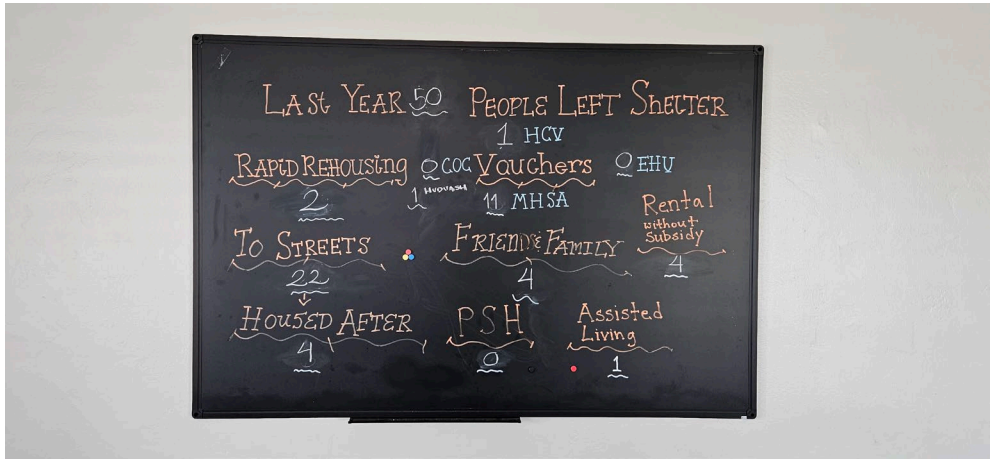


Meeting people where they are


Friendship Shelter


AURORA VISTA
APARTMENTS


1140
Family
CareCenter
HIS OC


Last Year 50 People Left Shelter
1 HCV
Rapid Rehousing
2
2 CoC
1 Housing
Vouchers
11 MHSA
2 EHV
Rental without Subsidy
4
To Streets
22
Friend & Family
4
Housed After
4
PSH
0
Assisted Living
1



Do not edit
How to change the design



One Word: How Should Help Feel?

ⓘ The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

slido

What Lived Experience Teaches Us

Nichole Gideon

Lived Experience Advisory Committee

OUR QUESTION

What should leaders understand about asking for help in a complex system?



The evaluation heard from 74 people with lived experience. Their voices shaped every finding you'll hear today.

PART 1

What Is CES?

Orange County’s shared front door for housing help



CES Can Be Orange County's Shared Front Door

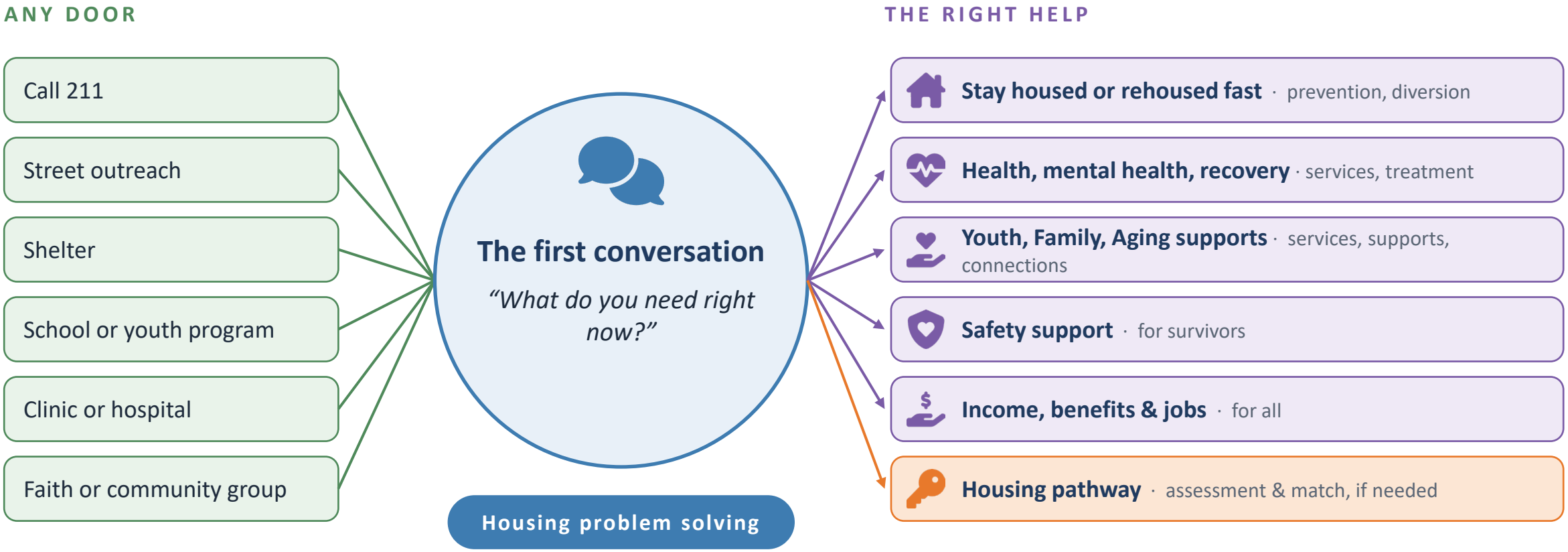
The Coordinated Entry System (CES) helps people in a housing crisis find a door, talk through what they need right now, and get connected to the right help. Sometimes that's housing. Often, it's something else first.

