

# MINNESOTA'S HMIS DATA STANDARDS GUIDE

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide provides information to standardize data collection across Minnesota based on requirements of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the State of Minnesota. This guide was created by the Institute for Community Alliances (ICA).

- **HUD Data Elements:** This guide is an abridged version of the HMIS Data Standards Manual and HMIS Data Standards Data Dictionary. We have taken the most relevant material from these sources and condensed it into this guide to assist you with your data collection and to help clarify which data elements are required in HMIS to meet participation and reporting requirements established by HUD and the federal partners. Read the HMIS Data Standards Manual or the HMIS Data Standards Data Dictionary for the Field and Response Categories.
- **Minnesota Data Elements:** This guide includes data elements that are required by the State of Minnesota. These data elements are not covered in the federal documents referenced above. We have included the Field and Response Categories within this document as Minnesota does not have a corresponding Data Standards Manual nor Data Standards Data Dictionary for these data elements.
- **Can't find a data element in this guide?** Check your Program Specific User Guide organized by program at [hmismn.org/forms-and-instructions](http://hmismn.org/forms-and-instructions), or your Federal Partner Program Manual for federal programs. *This guide does not include information about all program specific data elements, simply the data elements that are common to most programs.*

Most of the content within this guide is taken from a source document; we've included citations within. Please refer to the original document as needed.

# HUD UNIVERSAL DATA ELEMENTS

HMIS Universal Data Elements (UDEs) are elements required to be collected by all projects using the ServicePoint as an HMIS regardless of funding source.<sup>1</sup>

The UDEs are the basis for producing unduplicated estimates of the number of people experiencing homelessness, accessing services from homeless assistance projects, basic demographic characteristics of people experiencing homeless, and patterns of service use, including information on shelter stays and homelessness over time.

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## 3.1 NAME

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Record Creation<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To support the unique identification of each person served.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** When creating a new client record, enter the client's name and select the appropriate data quality indicator. When enrolling a client who already has a record in the HMIS, verify that the name in the system is accurate and as complete as possible – and correct or complete it if it is not. HMIS records should use a client's full, legal name whenever possible—doing this as a standard practice makes it easier to find records when searching and avoid creating duplicate records.<sup>1</sup>

Street outreach projects may record a project entry with limited information about the client and improve on the accuracy and completeness of client data over time by editing data in an HMIS as they engage the client. Over time, the data must be edited for accuracy (e.g. replacing “Redhat” with “Robert”) as the worker learns that detail.<sup>1</sup>

## 3.2 SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Record Creation<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To support the unique identification of each person served. Where data are shared across projects, the SSN greatly facilitates the process of identifying clients who have been served and allows projects to de-duplicate at project start. Name and date of birth are useful unique identifiers, but the SSN is significantly more accurate.<sup>1</sup>

Also, an important objective for ending homelessness is to increase access and utilization of mainstream programs by persons who are experiencing homelessness or are at-risk of homelessness. Since SSN is a required data element for many mainstream programs, projects may need the SSN in order to help their clients access mainstream services.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** In separate fields, record the nine-digit SSN and appropriate SSN Data Quality Indicator. When enrolling a client who already has a record in the HMIS, verify that the SSN in the system is accurate and correct it if it is not. Some projects may serve clients that do not have an SSN. In these cases, select 'Client doesn't know.'<sup>1</sup>

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## 3.3 DATE OF BIRTH

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Record Creation<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To calculate the age of persons served at time of project start or at any point during project enrollment and to support the unique identification of each person served.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** When enrolling a client who already has a record in the HMIS, verify that the date of birth on the record is accurate and correct it if it is not. If the client cannot remember their birth year, it may be estimated by asking the person's age and calculating the approximate year of birth. If a client cannot remember the month or day of birth, record an approximate date of '01' for month and '01' for day. Select 'approximate or partial date of birth.'<sup>1</sup>

If a client is not able to estimate their age within one year of their actual age, select 'Client doesn't know.' Select 'Client refused' when a client refuses to provide any part of their DOB.<sup>1</sup>

A client record must have a date of birth recorded in the date field for the system to differentiate between a youth and adult, regardless of the selected response for date of birth data quality.

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## 3.4 RACE

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Record Creation<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To indicate clients' self-identification of one or more of five different racial categories. Supports system planning, local, and national understanding of who is experiencing homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Help the client select the race or races that they most identify with. Allow clients to identify as many racial categories as apply (up to five). When enrolling a client who already has a record in the HMIS, verify that race information is complete and accurate – and correct it if it is not. Staff observations should never be used to collect information on race. Provide all options to every client. Even if staff believes they can guess a client's race, every client must be asked for their self-reported information. No documentation is required to verify a client's response.<sup>1</sup>

This data element can be challenging to separate from ethnicity. As one example, some people of Latin American descent often indicate their race is 'Hispanic,' and would not be referred to in casual conversation or seen in their communities or by themselves as 'White' or 'Black or African American.'<sup>1</sup> Page 37 of the HMIS Data Standards Manual provides additional information on differentiating between *Race and Ethnicity*.

