

Coordinated Entry Cheat Sheet

General

Please note: the HMIS-related guidance provided in this document is <u>only</u> relevant to the Coordinated Entry (CE) provider in HMIS. You should follow your agency/program guidance for anything outside of CE in HMIS.

How do I access HMIS?

The URL for our community's HMIS is: https://sp5.servicept.com/MHIDNashville

We highly recommend you bookmark this link for easy access.

What is Coordinated Entry (CE)?

CE is a system-wide approach that serves to assess all persons experiencing a housing crisis to help identify, prioritize and connect them with the appropriate housing and support service resources as quickly as possible.

Who is CE for?

CE is for <u>anyone</u> 18 years of age or older who is experiencing a -<u>housing crisis</u> (this includes people experiencing literal homelessness, people facing eviction, etc.).

Please note: An individual or family who is staying with family or friends, but is not being asked to leave (just would *prefer* to live somewhere else), is NOT experiencing a housing crisis and should NOT be entered into CE.

How will my clients benefit from CE?

CE helps match clients with the right services and housing type, based on their acuity level. This improves your clients' chances of succeeding in finding and maintaining housing. There are also a variety of resources that your client must be entered into CE to receive. These include:

- How's Nashville Section 8 Vouchers
- Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units at Urban Housing Solutions
- How's Nashville financial assistance for move-in costs
- Annual WeGo bus passes for clients who are experiencing or at risk of chronic homelessness
- Critical Time Intervention (CTI) case management through Centerstone (post-housing)
- Family Rapid Rehousing
- Youth and Young Adult Diversion and Rapid Rehousing
- IPV DV CE and Rapid Rehousing

For more information about these resources, please contact the Metro Homeless Impact Division at nashville.gov.

Is there anyone who will contact me or the client after I've entered them into CE?

CE is a process, not a program. After entering your client into CE, you and your client will still need to fill out any relevant housing applications (i.e. Section 8, UHS SROs) in order for your client to be considered for these housing opportunities. If there is a match to a housing unit, you will be contacted, BUT it is up to you to attend Care Coordination Meetings (CCMs) in order to make sure your client's information is up to date and needs are being met. Care Coordination Meetings are also the place to advocate for your client if you feel that some issues and barriers your client has are not reflected in the VI-SPDAT.

Note: You and your client are responsible for pursuing any other housing options outside of those available through CE (How's Nashville Section 8 vouchers and UHS SROs).

Who should attend Care Coordination Meetings?

Any person working with an individual experiencing homelessness can attend the CCMs. These meetings are a time to update client information, ask about and share resources, etc. Your agency has the option to designate a representative to attend the CCMs. Just make sure you have briefed that representative on your clients, so he/she can advocate for them and give updates as necessary.

Who is assigned as the Housing Navigator (i.e. What does my entering data in HMIS mean for the client?)

Currently, the way Navigators are assigned is based on who is "tagged" as the Navigator in a Case Note in CE. We would like to get to a place where we assigned Navigators at CCMs. Until that time, we need to ensure that each client entered into HMIS has some sort of connection to

a contact at an agency. This could be you, or it could be another employee at your agency (or another agency, if you are collaborating to serve a client across agencies) who will be working with the client on housing.

What constitutes a "household" in HMIS?

A household is a group of people who want to be housed together in the same unit.

This does not necessarily mean that the whole household is *currently* staying together. For instance, you may be serving a mother who's staying in emergency shelter, while her children are staying with family members until she finds housing. This would still constitute a household, since your client plans to ultimately be housed with her children. So you would need to create a household in HMIS that includes the children.

If a parent does not currently have custody of his/her children you should <u>not</u> include the children in the household. If a parent has partial custody, the children should only be included in the household if they will be staying with the parent <u>at least 50% of the time</u>.

Remember: You should <u>not</u> create a household in HMIS if you are working with a single adult. In that case, you will simply skip the household step in the HMIS CE Data Entry Guide.

If you're unsure if a situation constitutes a household for the purposes of CE, please contact the Metro Homeless Impact Division at nashville.gov.

