

Evaluation of the Homelessness Prevention Call Center

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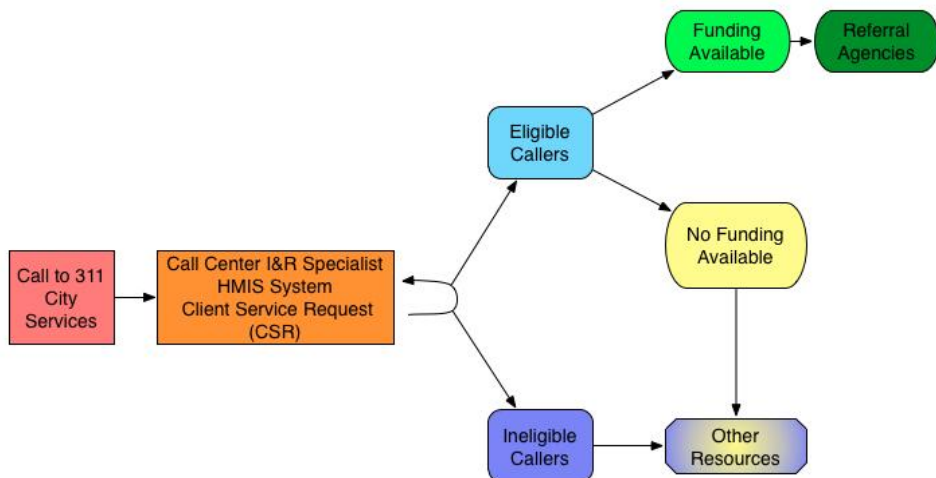
Overall Research Focus

- How do callers experience and move through the Homelessness Prevention Call Center (“HPCC” or “Call Center”) system?
- How does the centralized Call Center system work?
- How was the Call Center system impacted by the changed policies and increased availability of homeless prevention funds due to stimulus (HPRP) funds?

Methodology

- 100 test calls to 311 City Services and HPCC
- 357 phone surveys with sample of “eligible” HPCC callers
 - At least 7 days after their call to HPCC
 - In two waves (pre and post infusion of stimulus funding)
- Online surveys with 37 (79%) referral agencies
- Two focus groups with HPCC I&R Specialists
- Six interviews with HPCC administrative staff and stakeholders
- Review of HPCC administrative data

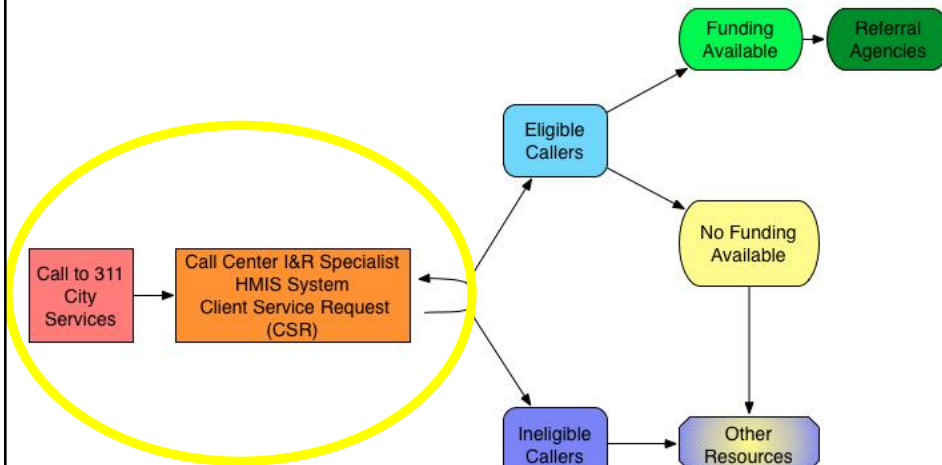
HPCC Referral Process



Who Were the Callers to HPCC?

