



COALITION FOR HOMELESSNESS
INTERVENTION & PREVENTION

UNIVERSAL DATA ELEMENTS GUIDE

BASED ON FY 2024 HMIS DATA STANDARDS MANUAL

DESCRIPTIONS OF HMIS DATA ELEMENTS, COLLECTION POINTS, PURPOSE, AND DATA QUALITY

Housing is a human right.

We envision an Indianapolis where everyone has a safe, stable, and affordable home and is embraced by compassionate care and an inclusive community.

OVERVIEW

Broadly, “data” refers to any stored information related to a client and their experience of homelessness. This document provides an overview of Universal Data Elements (UDEs) in HMIS. HUD requires UDEs for every client and every project stay. Additional information can be found in the [FY 2024 HMIS Data Standards Manual](#) from HUD.

REPORTING UDES

UDEs require HMIS data for each client. However, this information is not always able to be recorded. In these instances, use the following responses:

- **Client prefers not to answer:** use this to indicate a client was asked to provide information and elected not to answer. Don’t worry – this will not count against you when assessing data quality!
- **Client does not know:** use this to indicate a client was unable to answer the question asked (e.g., does not know their SSN or does not know their Gender based on provided options). Don’t worry – this will not count against you when assessing data quality!
- **Data not collected:** use this to indicate a client **was not asked** to provide information.

Identifier UDEs (one per client)	Project Stay UDEs (per client, per project stay)
Name	Disabling Condition
Social Security Number	Project Start Date
Date of Birth	Project Exit Date
Race and Ethnicity	Destination
Gender	Relationship to Head of Household
Veteran Status	Enrollment CoC
	Housing Move-In Date

If you expect to see a data element and it is not here, please [submit a Help Desk ticket](#).

Data Elements

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3.01 NAME AND NAME DATA QUALITY

When creating a client profile, you will be asked to report their name and the data quality of the name. If they provide their full name (first and last), indicate that.

There may be cases where you need to enter a partial name or a descriptor of the individual. For example, if you are logging the initial connection with an unsheltered neighbor, you can put in information to make it easier to identify their profile (e.g., first name ‘Red Hat’ and last name ‘Prospect St’). In such instances, you will simply need to select: “Partial, street name, or code name reported.”

NOTE: some programs may require a legal name for enrollment.

COLLECTION

Name and Name Data Quality should be recorded when a client record is created in HMIS.

RATIONALE

Having a full name in HMIS allows us to ensure there is only one, deduplicated profile for each client. This ensures the profile reflects a fuller and more accurate picture of the client's experiences.

DATA QUALITY

If you find a client with more than one profile, please submit a Help Desk ticket with the client IDs that need to be merged. Please indicate if you wish to maintain a specific profile. Removing duplicates helps us more accurately understand the scope of homelessness in our community.

3.02 SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER AND SSN DATA QUALITY

When creating a client profile, you will be asked to report their SSN and SSN Data Quality. If a full SSN (9 digits) is provided, indicate that.

Like submitting clients' names, partial SSN data is allowed. For example, if you only have the last 4 digits of a client's SSN, select “Approximate or partial SSN reported” in HMIS. Additionally, a client may not have – or may prefer not to share – an SSN. You should not deny shelter or services in these instances.

NOTE: For some programs SSN may be required to verify eligibility (e.g., Rapid Re-Housing through SSVF grants).

COLLECTION

Social Security Number (SSN) and SSN Data Quality should be recorded when a client record is created in HMIS.

RATIONALE

SSNs are used to deduplicate clients for reporting and determine eligibility for certain programs. Since SSNs are required for other mainstream programs and services, projects may need SSNs to help clients access services.

DATA QUALITY

You will get a flag in reporting if either of these elements are missing, or if the SSN Data Quality entry does not match the SSN (e.g., if only the last 4 digits are known but “Full SSN” is selected). These fields may need updating if additional information (e.g., Social Security Card) is attained.

3.03 DATE OF BIRTH (DOB) AND DOB DATA QUALITY

When creating a client profile, you will be asked to report their DOB and DOB Data Quality. If a full birthday is known and provided, indicate that.

If a client does not know their date of birth, you can estimate. For example, if a client knows their age, calculate an approximate year of birth and select “01” for month and “01” for day. In this instance, you would select “Approximate or partial DOB reported” for DOB Quality.

COLLECTION

DOB and DOB Quality should be recorded when a client record is created in HMIS.

RATIONALE

In addition to helping deduplicate profiles, having an accurate date of birth helps ensure clients can receive specific services (e.g., services from youth-serving organizations).

DATA QUALITY

These fields may need updating if additional information (e.g., a birth certificate) is attained.

