



Documenting Chronicity in HMIS





Length of Homelessness

The primary purpose for documenting length of time homeless is to establish eligibility for community resources available only to those whose experience meets HUD's definition of Chronically Homeless.

HUD Chronic Homelessness Definition

Must have a qualifying disability

Living in a place not meant for human habitation or emergency shelter

Has been homeless for a year, or has experienced four episodes of experiencing homelessness in the past three years, adding up to one year

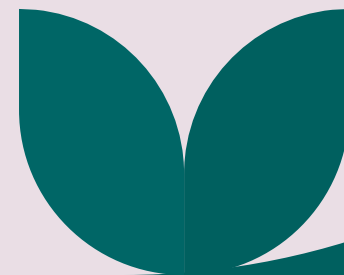
What is an “episode” or “occurrence” of homelessness? Episodes are separated by a break of at least 7 nights



Length of Homelessness: Cumulative 12 Months

For chronically homeless persons experiencing **one continuous year of homelessness**, this part of the definition has not changed.

For chronically homeless persons experiencing 4 or more occasions of homelessness over a period of 3 years, ***the cumulative total of the occasions must be 12 months or more.***





Identifying Episodes of Homelessness

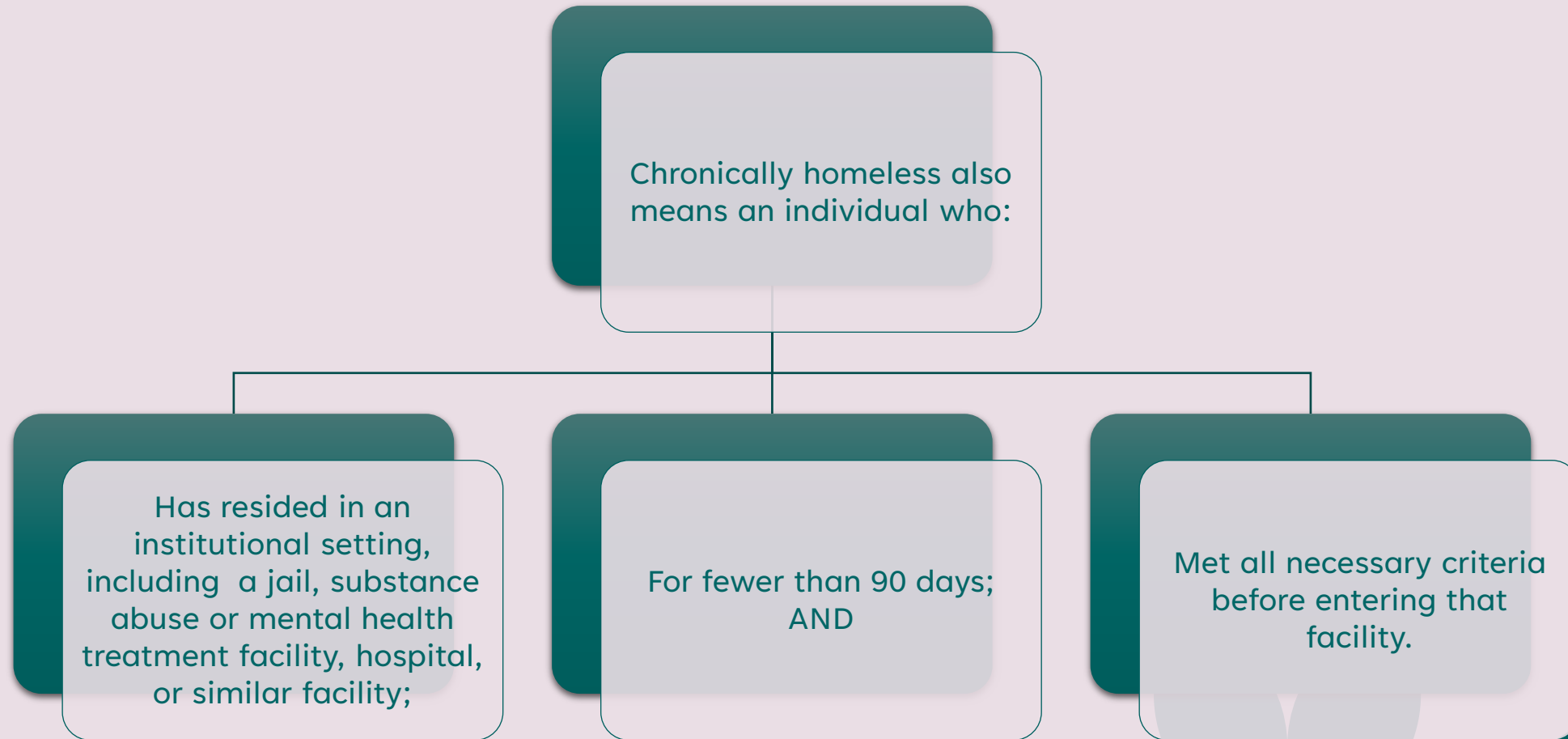
A break in homelessness is any period of 7+ consecutive nights in a non-qualifying location

- Examples: staying with friends or family, a hotel paid by the individual, transitional housing, etc.