Table 1	Sample (%)	Population (%)
Race & Ethnicity		
Black/African American	87.1	83.9
White	1.7	5.9
Hispanic/Latino	8.4	9.4
Asian	0.6	0.4
Native-American/Alaska-Native	0.3	0.4
Multi-racial/ Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander/ Other	2.0	0.1
Gender		
Male	17.2	20.9
Female	82.8	79.0
Transgender	-	0.1
Primary Language		
English	98.4	98.3
Spanish	1.6	1.5
Other	-	0.2
Veteran Status		
Veteran	3.7	3.3
Non-Veteran	96.3	96.7

HPCC Referral Process: Accessing the System



Accessing the Homeless Prevention Call Center

- Callers were able to access the centralized referral system within a manageable wait time.
 - Average cumulative time to connect to a HPCC operator was 5 minutes. This includes both the time for 311 and HPCC. (Longer on Mondays – 9 minutes.)
 - Majority of time was wait time on the 311-end.
 - Wait time to talk to 311 operator was 2.8 minutes (median). (Longer on Mondays - 6 minutes.)
 - Only 0.7 minutes on HPCC-end.

311 Portal--Challenges

- HPCC records show small error rate of 2.5%.
- Problems (44%) found by test callers.
 - 10% were misdirected (e.g. should have been directed to CEDA, HOPI, etc.).
 - 29% were told to call back rather than the 311 operator taking a Client Service Request (CSR) during weekends or evenings.
 - Sometimes the 311 operators were unclear on HPCC hours when telling clients to call back.
 - 5% were disconnected or dropped calls.

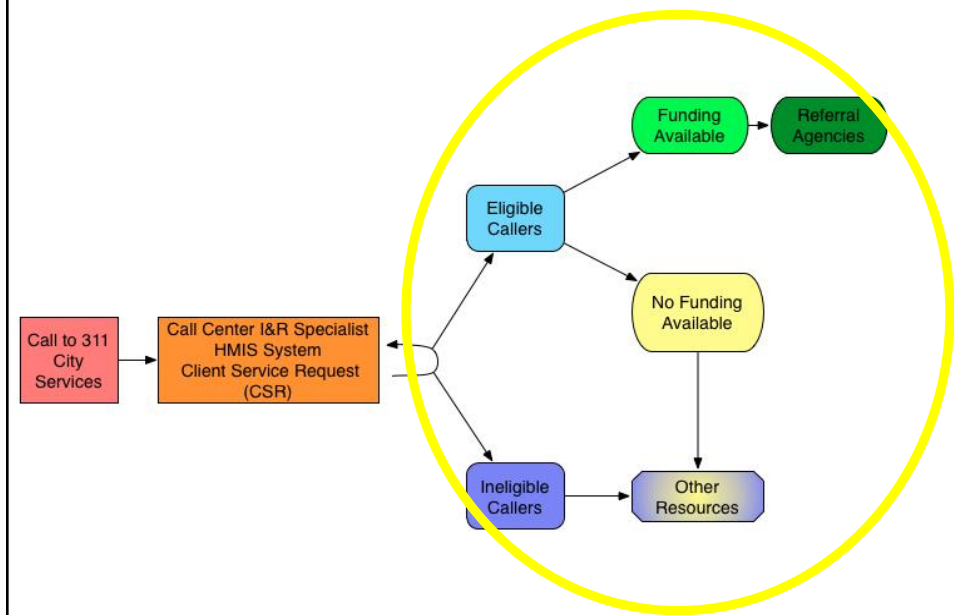
311 Portal--Challenges

- Challenges encountered during Spanish-language test calls
 - English calls were two and half times as likely to be appropriately transferred/connected as Spanish calls.
 - Interpreter at 311 often delayed in coming on the line.
 - A few operators were rude and kept asking questions in English.

311 Portal--On the Whole Positive

- Overall assessment by test callers
 - With very few exceptions, the operators were very polite and respectful.
 - The “on script” process sometimes became mechanical.
- Sample of HPCC callers’ rating of 311
 - 71% rated interaction city service system as “excellent” or “good.”