Please refer to the HMIS CE Data Entry Guide (training slides) for detailed instructions on how to create a household in HMIS. If you are having trouble creating a household in HMIS, please contact the HMIS Help Desk at HMISHelp@nashville.gov.

How do I determine who the "head of household" is?

There are no hard and fast rules for determining the head of household. This is largely at the discretion of you and your clients. One good way to determine the head of household is to think about who will open the doors to the most resources for the household. For instance, if you have a two parent family, and one parent is a veteran or meets the criteria for HUD chronic homelessness, it would make the most sense to consider that parent to be the head of household. Alternatively, you can use the individual whose name will be the primary name on the lease once the household is housed.

Remember: Only one person per household should be listed as the head of household in HMIS!

How should I categorize households with a non-binary head of household?

If the head of household identifies their gender as non-binary/gender non-conforming (neither male nor female), use "Other" as the Household Type when you create the household in HMIS.

VI-SPDAT

What is the VI-SPDAT?

The Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) was developed by OrgCode, in collaboration with Community Solutions, as a brief survey that can quickly determine a client's acuity and what housing intervention may be most appropriate. It also assists communities with prioritizing housing resources for the most vulnerable individuals/families.

What is the point of the VI-SPDAT?

- To help determine the person's acuity level
- To help determine the most appropriate housing intervention
- To assist in prioritizing the most vulnerable people for the most appropriate housing intervention
- To connect the person with appropriate support services based on the type of housing intervention

Who should I complete the VI-SPDAT with?

The VI-SPDAT should only be completed with a person or family who is experiencing HUD Category 1 **literal homelessness** (street, shelter [emergency/transitional], place not meant for human habitation, <u>or</u> exiting an institution where he/she has stayed for 90 days or less <u>AND</u> was in emergency shelter or place not meant for habitation immediately before entering the institution) and has identified housing as a goal or want.

NOTE: if the client is a young person aged 18-24, literal homelessness is defined as not having a key of their own to a safe residence.

Do I have to complete the CE preliminary assessment and VI-SPDAT in the same visit?

No. It is 100% acceptable to complete the CE preliminary assessment and VI-SPDAT at different visits. This can be helpful if there isn't enough time to do both at once, or if you need time to build rapport with the individual before completing the VI-SPDAT. You should complete

the preliminary assessment <u>before</u> completing the VI-SPDAT. And make sure you're only completing the VI-SPDAT for individuals and families who meet the criteria specified above!

Which version of the VI-SPDAT should I use?

- VI-SPDAT: Any individual, veteran, adult couple, or family of adults who are experiencing literal homelessness
- F-VI-SPDAT: Any family who has **minor children** in their care, or an expectant mother in her third trimester, who are experiencing literal homelessness
- TAY-VI-SPDAT: Any individual who is 18-24 years of age and does not have a key to a safe and stable residence

If you are unsure about which VI-SPDAT to use, please contact the Metro Homeless Impact Division at nashville.gov.

When should I re-do a VI-SPDAT for someone?

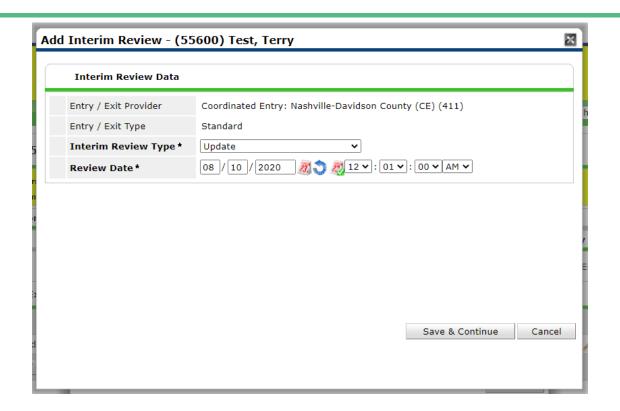
There are only two reasons a VI-SPDAT should be re-completed:

- If a person was housed, exited from CE (via HMIS) and has fallen back into homelessness
- If a person was exited from CE (via HMIS) due to being inactive and has resurfaced (*Note: See page 15 for definition of "inactive" in CE*)

The best way to remember is: does the person currently have an open CE entry in HMIS? If they have been exited, you can re-do a VI-SPDAT (and **create a new entry!**).

