

# HMIS Data Element Collection Training

211

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Orange County  
**UNITED WAY**

# Q&A



To better organize questions the HMIS Help Desk receives during the training, our Team recommends that you submit your questions through the Q&A option.

We request that you keep your questions general and related to the topics discussed in the training.

Agency specific questions is best supported through a HMIS Help Desk ticket submission, so our Team is able to further investigate and provide assistance for your request.

# Agenda

1. Using & Disclosing Client Information
2. Client Privacy Best Practices
3. HMIS Data Elements 3.01-3.07 (Client Profile and Demographic Data)
4. HMIS Data Element 3.917 (Prior Living Situation)

Meeting materials and recording will be available on the [OC HMIS website](#)



# Data Collection Terms

**Data Elements** = response fields in HMIS correlate to categories of data called elements.

EX: Universal Data Elements (UDE) such as Name or Social Security Number

**Client Universe** = which group of clients the data is about.

EX: All clients, Head of Household, Veterans etc.

**Collection Point** = what point in time the data element is entered.

EX: Record Creation, Enrollment Screen, Exit Screen, Occurrence Point.

# Universal Data Elements

Universal Data Elements are data required to be collected by all projects about all clients participating in HMIS, regardless of funding source.

To produce unduplicated estimates of the number of people experiencing homelessness and accessing services.

Provide context about the basic demographic characteristics of people experiencing homelessness including patterns of service use, shelter stays, and homelessness over time.

Universal data elements are found on the client profile and project enrollment and exit screens.

Universal Identifier Elements (One and Only One per Client Record)	Universal Project Stay Elements (One or More Value(s) Per Client, One Value Per Project Stay)
★ 3.01 Name	3.08 Disabling Condition
★ 3.02 Social Security Number	3.10 Project Start Date
★ 3.03 Date of Birth	3.11 Project Exit Date
★ 3.04 Race and Ethnicity	3.12 Destination
★ 3.06 Gender	3.15 Relationship to Head of Household
★ 3.07 Veteran Status	3.16 Enrollment CoC
	3.20 Housing Move-In Date
	★ 3.917 Prior Living Situation

# Using & Disclosing Client Information

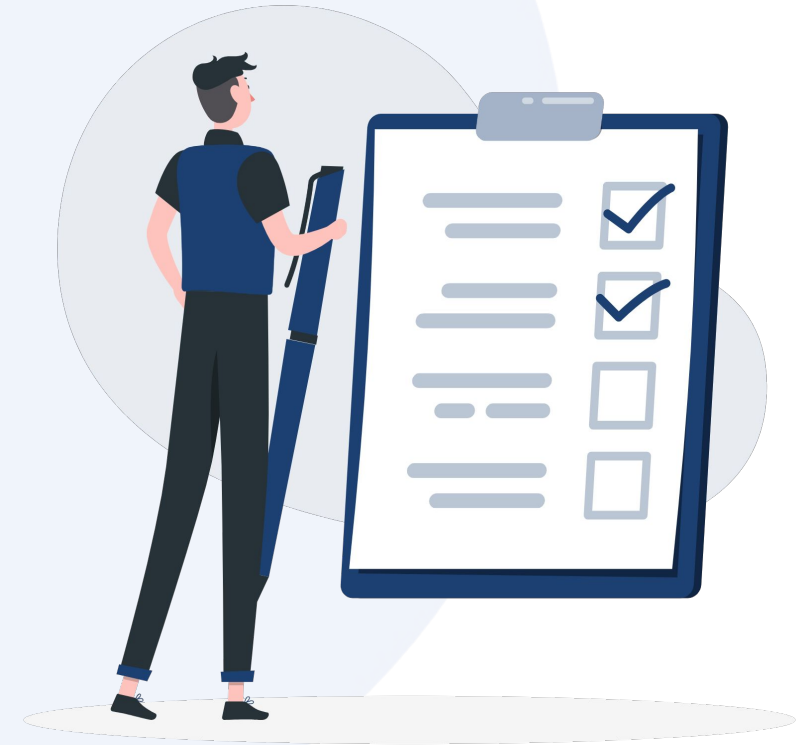


Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

# Using & Disclosing Client Information

- [HMIS Data Standards](#), the client always has a right to privacy and can refuse to provide their information without being denied service. However, some information may be required to determine program eligibility.
  - Clients may provide or refuse/revoke consent at any time.
- Client consent is not needed to ask for the information or to enter it into the HMIS. Some funders may establish required data elements that agencies will need to ask client for specific information and to enter it into HMIS. Please note, however, that collecting the data and using or disclosing the data are two different things.
  - Review the [HMIS Client's Record Sharing Decision Pathways](#) for additional guidance.

KBs: [Accessing and Completing Release of Information \(ROI\) Page](#)  
[Creating Client Records without Client-Identifying Information](#)  
[Refusing/Revoking Consent to Share Personal Information](#)



Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

# Client Privacy Best Practices



Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

# Client Privacy Best Practices

All HMIS Users must be able to clearly explain the purpose and benefit of HMIS and the related HMIS Consent Form as detailed in the Client Privacy section.

- What is HMIS?
- What personal identifying data will be collected and how it will be used?
- Privacy and confidentiality standards
- Revocation of consent and how to do it

Ensure clients have the opportunity to review and ask questions about each of the privacy forms during intake.

- Remind clients that they have the right to deny or revoke their consent at any time and that their decision to share their PPI will not affect their ability to receive **\*most services. *\*Most services that do not require certain data for program eligibility\****
  - An example when specific data is needed for eligibility verification, a PSH project may require information about disabilities or a program required to serve only elderly individuals may require a date of birth to ensure the individual is 62 or over.

# HUD Data Elements 3.01-3.07: Client Profile and Demographic Data



Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

## 3.01 Name

### Overview:

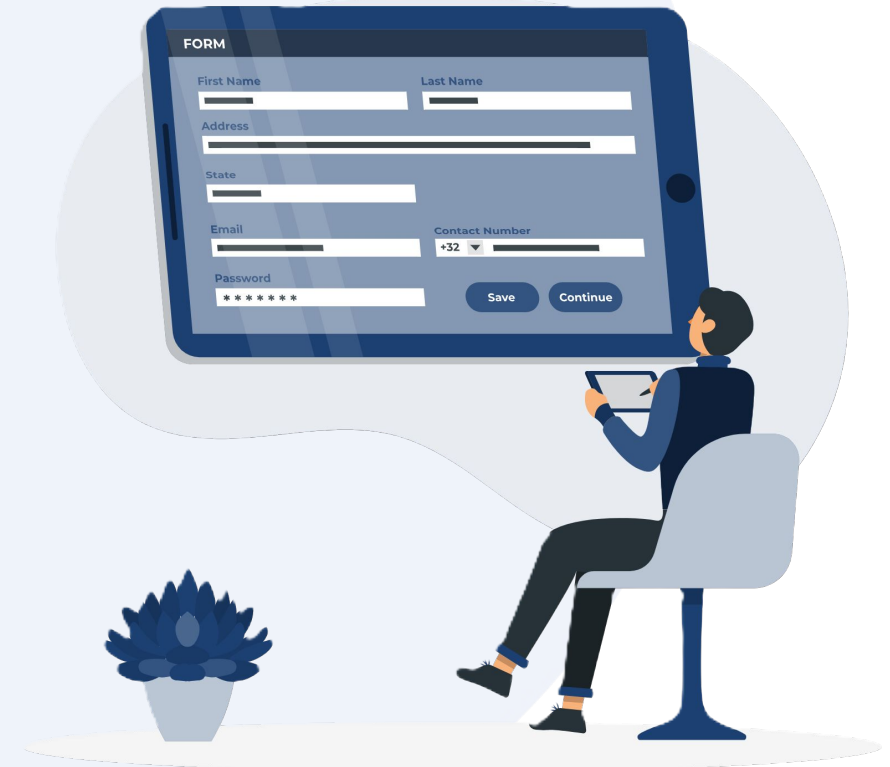
Before creating a new profile, search if the client already has an existing HMIS record to reduce duplicate records.