Think of an urgent care or emergency room: anyone can walk in, people are seen based on need, and each person is connected to the right care.

CES is not just a waitlist



Not One Door OR One Path:
Any Door, Then the Right Help



Start with the person's need. Connect people directly. The community queue is one path, not the only one.

Myth or Fact?

ACTIVITY · 5 min

1. “CES is just a waiting list.”
2. “CES can build new housing.”
3. “Anyone can be a door to help: a school, a clinic, a church.”
4. “Everyone who asks for help needs a housing assessment.”
5. “If you’re assessed, you’ll get housed.”

How to play



Thumbs up = FACT



Thumbs down = MYTH

We read each one. Everyone votes at once. Then we reveal the answer.

A CES Can Coordinate the Right Support—But Cannot Provide Every Service Itself

CES can

- Coordinate immediate, appropriate response
- Connect people to prevention or diversion and safe alternatives
- Link people to healthcare, aging, income, benefits, workforce, family, youth, Veteran, and other critical supports
- When necessary and there is capacity, use the CES Housing Needs Assessment and prioritize people experiencing homelessness for limited dedicated housing options

CES cannot alone

- Build housing
- Pay rent for everyone who needs it
- Provide healthcare, jobs, ongoing services, or benefits

Partners must **make direct, timely connections available across housing and non-housing supports.**

The goal is the right help now—not assessment or waitlist placement by default.

Myth or Fact? The Answers

MYTH	**“CES is just a waiting list.”**	It’s meant to connect people to the right help, which isn’t always a waitlist.
MYTH	**“CES can build new housing.”**	CES coordinates. Housing comes from cities, developers, funders, and partners.
FACT	**“Anyone can be a door to help: a school, a clinic, a church.”**	In a system that works well, any trusted door can start the process.
MYTH	**“Everyone who asks for help needs a housing assessment.”**	Start with what someone needs now. Assessment is for when housing is the right help.
MYTH	**“If you’re assessed, you’ll get housed.”**	Being assessed did not guarantee a housing connection. More on this soon.

Orange County's Governance and Operating Roles Shape How CES Works

CoC Board

Governance and policy

Office of Care Coordination (OCC)

CES Lead/Collaborative Applicant; operational implementation

CES Steering Committee

Performance, corrective action, and benchmark review

HMIS Lead, OC United Way

HMIS infrastructure, access, and data quality

Commission to Address Homelessness

Cross-system coordination with the County, cities, health, housing, and providers

HUD establishes required CES functions; Orange County makes local choices about governance, workflows, standards, and implementation.

New: As of September 1, 2026, PATH runs CES for individuals, families, and domestic violence survivors. The evaluation looked at the time before this change.

A Good System Keeps Five Promises People Can Recognize

Any door works:

a school, clinic, church, or outreach worker can start the process.

One person stays with you:

someone remains engaged and is **responsible** until the housing problem is solved.

Help matches your need:

assistance ranges from one-time help to long-term support *AND doesn't promise what it can't deliver.*

Partners share one picture:

people do not have to tell their story repeatedly or provide information that is not needed.

The system keeps learning:

leaders use data and feedback to fix problems.

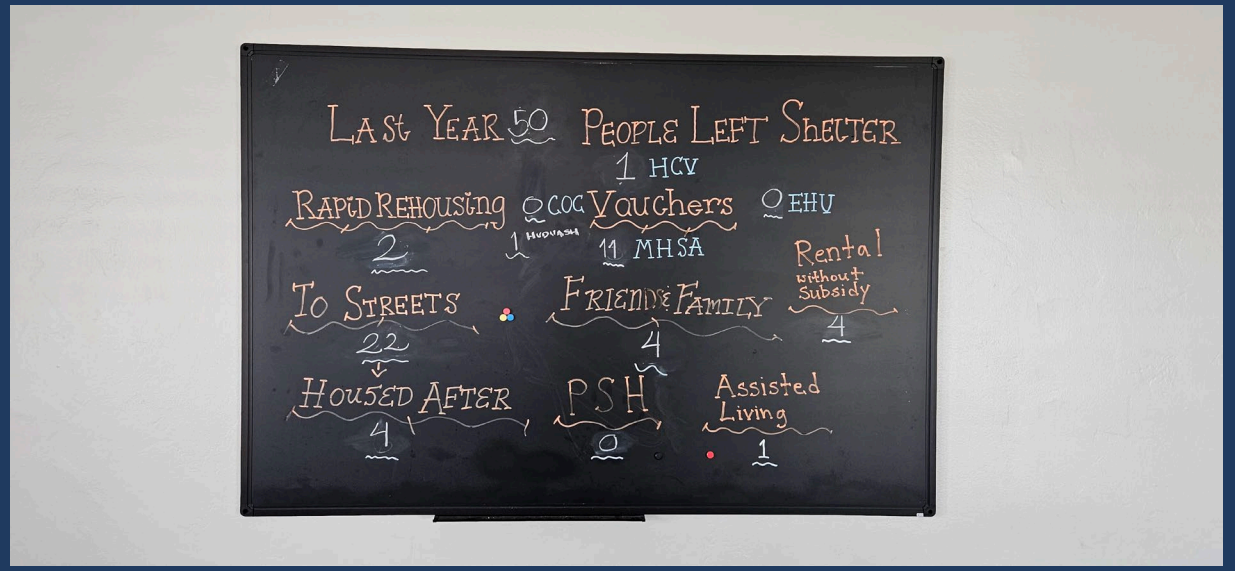
People in crisis are not placed on waiting lists but actively engaged and supported until the crisis over.