HPCC Referral Process: Outcomes of the System

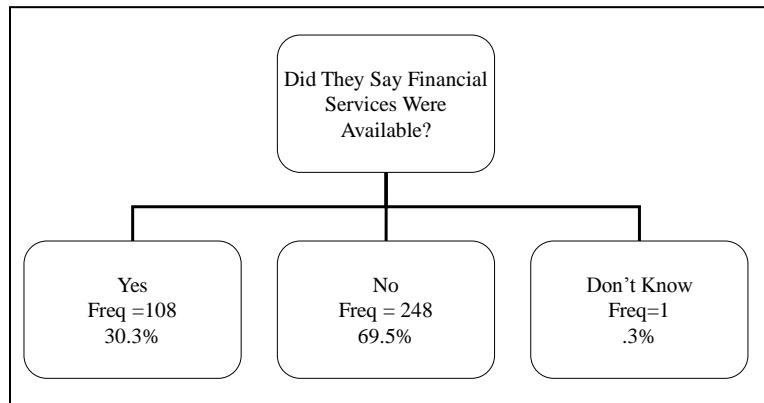


Ineligible Call Requests

- A large percentage of calls included requests that were deemed ineligible.
 - Only 1 in 5 requests was deemed eligible by HPCC.
 - Reasons for ineligibility included:
 - “Non-eligible crisis”—(41%)
 - “Self sufficiency”—(37%)
 - “No imminent risk of homelessness”—(11%)
 - “A need beyond resource”—(9%)
- 57% were given/accepted information for other resources.

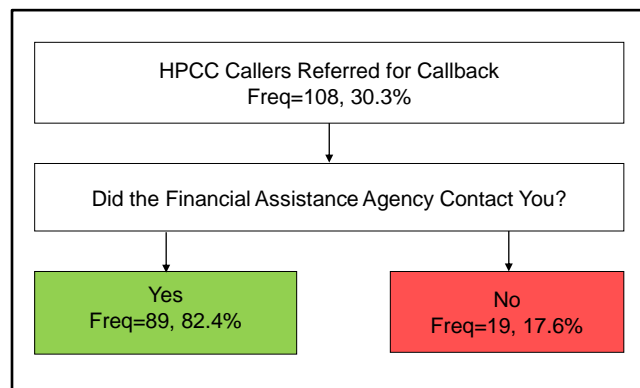
What Happened to Eligible Callers Who We Tracked?

Figure 1. (N=357)



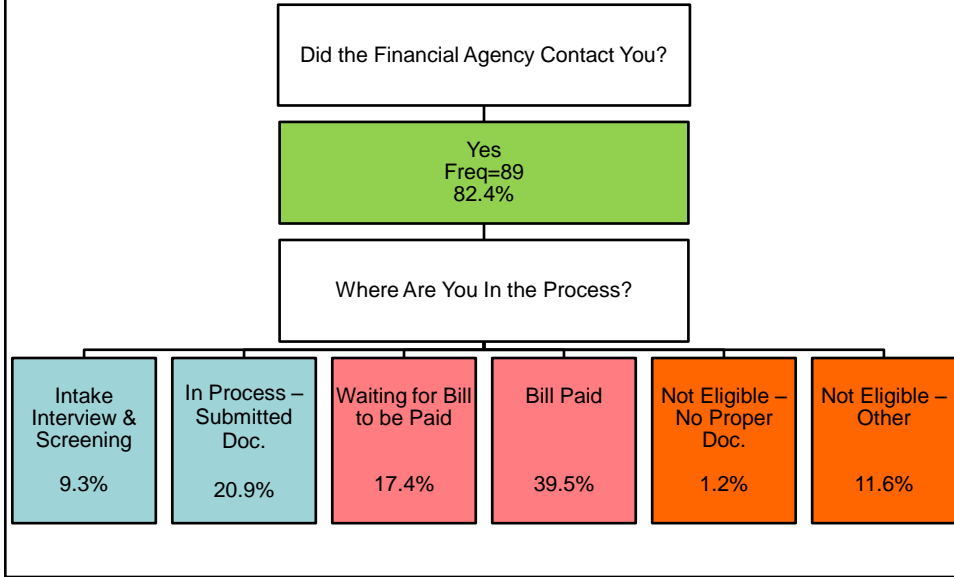
What Happened to Eligible Callers For Which There Was Funding?

