



March 5, 2015

Dear Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing:

ShelterCare consolidated our individual applications for each program offering housing and services into a single application three years ago. We made the change for several reasons: first, we are serving people who are fragile and easily daunted by paperwork. Multiple applications posed one more barrier to overcome in seeking appropriate services. Second, people seeking services do not necessarily know the array of options available, and an application for the wrong program would result in an even longer time on the wait list.

The consolidated form helps our clients overcome both of these barriers. It replaces over 10 multi-page applications with a single two-page form that seeks basic information about their mental health diagnosis and insurance status. It is not nearly as challenging to complete and only needs to be completed once -- rather than submitting a separate application for each program. The application also offers the full list of programs which both gives the applicant a better understanding of the options and a higher likelihood of requesting the program that is the best fit. Once his or her name rises to the top of the list, the applicant can confer with the ShelterCare screener to update and clarify or redirect the application to the appropriate services.

In sum, the consolidated application reduces stress for the applicant, increases the chances of directing the client to the appropriate program in a more timely manner, and also streamlines our assessment and intake process.

It is important to note that while we were able to make this change for our internal purposes, there continue to be redundancies across agencies: applicants for our housing programs will also have to complete a separate HUD application in order to be eligible for our programs that benefit from HUD funding, for example.

Susan Ban
Executive Director