Keep these promises in mind. Next, we'll see how close Orange County is to keeping them.

PART 2

What Did the Evaluation Find?

Four households. Real experiences. Honest findings.



The Evaluation Combines Data, Policy Review, and Lived Experience

51
compliance items reviewed

15,913
unique heads of household

69
survey responses

74
people with lived experience participated in seven PLE focus groups

Administrative and HMIS data

Coverage, timeliness, flow, referrals, placement, utilization, returns, geography, and subgroup outcomes.

Policy and process review

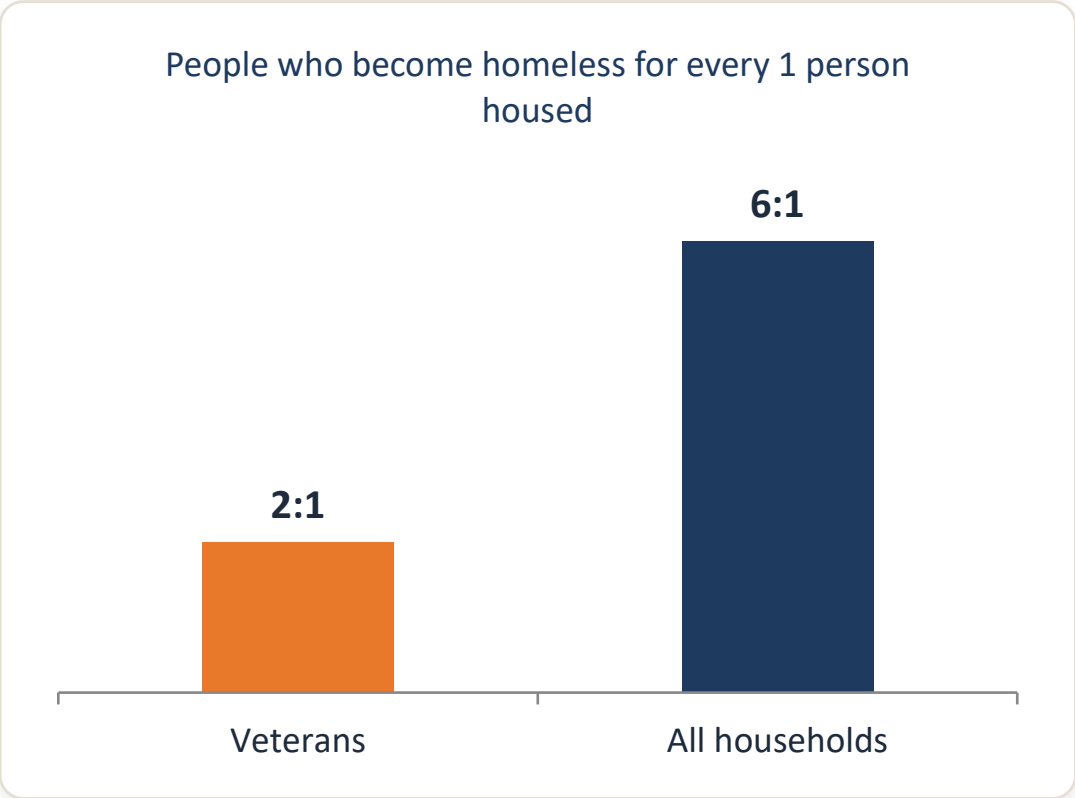
HUD requirements, OC CoC standards, forms, workflows, and implementation evidence.

Stakeholder experience

69 survey responses, 11 interviews, and 12 focus groups.

No single source tells the whole story; qualitative themes were identified bottom-up.

Start with a Bright Spot: Veterans Show It Can Work



In Orange County, about 2 Veterans become homeless for every 1 who is housed, compared with 6 to 1 for all households.

- **One shared list**
- **Weekly case meetings**
- **Clear goals**
- **Dedicated resources**

Also valued everywhere: responsive, consistent caseworkers.

"Whatever the county's doing with veterans, they're doing better than anyone else, as far as I can tell…" — **Housing developer**

Meet Four Households



Maria

and her two kids

Facing eviction

Right help: support to stay housed

"Even if you call 2-1-1, they give you a whole runaround…"



Jordan

19 years old

Leaving foster care, couch surfing

Right help: youth support and problem solving

"I'm couch surfing practically… it ain't enough. Just ain't enough."



Rosa

Domestic violence survivor

Fled her home for safety

Right help: safety and survivor housing

"You're starting from scratch. Just read my file."



Dennis

Single male, 62

Has chronic health conditions, long-term unhoused

Right help: health care and housing

"I've been going back time and time again every week… I get no answers."

Fictional names. Real experiences and real quotes from the evaluation's focus groups.