If the client does not know his or her race or ethnicity, or refuses to disclose it, use 'Client doesn't know' or 'Client refused,' rather than making an appearance or name-based assumption.<sup>1</sup>

- *American Indian or Alaska Native:* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America, including Central America, and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- *Asian:* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand and Vietnam.
- *Black or African American:* A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as 'Haitian' can be used in addition to 'Black or African American.'
- *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander:* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- *White:* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa.

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## 3.5 ETHNICITY

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Record Creation<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To indicate clients who do and do not identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Supports system planning, local, and national understanding of who is experiencing homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Record the self-identified ethnicity of each client served. Help the client select the ethnicity that they most identify with.<sup>1</sup>

Staff observations should never be used to collect information on ethnicity. Even if a staff person believes they can guess a client's ethnicity, every client must be asked for their self-reported information. No documentation is required to verify a client's response.<sup>1</sup>

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## 3.6 GENDER

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Record Creation<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To indicate whether clients self-identify as male, female, transgender female, transgender male, or gender non-conforming. Supports system planning, local, and national understanding of who is experiencing homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Record the self-reported gender of each client served. Users should be sensitive to persons who do not identify as male, female or transgender. When enrolling a client who already has a record in the HMIS, verify that gender information is complete and accurate -- and correct it if it is not. Update the gender previously recorded in HMIS if it does not match the person's current gender.<sup>1</sup>

Staff observations should never be used to collect information on gender. Provide all options to every client. Even if staff thinks they can guess a client's gender, every client must be asked for their self-reported information. If they refuse to give it or say they don't know, do not select a response for the client. Gender does not have to match legal documents and clients may not be asked about medical history or other information to try to determine the person's gender. Simply asking, "Which of these genders best describes how you identify?" is appropriate and focuses on the person's own internal knowledge of their gender.<sup>1</sup>

A transgender client may elect to share their transgender status with project staff, or not. In the event that a client discloses being transgender, staff should consult that client about whether the client prefers to have the HMIS data element for "gender" reflect their transgender status or not.<sup>1</sup>

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## 3.7 VETERAN STATUS

**Data Collected About** Adults<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Record Creation, update to reflect a change in status<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To indicate whether clients are veterans of the United States armed forces. Allows for an accurate count of how many veterans experience homelessness. Useful for screening for possible housing and service interventions and for gaining understanding of veterans' service needs. <sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Veteran Status is not dependent on discharge status. A dishonorable discharge limits eligibility for certain VA benefits and programs, but it does not mean that the person is not a veteran for HMIS and PIT purposes. Unless the project's funder has eligibility requirements for veteran status, it is not necessary to obtain documentation for users to record a 'yes' response to this data element. <sup>1</sup>

Asking additional questions may result in more accurate information as some clients may not be aware that they are considered veterans. For example, "Have you ever been on active duty in the military?" or "Were you disabled during a period of active duty training?"<sup>1</sup>

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## 3.8 DISABLING CONDITION

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Project Start (Edit as necessary to reflect new information) <sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To indicate whether or not clients have a disabling condition. This data element is to be used with other information to identify whether a client meets the criteria for chronic homelessness. <sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Record whether the client has a disabling condition at the time of each project start. It is not necessary to provide documentation to complete this data element. A disabling condition is one or more of the following:<sup>1</sup>

- A physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that: <sup>1</sup>
  1. Is expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration;
  2. Substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently; and
  3. Could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions.
- A developmental disability, as defined in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002); or
- The disease of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or any condition arising from the etiologic agency for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV).

Additionally, if the client is a veteran who is disabled by an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service and whose disability meets the disability definition defined in Section 223 of the social security act, they should be identified as having a disabling condition. <sup>1</sup>

A client indicating the following sources of Income (data element 4.2) can be considered to have a disabling condition: Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), VA Service-Connected Disability Compensation or VA Non-Service-Connected Disability Pension. <sup>1</sup>

Most projects collect more detailed information about specific disabilities in the 4.5 – 4.10 data elements.

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## 3.10 PROJECT START DATE

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Project Start<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To determine the start of each client’s period of participation with a project. In 2017, this data element changed from *Project Entry Date* to *Project Start Date* to capture more complete information about persons accepted into and residing in all types of Permanent Housing.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Record the month, day, and year of each client’s project start. The project start date indicates a client is now being assisted by the project.<sup>1</sup>

**Street Outreach:** Date of first contact with the client.

**Emergency Shelter:** Night the client first stayed in the shelter. Night by night shelters will have a project start date and will allow clients to re-enter as necessary without “exiting” and “restarting” for each stay for a specified period.

**Safe Haven and Transitional Housing:** Date the client moves into the residential project (i.e. first night in residence).

**Permanent Housing, including Rapid Re-Housing:** Date following application that the client was admitted into the project. To be admitted indicates the following factors have been met:

- 1) Information provided by the client or from the referral indicates they meet the criteria for admission;
- 2) The client has indicated they want to be housed in this project;
- 3) The client is able to access services and housing through the project. The expectation is the project has a housing opening (on-site, site-based, or scattered-site subsidy) or expects to have one in a reasonably short amount of time.