Figure 2.



What Happened to Eligible Callers Who Were Told Funding Was Available and Were Contacted by a Referral Agency?

Figure 3.



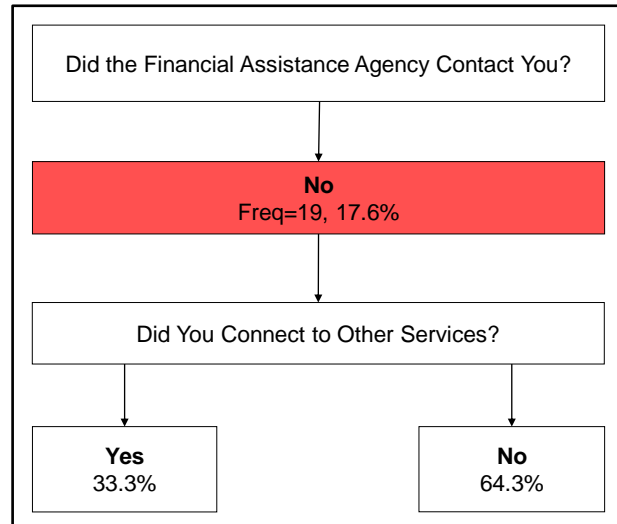
Reasons HPCC-Referred Callers were Ineligible for Financial Assistance, based on Referral Agency Feedback

Table 2. (N=37)

	Percent of Referral Agencies Who Had Type of Ineligible Case	Average Proportion of Ineligible Referrals
No Documentation	85.0%	40.0%
Story Changed	60.0%	15.2%
Eligibility	60.0%	26.9%
Already Served	35.0%	6.3%
Incorrect Assessment	40.0%	19.0%
Other	10.5%	18.0%

What Happened to Eligible Callers Who Were Told Funding Was Available, But Never Received a Callback?

Figure 4



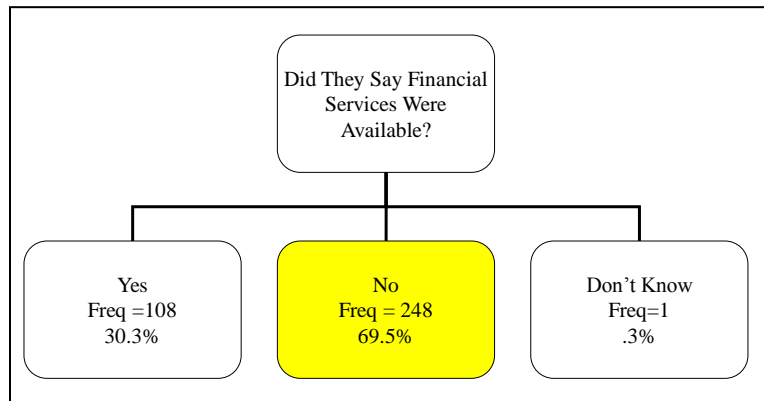
Barriers to Reaching HPCC Referrals, Reported by Referral Agencies

Table 3. (N=37)

Barrier	% of Agencies Reporting this Barrier
Phone Number Disconnected or Invalid	54.1
Unreturned Call or Messages	35.1
No-shows and/or Cannot Travel Distance	24.3
Correcting Misinformation	8.1
Do Not Receive Emails from HPCC	5.4
None	8.1

