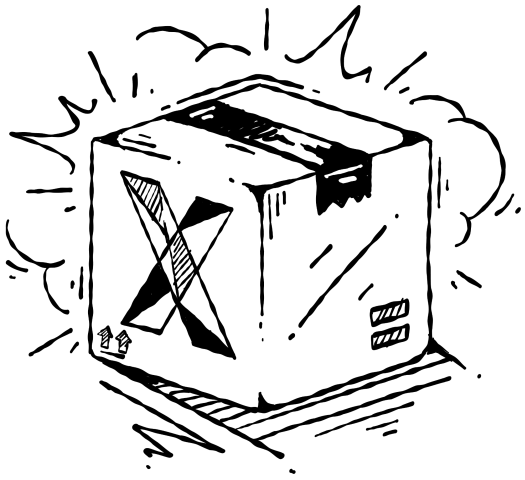


CityServeX

Community Advocate Training

Core Content - Section 4

ENTRY POINTS

Module 4 — Entry Point: 888-INFO-CARE & Community Website

Why First Contact Matters More Than You'd Think

Before a Participant ever sits across from a Resource Coordinator, before a need is entered into Findhelp, before any referral happens at all — somebody had to find out CityServeX existed in the first place. That first connection matters more than most people realize.

Here's the hard truth: a Resource Coordinator can only help the person sitting in front of them. They cannot help the person who never showed up, because that person never knew where to go. The hardest failure in social services isn't a bad referral — it's the person who never came in at all. Everything in this module exists to close that gap.

Your Four Entry Points

CityServeX has four entry points, and I want you to think of them as one connected system, not four separate competing options.

- 888-INFO-CARE (888-463-6227): the call-and-text helpline. This is a human-first access point for someone who needs immediate guidance or has no internet access at all. You can also text "I Need Help" to 888-463-6227 and be connected just as if you called — this matters for anyone who is more comfortable texting than calling, or who can't take a call in the moment.
- cityservex.help: the self-service, no-login version of the same nationwide Findhelp database — 950,000+ program locations across all 42,000+ U.S. zip codes. Best for someone ready to search on their own, day or night.
- Business cards: the physical handoff — carrying both the number and the URL for in-person moments, wherever those happen.
- Your network: simple word of mouth through a trusted relationship. In many ways, this is the most powerful entry point of all, because it reaches the person who will never pick up a flyer or call an unfamiliar number, but who will respond when a friend says, "I know someone who can help."

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888-INFO-CARE promotional card — hand these out or post them anywhere a trusted messenger meets someone in need.

Here's exactly what happens when someone calls 888-INFO-CARE, so you can describe it accurately and confidently to any partner who asks: the call is received and routed through the CityServeX system; a trained team member gathers basic information about the need and location; the participant is connected to a local Resource Coordinator; that Resource Coordinator conducts a full assessment inside Findhelp and walks beside the participant toward resources; and the Resource Coordinator documents outcomes and follows up until the case is resolved or closed.



The promise behind that process, stated simply: leave a few bits of information, and a real person calls back within 24 hours.

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Test It Yourself Before You Promote It

Before you promote any of this to anyone, test it yourself. Call the number. Walk through the website as a first-time caller would. Confirm the tone is unhurried, the next steps are clear, and the experience actually matches what you're about to promise community leaders. You cannot credibly sell an experience you haven't personally lived — and if you skip this step, you will eventually get caught describing something you've never actually done.

Building the Warm Handoff

One of the best ways you can promote 888-INFO-CARE is to introduce this number to city officials and frontline responders — police, fire, EMTs — as your community's official front door. These are people who encounter someone in need every single day but have never had a simple, dignified place to send them.

Take the time to build these relationships into a standardized "warm handoff" protocol at your site, so every leader you recruit knows exactly how a neighbor in their sector will be treated when they call. Then engage in an ongoing distribution campaign of 888-INFO-CARE cards to these same trusted messengers — police, fire departments, school counselors — so the door stays visible, not just open once.

Listening Well at First Contact: The OARS Method

Every entry point eventually leads to a conversation, and how that conversation is held matters just as much as the referral itself.

We teach this as Story Mode before Support Mode: first understand the whole picture — what they've already tried, their strengths, what dignity looks like to them — before moving into coordinating resources. Jumping straight to solutions, even good ones, can make someone feel unseen.

The core skill set for this is called OARS:

- Open questions: "Tell me what's been happening for you lately?" instead of "Do you need food?"
- Affirmations: "It takes courage to ask for help."
- Reflections: mirror back what you heard, in your own words, so the person knows they were actually heard.
- Summaries: confirm your understanding before moving forward into next steps.

Assume many people carry past trauma into the conversation, and let that assumption shape your pace and tone — slower and gentler almost always serves better than fast and efficient.

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Your First-Contact Routine

- Before you promote anything: personally call 888-INFO-CARE and separately walk through cityservex.help as a first-time user would. Note anything confusing and report it to your CSX Liaison.
- Every week during onboarding: practice one Open question, one Affirmation, and one Reflection in a real conversation, and take note of how it landed.
- Before a new Resource Coordinator's first shift: walk them through OARS yourself, with a short role-play, so they don't learn it cold on a real case.
- Ongoing: carry at least 20 business cards at all times in any community-facing capacity, and keep a simple log of who received one so you know when to restock.

One Last Thing

This module can feel almost too simple compared to what's ahead — a phone number, a website, a conversation technique. Don't underestimate it. Every single thing CityServeX does downstream depends on someone finding the front door in the first place, and finding it in a way that feels safe enough to walk through.

Discussion Questions

- What does first contact currently look like at your site, and where could it improve?
- Who on your team is the natural "first voice" people should hear?
- What's the difference between referring someone and handing them off well?
- Why does the module insist you test the hotline and website yourself before promoting them?
- Which trusted messengers in your community encounter someone in need every day but currently have nowhere to send them?
- How does the OARS framework change a first conversation compared to jumping straight to solutions?

Check List: Before You Move to the Next Module

- ☐ Personally call 888-INFO-CARE as a first-time caller and note anything confusing.
- ☐ Personally text "I Need Help" to 888-463-6227 to verify the text notification is working.
- ☐ Personally walk through cityservex.help as a first-time user.
- ☐ Report any rough edges in either experience to your CSX Liaison.
- ☐ Meet with local police, fire, EMT, and school-counselor contacts to build a warm-handoff protocol.
- ☐ Begin an ongoing distribution campaign of 888-INFO-CARE cards to trusted messengers.

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☐ Practice one Open question, one Affirmation, and one Reflection (OARS) in a real conversation.

☐ Walk a new Resource Coordinator through OARS before their first shift.

☐ Carry at least 20 business cards at all times and start a simple restock log.

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