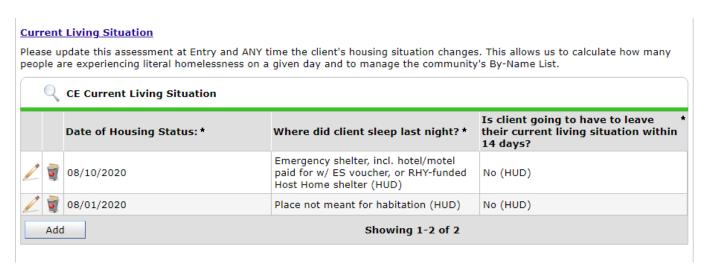
But what if the circumstances for the client have changed (e.g., what if they are now staying at an emergency shelter, but when I completed the VI-SPDAT, they were staying on the street)? Should I do a new VI-SPDAT then?

No. See above for the only reasons a VI-SPDAT should be re-completed. If the circumstances have changed, you should complete an Update (see the screenshot on the following page, and remember to **backdate** appropriately!), note the change in the case notes, and make any necessary updates to the information in HMIS.



Reminder: Include ALL appropriate household members when doing an update.

In the situation described above, you would update the Current Living Situation by adding a new housing situation:



Remember: Do NOT delete previous information when recording an update!

If I'm working with an adult couple, should each person have a separate VI-SPDAT?

YES, all adults should have a VI-SPDAT entered under their profile

CE Entry & Updates in HMIS

Who should I enter into CE in HMIS?

You should enter <u>anyone</u> 18 years of age or older experiencing a -<u>housing crisis</u> (this includes people experiencing literal homelessness, people facing eviction, etc.) into CE, **even if you won't be providing housing navigation for the client, or if the client isn't eligible for services at your agency.** If you won't be assigned as the client's housing navigator, you can simply indicate this in a case note in the client's CE entry. That way, we can make sure no one falls through the cracks and that we're connecting people to housing navigation services as quickly as possible.

It's very important for us to capture everyone experiencing a housing crisis, as this allows us to demonstrate the magnitude of the need for certain services in our community (e.g., prevention, diversion).

Please make sure ALL household members are added to the entry, and remember to fill out all the required information for each household member.

For a detailed list of which data elements are required for each household member, please refer to the HMIS CE Data Entry Guide (training slides). You can also refer to the Section headers within the CE preliminary assessment in HMIS for guidance on which data elements are required (e.g., the first section of the assessment is labeled "Section (1): Complete for All Household Members (Adults & Children)").

Remember: An individual who is staying with family or friends, but is not being asked to leave (just would *prefer* to live somewhere else), is NOT experiencing a housing crisis and should NOT be entered into CE.

What if I'm working with a client who is outside of Davidson County?

You should only enter clients into CE in HMIS if their housing crisis <u>originates</u> in **Davidson County**. If the housing crisis originates *outside of* Davidson County, you should *not* enter the client into CE in HMIS. Even if the client notes they will be coming to Davidson

County, you should only enter the client into CE if they are *currently* experiencing a housing crisis *in Davidson County*.

Why is it important to have <u>complete</u> and <u>accurate</u> information in HMIS?

There are several reasons why it is critical to have complete and accurate client information in HMIS. Among these are:

- We rely on CE data in HMIS to track clients and make sure they're getting connected to the most appropriate resources and housing options. If we don't know what's going on with your clients, we can't adequately meet their needs.
- 2. Having up-to-date, accurate information ensures continuity of services and reduces the chances of duplication. For instance, if a Housing Navigator suddenly vacates their position, but all of their clients have up-to-date information in CE, it is much easier for another Housing Navigator to pick up where the first one left off. Or, if a client shows up at your agency after receiving services from another agency, and their CE information is already in HMIS, you would simply need to verify the information and update as needed to reflect any changes. This reduces the time you and your client have to spend filling out paperwork!
- 3. In order to demonstrate the extent of our community's need for various services and resources (e.g., diversion/prevention), we have to use data. The more information we have in HMIS, the more we can **identify what services our community is lacking** and what gaps we need to fill. This helps us make a much stronger case to potential funders, and it helps us organize our community's Housing Crisis Resolution System in a way that makes the biggest impact for our clients.
- 4. Finally, having accurate and complete information allows us to **demonstrate our** successes! Is our community doing a good job of helping clients to increase their income? Have we seen a measurable decrease in the amount of time it takes for clients to be housed? These and SO many other questions can be answered with CE data!