**Other Service Projects:** Including but not limited to: services only, day shelter, homelessness prevention, coordinated assessment, health care it is the date the client first began working with the project and generally received the first provision of service.

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## 3.11 PROJECT EXIT DATE

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Project Exit<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To determine the end of a client’s period of participation with a project. All projects need this data element for reporting time spent participating in the project.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Record the month, day and year of last day of occupancy or service.<sup>1</sup>

**Residential projects:** The last day of continuous stay in the project before the client transfers to another residential project or otherwise stops residing in the project. Clients in rapid re-housing projects are to be exited after the last RRH service is provided. If eligible RRH case management services are provided past the final date of receiving rental assistance, for example, the client must not be exited until those services cease.<sup>1</sup>

**Non-residential projects:** the last day a service was provided or the last date of a period of ongoing service. For non-residential projects, the exit date must represent the last day a contact was made or a service was provided. The exit date should coincide with the date the client is no longer considered a participant in the project. Projects must have a clear and consistently applied procedure for determining when a client who is receiving supportive services is no longer considered to be participating in the project.<sup>1</sup>

If a client uses a service for just one day, then the Project Exit Date may be the same as the Project Start Date.<sup>1</sup>

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## 3.12 DESTINATION

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Project Exit<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To identify where a client will stay just after exiting a project for purposes of tracking and outcome measurement.

**Data Collection Instructions** Select the Destination response category that most closely matches where the client will be staying after exiting the project. Record where the client is expected to stay after they complete or stop participating in project activities. For residential projects that expect a client to move out upon exit, record where the client is expected to move immediately after leaving. For projects where a client is not expected to relocate upon exit, such as homelessness prevention, rapid re-housing, transition in place, or SSO projects, record where the client is expected to stay after they complete or stop participation in project activities. This may be the same place that they were staying prior to starting in the project.<sup>1</sup>

'Other' should be used only as a last resort if the client's destination truly cannot be even loosely described by any of the available options. Any response of 'Other' will not count in any HMIS-based reporting as a positive outcome.<sup>1</sup>

Mass shelters that track bed nights using the night by night method may have high rates of missing Destination data when the client is exited. HUD and other federal partners strongly encourage shelters – even large scale shelters – to consider themselves to be a part of the community's system working to end homelessness. Any steps these projects can take to establish relationships with clients, focus on moving clients into more permanent housing situations, or collaborate with service projects that do so, will improve a system's functioning, data quality, and client outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

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## 3.15 RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Project Start<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To identify one person to whom all other household members can be linked to at the time they enter a project. Specifying the relationship of household members to the head of household facilitates reporting on household composition.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Identify one member of a household to whom all other household members can be associated. In a household of a single individual, that person must be identified as the head of household ["Self"].<sup>1</sup>

There cannot be more than one head of household for any given project start.<sup>1</sup> An individual present for the entire project stay should be designated as head of household.<sup>2</sup> If the head of household leaves the project while other household members remain, another member of the household currently participating in the project must be designated as the head of household and the other members' relationship to head of household should be corrected to reflect each individual's relationship to the newly designated head of household in the event that it differs from the relationship to whoever was previously identified as the head of household.<sup>1</sup>

If the group of persons is composed of adults and children, an adult must be indicated as the head of household.<sup>1</sup>

If the group of persons are all children and youth (where none of the youth presenting are the child of another youth being served by a project), each youth should be entered as their own record in their own household.<sup>1</sup>



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## 3.16 CLIENT LOCATION

**Data Collected About** Head of Household<sup>2</sup>      **Data Collection Point** Project Start, Update<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To link client household data to the relevant CoC. Necessary for projects that operate across multiple CoCs for data export purposes and to ensure accurate counts of persons who are served within a CoC.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Select or enter the CoC code assigned to the geographic area where the head of household is staying at the time of project entry. A new Client Location record must be created at any time during a project stay if a client moves into a different CoC while enrolled.<sup>1</sup>

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## 3.20 HOUSING MOVE-IN DATE

**Data Collected About** Heads of Household<sup>2</sup>      **Data Collection Point** Occurrence Point (Must be between Project Start and Project Exit)<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To document the date that a household admitted into a Permanent Housing project moves into housing. This data is critical to point-in-time and housing inventory counts as it differentiates households which are enrolled in a Permanent Housing project, but are still literally homeless, as they prepare to move into an available unit from households which have already moved into permanent housing. Housing Move-In Date must be between the Project Start Date (3.10) and Project Exit Date (3.11).<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Record the date a client or household moves into a permanent housing unit.<sup>1</sup>

For RRH projects only, a Housing Move-in Date must be entered regardless of whether or not the RRH project is providing the rental assistance for the unit. For example, if an RRH project provides supportive services, but is not providing the rental assistance for the unit, a Housing Move-in Date must still be entered to differentiate RRH clients in housing from those still experiencing homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