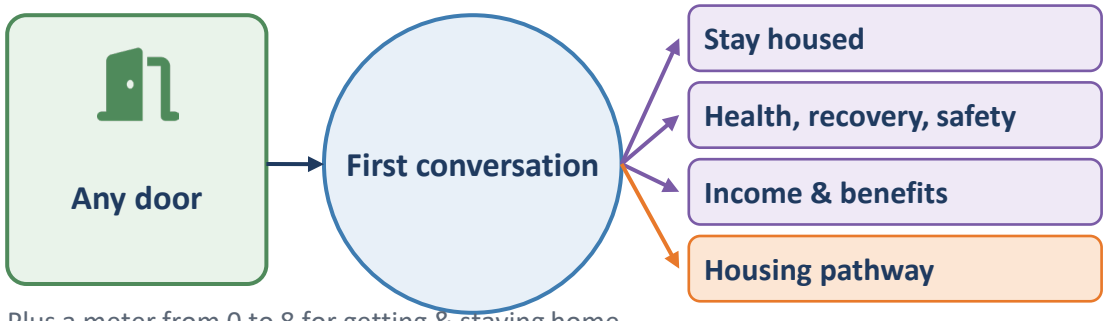
The Right Help Game

ACTIVITY · 20 min

How to play

1. Your table is one household. Read your card out loud, including its right help.
2. Put your token on ANY DOOR and your meter at 0.
3. Take turns drawing a Life Happens card. Move where it says and change your meter.
4. Reach 8 on the meter: you're connected and stable. Play for 10 minutes.

THE BOARD



Plus a meter from 0 to 8 for getting & staying home

LIFE HAPPENS CARDS (EXAMPLES)

No answer at 211 again. **Lose a turn.**

First question: what would help you stay housed? **Meter +3.**

Warm handoff to the right service. **Go to your right help. +2.**

Matched, but no one told you. **Meter −2.**

Game Debrief

ACTIVITY · 8 min



Where did your household get stuck?



What helped you move forward?



Which card could YOUR organization, or people like you, help change?



FLIP IT

Pick one setback card from your game. On a blank card, write what SHOULD happen instead. We'll collect these.

Guess the Number

ACTIVITY · 2 min

Out of every 100 people in shelter, outreach, or transitional housing, how many moved into housing through the CES housing pathway in one year?

1

About 50

2

About 25

3

About 10

4

About 1

Hold up 1, 2, 3, or 4 fingers. Everyone votes at once!

The Answer: About 1 in 100

100 people in shelter, outreach, or transitional housing



35 got a full housing assessment



3 were referred to a housing opening



About 1 moved in through this path

Why so few?

Three reasons, working together:

- **Not enough housing and services**
- **Too few first conversations about other ways to solve the crisis**
- **Delays and dead ends in the housing pathway**

No one in this room failed. This is a system finding.

Based on 15,913 households, Oct 2024–Sept 2025. Some people found housing in other ways. Of people who accepted a referral, about 88% moved in.

Any Door: *Finding Help Was Often Luck*

48%

of providers said people don't know how to reach CES

14%

of people who needed it got a first crisis screening (only 9% in South SPA)



PART 1 OF THE HUB

Any door

WHAT PEOPLE TOLD US

Many people found CES through friends, repeated tries, a crisis, or chance. Calls went to voicemail. Some were sent to access points that had closed.

"Even if you call 2-1-1, they give you a whole runaround…" — Family shelter participant



WHAT COULD HELP

- More doors, especially in South County
- Make schools, clinics, and faith groups real doors
- Check that every referral actually connects

The First Conversation: *Problem Solving Was Rare*

Rarely

did access points start with prevention or problem solving

35%

of people who qualified for housing got a full housing assessment



PART 2 OF THE HUB

The first conversation

WHAT PEOPLE TOLD US

Access points focus mostly on getting people into CES, so the first talk is seldom about solving the crisis. People didn't know why questions were asked or what papers they'd need, and had to retell their story.

"It's frustrating… you're starting from scratch. Just read my file." — Shelter participant

WHAT WE OBSERVED

CES Access Points are not trained on housing-focused problem-solving as part of CES.



WHAT COULD HELP

- More training, tools, standards
- Start every first conversation with housing problem solving
- Only ask what's needed, when it's needed
- Simpler paperwork; tell your story once

The Right Help: *Links Beyond Housing Were Thin*

21%

of survey respondents said agencies coordinate well enough

36%

of By-Name List spots expired after people lost contact and their assessment was not updated

PART 3 OF THE HUB

The right help

WHAT PEOPLE TOLD US

CES lacks steady links to health care, benefits, and other supports, so existing help isn't always reachable. Money to prevent homelessness is scattered across programs. For housing, the list leans on time homeless, not need.

"I've been going back time and time again every week… I get no answers." — Focus group participant

Same-Day Solutions Fairs are an important way to connect people.



WHAT COULD HELP

- Connect health, benefits, and jobs directly to CES
- Money help to stay housed, coordinated in one place
- For housing: weigh need and safety, and explain status

Getting & Staying Home: *A Match Is Not a Home*

40.5%

of housing matches became a confirmed move-in

22%

of people returned to homelessness system-wide

PART 4 OF THE HUB

Getting & staying home

WHAT PEOPLE TOLD US

One person waited seven months for one document to be uploaded after a match. Eligibility rules surfaced late. No one person owned the next steps. Match to move-in for rapid rehousing took 77 days (goal: 44).

