

## **BACKGROUNDER: CAEH's Work with Different Common Assessment Tools**

Common assessment tools are critical to our work in ending homelessness. We recommend communities use whichever tool works best for them, based on local needs and priorities, as well as their approach to coordinated access. We can help you review the tools that are out there, and we can help connect you with the training and expertise you need to implement the tool you choose, but ultimately the choice is yours on which tool best fits your community needs.

In this backgrounder, we outline our connections to the various common assessment tools.

### **National Conference on Ending Homelessness**

The National Conference on Ending Homelessness has offered and will continue to include opportunities for information about various assessment tools to be shared.

### **20,000 Homes Campaign**

The CAEH provides the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) to communities participating in the 20,000 Homes Campaign (20KHomes) as a screening assessment for communities completing Registry Weeks. The VI-SPDAT tool is well suited to use in the campaign as it:

- is easy to access (the tools and training are available free on-line);
- is a short survey that only requires self-reported yes/no and one-word answers;
- can be administered by volunteers with minimal training for a Registry Week;
- offers an acuity score that can be used to assist with matching and prioritization to resources for immediate housing efforts following a Registry Week;
- has versions for adults, youth and families;
- was co-developed by our partners at Community Solutions for use on the 100,000 Homes Campaign and Built for Zero initiative; and
- has been widely used, tested and updated over time.

However, **communities are not required to use the VI-SPDAT** and 20KHomes will work with and support communities to use whichever tool they have chosen in their community. Penticton, BC is a good example as they use the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) and are a Campaign community that has conducted two Registry Weeks by completing forms to add individuals to the BC Housing Registry who then follow-up to have trained staff in community complete the VAT.

The following 20KHomes documents reference common assessment tools:

- The [By-Name List Scorecard Guide](#) references common assessment tools in Question #5: “What percentage of providers serving people experiencing homelessness (who are not street outreach) (e.g., shelters, housing resource centres, transitional housing) report data to your By-Name List using a common assessment tool?”. This document explicitly encourages community to identify the tool(s) that best meet their needs.
- In the [10 Steps to Develop and Use a By-Name List](#), Step #3 speaks to the selection of tools (common assessment and By-Name List data system) and again encourages communities to select a tool(s) that best meet their needs.
- The [Coordinated Access System Scorecard](#) Question #11 asks, “Does your Coordinated Access System use a common assessment tool and process, including questions and scoring criteria”? It does not suggest that any particular tool be used.

### **CAEH Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTA)**

The TTA can help you review the tools that are out there, and we can help connect you with the training and expertise you need to implement the tool you choose.

We have arranged partnerships with BC Housing and OrgCode to ensure that communities have affordable access to the VAT and SPDAT suite of tools. The TTA will not recommend one tool over another but we will provide communities information about the differences in the tools, how they work, and how other communities have used them in their systems of care. Communities may also be connected to the creators of the tools for additional insight. Then communities can make their own choice.

When communities are seeking training on tools, the CAEH TTA can assist in making that training possible.

**SPDAT/VI-SPDAT Training:** Communities and organizations have two options for accessing training for the SPDAT delivered by OrgCode. The first is by contacting Org Code directly. The second is through the TTA’s partnership with OrgCode to offer SPDAT training as an option to communities that have mandated Housing First targets through HPS funding as a part of their allotted complimentary training days. The TTA can broker that training to OrgCode who would then deliver the training covered through our HPS funding.

**VAT Training:** There are also two ways to access VAT Training in Canada. For communities in British Columbia, contact BC Housing Directly as they continue to manage and provide VAT training across BC. Will Valenciano is the primary contact and can be reached at [wvalenci@bchousing.org](mailto:wvalenci@bchousing.org). For all other provinces, VAT training must be accessed through the CAEH TTA. After BC Housing completed their initial training regimen outlined earlier in this document, they identified a lack of capacity to continue offering training across Canada. As a result, BC Housing entered a partnership with the CAEH TTA to take on the organization and overseeing of additional VAT training based on requests from communities outside of BC. The CAEH TTA does not conduct the training (directly or through its training faculty) but receives

training requests and then facilitates the training assignment with existing VAT trainers from across the country. Like the SPDAT training, VAT training is also available as a customized training option for CE's with mandated Housing First targets through their complimentary training time. Outside of that, the training can be accessed on an affordable fee-for-service by existing VAT trainers through the TTA.

### **Youth Assessment and Prioritization (YAP) Tool**

The YAP tool was developed and is owned by CAEH Director of Training, Wally Czech through his company WalRhon Psychological and Assessment Services. WalRhon works with A Way Home Canada to provide information about the YAP tool. Through his company, and on his own time, Wally has been providing training to communities participating in the Making the Shift project and others who are using the tool. The CAEH has been providing [Housing First for Youth](#) Training and Technical Assistance for the Making the Shift project. Wally has been participating in that training in his CAEH capacity.

The CAEH has no preference on common assessment tools and as with every other tool, the CAEH does not and will not favour or promote the use of the YAP. The CAEH does not provide training on the YAP tool nor do we have an existing contract with WalRhon Psychological and Assessment Services to make YAP training available.

As Director of Training, Wally is required to provide unbiased and factual information on all common assessment tools to communities seeking information. Wally is specifically prohibited from promoting the YAP or soliciting training for the YAP tool through his employment with the CAEH. The CAEH will provide information on the YAP on the same basis as we do with every other tool.

If communities seek training on the tool through Wally's company, WalRhon Psychological and Assessment Services, those contracting the training will be asked to sign a Conflict Disclosure document acknowledging they understand the CAEH's neutrality on tools, that they have been given unbiased information on their options for common assessment tools and disclosing Wally's relationship with the YAP and the CAEH. Wally would only offer any such training during his time off from CAEH employment.