

# Chronic Homelessness Documentation

September 22, 2021

Information taken from a HUD webinar on Chronic Homelessness

# Why Should I Care About Chronic Homelessness?

- Documentation of Chronic Homelessness is required for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs.
- P. 27 of the Written Standards:
  - “Further, people who have complete chronic documentation in place with the Coordinated Entry System Manager are prioritized for openings in PSH programs.”

# Reminder of the Chronic Homeless Definition

(1) A “homeless individual with a disability,” as defined in the Act, who: Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter;

**and**

- Has been homeless (as described above) continuously for at least 12 months **or** on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined occasions must total at least 12 months. Occasions are separated by a break of at least seven nights.

(2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care 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 paragraphs (1) or (2) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

# Documenting a Disability

- Must be third-party, and includes:
  - Written verification from a professional licensed by the State to diagnose and treat the disability and certification that the disability is expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration and substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently.
  - Written verification from SSA.
  - The receipt of a disability check.
  - Intake staff-recorded observation of a disability that is confirmed and accompanied by evidence above within 45 days of being housed.

# Documenting Length of Homelessness

- Order of priority:
  1. Third-party.
  2. Self-certification from the person seeking assistance.

# Documenting Length of Homelessness: Acceptable Forms of Third-Party Documentation

- An individual record of a stay in an emergency shelter, a safe haven, or from a street outreach contact from HMIS or comparable database.
- A written observation by an outreach worker or intake worker of encounters with the individual or head of household that includes a description of the conditions where the individual or head of household was living or is currently living.
- A written observation by a community member that has observed where the individual or head of household was living or is currently living.
- A written referral by another housing or service provider.

# Documenting Length of Homelessness: Written Observation by Outreach or Intake Worker

- Must have physically observed where the individual or head of household is currently residing.
- If the encounter was at a soup kitchen or day resource center, you must state why you believe, to the best of your knowledge and based on your professional judgement, that the person is/was residing in a place not meant for human habitation, emergency shelter, or safe haven. Must specify each month in which you encountered the person and the nature of the conversation that led you to believe they were experiencing literal homelessness.
- Cannot provide third-party documentation for months that you did not encounter the person.
- Written observation should be on letterhead, should be signed by the staff member and contain their title.

# Documenting Length of Homelessness: Community Member Verification of Homelessness

- May accept third-party documentation from someone in the community (shopkeeper, building owner, neighborhood resident) that has physically observed where the person has been residing.
- Prefer the community member provide written observation that indicates which months they have seen the person.
- Can take oral documentation from the community member, but the intake worker must write it down.
- Intake worker must use professional judgement as to the reliability of the source.

## Documenting Length of Homelessness: Important Reminder!

- A single encounter in a month is sufficient to consider the household homeless for an entire month unless there is evidence of a break.

## Documenting Length of Homelessness: What if I Can't Get Third-Party Documentation?

- Provide a written record of your due diligence to obtain Third-Party Documentation.
- Provide a written record of intake worker's documentation of the living situation.

### **AND**

- Provide the individual's self-certification of the living situation.

# Documenting Length of Homelessness: Self-Certification

- An individual's time in a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter, or a safe haven.
- Third-party documentation is preferred; however:
  - For all clients, up to 3 months can be documented through self-certification.
  - In limited circumstances, up to the full 12 months can be obtained through self-certification.
- Must provide:
  - Thorough documentation of attempts to obtain third-party documentation and why third-party documentation was not obtained.
  - Written certification from individual or head of household of the living situation of the undocumented time period.

# Documenting Length of Homelessness: What Is a Break in Homelessness?

- At least 7 nights not residing in an emergency shelter, safe haven, or place not meant for human habitation.
  - Examples: Staying with family/friends, doubled-up, couch surfing, staying in a hotel that is paid for by the individual.
- Stays in institutions of greater than 90 days.
  - Note: Stays in institutions of less than 90 days do not constitute as a break and count toward total time homeless.

# Documenting Length of Homelessness: Illustrating Breaks

- Evidence of a break can be documented by:
  - Third-party evidence.
  - The self-report of the individual seeking assistance.
    - Note: 100% of the breaks can be documented by self-report.

## Documenting Length of Homelessness: Institutional Stays

- Discharge paperwork or a written or oral referral from a social worker, case manager, or other appropriate official stating the beginning and end dates of the time residing in the institutional care facility.
- When the above is not attainable, a written record of intake worker's due diligence to obtain verification **AND** the individual's self-certification that they are exiting an institutional care facility where they resided for less than 90 days.

## Documenting Length of Homelessness: Where Do I Start?

- Start with HMIS – This is the easiest way to get documentation. We have a statewide system.
- Third-party – Talk with the participant to figure out who may have known of their homelessness and will be able to document it.
- Self-certification should be the last resort.

# Chronic Homeless Documentation: How Does This Look Locally?

- Forms can be found on the HSC website:  
<https://www.danecountyhomeless.org/forms>
- Complete the Participant Interest Form with anyone you are working with who does not already have a housing resource.
- Disability Verification – Work on this with anyone who has a disability.
  - Prioritize this documentation for people who are currently Chronic.
- Homeless History
  - Only send to Coordinated Entry once you have 12 months of documented homelessness **OR** if you have some months but will discontinue working with the participant.
- Please send all forms to Katie Spaeth: [katie.spaeth@icalliances.org](mailto:katie.spaeth@icalliances.org).