If the client does not yet have a HMIS record, create a new client record, enter the client's full name and select the appropriate data quality indicator.

Use the name the client identifies with unless a funder (e.g., VA) requires the legal name; this helps prevent duplicate records and makes searches easier.

Street Outreach and Coordinated Entry projects may record limited information about the client and improve the accuracy and completeness of client data over time by editing data.

For more information on client profiles, please review the [Adding Client Profiles to HMIS](#) knowledge base article.



Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

# 3.01 Name

## Data Collection:

- Record the full first and last names used by the client.
  - Use the custom Alias field to record other names the client may go by.
- Enter a response for the 'Quality of Name' field.

Quality of Name	Description
Full name reported	Full first and last name has been recorded as provided by client
Partial, street name, or code name reported	If a name other than the full and accurate name is recorded
Client doesn't know	Client does not know or was unable to provide their name
Client prefers not to answer	Client choose not to provide their name at intake
Data not collected	The HMIS user did not attempt to collect client's name

CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number - - - - -

Quality of SSN Select

**Last Name**

**First Name**

**Quality of Name** Select

Quality of DOB

Date of Birth

Middle Name

Gender Select

Race and Ethnicity Select

Additional Race and Ethnicity Detail

Select

Full name reported

Partial, street name, or code name reported

Client doesn't know

Client prefers not to answer

Data not collected

# 3.01 Name

## Name Collection Best Practices:

- Always search for existing client records before creating a new record - validate any potential records with the client's other PPI (e.g. DOB and SSN).
- Use the preferred name, spelling and format provided by the client unless a complete legal name is required by the funder.
- Have the client review the name information entered for accuracy.
- If needed, update/correct temporary or incomplete name data when more accurate complete information becomes available.
- Collecting primary identification to validate the client data entered on the profile screen should be a priority!

### CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	909 - 99 - 4750
Quality of SSN	Full SSN Reported <input type="checkbox"/>
Last Name	They Gray
First Name	Gandalf
Quality of Name	Data not collected <input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of DOB	Select
Date of Birth	Full name reported
Middle Name	Partial, street name, or code name reported
Race and Ethnicity	Client doesn't know
Additional Race and Ethnicity Detail	Client prefers not to answer
	Data not collected

Please fill in Release of Information form



# 3.01 Name

## Name Collection Common Errors:

- Entering a legal name when the client identifies with a different name (when legal name is not required by the funder).
- Not verifying the existing name when a client already has a record in HMIS.
- Creating duplicate records because the worker searched with a slightly different spelling or name.
- Using nicknames or code names and never updating them once the client's real or preferred name is known.
- Leaving placeholder names in the system instead of updating them later with accurate information.

SEARCH FOR A CLIENT ADD CLIENT +

SEARCH

Use full name, partial name, date of birth or any combination.

**⚠** To search a client, please note that you can use any combination of:  
name (whole or part first or last name), DOB, SS number

Your search - "Gandalf The Gray" - did not match any client.

SEARCH FOR A CLIENT ADD CLIENT +

SEARCH

Use full name, partial name, date of birth or any combination.

	Date of Birth	Last Four SSN	Last Updated	ROI
Gandelf The Gray	09/22/1954	Age: 71 4732	03/16/2026	<span>Yes</span>

CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	583 - 71 - 7931
Quality of SSN	Full SSN Reported <span>▼</span>
Last Name	Grey Beard
First Name	Blue Hat
Quality of Name	Client prefers not to answer <span>▼</span>

## 3.02 Social Security Number (SSN)

### Overview:

Collection of Social Security Numbers (SSN) are used for the unique identification of each person served and to avoid creating duplicate records at Project Start.

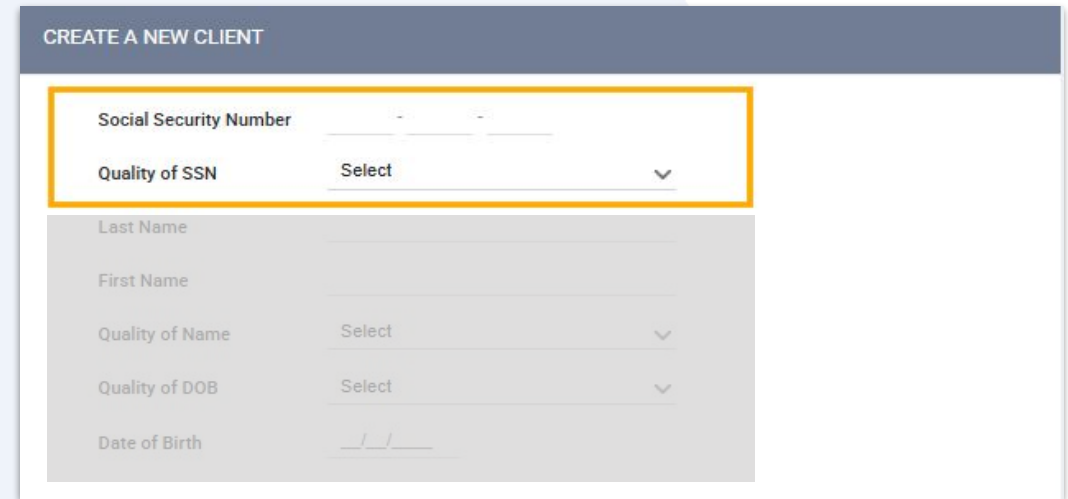
While PATH, CoC, and ESG funded projects are only required to collect the last four digits of the SSN, staff should strive to collect all nine digits of the SSN.

The Social Security Number field appears at the top of the client record creation screen.

A social security entry and Quality of SSN response is **required** before you can save a new client record.

If left blank, the system displays a banner to indicate that the record cannot be saved.

For more information on Social Security Number data entry, please review the [Adding Client Profiles to HMIS](#) knowledge base article.



CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number [input field]

Quality of SSN [Select dropdown]

Last Name [input field]

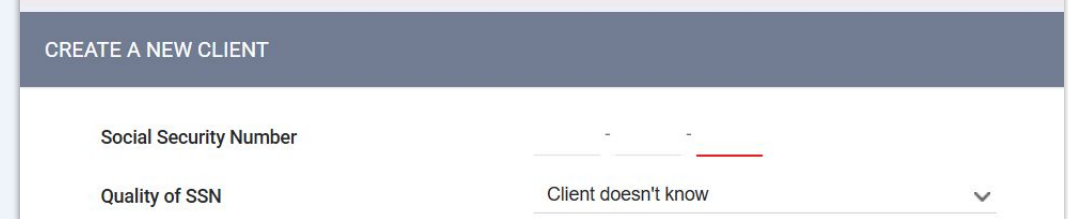
First Name [input field]

Quality of Name [Select dropdown]

Quality of DOB [Select dropdown]

Date of Birth [input field]

▲ Changes have not been saved. Please correct your entry and try again.



CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number [input field]

Quality of SSN [Client doesn't know dropdown]

## 3.02 Social Security Number (SSN)

### Response Descriptions:

When a user enters an SSN for a client, the system will check to see if the SSN is valid as based on Social Security Administration guidelines.

**If an invalid response is entered an alert will pop-up.**

A SSN is considered invalid if any of the following are true:

- The last four digits of the SSN are '0000'
- First three digits are '000', '666',
- The SSN starts with '9'
- The middle digits are '00'
- The digits are repetitive, like 333-33-3333, etc.
- The digits are sequential, like 123-45-6789

#### octrain.clarityhs.com says

The SSN entered does not conform to Social Security Administration guidelines. Click 'Cancel' to change the SSN. Click 'OK' to proceed with the SSN entered.