A housing opening can sit empty while a household stays homeless.

WHAT COULD HELP

- One responsible person and a warm handoff through move-in
- Get documents ready before a match
- Support to stay housed after move-in

Dignity and Trust Are Part of the Job, Not Extras

What hurt

- Feeling judged or dismissed because of homelessness, substance use, or mental health
- Feeling blamed, so people stopped asking questions
- No safe, anonymous way to raise a concern, with no set timelines and no independent review
- Some people reported fear of retaliation after complaining (reported, not proven)

What helped



A caseworker who calls back and stays



Clear, respectful explanations of each step



One person who stays accountable through each handoff

How people are treated is part of how the system works.

Is It Fair for Everyone?

No consistent system-wide racial or ethnic gap was found. But some groups waited much longer.

147 days
to housing

South SPA

142 days
to housing

Domestic violence survivors

109 days
to housing

Black / African American participants

94 days
average for everyone

Also: young adults were less likely to get on the priority list, and people with disabilities waited longer for a referral. South SPA had the fewest places to get help.

These are signals to look into, not final proof of unfair treatment. Some groups were too small to measure reliably.

Who Haven’t We Heard From Yet?

ACTIVITY · 6 min

The evaluation did not directly reach these groups through focus groups:

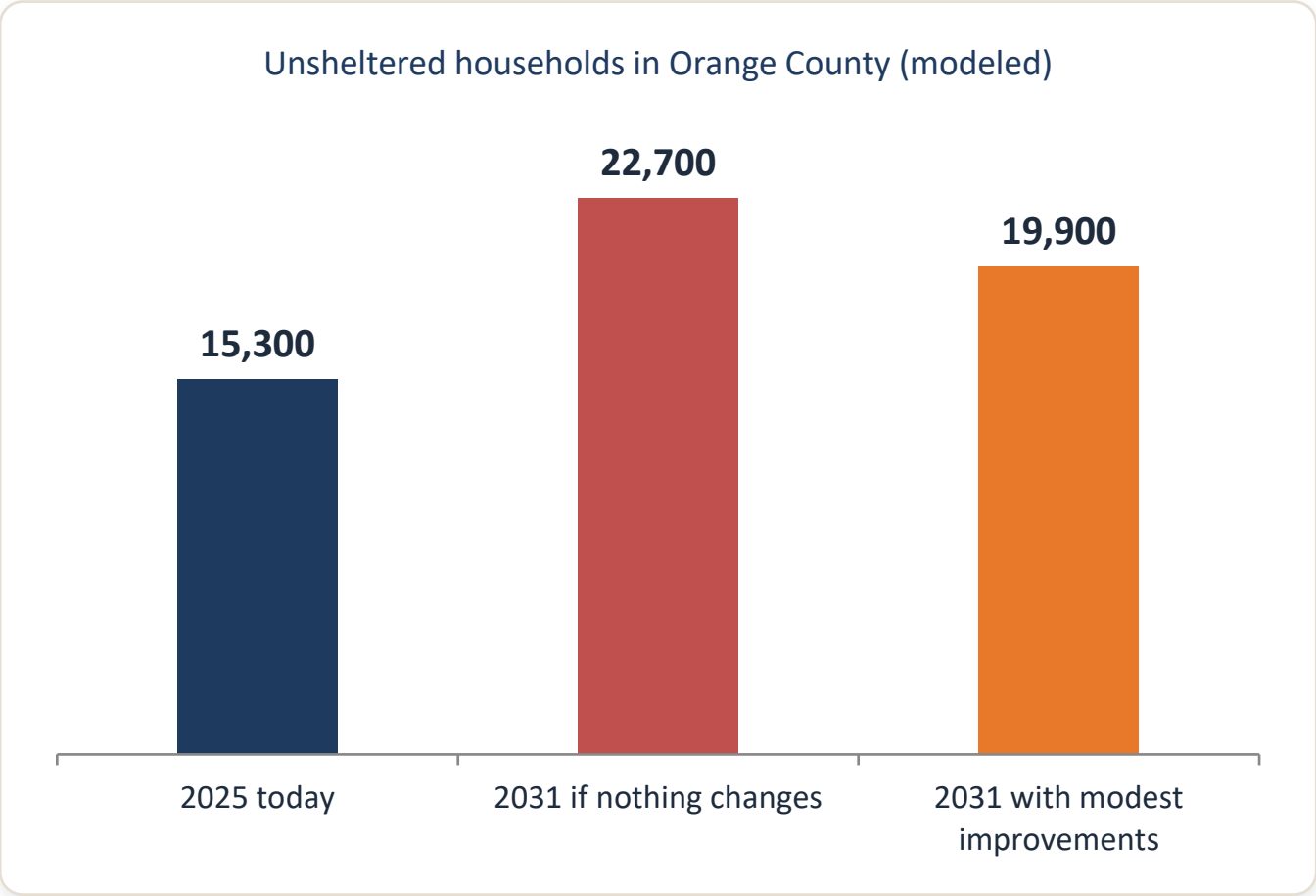
- Older adults and seniors
- People leaving jail or prison
- LGBTQ+ and gender-diverse people
- Households with limited English
- People at risk of losing housing

Talk at your table

1. Who else is missing from this conversation?
2. Where do they already gather, and who do they trust?
3. Who in this room could help us reach them?