For any other project types that are typed as 'Permanent Housing' in the HMIS, clients who are receiving pre-housing placement services but are ultimately housed by another project or subsidy source should be exited from the PH project to the appropriate permanent Destination. If the client exits the permanent housing project for a different housing opportunity without physically moving into a housing unit associated with the project, do not enter a housing move-in date, simply exit the client and record the exit destination.<sup>1</sup>

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## 3.917 LIVING SITUATION

**Data Collected About** Head of Household and All Adults<sup>2</sup>      **Data Collection Point** Project Start<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To identify the type of living situation and length of stay in that situation just prior to project start for all adults and heads of households. This data element is to be used with other information to identify whether a client appears to meet the criteria for chronic homelessness. The element has been constructed to avoid collecting information which is irrelevant or inappropriate for the client population being served in a particular situation. For example, eligibility for Homelessness Prevention requires that a client be in housing. By definition, a person in housing is not chronically homeless, so some of the fields in this data element used to determine chronic homeless status are not required in that situation.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Intake staff should ask clients about their homeless history, including specific instances the client spent on the street, in an emergency shelter, or in a Safe Haven project. This may require defining or explaining each field to the client. Completing the data fields in HMIS does not require documentation.<sup>1</sup>

Different project types have different realities they are working in when it comes to interviewing clients. Some high volume shelters may simply ask people to quickly “ballpark” their responses to the required fields. Other project types are able to have more complex intake processes that allow staff to sit with the client and get a clearer picture of the client’s housing history and their official “breaks” in homelessness, according to the definition of chronic homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

The responses are intended to reflect from the client’s last living situation immediately prior to the Project Start Date. For projects that do not provide lodging, the ‘prior’ living situation may be the same as the client’s current living situation.<sup>1</sup>

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#### INTERIM HOUSING RESPONSE VALUE FOR TYPE OF RESIDENCE

This response is limited to use by Permanent Supportive Housing projects for which chronic homelessness is an eligibility criterion. Interim Housing is a situation where a person who is experiencing chronic homelessness has:<sup>1</sup>

- Applied for permanent housing,
- Been accepted, and
- A unit / voucher for permanent housing is reserved for them, but for which there is some other situation that prevents them from moving immediately into housing.

Where it has been determined to be absolutely necessary to use transitional housing to keep the client engaged prior to moving into PSH, the client must be identified as coming from “Interim Housing” to preserve the chronic homelessness identification in reporting.<sup>1</sup>

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#### LENGTH OF STAY IN PRIOR LIVING SITUATION

The length of time the client was residing in the living situation selected. If the client moved around, but in the same type of situation, include the total time in that type of situation. If the client moved around from one situation to another, only include the time in the situation selected.

90 days or more in an institutional setting is considered a “break” according to the definition of chronic homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

7 nights or more in transitional or permanent housing situations is considered a “break” according to the definition of chronic homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

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#### DATE HOMELESSNESS STARTED

Have the client look back to the date of the last time the client had a place to sleep that was not on the streets, ES, or SH. Including the situation the client was in right before entering, plus any continuous time moving around between the streets, an emergency shelter, or a safe haven, determine the date this period of the client’s “literal” homelessness began.<sup>1</sup>

The look back time would not be broken by a stay of less than 7 consecutive nights in any permanent or temporary housing situation nor would it be broken by an institutional stay of less than 90 days (i.e. jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility).<sup>1</sup>

Approximations are permitted.<sup>1</sup>

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**NUMBER OF TIMES CLIENT HAS BEEN ON THE STREETS OR IN EMERGENCY SHELTER IN THE PAST 3 YEARS**

Including today, count all the different times the client was on the streets, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven in the last 3 years where there are full breaks in between (i.e. breaks that are 90 days or more in an institution or 7 nights or more in permanent or transitional housing).<sup>1</sup>

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**NUMBER OF MONTHS ON THE STREET OR IN EMERGENCY SHELTER IN THE PAST 3 YEARS**

Count the cumulative number of months in which a person was on the streets, in an ES, or SH in the last 3 years, including stays in an institution <90 days or in permanent or transitional housing <7 days. Round the number of months up to the next highest number of full months. The current month, even if a partial month, can be counted as a full month.<sup>1</sup>

# HUD COMMON PROGRAM SPECIFIC DATA ELEMENTS

The Program Specific Data Elements are elements that are required by at least one of the homeless programs. Some of the program specific data elements are collected across most programs. These are called “Common” Program Specific Data Elements. We are covering the Common Program Specific Data Elements in this section.