OK

Cancel

▲ Please correct errors.

CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	912 - 12 - 3456
Quality of SSN	Full SSN Reported
Last Name	The Gray
First Name	Gandalf

## 3.02 Social Security Number (SSN)

### Response Descriptions:

Users may enter **non-numeric digits** for parts of an SSN that are unknown or refused by a client.

The system will automatically convert those non-numeric entries to an “x.”  
Example: xxx-45-6789, 123-xx-6789, 12x-x5-6789

If any digit in the SSN has a non-numeric character the “Quality of SSN” field defaults to **‘Approximate or partial SSN reported.’**

If a non-numeric character is entered for all 9 digits of the SSN, the “Quality of SSN” field defaults to **‘Client doesn’t know,’** but is editable.

- To avoid missing/incomplete data, users must later edit the Quality of SSN when using:
  - **Client prefers not to answer**
  - **Data not collected**

CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	asj - fs - ouis
Quality of SSN	Client doesn't know
Last Name	Gondolin
First Name	Earendil

CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	xxx - xx - 4456
Quality of SSN	Approximate or partial SSN reported

CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	xxx - xx - xxxx
Quality of SSN	Client doesn't know

## 3.02 Social Security Number (SSN)

### Social Security Number Collection Best Practices:

- Collecting the full SSN when possible.
- Verifying and correcting existing SSNs in HMIS with primary documentation when entering partial SSNs.
- If the full number is unavailable, updating records when new more accurate and complete information is obtained.
- Cross checking client SSNs with other identifiers to prevent duplicate client records.

CREATE A NEW CLIENT	
Social Security Number	602 - 69 - 4328
Quality of SSN	Full SSN Reported <span>▼</span>

CREATE A NEW CLIENT	
Social Security Number	000 - 00 - 4328
Quality of SSN	Approximate or partial SSN reported <span>▼</span>

## 3.02 Social Security Number (SSN)

### Social Security Number Common Errors:

- Failing to check whether the SSN already in the client's HMIS record is correct when enrolling them.
- Typing errors or entering numbers without confirming accuracy with the client.
- Changing a previously recorded full 9-digit SSN to only the last four digits when the client did not request it.
- Not documenting whether the client refused, does not know, or if the SSN was not collected.
- Not using SSN (along with name and date of birth) to check if the client already exists in HMIS.
- Entering only the last four digits initially and never updating the record when the full SSN becomes available.
- Using numbers like "999-99-9999" instead of properly selecting the correct SSN data quality option.

# 3.03 Date of Birth

## Overview:

Date of Birth (DOB) is collected to help determine a client’s age at project start and during enrollment and to support the accurate identification of each person served in HMIS.

Collecting a full and accurate DOB helps prevent duplicate records and improves overall data quality.

The client Date of Birth field is located on the client record creation screen, under the SSN, and name fields.

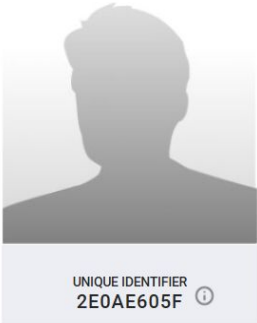
For more information on Date of Birth data entry, please review the [Adding Client Profiles to HMIS](#) knowledge base article.

Gandelf The Gray

PROFILE HISTORY PROGRAMS ASSESSMENTS NOTES FILES CONTACT LOCATION REFERRALS SERVICES

CLIENT PROFILE

Social Security Number	*** - ** - 4732
Quality of SSN	Full SSN Reported
Last Name	The Gray
First Name	Gandelf
Quality of Name	Full name reported
Quality of DOB	Full DOB Reported
Date of Birth	09/22/1954 Adult. Age: 71
Middle Name	None
Gender	Man (Boy, if child)
Race and Ethnicity	White
Additional Race and Ethnicity Detail	Maiar
Veteran Status	No



# 3.03 Date of Birth

## Response Options:

- Complete DOB select, '**Full DOB Reported.**'
- Missing Day/Month, select '**Approximate or partial DOB reported.**'
- Unable to estimate age within one year of their actual age, select '**Client doesn't know.**'
- Select '**Client prefers not to answer,**' when a client declines to provide their birth year.
- Select '**Data Not Collected,**' when no attempt was made to collect DOB information from the client.

Quality of DOB	Full DOB Reported	▼
Date of Birth	09/22/1954	Adult. Age: 71

Quality of DOB	Approximate or partial DOB reported	▼
Date of Birth	01/01/1955	Adult. Age: 71

# 3.03 Date of Birth

## DOB Collection Best Practices:

Verify with documentation where possible.

If a record already exists for the client, verify that the recorded DOB is accurate.

If the client doesn't remember or want to provide the day/month of their birth record a date of '01' instead.

*Example: 01/01/2000 or 05/01/2000*

CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	-	-
Quality of SSN	Select	▼
Last Name		
First Name		
Quality of Name	Select	▼
Quality of DOB	Approximate or partial DOB reported	▼
Date of Birth	01/01/988	Adult. Age: 1037
Middle Name	None	▼
Gender	Select	▼
Race and Ethnicity	Select	▼
Additional Race and Ethnicity Detail		
Veteran Status	Select	▼

Please fill in Release of Information form CANCEL

## 3.03 Date of Birth

### DOB Common Errors:

- Entering an incorrect DOB (Proof of DOB (Birth Certificate or ID) should be added to the client record when possible).
- Typing errors or recording the wrong year, month, or day.
- Failing to check and confirm the DOB when enrolling an existing client record in HMIS.
- Using an estimated DOB but not marking it as approximate.
- Choosing “Client doesn’t know” or “Client prefers not to answer” when the client provided their full DOB.
- Entering placeholders or guesses without documentation.

Please correct errors.

### CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	909 - 70 - 0411
Quality of SSN	Full SSN Reported <input type="checkbox"/>
Last Name	Trin
First Name	Mega
Quality of Name	Full name reported <input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of DOB	Approximate or partial DOB reported <input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Birth	03/00/1988

# 3.04 Race & Ethnicity

Overview:

To indicate client's self-identification with one or more different racial and/or ethnic categories.

This data supports system planning, and local and national understanding of who is experiencing homelessness.

<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
<b>Additional Race and Ethnicity Detail</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous
<b>Veteran Status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Asian American
<b>VETERAN INFORMATION</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Black, African American, or African
<b>Year Entered Military Service (Year)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latina/o
<b>Theater of Operations: World War II</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern or North African
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
	<input type="checkbox"/> White
	<input type="checkbox"/> Client doesn't know

# 3.04 Race & Ethnicity

## Response Descriptions:

Clients may self-report as many race and ethnicity responses as needed.

Additional Race and Ethnicity Detail (*optional*) is available to capture options not available in the picklist.

Staff can write in the client's self-reported Additional Race and Ethnicity Detail.

Field Name	Response/Data Type	Description
Race and Ethnicity	American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	A person who identifies with any of the original peoples of North, Central, and South America. Examples include, but are not limited to Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Tlingit, etc.
	Asian or Asian American	A person who identifies with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups originating in East Asia, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. Examples include, but are not limited to Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, Vietnamese, or another representative nation/region.

# 3.04 Race & Ethnicity

## Response Descriptions:

A full list of Race and Ethnicity response options and descriptions are available from the HMIS Data Standards Manual.

- If the client doesn't know their race or ethnicity, enter **'Client doesn't know.'**
- If the client doesn't want to provide the information, enter, **'Client prefers not to answer.'**
- A response of **'Data not collected,'** means the client was not asked about their race or ethnicity.