Write each idea on a sticky note and put it on the “Who’s Missing?” poster on your way to the break.

A Better CES Can’t Make Up for Too Few Homes



2,800

fewer households outside in 2031 if modest improvements are made

Shelter beds

We are short about 9,300 shelter beds today. Without action, that gap could grow to about 13,900 by 2031.

An illustrative model, not a prediction. It shows direction and size, not a forecast.

Break Time: Where Do You Help?

ACTIVITY · 15 min

On the wall

Opening doors

211, outreach, schools, clinics, food pantries, faith groups

Connecting to help

problem solving, health care, benefits, recovery, safety, assessment

Housed & stable

housing, rent help, support to stay housed

1. Find the big “Where do you help?” wall.
2. Place your dot where you help people today.
3. Add a sticky note: “What I could do here…”
4. Drop a question card in the Questions box.

Dot colors

- GREEN: I open doors
- YELLOW: I connect people to help
- BLUE: I help people get or stay housed
- RED: I advocate for people and accountability

“What I could do here…”

PART 3

Shaping What Comes Next

The evaluation is a starting point. You are part of what happens next.



Your Questions, Answered

ACTIVITY · 10 min



Lianna, Tanesha, Tom

Evaluation team, Element Consulting Group



Zulima

Office of Care Coordination



Nichole

Lived Experience Advisory Committee

No question is too basic. If you wondered it, someone else did too.

How it works

1. We read question cards from the break, grouped by theme.
2. Panelists answer in plain words. Hold up JARGON! anytime.
3. Not answered today? It goes in the follow-up summary.

A Stronger CES Depends on System Improvements, Shared Resources, and Clear Governance

1

Fix/improve the system:

make existing CES policies and practices work fairly, consistently, and efficiently.

5 of 6 areas fell short of the 75% goal for following required practices.

2

Align resources:

better connect housing, services, prevention, and mainstream supports.

Only 21% of survey respondents said agencies work together well enough.

3

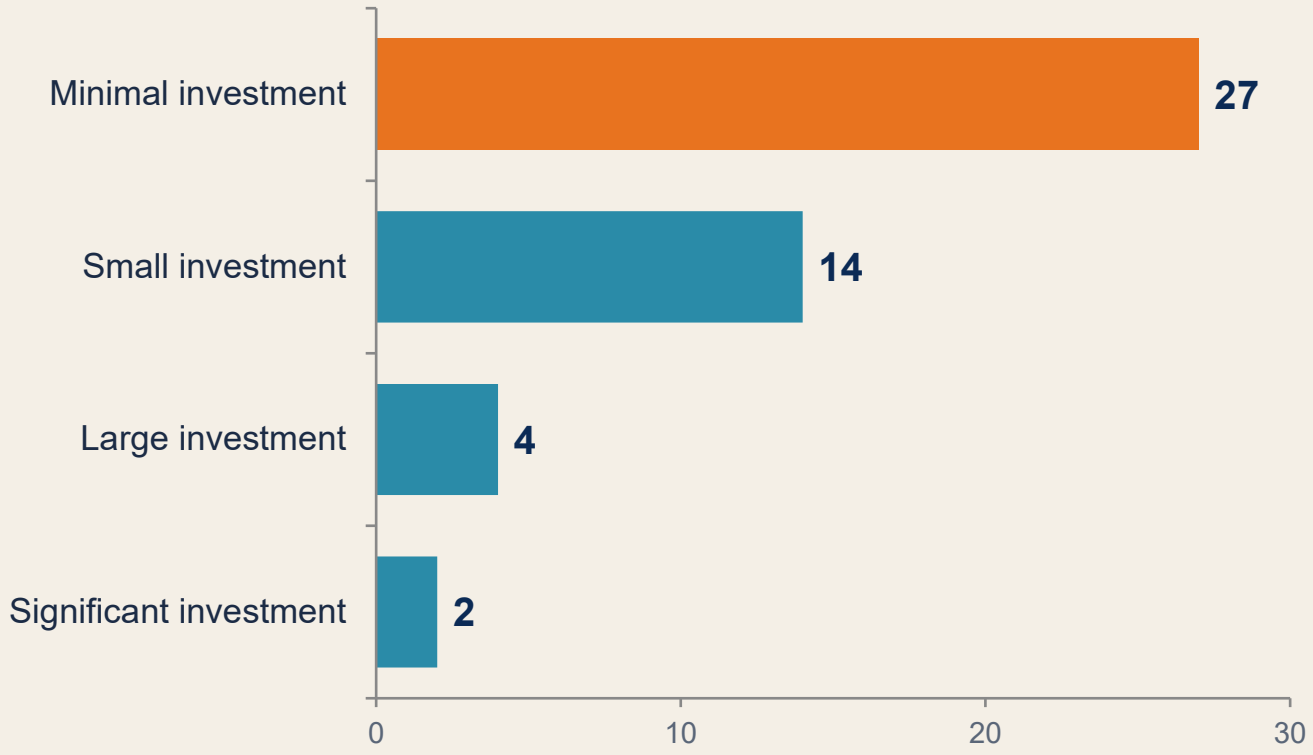
Address governance:

clarify participation, support, and accountability across CoC members and cross-sector partners.