3.04 RACE AND ETHNICITY

When creating a client profile, you will be asked to record their identification with one or more of the following race/ethnicity options (note, these were updated in 2024 Data Standards):

	Examples (non-exhaustive)
<i>American Indian, Alaska Native, Indigenous</i>	Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec
<i>Asian or Asian American</i>	Chinese, Pakistani, Indian, Burmese
<i>Black, African American, or African</i>	African American, Haitian, Somali
<i>Hispanic/Latina/e/o</i>	Mexican or Mexican American, Cuban, Colombian
<i>Middle Eastern or North African</i>	Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Israeli
<i>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</i>	Nationalities originating in Hawaii, Guam, Samoa
<i>White</i>	German, Irish, English, French

COLLECTION

Race and Ethnicity should be recorded when a client record is created in HMIS.

RATIONALE

Race and Ethnicity data supports system planning, especially related to addressing known inequities.

DATA QUALITY

This data must come directly from the client, never from staff observation or assumption. Be sure to present every option to clients and let them know they can select any they identify with.

3.06 GENDER

When creating a client profile, you will be asked to record their identification with one or more of the following race/ethnicity options (note, these were updated in 2024 Data Standards):

- Woman (girl, if child)
- Man (boy, if child)
- Culturally Specific Identity (e.g., Two-Spirit)
- Transgender
- Non-Binary
- Questioning

COLLECTION

Gender should be recorded when a client record is created in HMIS. If a client discloses an identity other than “Woman (girl, if child)” or “Man (boy, if child),” please verify whether they want the information recorded in HMIS. For example, a client who is a transgender man may not want a transgender identity recorded. In that instance, you would select “Man (boy, if child)” in HMIS.

RATIONALE

Gender data supports system planning, especially related to addressing known inequities.

DATA QUALITY

This data must come directly from the client, never from staff observation or assumption. Be sure to present every option to clients and let them know they can select any they identify with. Gender identity is a person’s internal perception of themselves and does not have to match the sex they were assigned at birth.

NOTE: “Questioning” is different from “Client doesn’t Know.” “Questioning” reflects an exploration of one’s gender identity. “Client doesn’t Know” should be selected if a client does not know their gender based on the options available.

3.07 VETERAN STATUS

When creating a client profile, you will be asked to indicate whether the client has ever served in the United States Armed Forces.

COLLECTION

Veteran status should be recorded when an adult’s client record is created in HMIS.

RATIONALE

Veteran Status is necessary to screen eligibility for possible housing and service interventions and understand veterans’ needs.

DATA QUALITY

For a full description of what is included for a “Yes” under Veteran Status, see [page 21 of the FY 2024 VA Data Guide](#). Asking clients additional questions can help ensure accuracy for those who may be unaware they are considered veterans. For example:

- “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?”

3.08 DISABLING CONDITION

A disabling condition is a physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug use, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that:

- Is expected to be long – continuing or of indefinite duration,
- Substantially impedes the client’s ability to live independent, AND
- Could be improved by the provision of more suitable housing conditions

Examples:

- Alcohol Use Disorder
- Chronic Health Conditions
 - Cancer, heart disease, diabetes, etc.
- Developmental Disability
- Drug Use Disorder
- HIV/AIDs
- Mental Health Conditions
 - Bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, PTSD, etc.
- Physical Disability
 - Client uses a wheelchair, etc.
- Clients receiving any of the following income:
 - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
 - VA Service-Connected Disability Compensation
 - VA Non-Service-Connected Disability Pension

If you are wondering if a condition is considered a disabling condition, it probably is! Please feel free to contact the HMIS team to verify.

COLLECTION

Disabling Condition should be recorded when a client record is created in HMIS. This element should be updated as necessary to reflect any changes/updates on new conditions during enrollment.

RATIONALE

This data element is to be used with other information to identify whether a client meets the criteria for experiencing chronic homelessness. If this information is missing, it may result in the client not being eligible for Permanent Housing.

DATA QUALITY

You may notice errors in reports if a client has missing data for disabling conditions. This is especially important if you are trying to get folks into Permanent Supportive Housing.

3.10 PROJECT START DATE

You will be asked to record the date of each client’s project start. This date indicates a client is being assisted by a project.

COLLECTION

The table below shows guidance for entering a project start date, by project type:

	Project Start Date
<i>Street Outreach</i>	Date of first contact with the client
<i>Emergency shelter</i>	Night the client first stayed at the shelter
<i>Safe Havens / Transitional Housing</i>	Date the client moves into the project (i.e., first night in residence)
<i>Permanent Housing (including Rapid Rehousing)</i>	Date client is admitted to the project. To be admitted, the following must be met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information provided by the client or from the referral indicates they meet the criteria for admission • Client has indicated they want to be housed in this project • Client can access services and housing through this project. The expectation is a housing opening is expected in a reasonably short amount of time, or is already open.

