



HOUSING
ALLIANCE
DELAWARE

DELAWARE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

Length of Time/Chronic Homelessness

Housing Alliance Delaware
CMIS Lead Agency

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For any inquiries, contact cmis.support@housingalliance.org.

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INTRODUCTION

This document's purpose is to provide guidance to Delaware CMIS users to accurately and consistently enter data relating to clients' **length of time homeless** (LOT) according to and in compliance with the HUD Data Standards Manual.

Length of Time Homelessness measures are used for several of Delaware CoC's service processes:

- Coordinated Entry – Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) prioritization and referral;
- CoC-funded PSH eligibility

Therefore, the accurate and consistent data entry is imperative to ensure that processes operate efficiently and fairly for those seeking assistance.

The data elements highlighted here are also used in submission of Delaware's federal reports, including the Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA), System Performance Measures (SPM), and Point in Time (PIT).












TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For further clarification regarding data entry of Length of Time Homelessness or Chronic Homelessness, contact Housing Alliance Delaware (HAD) at cmis.support@housingalliance.org.

LOCATING LENGTH OF TIME HOMELESSNESS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

The Length of Time Homelessness-related assessment questions are located in an **entry assessment** when a client is enrolled into a project. Project entries are completed in the **Entry/Exit tab** of CMIS. These questions are a set of HUD-specified data elements in CMIS that reflect a client's living situation prior to project entry, and identifies whether clients may be experiencing chronic homelessness (CH).

All DE-CMIS end users are expected to ask and update these (and all) assessment questions with the most accurate information as provided by the client. For most clients, these assessment questions can change between every project entry, including those happening between the same service provider. Therefore, it is pertinent for all service providers and CMIS end users to review and update these questions with each entry.

Prior Living Situation	-Select-  
Length of Stay in Previous Place	-Select-  
Approximate date homelessness started:	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>   
Regardless of where they stayed last night - number of times the client has been on the streets or in ES in the past three years, including today	-Select-  
Total number of months homeless on the street or ES in the past three years	-Select-  

The assessment questions are always on the entry assessment in the same order:

CMIS is set up with two possible layouts:

1. For Emergency Shelter (ES) or Street Outreach (SO) providers:

- The listed assessment questions will automatically appear on the entry assessment regardless of a client's prior living situation.
- As per HUD definitions, clients being served by an Emergency Shelter or Street Outreach program, are automatically considered as literally homeless by the system.

2. For non-Emergency Shelter (ES) or Street Outreach (SO) providers:

- The response entered as the client's Prior Living Situation will determine whether the subsequent questions need to be answered through **conditional logic**.
- Clients served by these programs are not assumed to be literally homeless, and the use of conditional logic limits the amount of data collection to only information required to determine chronic homelessness status.
- Additional assessment questions appear based on the response to the previous question.

ANSWERING LENGTH OF TIME HOMELESSNESS

GENERAL REMINDER

Selecting any of the following options under the Other category will result in a data quality error.

- Client Doesn't Know
- Client Refused
- Data not collected

Prior Living Situation

Record the type of living situation the head of household and each adult household member was residing in **the night before their project entry**. All household members under the age of 18 should have their Prior Living Situation match the response provided by the living situations are available in a drop-down box and have been divided into three different situations: *Literally Homeless*, *Institutional*, and *Transitional and Permanent Housing*.

This question must be asked of every client to determine the following:

- Program eligibility for RRH and PSH, and/or
- Possible diversion from homelessness (for all project types).

Depending on the category of the client's response, additional assessment questions may appear.

Length of Stay in Previous Place

Record the length of time that the client was **continuously** residing in their previous place of stay, recorded as the Prior Living Situation. If the client moved between multiple living situations, the Length of Stay would be based on the time that they started staying at that location for this current episode.

Approximate Date Homelessness Started

Record the approximate date that **this episode** of literal homelessness began. Per HUD definitions, **literal homelessness** is defined as someone who is living in:

- A place not meant for habitation (on the streets, in a car, the park, an abandoned building, an alleyway, etc.);
- An emergency shelter, including a hotel or motel *paid for with an emergency voucher*;
- A safe haven (**NOTE:** There are no safe havens in the state of Delaware, so this option should not be used in CMIS);
- Transitional housing for those who were formerly homeless; or
- Any other living situation, but are actively fleeing domestic violence.

This question is NOT asking:

- The date that a client *first* experienced homelessness.
- Clients to define their homelessness as not having a permanent housing situation of their own.