The evaluation calls for clear roles and regular review of progress.

The three priorities move forward together. Progress on only one of these won't be enough.

Most Recommendations Start with Limited Investment



27 of 47

recommendations and innovation opportunities are rated minimal investment.

38 recommendations

9 innovation ideas

Investment ratings describe relative effort and potential cost.

8 urgent first steps - Fixing safety and fairness problems, like correcting priority-list rules, reviewing assessments for survivors and youth, and investigating reported retaliation. All 8 are low cost.

Begin with Urgent Compliance, Participant-Safety, and System-Integrity Actions

REC-4: Document VA SSVF participation terms.

REC-12: Remove disability-type disclosure and prohibited documentation requirements.

REC-14/15: Review HNA adequacy for DV survivors, transition-age youth, and all populations.

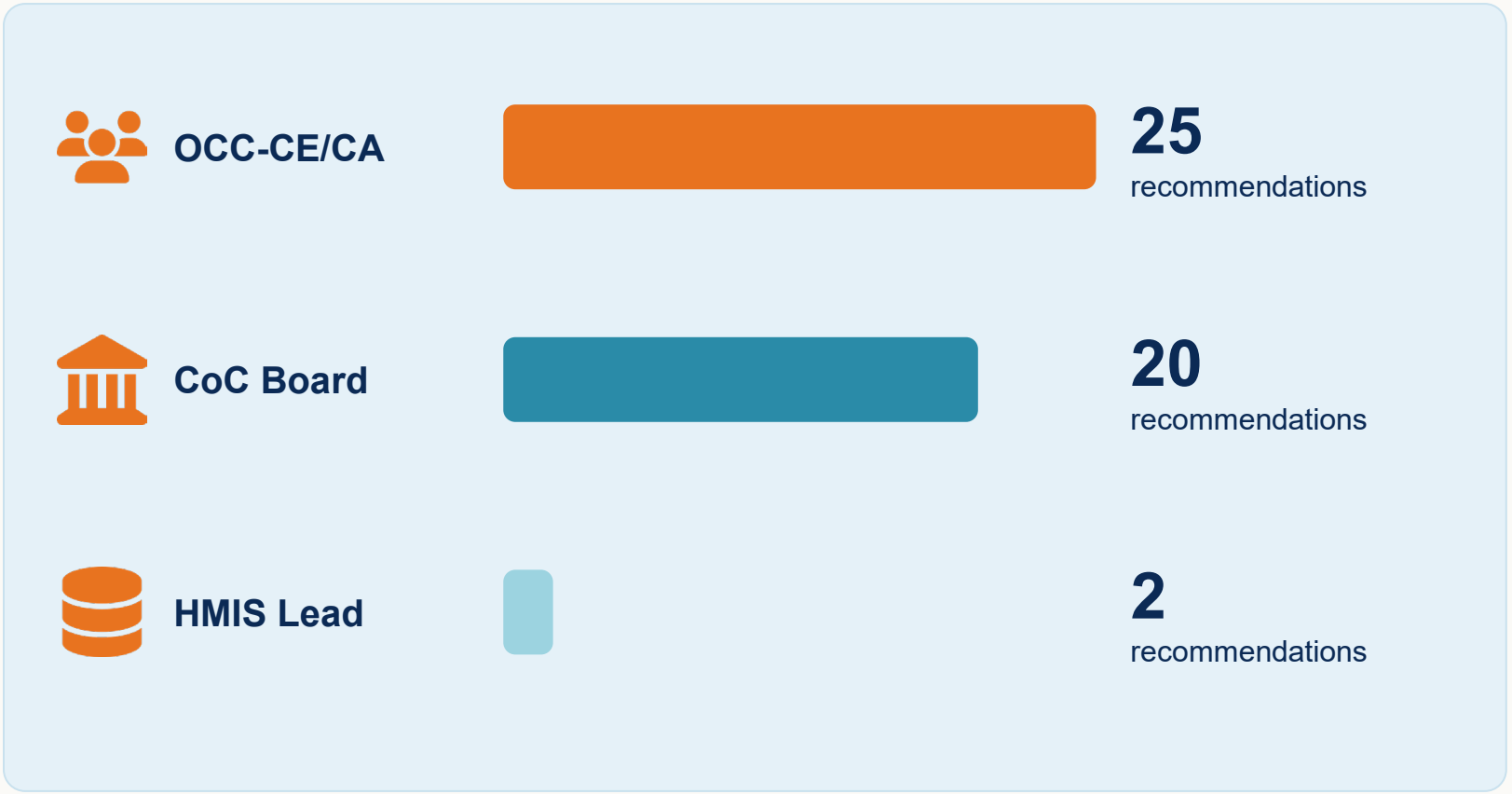
REC-18: Correct PSH prioritization language.

REC-20: Remove length of homelessness from Emergency Shelter prioritization.

REC-23/26: Investigate retaliation and provider screen-out practices.