RATIONALE

Start dates are needed to calculate and report on the time spent participating in a project. This affects the CoC's System Performance Measures.

DATA QUALITY

You may see data error flags if a client has multiple project start dates on the same day.

3.11 PROJECT EXIT DATE

You will be asked to record the date of each client's last day of occupancy or service.

The table below shows guidance for entering a project exit date, by project type:

	Project Exit Date
<i>Site-based residential projects and Entry/Exit emergency shelters</i>	This date represents the last day of a continuous stay in the project.
<i>Night-by-Night emergency shelter</i>	The exit date should be the day after the last recorded bed night.
<i>Tenant-based permanent housing projects</i>	The exit date should be the last day the client receives rental assistance or supportive services or is provided rental assistance.
<i>Street Outreach and Services Only projects</i>	The exit date is the last day a service was provided or the last date of a period of ongoing services.

RATIONALE

If the Project Exit Date is incorrect or missing, it will affect the individual's length of stay in the project. The Project Exit Date is necessary to calculate and report on time spent participating in a project, and for accurate client counts at a point in time. This data element affects all Federal System Performance Measures (SPMs).

DATA QUALITY

Each individual in a household will have their own exit date. If one household member leaves before the rest of the household, that client's exit date should reflect the actual day they left the project.

3.12 DESTINATION

COLLECTION

During an exit interview with clients leaving your program, you will need to record where they are going.

RATIONALE

Exit destination is important for continuing to connect with clients who leave our programs and for measuring outcomes.

DATA QUALITY

Similar to other elements, only select "Data not Collected" if you did not ask a client where they are going. Even if you cannot conduct a full exit interview, asking where they are going when they leave is a critical piece of information for connection to other providers.

3.15 RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

When creating households in HMIS, each household needs a Head of Household, and every other member must have a relationship descriptor.

COLLECTION

Identify one member of a household to whom all other household members can be associated. A household is a single individual or a group of persons who apply together to a continuum project for assistance and who live together in one dwelling unit, or for persons who are not housed, who would live together in one dwelling unit if they were housed.

There must be **ONLY ONE** Head of Household for each enrollment.

Where two or more people under the age of 18 present at a project together and one of the people presenting is not the child of the other (e.g., brother and sister), each person should be entered as their own record in their own household.

Options for this element are:

- Self (Head of Household)
- Head of Households child
- Head of Households spouse or partner
- Other relation to Head of Household
- Other: non-relation member

RATIONALE

This data allows us to report on and understand household composition for those experiencing homelessness. This is particularly important in monitoring how we connect families with minor children to services and housing.

DATA QUALITY

You may see error flags in reporting if a household has multiple Heads of Household or no Heads of Household.

3.16 ENROLLMENT CoC

Enrollment CoC (formerly known as Client Location) is based on the Continuum of Care location in which a service is being provided. In Indianapolis, the Enrollment CoC is Indianapolis. In state communities outside Marion County, the Enrollment CoC is Indiana Balance of State (BoS).

COLLECTION

Enrollment CoC is collected at project entry.

RATIONALE

Clients will NOT be included in federal reporting and will NOT be included in APR (Annual Performance Report), LSA (Longitudinal System Analysis), SPM (System Performance Measures), or PIT (POINT IN TIME) reports when this element is missing or has an error.

DATA QUALITY

If this information is missing or does not match the project's location, you may notice error flags in reporting.

3.20 HOUSING MOVE-IN DATE

The housing move-in date is the date the household moved into permanent housing. "Move-in" means the client has a key or entry to the unit and has physically slept in it. This date may or may not align with the lease date or the Project Start Date.

COLLECTION

Housing Move-In Date is collected for the date the household moved into Permanent Housing.

RATIONALE

This date is critical to Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and Point-in-Time (PIT) counts as it differentiates households which have already moved into permanent housing from households which are enrolled in a Permanent Housing project but are still experiencing literal homelessness (in Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, Transitional Housing, or on the street) as they prepare to move into an available unit.

DATA QUALITY

Housing Move-in Date must be a date occurring on or between the Project Start Date and Project Exit Date. There can be only one 'Housing Move-in Date' per enrollment. Once a 'Housing Move-In Date' has been recorded for an enrollment, it must not be removed from the client's record, even if they subsequently lose that housing situation.

If a client vacates or loses housing, staff should exit the client from the project with an accurate Project Exit date and Destination and create a new Project Start date in a new enrollment for the client on the same or following day. If the client moves directly from one unit into another unit, with no days of homelessness in between, it is not necessary to exit and re-enter them because their housing move in date would still be accurate for the day the client entered permanent housing.