Field Name	Response/Data Type	Description
Race and Ethnicity	American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	A person who identifies with any of the original peoples of North, Central, and South America. Examples include, but are not limited to Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Tlingit, etc.
	Asian or Asian American	A person who identifies with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups originating in East Asia, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. Examples include, but are not limited to Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, Vietnamese, or another representative nation/region.

## 3.04 Race & Ethnicity

### Race & Ethnicity Collection Best Practices:

- Always collect race and ethnicity through client self-identification.
- Do not rely on staff observation or assumptions based on appearance, name, or background.
- Show the client all race and ethnicity response options.
- Allow the client to select multiple races or ethnicities if they identify with more than one.
- Ask questions in a respectful and nonjudgmental way.
- Be aware that past experiences or trauma may affect a client's comfort level in answering demographic questions.
- When enrolling a client who already has a record in HMIS, confirm that their race and ethnicity information is accurate and complete and update it if needed.
- If a client identifies with a more specific ethnicity or cultural identity, record that information in the open text field (for example, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.).

### CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	909 - 70 - 0411
Quality of SSN	Full SSN Reported <input type="checkbox"/>
Last Name	Trin
First Name	Mega
Quality of Name	Full name reported <input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of DOB	Full DOB Reported <input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Birth	03/24/1988 <span style="float: right;">Adult. Age: 37</span>
Middle Name	None <input type="checkbox"/>
Race and Ethnicity	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/>
Additional Race and Ethnicity Detail	Filipino

## 3.04 Race & Ethnicity

### Race and Ethnicity Collection Common Errors:

- Entering guesses based on appearance, name, or other assumptions.
- Limiting the client's choices or only asking about one race or ethnicity even if they identify with more than one.
- Leaving old or incomplete race/ethnicity information in HMIS when enrolling a client who already has a record.
- Entering a race/ethnicity value and simultaneously marking "Client doesn't know" or "Client prefers not to answer."
- Failing to record more specific ethnic or cultural identifiers the client provides (e.g., Puerto Rican, Haitian).

### CREATE A NEW CLIENT

Social Security Number	909 - 70 - 0411	
Quality of SSN	Full SSN Reported	
Last Name	Trin	
First Name	Mega	
Quality of Name	Full name reported	
Quality of DOB	Full DOB Reported	
Date of Birth	03/24/1988	Adult. Age: 37
Middle Name	None	
Race and Ethnicity	Client doesn't know	
Additional Race and Ethnicity Detail	Filipino	
Veteran Status	Yes	

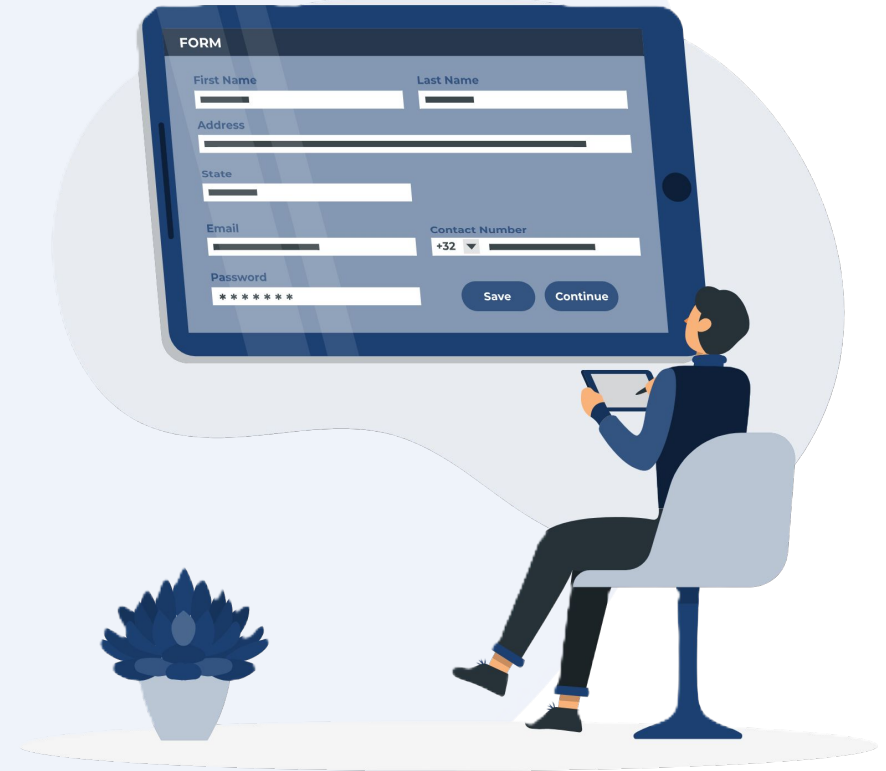
## 3.07 Veteran Status

### Overview:

Veteran status data allows for an accurate count of how many Veterans experience homelessness and possibly eligible for Veterans' services.

The Veteran Status field will populate on the profile creation screen for any adult clients. The veteran status field will only populate on the screen once a DOB of 18-years or older is entered.

This data is useful for screening for possible housing and service interventions and for gaining an understanding of Veterans' service needs.



## 3.07 Veteran Status

### Response Descriptions:

These are the available Response Descriptions available when entering a Veteran Status.

This data element is only required for adult clients and when a client turns 18 while enrolled in a program.

The client's veteran status along with other data elements such as income should be reviewed and collected when the client ages into adulthood.

### Response Descriptions

Field Name	Response/Data Type	Description
<b>Veteran Status</b>	No	Client has never spent any time in the United States Armed Forces. This includes individuals who attended training but were discharged before reporting to a duty station, and Reservists or National Guard who were never activated or deployed.
	Yes	Client has ever served in the Armed Forces of the United States, regardless of discharge status or length of service. Please see the <a href="#">VA Data Guide</a> for additional specific information related to 'Veteran Status' definition.
	Client doesn't know	"Client doesn't know" should only be selected when a client does not know their Veteran status.
	Client prefers not to answer	"Client prefers not to answer" should be selected when a client chooses not to identify their Veteran status.
	Data not collected	Use this response if the staff does not ask the client to provide their Veteran status.

Source: FY 2026 HMIS Data Standards Manual

# 3.07 Veteran Status

## Veteran Status Collection Best Practices:

'Veteran Status' is not dependent on discharge status.

Asking additional questions may result in more accurate information as some clients may not be aware that they are considered Veterans.

- *“Have you ever been on active duty in the military?”*
- *“Were you disabled during a period of active-duty training?”*
- *“Were you ever called into active duty as a member of the National Guard or as a Reservist?”*

As always, if using an existing client record, the user should ask the client to confirm the information already recorded and make correction/additions as needed.