HMIS has a **global standard** (across all programs/providers) **of 95% data completeness** for universal data elements (e.g., health insurance, income, etc.). CE adheres to the same standard and has also tentatively adopted this standard for CE-specific information (e.g., housing situation guestionnaire, domestic violence questions).

Where can I find a paper copy of the CE assessments?

You can find paper copies of the CE preliminary assessment, interim assessment (for updates), and exit assessment at http://coordinatedentrynashville.weebly.com/navigator-toolstenant-

<u>resources.html</u>. The paper forms are updated any time there are updates to the CE assessments in HMIS. Please use the link to find the most up-to-date forms.

What is Back Date Mode, and when should I use it?

Back Date Mode is simply a way to organize data in HMIS by indicating **when the information was gathered** (e.g., entry date, date of an update, exit date, etc.). You should **always** use Back Date Mode when entering data into HMIS, **even if you are entering data the same day you collect it!**

Remember, the **time stamp** should always stay at **12:01:00 AM**!

Where do I record the health insurance, income, and non-cash benefits for a minor child (under age 18) in a household?

Health insurance for minor children (under age 18) should be recorded in the **child's entry/update**.

If a minor child (under age 18) in a household is receiving some type of **income** (e.g., SSDI) **or non-cash benefits**, you should record that in the **head of household's entry/update**.

For a detailed list of which data elements are required for each household member, please refer to the HMIS CE Data Entry Guide (training slides). You can also refer to the **Section headers** within the CE preliminary assessment in HMIS for guidance on which data elements are required (e.g., the first section of the assessment is labeled "Section (1): Complete for All Household Members (Adults & Minors)").

What documents should be uploaded to the Client Profile?

A signed **Release of Information** (ROI) <u>must</u> be uploaded to the Client Profile for <u>each adult</u> <u>in the household</u>. You should also upload any **relevant housing-related documents** (e.g., birth certificate, Section 8 application, pay stubs, homeless verification form, etc.).

You should <u>always</u> check to ensure that a signed ROI has been uploaded to the Client Profile before proceeding with data entry. Even if there is a verbal consent indicated in the ROI tab, you should obtain a signed ROI if there is not one on file.

Note: Documents of the same type may be uploaded together, but please separate documents of differing types. For instance, if you want to upload birth certificates for multiple household members, you can combine those into one document. But birth certificates and Section 8 applications should be uploaded as separate documents.

Please use the following **naming convention** for your documents:

Client Last Name_Client First Name_Document Type (for instance, Smith_John_Birth Certificate)

If a client already has a signed Release of Information on file, should I get a new release signed?

First, you should check to make sure the ROI is still valid. The current ROI is only valid for **3 years from the date signed.** If the ROI has expired, you need to obtain a new signed ROI. If the ROI is valid, it is not mandatory to obtain a new ROI, but we recommend that you do so anyway, if possible.

What should I do if I look in HMIS and see that my client already has an open CE entry in HMIS? Should I create a new entry?

No. If your client already has a CE entry (without an exit), you should complete an **Update** for the client, to update any relevant information (e.g., housing situation, income, etc.). **No client should have more than one open CE entry at a time.**

If a client has an open entry in CE, please double-check to make sure there is a signed ROI uploaded to the Client Profile, and that the ROI has been entered electronically. Also, if you're adding to a household's existing entry, please make sure all of the appropriate household members were included in the entry. If they were not included, please back date to the entry date and add them to the entry.

If you find an existing entry for your client, please make sure to update the information as needed, or fill in any pieces that were left blank. It is entirely possible that not all of the information for the preliminary assessment was collected at the time of the initial entry, so we're relying on you to make sure all of the client's information is up-to-date, accurate, and as complete as possible.