Housing Alliance Delaware understands that this assessment question can be interpreted in multiple ways by both the data collector and the client, and to use the following considerations (based on HUD's definition of literal homelessness) to get a more accurate answer.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DETERMINING APPROXIMATE DATE HOMELESSNESS STARTED:

- Ask the client to reflect on the last time the client had a place to sleep that was **not** an Emergency Shelter (including a hotel or motel provided through an emergency voucher) or a place not meant for habitation.
- There may be breaks in their stay in place(s) not meant for habitation or ES. These breaks are **only** allowed to be included in the period for calculation if:
 - The client moved continuously between places not meant for habitation or ES.
 - If the break in their time in places not meant for habitation or ES was **less than seven (7) nights**. These breaks can occur while staying with friends or family, or paying for a hotel or motel out-of-pocket.
- If the client states that they were never homeless but are entering an ES or Street Outreach project, put the project Entry Date as the Approximate Date Homelessness Started.

- Specific circumstances of where client moved from:
 - a) Institutional Settings**
 - Includes, but is not limited to, jail, hospital, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility.
 - If the client's length of stay was **less than 90 days**, the Approximate Date Homelessness Started would include that institutional stay.
 - b) Temporary or Permanent Situations**
 - Includes, but is not limited to, staying with friends or family, paying for motel out-of-pocket, staying in a host home, or paying rent for an apartment.
 - If the client's length of stay exceeded **seven (7) days**, the Approximate Date Homelessness Started would match the project Entry Date.
 - This should be done with the assumption that diversion practices were completed to ensure that the service type is the client's best fit.

Regardless of where they stayed last night – number of times the client has been on the streets or in ES in the past three years, including today

Record the number of separate episodes of homelessness a client has experienced in the last three (3) years. Multiple episodes of homelessness should be separated by a break of homelessness (defined above).

If this is the first time the client has been homeless in the past three years, the response is "One time".

Total number of months homeless on the street or ES in the past three years

Record the total number of months homeless across all episodes in the last three (3) years. This time period does not include temporary living situations if client stayed there for over seven (7) nights in a row per episode, nor does it include institutional stays for over ninety (90) days per episode.

Clients whose response is "One month (this time is the first month)" are stating that this is the first month during this period that they have resided in a place not meant for habitation or Emergency Shelter.

Clients whose response is "More than 12 months" are stating that they have lived in places not meant for habitation and/or Emergency Shelters for over a year (consecutively or non-consecutively) over the last 36 months.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Although documentation is required by some funders (i.e., the Delaware Continuum of Care) for programs targeting chronically homeless individuals, completing data fields in CMIS does not require documentation.
- CoC-funded program eligibility has additional data and non-data related requirements that should be considered when entering LOT data:
 - Information in CMIS relating to length of time do not qualify as formal documentation for confirming Permanent Supportive Housing eligibility. CMIS data, entered through Entry/Exits by Emergency Shelter providers, as well as letters confirming months/years of homelessness, must also be present in a client's profile.
 - Chronic Homeless status calculation can be viewed after running an APR, a CAPER, or some Advanced Reports. Disability information also needs to be entered in the client's Entry/Exit for this status determination to be calculated.
 - CH also pulls Entry/Exit dates from other homeless programs (ES, Street Outreach) as well as Exit Destinations (for permanent destinations) to calculate full LOT in system.
 - LOT Documentation will not pull into reports that calculate CH status, so be mindful of that when clients use documentation to supplement times that they are not homeless but the system does not show so.
 - PSH eligibility rules still state that documentation for a client's disability, obtained from a medical professional, is required to be uploaded for all clients in CMIS. Contact HAD's CoC team for more information, or CMIS team for guidance on uploading documentation.
- The only data cleanup that will be completed by the Housing Alliance Delaware CMIS team will be using the Current Living Situation sub-assessment (completed by Centralized Intake and Street Outreach programs) or other providers' Entry/Exit data, to ensure that we are getting as close to correct LOT data as possible for clients in the system.
 - This data cleanup will include the clearing-out (but not deleting) of outdated LOT assessment questions, as determined by HAD staff.

APPENDIX A: CENTRALIZED INTAKE RAPID-REHOUSING PROCESS

This customized report pulls in head of household clients who have open enrollments and are currently living in homeless situations. Included project types are:

- Coordinated Entry (CE),
- Emergency Shelter (ES),
- Street Outreach (SO), and
- Transitional Housing (TH).