Veteran Status Yes ▼

▲ Veteran Notice Testing

VETERAN INFORMATION

Year Entered Military Service (Year)	_____	Separated (Year)	_____
Theater of Operations: World War II	Select		▼
Theater of Operations: Korean War	Select		▼
Theater of Operations: Vietnam War	Select		▼
Theater of Operations: Persian Gulf War	Select		▼
Theater of Operations: Afghanistan	Select		▼
Theater of Operations: Iraq (Iraqi Freedom)	Select		▼
Theater of Operations: Iraq (New Dawn)	Select		▼
Theater of Operations: Other Operations	Select		▼
Branch of Military	Select		▼
Discharge Status	Select		▼

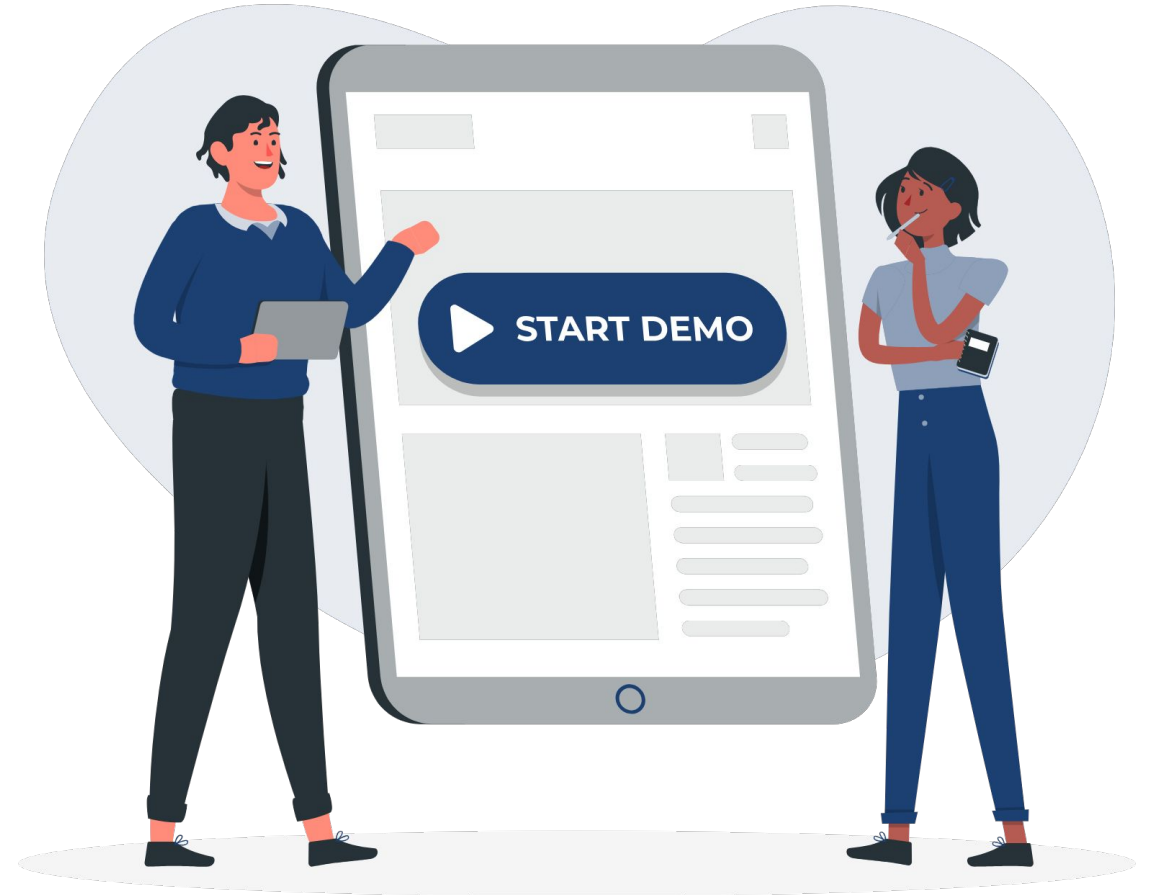
# 3.07 Veteran Status

## Veteran Status Collection Common Errors:

- Not checking a client’s previous HMIS record and overwriting or leaving incorrect Veteran status information.
- Marking “No” because the client is not eligible for certain VA benefits, even though they served in the Armed Forces
- Creating multiple conflicting entries across different enrollments instead of maintaining one record per client.
- Selecting “Client doesn’t know” or “Client prefers not to answer” when the client actually provided an answer.
- Selecting “Data not collected” when the client was asked.
- Failing to ask about service in the National Guard, Reserves, or active-duty training, which can lead to underreporting
- Missing an opportunity to collect Veteran status when a client reaches adulthood during enrollment.

Veteran Status	Yes	▼
VETERAN INFORMATION		
Year Entered Military Service (Year)	Separated (Year)	
Theater of Operations: World War II	Client doesn't know	▼
Theater of Operations: Korean War	Select	▼
Theater of Operations: Vietnam War	Select	▼
Theater of Operations: Persian Gulf War	Select	▼
Theater of Operations: Afghanistan	Select	▼
Theater of Operations: Iraq (Iraqi Freedom)	Select	▼
Theater of Operations: Iraq (New Dawn)	Select	▼
Theater of Operations: Other Operations	Select	▼
Branch of Military	Client doesn't know	▼
Discharge Status	Client doesn't know	▼

# Profile Elements Demo



# HUD Data Element 3.917: Prior Living Situation



Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

# 3.917 Prior Living Situation

Overview:

Prior Living Situation data is used to identify the type of living situation and length of stay in that situation for all Head of Household and Adults *immediately prior* to the project start.

It is also used to calculate Chronic Homelessness status, project eligibility, and length of homelessness.

Users can locate information about the Prior Living Situation data element by navigating to 3.917 of the [HMIS Data Standards](#) or reviewing the [Prior Living Situation Knowledge Base Articles](#).

Data Collection Instruction	
Header	Instructions
Data Collected About	Head of Household and Adult(s)
Funder: Component - Program	All Programs - All Components
Project Type Applicability	All HMIS Project Types*
Collection Point	Project Start

Source: FY 2026 HMIS Data Standards Manual



# 3.917 Prior Living Situation

## Overview:

The Prior Living Situation data element is composed by a series of questions on the project entry screen:

- Type of Residence
- Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation

Projects that do not require a homeless status at entry (e.g. Homeless Prevention) may not see all the response constrained fields available under the Prior Living Situation data element.

Gandelf The Gray

PROFILE HISTORY **PROGRAMS** ASSESSMENTS NOTES FILES CONTACT LOCATION REFERRALS SERVICES

Enroll 'Shire Permanent Supportive Housing Program' program for client Gandelf The Gray

Project Start Date 03/18/2026

COMPLETE HOUSING MOVE-IN DATE WHEN CLIENT MOVES INTO A PERMANENT HOUSING UNIT

Housing Move-In Date

**PRIOR LIVING SITUATION**

Type of Residence	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One week or more, but less than one month
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	05/14/2020
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	One Time
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	More than 12 Months

Gandelf The Gray

PROFILE HISTORY **PROGRAMS** ASSESSMENTS NOTES FILES CONTACT LOCATION REFERRALS SERVICES

Enroll 'Prevention and Shelter Diversion' program for client Gandelf The Gray

Project Start Date 03/17/2026

**PRIOR LIVING SITUATION**


Type of Residence	Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One year or longer
Length of Stay Less Than 7 Nights	No

## 3.917 Prior Living Situation


Errors on the entry screen can result in greater impacts on the CoC as a whole, including the CoC's competitiveness for future funding.

- Poor scoring on entries from literal homelessness (for applicable projects).
- Extremely long lengths of homelessness.
- Not accurately capturing the level of Chronic Homelessness in the community.
- Incorrect Coordinated Entry prioritization.
- Outdated data due to enrollment cascading.

Enroll 'Individual Coordinated Entry System' program for client Gandalf The Grey

Project Start Date	03/11/2026	
PRIOR LIVING SITUATION		
Type of Residence	Staying or living in a friend's room, apartment, or house	
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	Select	▼
Length of Stay Less Than 7 Nights	Select	▼

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION

Type of Residence	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu	
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One week or more, but less than one month	
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	05/14/2020	
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Four or more times	
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	More than 12 Months	

# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Type of Residence

Record the type of living situation that best describes where the client stayed the night prior to project start.

This information is used to track the types of living situations clients are entering from for the project type.

Further guidance and response descriptions for the Type of Residence question are available from [Appendix A of the HMIS Data Standards Manual](#) and the [Type of Residence](#) Knowledge Base Article.

