

Best Single Source Plus

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

WHO WE ARE

The Best Single Source Plus (BSS Plus) Program provides comprehensive case management and basic needs (rent, mortgage, utility assistance and housing supports) services to eligible individuals and families in the Travis Co. and Austin area. The program's primary purpose is establishing housing stability, preventing, and ending homelessness. BSS Plus is a collaboration among twelve of the area's leading nonprofit service providers, trading competition for collaboration to benefit those most in need. Agencies participating in BSS Plus are:

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| 1. AIDS Services of Austin | 8. Front Steps |
| 2. Any Baby Can | 9. Goodwill Industries of Central Texas |
| 3. The Arc of the Capital Area | 10. Meals on Wheels and More |
| 4. Caritas of Austin | 11. SafePlace |
| 5. Catholic Charities of Central Texas | 12. The Wright House Wellness Center |
| 6. Family Eldercare | |
| 7. Foundation for the Homeless | |

ELIGIBILITY

- Clients must be living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. Confirmation of violence victimization exempts clients from this eligibility criterion.
- Clients must be experiencing a financial crisis that puts their housing at-risk, e.g. job loss, reduced work hours, medical crisis, etc., or experiencing short-term homelessness.
- Clients must be at a point where up to 12 months of case management and limited financial assistance will be sufficient to stabilize their housing and to help them build self-sufficiency skills. Limited exceptions to this criterion may be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Clients must be Austin/Travis County residents.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES:

- Clients must meet the eligibility criteria of the individual agency that they are applying to in addition to that of the BSS Plus Screening & Assessment.
- Clients who have previously been enrolled in the Best Single Source Program (BSS) will not be eligible for application to the BSS Plus Program for 12 months from their BSS exit date.¹
- Clients can only be enrolled in BSS Plus with one agency at any given time and, once enrolled in BSS Plus, they cannot be reenrolled in BSS Plus (even with another agency) until 12 months after their exit date.

PROGRAM COORDINATION

Caritas of Austin is the fiscal and administrative agent for BSS Plus and houses a dedicated Program Coordinator for the project. The Coordinator has been instrumental in helping each of the participating agencies implement and become proficient with the database, ensures a common standard of practice, ensures consistency across agencies, and will be responsible for evaluation of the project. Direct client assistance funds will also be at Caritas—one “pot” of money that all participating agencies can access if the client meets the eligibility criteria set forth by the collaboration.

Leaders from each agency participate in a monthly BSS Plus Collaborative Partners meetings to oversee the program and set policies, monitor budget, project progress and results. There is also a BSS Plus Program Managers meeting that has representation from direct service and case managers at each participating agency meets monthly to establish procedures and share information. This work group is responsible for developing and revising intake, confidentiality and information sharing processes as well as the common format for data input and reporting. This workgroup is the “nuts and bolts” of the collaboration – staffing cases, identifying problems, and learning each other so that best options can be developed for clients.

BSS Plus is an example of a project that meets the truest standards of model collaboration – a common vision, shared decision making at multiple levels, agreed upon and coordinated service delivery, and shared resources (including each agency allocating many of its own resources away from other services and into this model.)

Case managers at each of the partner agencies will receive periodic comprehensive training on all aspects of service provision and administration of the BSS Plus program. Clients will be assessed using a common tool that identifies client’s homeless or housing status, housing barriers, levels of need, and priority for service. Items that are examined will include a client’s income-to-housing cost ratio, clients’ ability to garner the necessary income to support and stabilize in housing within a set time frame, and the identification of assets and barriers as they relate to housing stability.

All BSS Plus agencies have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Caritas of Austin outlining the responsibilities and commitment of each organization as a partner in the Best Single Source Plus program. The MOU establishes guidelines and procedures for each partner agency to sustain and enhance their collaboration to assist families as they move toward self-sufficiency. Regular meetings at all levels of program implementation will be conducted to monitor and manage effectiveness, program evaluation results, emerging trends, trouble-shooting and comprehensive case manager training.

PROGRAM OUTCOME GOALS

OUTCOME # 1
Unduplicated households that exited the program and achieved housing stability Goal = 80%
OUTCOME # 2
Unduplicated households served that achieved housing stability and remained in stable housing for six months after exit. Goal = 80%

System for collecting and reporting program data:

The web-based Service Point data collection and management system will be used by participating agencies for the following purposes: 1) intake; 2) client demographics; 3) evaluation results; and 4) data reporting. Each of the participating Best Single Source Plus agencies will enter information on their respective clients into Service Point. Caritas’ Best Single Source Plus Program Coordinator will have access to information from each agency. Service Point client files are reviewed by the Program Coordinator whenever a new client is approved for the program and/or financial assistance is being requested. These reviews identify inconsistencies in reporting or missed data, ensuring high quality of consistency in data entry and reporting. Monthly data quality and summary reports will be sent to participating agencies providing information on the clients seen and the financial assistance distributed.

FUNDING SOURCES

The City of Austin
Travis County Health and Human Services
Applied Materials