As per HUD standards, the following responses for a client's Current Living Situation is defined as literally homeless:

- Place not meant for habitation,
- Emergency shelter, incl. hotel/motel paid for w/ ES voucher, or RHY-funded Host Home shelter,
- Safe Haven, and
- Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth).
 - While transitional housing is not considered a literally homeless living situation, clients are referred to several TH projects around the state after being determined literally homeless.

Agency Partners are responsible for entering clients into their respective ES, SO, or TH projects. On the other hand, CE entries are created by the Centralized Intake team of Housing Alliance Delaware when a client calls and is determined to be **literally homeless**.

Clients who are actively working with a Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) or Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) provider are excluded. An example would be an ES client who is also receiving RRH assistance.

For clients enrolled in multiple projects (e.g., CE and SO), only one project entry based on a descending order of the project types will appear on the report. In that example, the project type pulled for this client will be Street Outreach.

All other information comes from each client's entry assessment. There are two types of data being pulled here:

1. Direct answers:
 - a. **MULTIPLE EPISODES** – “Regardless of where they stayed last night – number of times the client has been on the streets or in ES in the past three years, including today”

2. Calculations for the following:
 - a. **ES/TH STAYS** - Total count of ES or TH entries found in the Entry/Exit tab of the client's profile
 - b. **CH** - Whether a client's experiencing Chronic Homelessness based on responses to their Length of Time
 - c. **CURRENT LOS (DAYS)** - Number of days between a client's project Start Date and when the report was run
 - d. **LOS BEFORE ENTRY (MONTHS)** - Number of months between a client's Approximate Date Homelessness Started and project Start Date

APPENDIX B: DEFINITION OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Chronic Homelessness, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as contained in the [CoC Program Interim Rule 24 CFR 578.3](#) (April 2017), is defined as:

(1) A "homeless individual with a disability," as defined in section 401(g) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360(g)), who:

(i) Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and

(ii) Has been homeless and living as described in paragraph (1)(i) of this definition continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights of not living as described in paragraph (1)(i).

Stays in institutional care facilities for fewer than 90 days will not constitute as a break in homelessness, but rather such stays are included in the 12-month total, as long as the individual was living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility;

(2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility; or

(3) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) or (2) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

APPENDIX C: DE-CMIS GUIDANCE SUMMARY PAGE

DE-CMIS HOW TO GUIDANCE: Length of Time/Chronic Homelessness

SUMMARY

All questions on the screenshot below are important in CMIS as they are used to calculate a client's **Length of Time (LOT) Homeless** and calculate LOT as it applies to **chronic homelessness (CH)** status. LOT calculates a client's current episode of literal homelessness. As per HUD, this is when a client previously stays at either a "Place not meant for habitation" or an "Emergency shelter incl. Hotel/motel paid for w/ ES voucher, or RHY-funded Host Home shelter," only (potentially) separated by short-term temporary living situations. The determination of a client's CH status opens additional access to permanent housing or diversion resources.

The screenshot shows a form with five numbered questions:

- 1** Prior Living Situation: A dropdown menu with "-Select-" selected.
- 2** Length of Stay in Previous Place: A dropdown menu with "-Select-" selected.
- 3** Approximate date homelessness started: Three date input fields (MM/DD/YYYY) with a calendar icon and a "G" icon.
- 4** Regardless of where they stayed last night - number of times the client has been on the streets or in ES in the past three years, including today: A dropdown menu with "-Select-" selected.
- 5** Total number of months homeless on the street or ES in the past three years: A dropdown menu with "-Select-" selected.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- This section must be reviewed for each project entry, especially when old answers appear.
- ES and SO clients will always have all five (5) questions, while any other project type (PSH, RRH, TH) are designed with conditional logic.
 - If the response to Prior Living Situation is not considered by HUD as literally homeless, the last three (3) questions will not appear.
- Leaving these blank or selecting "Client doesn't know/Client refused/Data not collected" will be flagged as errors.

FIELD #	DESCRIPTION
1	Where each client was residing in the night before their project entry.
2	How long the client was continuously residing in the most recent place of stay.
3	Estimate of when this episode of literal homelessness began. This is not the very first time a client has lost their housing. When to say <i>approximate date homelessness started = project start date</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary/permanent prior living situation exceeded seven (7) days • Institutional stays in prior living situation exceeded 90 days • Short-term housing is included if lengths of stay are less than mentioned.
4	Number of times (episodes) a client has lived in an emergency shelter or place not meant for habitation in the last three years. If it is their first time, select "One time".
5	Total number of months literally homeless across all episodes in the last three years excluding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary situations for over seven (7) days • Institutional stays for over 90 days