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION	
Type of Residence	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	Select
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus/train/subway station/airport or anywhere outside)
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher, Host Home shelter
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Safe Haven
	Foster care home or foster care group home
	Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility
	Jail, prison, or juvenile detention facility
	Long-term care facility or nursing home
	Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility

# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Type of Residence

## Type of Residence Common Errors:

Reporting where the client stayed on the date the information is being collected.

Reporting where the client stayed when they were last housed as seen on the image to the right.

Hint: Street Outreach projects should report a literal homeless Type of Residence at entry 100% of the time.

Enroll 'ESG Funded Street Outreach Project' program for client Gandelf The Gray

Project Start Date	03/18/2026	
COMPLETE DATE OF ENGAGEMENT WHEN CLIENT HAS BEEN ENGAGED		
Date of Engagement	03/18/2026	
PRIOR LIVING SITUATION		
Type of Residence	Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	▼
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One year or longer	▼
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	03/01/2026	
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	One Time	▼
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	One month (this time is the first month)	▼

# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Length of Stay

## Overview:

The Length of Stay field captures how long the client resided in their Type of Residence leading up to intake.

For this field the intake staff will record the number days, weeks or months in a row the client stayed in that living situation up to the night prior to intake.

Select the field that most closely aligns with the client's self-reported experience.

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION	
Type of Residence	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One week or more, but less than one month
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	Select
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	One night or less
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Two to six nights
DISABLING CONDITIONS AND BARRIERS	One week or more, but less than one month
Disabling Condition	One month or more, but less than 90 days
	90 days or more, but less than one year
	One year or longer
	Client doesn't know
	Client prefers not to answer
	Data not collected

# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Length of Stay

## Response Descriptions:

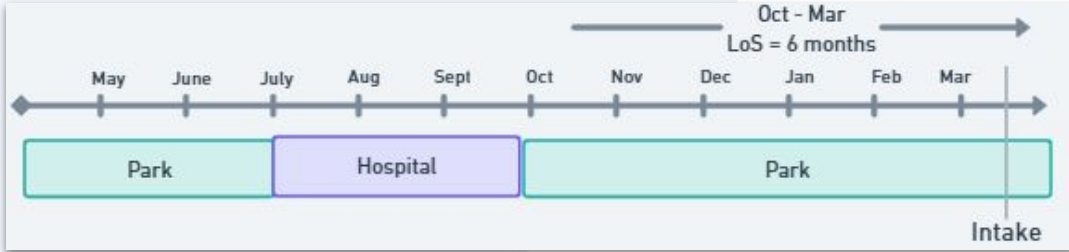
If the client moved around, but stayed in the same type of situation, sum the length of time spent in that living situation (example A).

If the client moved around from one situation to another, only include the time in the living situation immediately prior to intake (example B).

Hint: number of consecutive nights in Type of Residence leading up to intake = Length of Stay.



Example A

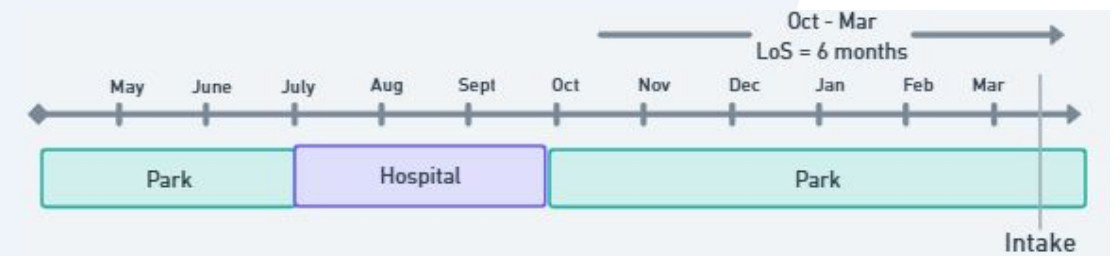


Example B

## 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Length of Stay

### Length of Stay Common Errors:

- ✗ The length of stay is under reported and does not reflect the total time spent in that living situation (e.g including the park time but not the church).
- ✗ The length of stay reflects the total time homeless when the client has reported multiple living situations.



# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Approximate Date this Episode of Homelessness Started

For all projects other than Street Outreach, ES, or Safe Haven, Clarity has built-in logic that populates additional questions based on responses to the *Type of Residence* and *Length of Stay* questions.

If responses those questions meet any of [HUD's literal homeless criteria](#), the *Approximate date this episode of homelessness began* question will appear on the screen.

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION

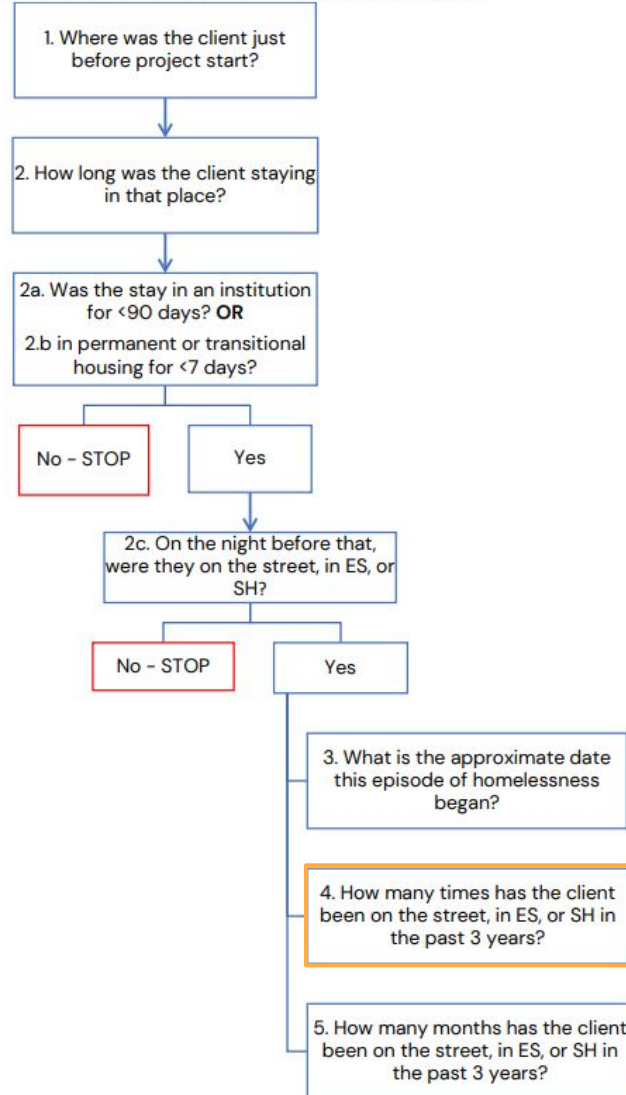
Type of Residence	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu	▼
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One week or more, but less than one month	▼
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	__/__/__	28
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select	▼
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select	▼

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION

Type of Residence	Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria	▼
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	Two to six nights	▼
Length of Stay Less Than 7 Nights	Yes	▼
On the night before - stayed on the streets, ES or Safe Haven	Yes	▼
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	__/__/__	25
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select	▼
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select	▼



3.917B Flow Chart is applicable to all other HMIS project types.



# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Approximate Date this Episode of Homelessness Started

## Overview:

The **Approximate Date this Episode of Homelessness Started** question represents the start date of the client's most recent experience of homelessness.

For further guidance review the HMIS Data Standards, Prior Living Situation.

Review the [Approximate Date Homelessness Started](#) Knowledge Base Article.

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION	
Type of Residence	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One week or more, but less than one month
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	MM/DD/YYYY
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select




# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Approximate Date this Episode of Homelessness Started


## Response Options:

Enter the exact or approximate date the client’s current episode of homelessness began.