Please refer to the HMIS CE Data Entry Guide (training slides) for detailed instructions on how to upload documents, enter ROIs electronically in HMIS, and include additional household members in entries.

What should I do if a client gives me information that I know (or suspect) to be false?

All information in CE is self-report. You should enter the information exactly as the client gives it to you. For instance, if a client comes into your office in a wheelchair, but reports that they do not have a disabling condition, you should record NO disabling condition for that client.

Remember, when a client signs the HMIS Release of Information, they are ONLY consenting for you to record the information they give you.

What if a client can't remember the date something occurred?

If a client can't remember an exact date (e.g., their birth date or the date they started experiencing homelessness), use the following guidelines:

What your client knows	How you record the date in HMIS	Example
Month & year	Use the 1st of that month	February 1990 → 2/1/1990
Year	Use January 1st of that year	1990 \(\to 1/1/1990\)

How can I explain to my client what a "disabling condition" is?

If your client does not know what to consider a "disabling condition," you can describe it as a condition that substantially impairs their ability to live independently.

What should I do if a client has more than one disabling condition?

You should enter as many disabling conditions as the client reports. If a client has multiple disabling conditions within one category, you should add multiple records with that category. For instance, if a client reports they have been diagnosed with both Bipolar Disorder and Generalized Anxiety Disorder, you should add TWO mental health conditions in HMIS.

Note: You will see an option for "Both Alcohol and Drug Abuse" when you add a disabling condition to HMIS. However, if a client reports both alcohol and drug abuse, we ask that you record these *separately*. So, you would add one disabling condition using the "Alcohol Abuse" category, and another disabling condition using the "Drug Abuse" category. This allows us to get a more accurate picture of the total number of disabling conditions each client reports.

Should I record the client's diagnosis anywhere in the CE assessments?

NO. Specific diagnoses should *not* be recorded in the CE assessments in HMIS. The only thing you should record for CE purposes is the disabling condition category (e.g., "Mental Health Problem," "Chronic Health Condition," etc.).

What is the difference between the Current Living Situation and the Homeless History Questions?

The Homeless History Questions (e.g., Residence prior to project entry, Length of stay in previous place, etc.) are completed only at entry and are used to determine chronicity. The Current Living Situation is completed both at entry and any time a client's housing situation changes and is used to show a client's movement through the system.

What's the best way to explain the Homeless History Questions?

The Homeless History Questions can be difficult to understand and explain to clients. The table below gives some guidance to help you get the most accurate responses to these questions.

Question Text	In other words	Additional guidance
Prior Living Situation	Where was the client staying the night before they met with you?	
Length of stay in previous place	How long has the client been staying there?	If the client moved around, but was in the <i>same type</i> of situation (e.g., moved from one emergency shelter to another shelter), record the total time in that <i>type</i> of situation.
Approximate date homelessness started	What was the beginning of the current <i>continuous</i> period of homelessness on the streets/in places not meant for habitation, in emergency shelters, in safe havens, or moving back and forth between those places?	This question is asking about <i>literal homelessness</i> (staying on the streets/in a place not meant for habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in safe haven). Ask the client to think back to the last time they were <i>not</i> staying on the streets, in another place not meant for habitation, in emergency shelter, or in safe haven.
Number of times the client has been on the streets, in ES, or SH in the past three years including today	How many separate episodes of literal homelessness has the client experienced in the past three years?	Including today, count all the different times the client was on the streets/in a place not meant for habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in safe haven in the last three years, where there are <i>full breaks</i> in between.
Total number of months homeless on the street, in ES	How many <i>months</i> do those episodes of literal	Always round UP to the next highest month. For

What does "safe haven" mean, in the context of HMIS?

"Safe haven" in HMIS refers to a specific type of bed funded by HUD. This is **not** Safe Haven Family Shelter, or the Safe Haven program at Park Center. There are very few safe haven beds in Nashville, so it's unlikely that your client would be residing in one of them.

How often should I add updates to the client's record?

You should update the client's record when you have a **case note** to add indicating relevant status changes or progress (e.g., "Submitted Section 8 packet," "Case manager has made multiple attempts to contact client over the past month with no response," "Client has identified housing and is waiting on MDHA inspection to move in").