4.2 Income and Sources	4.3 Non-Cash Benefits	4.4 Health Insurance
4.5 Physical Disability	4.6 Developmental Disability	4.7 Chronic Health Condition
4.8 HIV / AIDS	4.9 Mental Health Problem	4.10 Substance Abuse
4.11 Domestic Violence	4.12 Contact	4.13 Date of Engagement
4.14 Bed-Night Date	4.18 Housing Assessment Disposition	

## 4.2 INCOME AND SOURCES

**Data Collected About** Head of Household and Adults<sup>2</sup>      **Data Collection Point** Project Start, Update, Annual Assessment, and Project Exit<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To determine whether households are accessing all income sources for which they are eligible at the time of project start and to allow for analyzing changes in the composition of income between project start and exit.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Indicate whether each head of each household served (including minor heads of their own household) and each adult household member have income and the sources of that income.<sup>1</sup>

Income and Sources is intended to identify regular, recurrent earned income and cash benefits. Services and/or gifts such as phone cards and vouchers that are provided by a project to clients during enrollment are fundamentally different and are not considered income.<sup>1</sup>

To collect income information, projects are expected to ask clients whether they receive income from each of the sources listed (either on paper or through client interview) rather than asking them to state the sources of income they receive. Unless the project funder requires documentation for recordkeeping purposes, clients are not required to provide documentation of income or benefits. Requiring documentation of income and benefits when it is not a funder’s requirement unnecessarily slows down the process for assisting people to exit homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

Lump sum amounts received by a family, such as inheritances, insurance settlements, or proceeds from sale of property, or back pay from Social Security are considered assets, not income, and are not recorded in HMIS.<sup>1</sup>

Income data should be entered in HMIS consistent with guidelines for calculating household income provided by a project funder, if such guidelines exist. For example, for eligibility purposes, both CoC and ESG-funded projects are instructed to exclude income from the employment of a minor child from calculations of household income. The same is true for SSVF. However, recording income in an HMIS is not the same as performing an income evaluation for purposes of project eligibility determination or a rent calculation for the purpose of determining rental subsidy (24 CFR 5.609 and 24 CFR 5.611(a)). Data recorded in HMIS also does not replace required income verification documentation that may be required by a funder.<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of income calculation guidelines provided by a funder, as a general rule, any income associated with a minor used for household expenses and support should be included in the head of households Income and Sources record. Where the income is not relevant for household expenses, it could reasonably be excluded from entry.<sup>1</sup>

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## 4.3 NON CASH BENEFITS

**Data Collected About** Head of Household and Adults<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Project Start, Update, Annual Assessment, and Project Exit<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To determine whether households are accessing all mainstream program benefits for which they are eligible at the time of project start and to allow for analyzing changes in the composition of non-cash benefits between project start and exit.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Non-cash benefits data should be entered in HMIS consistent with guidelines provided by a project funder, if such guidelines exist. In the absence of guidelines provided by a funder, as a general rule, any benefits received by or on behalf of a minor household member or on behalf of the household as a whole (such as SNAP) should be included in the head of households Non-Cash Benefits record.<sup>1</sup>

To collect benefits information, projects are expected to ask clients whether they receive benefits from each of the sources listed (either on paper or through client interview) rather than asking them to state the sources of non-cash benefits they receive. Clients are not required to provide documentation of benefits. Requiring documentation of benefits when it is not a funder's requirement unnecessarily slows down the process for assisting people to exit homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

Non-Cash Benefits is intended to identify regular, recurrent benefits. Services and/or gifts such as phone cards and vouchers that are provided by a project to clients during enrollment are fundamentally different and are not considered benefits.<sup>1</sup>

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## 4.4 HEALTH INSURANCE

**Data Collected About** Federal Programs: All Clients<sup>2</sup> | State (MN) Programs: Head of Household and All Adults

**Data Collection Point** Project Start, Update, Annual Assessment, and Project Exit<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To determine whether clients are accessing all mainstream medical assistance benefits for which they may be eligible, and to ascertain a more complete picture of changes to economic circumstances between project start and exit.

**Data Collection Instructions** Health Insurance is intended to identify actual health insurance sources. Indigent care received by a medical provider or hospital to cover a health care costs does not constitute health insurance coverage and should not be recorded in HMIS.

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## 4.5 – 4.10 DISABILITY ELEMENTS

**Data Collected About** Federal Programs: All Clients<sup>2</sup> | State (MN) Programs: Head of Household and All Adults

**Data Collection Point** Project Start, Update, Annual Assessment, and Project Exit<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To indicate whether clients have any disabling special needs which contribute to their experience of homelessness or may be a factor in housing.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** In separate fields, indicate:

- (1) If each client has the indicated disability; and
- (2) If there is indication that the disability is expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration (applicable to most of the individual disability elements) and substantially impair the client's ability to live independently.