The Clarity system will not allow users to save the page without a response for Approximate this Episode of Homelessness Started.

If the client does not know the exact day, it is acceptable to record the first day of the month and year for the date (e.g. 05/01/2020).

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION	
Type of Residence	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One week or more, but less than one month
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	05/14/2020 
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION	
Type of Residence	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One week or more, but less than one month
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	05/01/2020 
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Select



## 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Approximate Date this Episode of Homelessness Started

### Common Errors:

Entering the project start date into the '***Approximate Date this Episode of Homelessness***,' started field without asking the client about their homeless history.

Entering temporary/placeholder date without going back to update the field with a more accurate date.

Failing to review the entry screen questions with the client if the information auto populated due to enrollment cascading.


# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Number/Length of Homeless Episodes in the Past Years

## Overview:


In addition to a start date for the current episode, users will also record the number of unique episodes that occurred and the total number of months the client spent homeless over the past three years.

These questions are used to along with the start date of the current episode, to determine if the client meets HUD's definition of Chronic Homelessness.

Enroll 'Shire Permanent Supportive Housing Program' program for client Gandelf The Gray

Project Start Date 03/18/2026 


COMPLETE HOUSING MOVE-IN DATE WHEN CLIENT MOVES INTO A PERMANENT HOUSING UNIT

Housing Move-In Date  

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION

Type of Residence Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu

Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation One week or more, but less than one month

Approximate date this episode of homelessness started 05/14/2020 

Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years One Time

Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years More than 12 Months

# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Number/Length of Homeless Episodes in the Past Years

## Response Options:


### ***Number of times on the streets, in ES...***

Enter number of episodes of homelessness resulting in the client staying on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years.


### ***Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES...***

Enter the total number of months combined for all episodes in the past three years.

Enroll 'Shire Permanent Supportive Housing Program' program for client Gandelf The Gray

Project Start Date 03/18/2026 


COMPLETE HOUSING MOVE-IN DATE WHEN CLIENT MOVES INTO A PERMANENT HOUSING UNIT

Housing Move-In Date  

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION

Type of Residence Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu

Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation One week or more, but less than one month

Approximate date this episode of homelessness started 05/14/2020 

Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years One Time

Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years More than 12 Months


# 3.917 Prior Living Situation - Number/Length of Homeless Episodes in the Past Years

## Common Errors:

**X** Reporting multiple episodes in the past (3) years when the current episode started more than (3) years ago.

If more than one episode was reported in the past three years, then the most current episode MUST have occurred sometime in the past three years.

Intake staff may need to rephrase the question to ask for the number of times and months spent homeless in the past three years.

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION	
Type of Residence	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu
Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	One week or more, but less than one month
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	05/14/2020 
Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	Four or more times
Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years	More than 12 Months

*This error must be corrected 100% of the time.*

## 3.917 Prior Living Situation

### Prior Living Situation Best Practices:

Explain the purpose of your questions and use plain language (avoid reading the questions verbatim). Staff are encouraged to practice presenting the entry questions to gain confidence with collecting accurate Prior Living Situation data.

While staff may select, '**Client doesn't know**,' or '**Client prefers not to answer**,' when the client cannot remember or does not want to provide response for the Prior Living Situation questions, these entries can impact program eligibility and prioritization for the Coordinated Entry System.

Avoid selecting '**Data not collected**,' and if selected, try to collect the missing data.

Review program intake information that cascades from a previous enrollment and ask the client if it is still accurate.

Become familiar with the different categories of homelessness and what distinguishes are break from an episode. (Review HUD's [Categories of Homelessness page](#))

# Prior Living Situation Conversation



Hi Gandalf, to enroll you in our program, I need to ask you some questions about your history of experiencing homelessness.

These questions will help us determine your Chronic Homeless status and eligibility for certain assistance.

First question, where did you stay or sleep last night?

Okay, thank you.

I stayed in Huntington Beach behind a church. I usually sleep at a friend's or behind the church.



Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

Okay! Since you last left your friend's, do you know how many nights in a row you have stayed/slept behind the church leading up to last night?

A little over a week this time.



Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

211

Get Connected. Get Help.™



Do you know the date when you most recently became homeless? If you don't remember the exact date, the month and year will work too.

I remember the date. It was, **May 14th 2020.**



Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

Have you spent the night anywhere indoors since May 2020?

This could be with friends or family, a hotel, a hospital, or any other location.

I have just stayed with my friend on and off when I can.



Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

211

Get Connected. Get Help.™



Do you remember the date or month/year you last stayed with your friend for more than a week?

I used to rent a room until May 2020, when I became homeless. From then on I could only stay with my friend 2 or 3 days at a time.

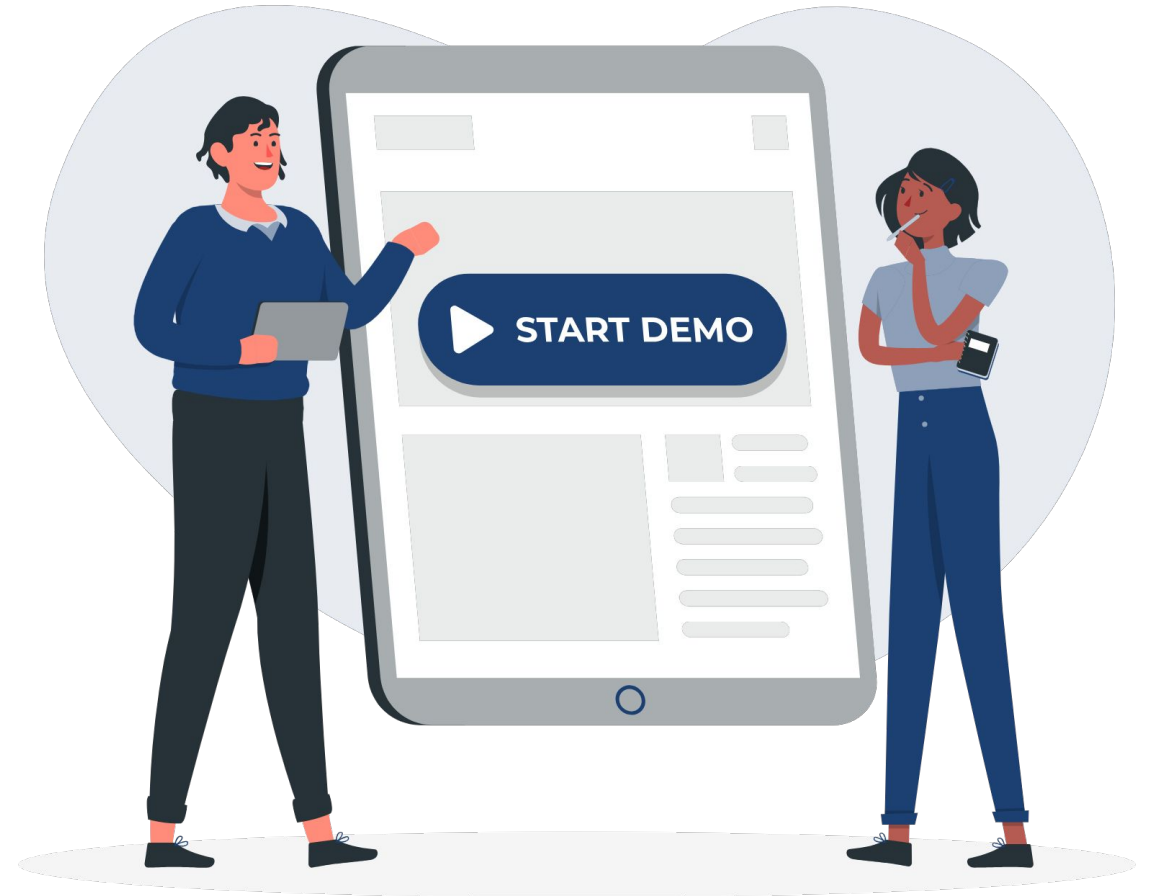


Graphic by: <https://storyset.com/online>

# 3.917 Prior Living Situation



# Prior Living Situation Demo



# 3.917 Prior Living Situation

Record the type of place they slept last night.