Note: Case notes are only required for the head of household, *unless* there are multiple adults in the household receiving annual WeGo bus passes through the Metro Homeless Impact Division. If this is the case, you should enter separate case notes for each adult receiving a bus pass.

You should also update the client's record **whenever any of the following information changes for ANY of the household members**:

- Housing situation (i.e. where the client is staying)
- Income
- Non-cash benefits
- Health insurance
- Disability
- Domestic violence history
- Client contact information
- Emergency contact information

Please add a short case note each time you add an update, indicating what was updated (e.g., "Updated client's income from \$500 to \$750 earned income," "Added emergency contact information"). This helps to quickly identify the changes that have been made.

At the very least, you should provide an update **every 90 days**. This helps to demonstrate whether the client is still engaged, and can indicate when you may need to exit a client as inactive. If you have been attempting to contact the client with no success for 90 days, you should exit them as inactive at that point.

When should I add a new housing situation to the Current Living Situation?

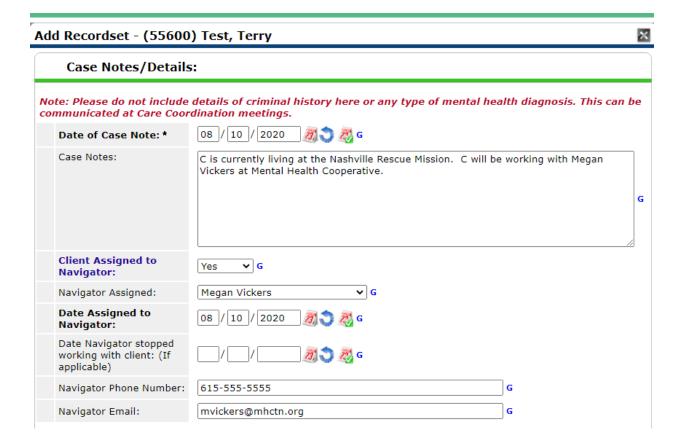
You should add a new living situation <u>every time the client's housing situation changes</u>. For instance, if a client is staying in an emergency shelter at entry, but then starts staying at a motel a week later, you would do an Update to record that change in the Current Living Situation.

The Current Living Situation is a critical piece of the CE assessment. By keeping the living situation up-to-date in HMIS, we can keep track of where clients are in real time. This helps to demonstrate eligibility for various housing opportunities and to ensure that clients don't fall through the cracks. It also allows us to demonstrate the level of need for various resources in our community (e.g., funding for prevention and diversion services).

Remember: Do NOT delete previous information when adding an update!

Do I need to tag myself as the Housing Navigator every time I enter a case note for a client?

No. You only need to tag yourself as the Housing Navigator on the first case note you enter. If you will no longer be the client's Housing Navigator for any reason, please add an Update, go back to the case note in which you are tagged as the client's Navigator and indicate the "Date Navigator stopped working with client" (see the screenshot on the following page).



What should I do if a couple or household separates?

If you have a couple or family who separates from each other, you will need to **update the household information in HMIS** to reflect this change (see example below for details).

Note: A VI-SPDAT will "follow" whoever it was initially completed with.

Example: Johnny and Jane, two adults, are entered into CE as a couple (i.e. in the same household) on 7/1/20. Johnny is listed as the head of household. Only Johnny has a VISPDAT done. On 12/1/20, Johnny tells you that he and Jane have broken up. You get in touch with Jane, who says she is still experiencing literal homelessness and wants to work toward finding housing. Your next steps are:

- 1. Contact the HMIS Help Desk at HMISHelp@nashville.gov, who will split up the household into separate entries for you.
- 2. Then, you will need to update Jane's HMIS record with any information you did not include when Johnny was the head of household (e.g., relationship to head of household, income, health insurance, etc.).
- 3. Complete a VI-SPDAT with Jane and enter her VI-SPDAT into HMIS under her entry.

CE Exit in HMIS

When should I exit a client from CE in HMIS?