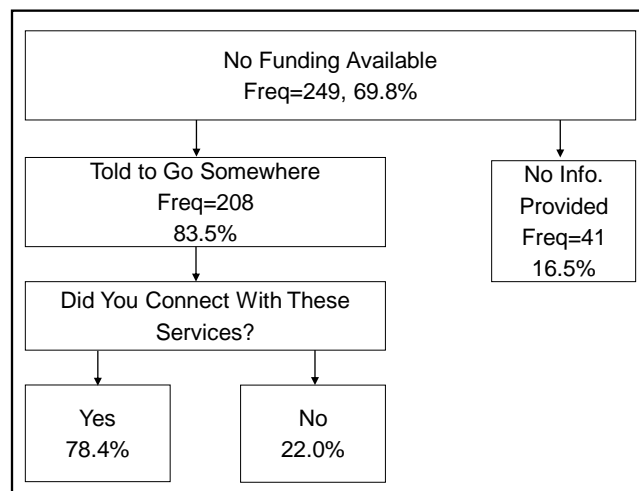
What Happened to Eligible Callers Who We Tracked?

Figure 1. (N=357)



What Happened to Eligible Callers For Whom There Was No Funding?

Figure 5



What Were Callers' Assessments of HPCC?

- 66% rated their interaction with HPCC I&R Specialist as “useful” or “very useful.”
- 73% said they would be “likely” or “very likely” to refer a friend in need of assistance to HPCC.

What Were Eligible Callers' Assessment of Referral Agencies?

- Not surprisingly, those callers who were told funds were available rated their experience with referral agencies higher.
 - 82% of those told funding was available and were contacted by referral agencies rated them as “useful” or “very useful.”
 - 46% of those for whom funding was not available and used alternative resources rated those services as “useful” or “very useful.”

Referral Agencies' Assessment of Benefits of Centralized System

Table 4. (N=37)

Benefits	Percent
Pre-Screened Referrals	77.1%
Quick Response For Anyone Who Calls For Assistance – “Call 311”	57.1%
Brings Similar and Differing Agencies Together For Other Opportunities and Working Relationships	42.9%
Provides Quick Insight In Resident Needs, Problems and Trends	40%
Flexibility With Time to Respond to Referrals	31.4%
Provides Useful Data For Advocacy and Information	28.6%
A Place to Call and Quickly Find Clients to Spend Down Funds	25.7%
Don't Have to Staff a Phone Line	25.7%
Avenue For Agency Input Regarding Improvements to City-wide System	20%
Reduction in Walk-in Clients	20%
Less Inquiries to Deal With	20%
Accommodation to Staff Changes Due to Training, Shortages, etc.	14.3%
Pre-determined Staffing Level to Handle Processing of Applications	11.4%

Impact of Federal Stimulus

- Kinds of requests were similar
 - However, significant increase in request for “other” (e.g. furniture, transportation assistance and ID fees from 4 to 13.3% - ** $p \leq .01$)
- More told financial services available
 - From 26% to 40% (* $p \leq .05$)
- Less told to go elsewhere (because no funding available)
 - From 65% to 43% (***) $p \leq .001$)

Impact of Federal Stimulus

- Smaller percentage were told by referral agency that they did not qualify for funding
 - From 17% to 6%
- Referral agencies more swamped by demand.
 - “No call back rates” increase slightly.
 - Higher percentage of callers still in process.
- Increase in positive rating of referral agencies by callers.
 - Rating of referral agency as “very useful” or “useful”- 80% to 85%

Key Recommendations

- Improve 311 Spanish-language services
- Annual review by 311 and HPCC of screening process
- Assess and clarify 311 after-hours request process
- Explore a direct line to HPCC and/or 211 number
- HPCC should provide better explanation to callers involving the next steps of the process
- Systems integration between HPCC and referral agencies (re: outcome data from referral agencies)
- Expansion of services to non-eligible callers
- Consider changing the ‘first-in, first service’ access to funding model

Conclusions

- While there are needs for “tweaks,” the system works well.
- Added resources (i.e. stimulus funds) successfully increased the capacity of the system.
- Yet, a majority of individuals have needs not met by the system.

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