Individual *Disability* records created at project start, update, and project exit are to reflect the information as of the date of each phase of data collection. *Disability* update records should be created at any time during a project stay if a client's physical disability status changes.<sup>1</sup>

If the disability is present and is expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration, the corresponding element 3.8 Disabling Condition should also be "yes."<sup>1</sup>

**4.5 Physical Disability** For the purposes of these Data Standards, a physical disability means a physical impairment.<sup>1</sup>

**4.6 Developmental Disability** For the purposes of these Data Standards, a developmental disability means a severe, chronic disability that is attributed to a mental or physical impairment (or combination of physical and mental impairments) that occurs before 22 years of age and limits the capacity for independent living and economic self-sufficiency.<sup>1</sup>

**4.7 Chronic Health Condition** For the purposes of these Data Standards, a chronic health condition means a diagnosed condition that is more than 3 months in duration and is either not curable or has residual effects that limit daily living and require adaptation in function or special assistance. Examples of chronic health conditions include, but are not limited to: heart disease (including coronary heart disease, angina, heart attack and any other kind of heart condition or disease); severe asthma; diabetes; arthritis-related conditions (including arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia); adult onset cognitive impairments (including traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic distress syndrome, dementia, and other cognitive related conditions); severe headache/migraine; cancer; chronic bronchitis; liver condition; stroke; or emphysema.<sup>1</sup>

**4.8 HIV/AIDS** HIV-related information is covered by confidentiality requirements. As in other areas involving sensitive or protected client information, information should be recorded only when a project has data confidentiality protections that conform to the standards specified in the HMIS Final Rule, to be published. These protections include agency policies and procedures and staff training to ensure that HIV-related information cannot be accessed by anyone without the proper authorization.<sup>1</sup>

**4.9 Mental Health Problem** A mental health problem may range from situational depression to serious mental illnesses. The dependent field is designed to gauge the severity of the mental health problem.<sup>1</sup>

**4.10 Substance Abuse**

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## 4.11 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Data Collected About** Head of Household and All Adults<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Project Start, update to reflect a change in status<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To indicate whether heads of household and other adults served are survivors of domestic violence. Ascertaining whether a person is a survivor of or fleeing from domestic violence is necessary to provide the person with the appropriate services to prevent further abuse and to treat the physical and psychological injuries from prior abuse. Also, ascertaining that a person may be experiencing domestic violence may be important for the safety of project staff and other clients. At the aggregate level, knowing the size of the population of persons experiencing homelessness who have also experienced domestic violence is critical for determining the resources needed to address the problem.

**Data Collection Instructions** Projects should be especially sensitive to the collection of domestic violence information from clients and should implement appropriate interview protocols to protect client privacy and safety.

If clients are providing inconsistent information (e.g. indicating that they are currently fleeing an abusive situation but their response to 'When experience occurred' is 'One year ago or more'), clarification should be facilitated by appropriate staff. Staff can help clients understand that the definition of a DV experience includes "dangerous... conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member," which is broader than a specific violent episode. There are situations where the act of fleeing takes place weeks or months after a particular violent episode, but the conditions within the home remain dangerous. With this clarification, the staff and client together can determine the best response for 'When experience occurred.'

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## 4.12 CONTACT

**Data Collected About** Head of Household and Adults<sup>2</sup>      **Data Collection Point** Occurrence Point (At the Time of Contact)<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To record each contact with people experiencing homelessness by street outreach and other service projects and to provide information on the number of contacts required to engage the client. A contact is defined as an interaction between a worker and a client. Contacts may range from simple a verbal conversation between the street outreach worker and the client about the client's well-being or needs or may be a referral to service.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Record the date and location of each interaction with a client. The first Contact with the client will occur at the same point as Project Start Date.<sup>1</sup>

All street outreach projects are expected to record every contact made with each client, including when the Project Start Date or Date of Engagement is recorded on the same day. There may or may not be a contact made at project exit.<sup>1</sup>

Night-by-Night shelters should only record a Contact if the interaction between the shelter personnel and client goes beyond a basic provision of shelter services. A Contact for emergency shelter does not include activities of daily sheltering (e.g. bed registration, request for personal care items, dinner signup, meals, etc.), nor should it be redundant with data element 4.14 Bed-Night Date.<sup>1</sup>

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## 4.13 DATE OF ENGAGEMENT

**Data Collected About** Head of Household and Adults      **Data Collection Point** Occurrence Point (At point of engagement; often Project Start or Update)

**Rationale** To record the date the client became 'engaged' in project services after one or more contacts with outreach or night-by-night shelter.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Record the date a client became engaged by a street outreach project or night-by-night emergency shelter in the development of a plan to address their situation. The date on which an interactive client relationship results in a deliberate client assessment or beginning of a case plan.<sup>1</sup>

Only one date of engagement is allowed between project start and exit. This date may be on or after the Project Start Date and if the client becomes engaged, must be on or prior to the Project Exit Date. If the project has not developed this intensive relationship with the client before exit, Date of Engagement should be left blank.<sup>1</sup>

If the client returns after a project exit, a new Project Start Date and a new Date of Engagement is to be established.<sup>1</sup>

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## 4.14 BED-NIGHT DATE

**Data Collected About** All Clients<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Occurrence Point<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To determine each bed-night utilized by a client in a night-by-night shelter.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** A Bed Night Date record indicates that the client has utilized a bed in a night-by-night shelter on that date. There must be a record of a bed night on the Project Start Date into a night-by-night shelter; any additional bed night dates must be after the Project Start Date and before the Project Exit Date.<sup>1</sup>

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## 4.18 HOUSING ASSESSMENT DISPOSITION