A stay in an institutional care facility does not constitute a break in homelessness if:

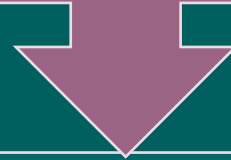
- Stay was fewer than 90 days; AND
- Client was homeless and living in a place not meant for habitation, safe haven, or emergency shelter immediately prior.

Chronically Homeless from Institution



Chronically Homeless Families

This includes a family whose situation has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.



Who is the head of household?

If there are multiple adults, the family can determine who is the head of household.

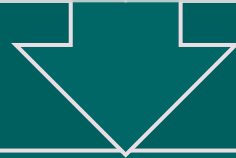
Same if there are multiple minors in a household without adults.

Chronically Homeless Families

Chronically homeless also means a family:

With an adult head of household

If there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household



Who meets all the criteria for chronic homelessness

Putting It All Together

Chronically homeless means:

- An individual or head of household experiencing homelessness, with a disability;
- Lives in a place not meant for habitation, safe haven, or emergency shelter; AND
- Has been homeless for at least 12 months OR on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal 12 months.

REMEMBER:

- Breaks in homelessness must be for 7 or more nights
- Institutional stays of under 90 days are counted as time homeless; stays of 90 days or more constitute a break.



What Does Chronicity & Length of Homelessness Look like in HMIS?

Length of Homelessness in HMIS

Housing Status	Category 1 - Homeless (HUD) ▼ G
Prior Living Situation *	Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus/train/subway station/airport or anywhere outside) (HUD) ▼ G
Length of Stay in Previous Place	Two to six nights ▼ G
Approximate date this episode of homelessness started	03 / 31 / 2024 📅 ↺ 📅 G
Regardless of where they stayed last night - Number of times the client has been on the streets, in ES, or SH in the past three years including today	Three times (HUD) ▼ G
Total number of months homeless on the street, in ES or SH in the past three years	12 ▼ G

Housing Status: Category 1 - Homeless

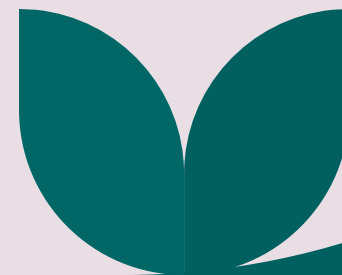
HUD definition:

(1) Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

(i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation;

(ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or

(iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.





Prior Living Situation

Refers to where the client was sleeping the night before entering your project and how long they have been in that living situation



Approximate Date this Episode of Homelessness Started

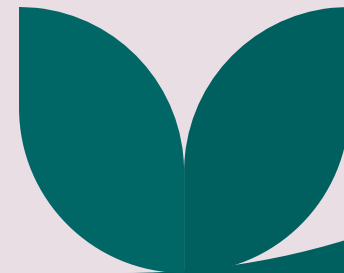
Refers to the date the current homeless episode began. An episode is a period of time where the client was in any type of homeless situation.

The episode ends when the client is housed for 7 days or more, or they spend at least 90 days in an institutional situation.



How Many Times... & Total Number of Months

- Refers to the overall total within the last 3 years.
- Number of times homeless means number of episodes.
- Number of months means the total number of calendar months the client was homeless within the last 3 years.
- You may need to add the months from different episodes to get the total sum within the last 3 years.

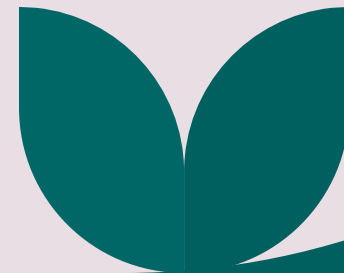




Why is Length of Homelessness Important?

One of the most critical signs that your homeless service system is working efficiently is that people who experience homelessness are able to move quickly into a permanent housing situation.

HUD measures this by looking at the average and median length of time people spend in homeless situations and then looks to see if that time period is getting shorter, staying the same, or getting longer.



Important for System Performance Measures (SPM)

The SPM is a crucial part of the HUD reporting season as it can directly affect funding for everyone within our Continuum.

Measure 1: Length of Time Persons Remain Homeless

Goal: Reduce the average and median length of time persons remain homeless.



Why?

Accuracy + Integrity

Our data drives funding, accountability, and community impact.

Every entry helps tell the true story of homelessness in our system.

Impact + Access

Correct data ensures resources reach those who need them most.

Every accurate record supports real people and real outcomes.

The Bigger Picture

We're not just entering data — **we're opening doors** to housing, stability, and hope.



Inside the Entry Assessment

All key fields work together:

- *Housing Status*
- *Prior Living Situation*
- *Episode Start Date*
- *Number of Times Homeless*
- *Total Number of Months Homeless*

Together, these determine if a client meets the **chronic homelessness definition**.