Clients should only be exited from CE for two reasons:

- Client has been <u>permanently</u> housed (e.g., rental, living with family or friends on a permanent basis, etc.)
- Client is inactive, i.e. 90 days of no contact after several attempts to contact <u>or</u> if client will be in an institution (like prison) for a prolonged period of time <u>or</u> if client is deceased <u>or</u> if client refuses services

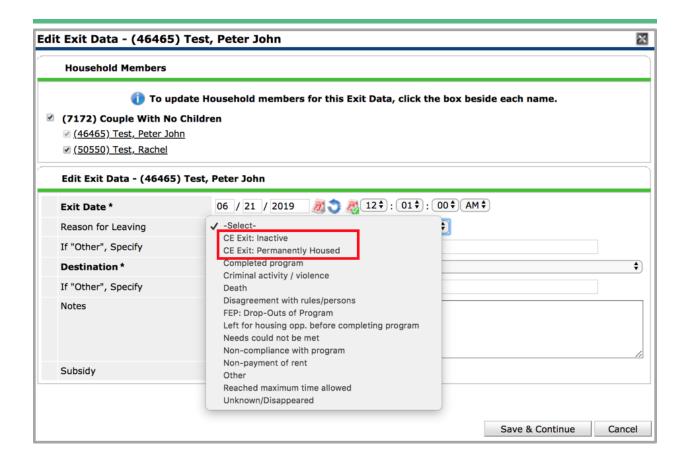
The "90 days of no contact" is the community guidance for completing an exit due to inactivity. Please make sure to continue to add updates at least every 90 days, so that a client is not exited as inactive when they are still experiencing a housing crisis. **Before exiting a client due to lack of contact, please make sure to check for any recent updates in HMIS**; remember, CE is community-wide, and just because a client has not been in contact with *you* does not mean they haven't been in contact with *someone* in the community.

Please make sure to include ALL household members in the exit!

Note: When exiting a client in HMIS, you will be asked for "Reason for Leaving" (see the screenshot on the following page). You should ONLY select either:

- "CE Exit: Permanently Housed" (if client is exiting to permanent housing), or
- "CE Exit: Inactive" (if client is being exited due to inactivity)

All other response options for this question are not relevant to CE and should not be chosen.



Please exit clients as soon as they are housed or become inactive (and back date appropriately)!! This is critical to our ability to demonstrate housing outcomes for our community and prioritize services for clients who still need them.

*For clients who have been **permanently housed**, you should use the **move-in date** as the exit date, *regardless of when YOU find out that the client has been housed*!

What should I do if the client is moving out of Davidson County?

If you know that the client will be moving out of Davidson County to permanent housing, you should exit the client from CE as permanently housed (selecting the appropriate Reason for Leaving and Destination, as described above).

If you are <u>unsure</u> if the client will be moving out of Davidson County to permanent housing, *or* if you know the individual will <u>not</u> be in permanent housing once they leave the county, you should exit the client as inactive (selecting the appropriate Reason for Leaving and Destination, as described above).

Who should exit the client from CE in HMIS?

Any person with HMIS access who knows the client has been housed (or is inactive) should process the exit. It is extremely important for you to exit the client in HMIS as soon as you know the client has been housed, or if the client is inactive (see above).

What if a client is non-compliant with my program? Should I exit the client from CE?

NO. Clients should <u>only</u> be exited from CE under the two circumstances listed above. If a client is exited from your agency's program due to non-compliance, this does <u>not</u> constitute a CE exit. You should note this in a case note and bring it up at the Care Coordination Meeting to make sure the client is connected with another resource/agency who can continue to work with him/her toward housing.

Who should I contact if I have questions that weren't answered in this Cheat Sheet?

If you have questions about how to enter CE data into HMIS, please refer to the HMIS CE Data Entry Guide (training slides). If you still can't find an answer to your data entry questions, please contact the HMIS Help Desk at HMISHelp@nashville.gov.

If you have policy questions, please contact the Metro Homeless Impact Division at nashvilleces@nashville.gov.

Additional Metro Homeless Impact Division contact information:

Sally Lott, Coordinated Entry Manager: sally.lott@nashville.gov

Rachel Cook, HMIS Administrator: rachel.cook@nashville.gov