**Data Collected About** Head of Household<sup>2</sup>

**Data Collection Point** Project Exit<sup>2</sup>

**Rationale** To track client disposition following a brief assessment of critical housing needs, such as at a prevention project. This data element may be used as part of a coordinated assessment system if appropriate for the CoC's system.<sup>1</sup>

**Data Collection Instructions** Indicate the appropriate disposition of the client following a housing crisis assessment once at or before project exit. The Housing Assessment Disposition element is only required for projects that are doing coordinated assessments as part of a CoC's coordinated entry system, to capture information and efforts made to house the client for planning purposes.<sup>1</sup>



# MINNESOTA UNIVERSAL DATA ELEMENTS

The data elements in this section will not appear in any HUD published materials as they are only used in Minnesota. For that reason, we have added a table to each element with the field name and response categories.

Tribal Membership	Veteran Question Series	Foster Care
Extent of Homelessness	Leave any of these? (0 – 3 Months Ago)	Prior Permanent Residence Series

## TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP

**Data Collected About** All Clients

**Data Collection Point** Record Creation

**Rationale** To connect and refer tribal members to available services and to assist Tribal Nations with obtaining accurate homeless data.

**Data Collection Instructions** If the client self-identifies as “American Indian or Alaska Native” as one of the five racial categories, then a response to “If Native American, of which tribe are you an enrolled member?” is required. If none of the client’s self-identified racial categories are “American Indian or Alaska Native,” the question can be left unanswered.

Field	Dependency	Response Category/Data Type
<b>If Native American, of which tribe are you an enrolled member?</b>	HUD 3.4 Race Field 1 & Response 4 <i>American Indian or Alaska Native</i> <sup>2</sup>	Lower Sioux Indian Community in the State of Minnesota
		Mdewakanton Sioux Indians
		Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - Bois Forte
		Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - Fond du Lac
		Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - Grand Portage
		Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - Leech Lake
		Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - Mille Lacs Band
		Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - White Earth
		Prairie Island Indian Community in the State of Minnesota
		Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians
		Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community of Minnesota
		Upper Sioux Community
		Other
		Not enrolled member of any tribe
		Client doesn't know
Client refused		
Data not collected		

## VETERAN QUESTION SERIES

**Data Collected About Adults**

**Data Collection Point** Project Start

**Rationale** A veteran is someone who has served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty. The questions below attempt to enumerate these distinctions, and this is why it is asked in addition to Veteran Status (3.7).

**Data Collection Instructions** This should be updated for clients who turn 18 while participating in the program on the Entry Assessment into the project. Has client ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces (e.g. served in full-time capacity in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard) OR served in the National Guard or as a reservist? If no, skip to next section.

As part of Heading Home: MN's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, the [MN Homeless Veteran Registry](#) attempts to ensure that Veterans experiencing homelessness have access to appropriate housing and services. This registry is optional and separate than HMIS.

Field	Dependency	Response Category/Data Type
A Did you serve on Active Duty, or in the National Guard or Reserves?	No	1 No
		2 Yes, Active Duty (regardless of Guard and Reserve answers)
		3 Yes, National Guard
		4 Yes, Reserves
		5 Both Guard and Reserves
		6 Client Doesn't Know
		7 Client Refused
		8 Data Not Collected
B If Guard or Reserve: Were you ever called to Active Duty as a member of the National Guard or as a Reservist?	Field A; Response 2, 3, 4, 5	1 Yes
		2 No
		3 Client Doesn't Know
		4 Client Refused
		5 Data Not Collected
C Did you enter Active Duty before 9/7/1980?	Field A; Response 2, 3, 4, 5	1 Yes
		2 No
		3 Client Doesn't Know
		4 Client Refused
		5 Data Not Collected
D For approximately how many months did you serve? Approximate answers ok.	Field A; Response 2, 3, 4, 5	1 [Text field]
E What kind of discharge did you have?		1 Honorable or under honorable conditions
		2 Other than honorable, but not dishonorable

	Field A; Response 2, 3, 4, 5	3 Dishonorable
		4 Client Doesn't Know
		5 Client Refused
		6 Data Not Collected
F Are you receiving VA disability pay?	Field A; Response 2, 3, 4, 5	1 Yes
		2 No
		3 Client Doesn't Know
		4 Client Refused
		5 Data Not Collected
G Has client been referred to the Homeless Veteran Registry?	Field A; Response 2, 3, 4, 5	1 Yes
		2 No
		3 Client Doesn't Know
		4 Client Refused
		5 Data Not Collected

## FOSTER CARE

**Data Collected About** Youth, 24 and under    **Data Collection Point** Project Start

**Data Collection Instruction** Foster care is the term used for the supervised care and placement of a minor child who has been made a ward of the state due to abuse or neglect allegations. These placements include: Group Home (congregate care), Residential Care Center (RCC), Kinship Care (placement with a relative), and Traditional Foster Care (private home of a non-relative).