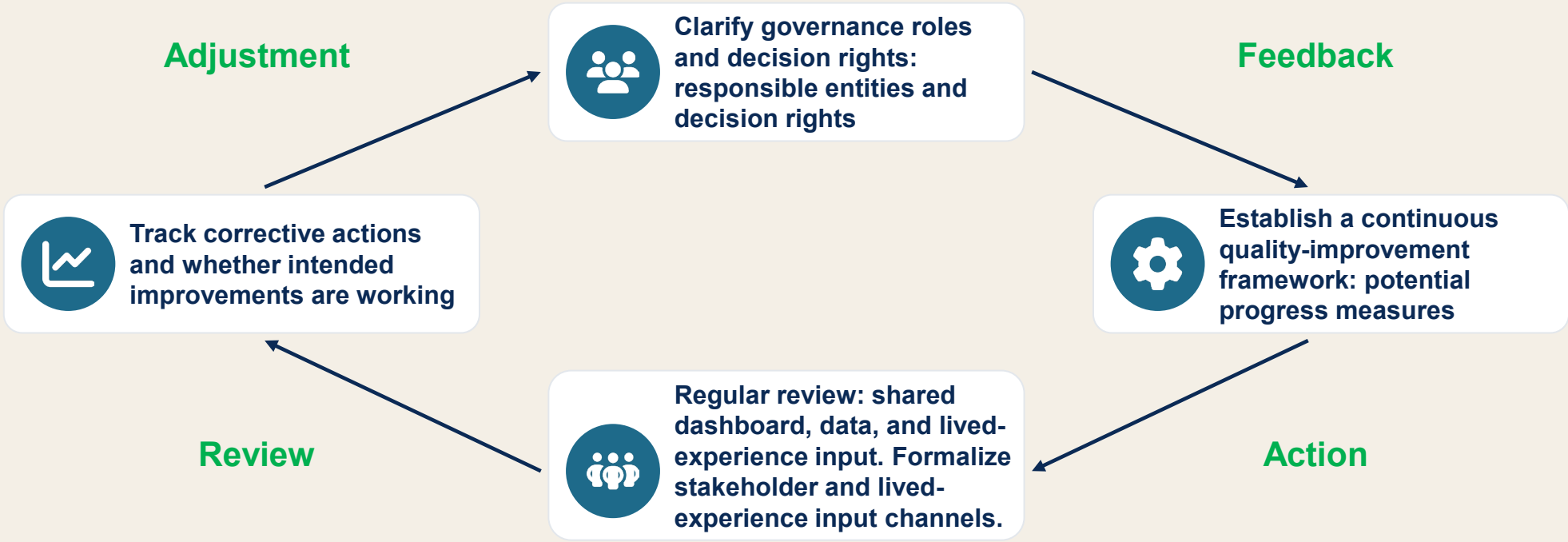
These actions address participant safety, policy clarity, and system compliance and fidelity. All are rated with a minimal investment.

Recommendations Touch Operations, Governance, and Data



Proposed areas of responsibility should be used as a lens for reflection—not as implementation assignments.

Governance and Quality Improvement Create the Foundation for Accountable Action



Immediate corrective actions: Begin urgent compliance, participant-safety, and system-integrity work while longer-term changes proceed.

- ✓ Recommendations identify opportunities for future consideration.
- ✓ Progress should be reviewed using quantitative and qualitative information.

Ideas People Would Feel First

Only ask what's needed, when it's needed

Shorter, step-by-step assessments

- The first conversation

Help that fits your culture and language

Navigators who reflect the community

- Any door

A safe, independent way to raise concerns

Without fear of losing your place

- The right help

Money help that comes earlier

Rent, deposits, and move-in costs in one place

- The right help

One shared, real-time picture

So partners see openings and waits as they happen

- Getting & staying home

Health, benefits, and jobs connected to CES

So existing help is easy to reach

- The right help

Which one would the people you know feel first? Keep it in mind for the next activity.

Four Corners: Pick Your Spot

ACTIVITY · 15 min



CORNER 1

Any door



CORNER 2

The first conversation



CORNER 3

The right help



CORNER 4

Getting & staying home

Go to the corner for the part you most want to see change.

In your corner, talk about:

1. Why did you pick this corner?
2. If this part worked well, what would someone notice?
3. Where do you, or your group, see yourself helping?

Before you leave your corner: put a dot on the idea on your poster that people would feel first.

What Happens with What You Shared Today



Today

We collect everything: Flip It cards, dots, sticky notes, corner notes, and postcards.



Next

We share a summary of what we heard back with you.



Then

Community input goes to CES leaders and the CoC as they decide next steps.



Ongoing

More ways to stay involved, including future sessions and lived-experience voices.

Your input doesn’t end today. It becomes part of how Orange County shapes what comes next.

For More Information

Read the Community Summary

Short, plain-language version of the evaluation.

Explore the full evaluation

Evaluation landing page and CoC Summary.

Lend your lived experience

Lived Experience Advisory Committee.

Questions or ideas?

ONE LAST TIME

Stand Up, Stay Up

1. Stand up if you learned something new today.
2. Stay standing if you'll share it with one person this week.
3. Stay standing if you want to be part of what comes next.

Look around. This is the team.

Thank You

A clearer path home is shared work. Thank you for being part of it.