Record the length of time they stayed in that situation.

Record the start date of their current episode.

Record the number of EPISODES that occurred in the past three years.

Total and record the number of months homeless for each episode in the past three years.

## PRIOR LIVING SITUATION

<b>Type of Residence</b>	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bu
<b>Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation</b>	One week or more, but less than one month
<b>Approximate Date Homelessness Started</b>	05/14/2020 
<b>Number of times on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years</b>	One Time
<b>Total number of months homeless on the streets, in ES, or Safe Haven in the past three years</b>	More than 12 Months



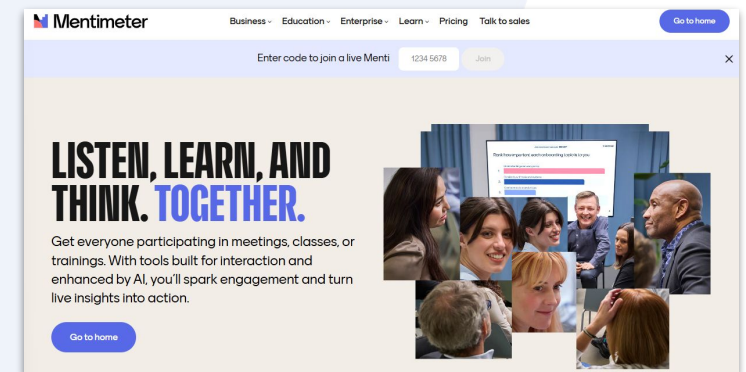
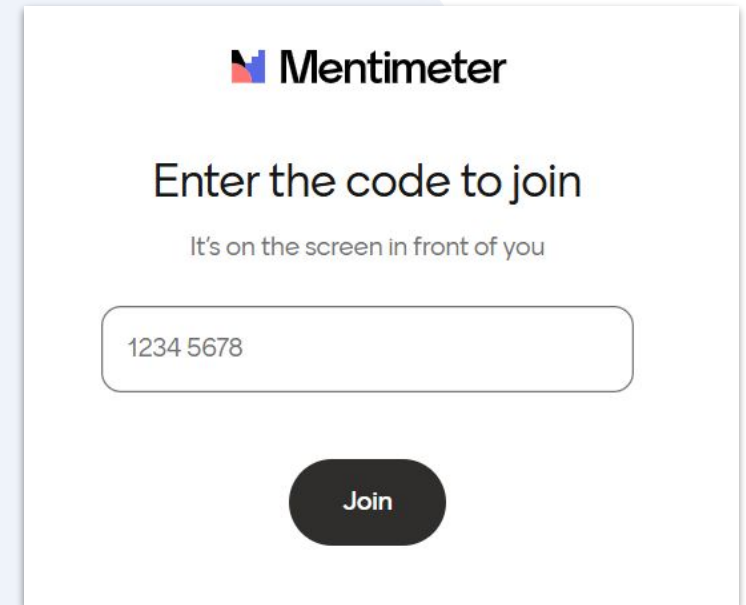
# Data Elements Poll

Step 1. Navigate to [menti.com](https://www.menti.com)

Step 2. Pause for the magic.

Step 3. Plug-in the numerical code or scan the QR code.

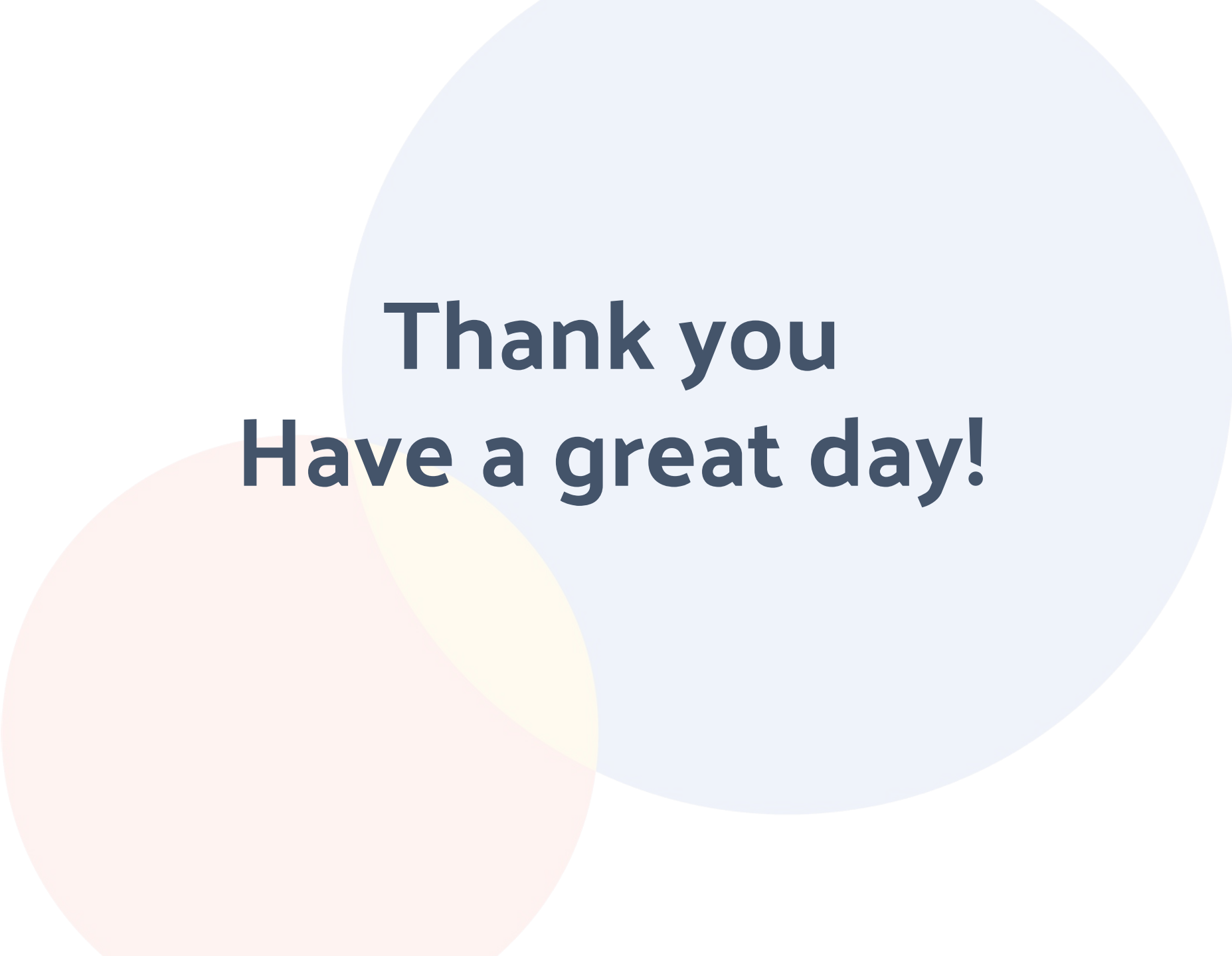
Step 4. Click join and start polling.



# Q&A

**Reminder: Please enter your agency name in the chat box for attendance**

Training materials and recording will be available on the [OC HMIS website](#)



**Thank you  
Have a great day!**



Orange County  
**UNITED WAY**