Field	Dependency	Response Category/Data Type
<b>Are you or have you ever been in foster care?</b>	None	Yes
		No
		Client Doesn't Know
		Client Refused
		Data Not Collected

## EXTENT OF HOMELESSNESS

**Data Collected About** Head of Household and Adults    **Data Collection Point** Project Start

**Data Collection Instruction** Not currently homeless can be used for homelessness prevention projects.

*Long-Term Homelessness:* Persons including individuals, unaccompanied youth, or families with children who lack a permanent place to live continuously for a year or more or at least four times in the past three years. Time spent in an institutional care or correctional facility shall be excluded when determining the length of time a household has been homeless except in the case where an individual was in a facility for fewer than 90 days and was homeless at entry to the facility.<sup>3</sup>

*Doubled Up/Couch Hopping:* Doubled up or couch hopping is considered an episode of homelessness if a household is doubled up with another household (and duration is less than one year) and couch hops as a temporary way to avoid living on the streets or in an emergency shelter. <sup>3</sup>

*Transitional Housing (TH):* Time spent in transitional housing is a neutral event. It is not considered time housed or time homeless when determining LTH eligibility. <sup>3</sup>

*Institutions:* Time spent in an institutional care (treatment, hospital, foster care, etc.) or correctional facility (jail or prison) is a neutral event. It is not considered time housed or time homeless except in the case where an individual was in a facility for fewer than 90 days and was homeless at entry to the facility. That time can be considered time homeless. <sup>3</sup>

Evaluate the housing history prior to and after TH or an institutional stay to determine if it meets the state’s LTH definition. NOTE: Minnesota's definition does not require that the person have a disabling condition. <sup>3</sup>

Field	Dependency	Response Category/Data Type
<b>Extent of Homelessness by Minnesota’s Definition</b>	None	Not currently homeless
		1 <sup>st</sup> time homeless and less than 1 year without home
		Multiple times homeless, but NOT meeting LTH definition
		Long term: At least 1 year, or at least 4 times in past 3 years

## RECENT INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

**Data Collected About** Head of Household and Adults      **Data Collection Point** Project Start

**Data Collection Instruction** If the client left a facility within the last three months, select the facility the client left most recently from the Response Categories.

Field	Dependency	Response Category/Data Type
<b>Leave any of these? (0 – 3 Months Ago)</b>	None	Adoptive Home (from foster care system)
		Foster Home
		Juvenile Detention Center
		County Jail or Workhouse
		State or Federal Prison
		Mental Health Treatment Facility or Hospital
		Drug or Alcohol Treatment Facility
		Combined MI/CD Treatment Facility
		Group Home
		Half-way House
		Residence for People with Physical Disabilities
		Client doesn’t know
		Client refused
Data not collected		

## PRIOR PERMANENT RESIDENCE SERIES

**Data Collected About** Head of Household and Adults    **Data Collection Point** Project Start

**Data Collection Instructions** A permanent address is an apartment, house, or room where the client last lived for 90 days or more. Shelters and time-limited housing are not permanent addresses.

Field	Dependency	Response Category/Data Type
A How long since client had permanent place to live (permanent address)?	None	1 0 (Prevention/Current Residence)
		2 Less than 1 month
		3 1 – 3 months
		4 3 – 6 months
		5 6 – 12 months
		6 1 – 2 years
		7 3 – 5 years
		8 6 – 8 years
		9 9 years or more
B State (Location of prior residence)	None	1 Minnesota
		2 [Picklist of the remaining 49 States]
		3 Washington, D.C.
		4 Other Country – Outside US
C County of prior residence (MN only)	Field B; Response 1	1 [Picklist of all MN counties]
D City of prior residence (MN only)	Field B; Response 1	1 [Lookup field of all Minnesota cities]

## COMPARISON OF PICKLIST VALUES: CLIENT DOESN'T KNOW, CLIENT REFUSED, DATA NOT COLLECTED

Most fields in HMIS have these options available as responses. These are used as explanations for missing data, and should be used to mean the following:

**Client Doesn't Know** means that the intake worker asked the client the question and they did not know the answer.

**Client Refused** means that the intake worker asked the client the question and they refused to answer.

**Data Not Collected** means that, for whatever reason, the intake worker was unable to, or did not, ask the client the question.

## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup>HMIS Data Standards Manual, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, July 2017,  
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Standards-Manual-2017.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>HMIS Data Standards Data Dictionary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Version 1.2, June 2017  
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Dictionary.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Long-Term Homelessness (LTH) Definitions and Eligibility Questions, Minnesota Housing, March 2017,  
[www.mnhousing.gov/get/MHFA\\_011066](http://www.mnhousing.gov/get/MHFA_011066)

## Version Updates

1	
2	3.20 Housing Move-In Date: Updated Data Collection Point from "Interim Update" to "Occurrence Point (Must be between Project Start and Project Exit)"
	4.13 Date of Engagement: Updated null fields to read "Data Collected About Head of Household and Adults" and "Data Collection Point Occurrence Point (At point of engagement; often Project Start or Update)"
	Updated document title to Minnesota Universal Data Elements