

HOMELESSNESS COORDINATED ACCESS SYSTEM

Process Guide

DURHAM REGION

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Introduction

The purpose of the Durham Region Homelessness Coordinated Access System Process Guide is to clarify and direct the process and management of Coordinated Access and the By-Name List. This guide will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as Durham continues to work towards ending homelessness.

Goals of this Guide:

- Produce standards for the operation of Durham's Coordinated Access System
- Establish community expectations for homelessness response
- Outline priorities and processes for homelessness response
- Ensure transparency between service agencies, the community, and individuals and families experiencing homelessness and housing instability

Background

At Home in Durham

At Home in Durham is the Durham Region Housing Plan for 2014 to 2024. The plan lays out the Region's vision for housing and homelessness over ten years.

The first goal of At Home in Durham is to reduce chronic homelessness to zero over the next five years. Work is being done to transform Durham's homelessness support system to a transparent, standardized and needs-based approach that can track our progress towards achieving this goal.

For more information, visit [At Home in Durham](#).

Housing First

Housing First is a philosophy that guides our homelessness support system which states that housing is a basic right for all humans. It is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and providing additional supports and services as needed. The five core principles of Housing First include:

1. Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements
2. Consumer choice and self determination
3. Recovery orientation
4. Individualized and client-driven supports
5. Social and community integration

For more information, visit [Homeless Hub](#).

Homeless Individuals & Families Information System (HIFIS)

The Homeless Individuals & Families Information System (HIFIS) is a secure shared database used by various community partners within the Homelessness Support System to manage all information about individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness in Durham. HIFIS allows for comprehensive data collection and case management and helps us understand what is happening in our community and work collaboratively. The Region of Durham hosts the HIFIS server and the Homelessness Data Coordinator from Community Development Council Durham (CDCD) oversees the ongoing maintenance of HIFIS with input from the HIFIS Working Group. The By-Name List is currently held on HIFIS.

Built for Zero

The Built for Zero – Canada (BFZ-C) campaign is led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH). It is a Canada-wide change effort that helps a core group of leading communities work towards ending chronic homelessness – a first step on the path to eliminating all homelessness in Canada. The structured, supportive, data driven approach focuses on creating a sense of urgency, optimizing local homeless systems, accelerating the adoption of proven practices, and driving continuous improvement

The Region of Durham was invited to join the BFZ–C campaign in July 2019. Through this initiative, the Region has developed a robust Coordinated Access System that meets CAEH quality standards. Durham’s Coordinated Access System is fully operationalized, and the Region measures month-over-month reductions in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in our community. For more information, visit [Built for Zero - Canada](#).

Governance

Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness

The Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness (DACH) provides an opportunity for organizations and homelessness service funders to share information about resources, identify service needs, and provide feedback to Regional Council on the implementation of At Home in Durham. DACH acts as the Coordinated Access leadership group and oversees the planning, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of Durham’s Coordinated Access system. DACH also approves protocols and policies for the Coordinated Access system and makes recommendations as required.

The Region of Durham Homelessness Initiatives Team, the Homelessness Data Coordinator, and the Regional Housing Coordinator use the Built for Zero (BFZ) scorecard to monitor activities, report progress, and track next steps for Coordinated Access. This team also meets monthly with Durham’s BFZ Improvement Advisor to discuss BNL data, trends, improvement projects, and changes ideas to ensure ongoing enhancement of Durham’s Coordinated Access system.

Stay up to date on DACH's initiatives [here](#).

HIFIS Working Group

The HIFIS Working Group, hosted by the Homelessness Data Coordinator, is the lead group for HIFIS. This working group is made up of representatives from all HIFIS using agencies as well as representatives from organizations who are not currently HIFIS users but hope to be in the future. The HIFIS Working Group meets monthly to discuss best practices as well as HIFIS related issues and challenges.

Guiding Principles and Approaches

- Peer and lived/ living experience voice/leadership
- Housing First Philosophy
- Strength-Based Approach
- Equity Lens
- Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and MMIWG Calls to Justice
- Youth-Specific Considerations
- Rights-Based Approaches
- Systems Integration

Coordinated Access System

What is Coordinated Access?

Coordinated Access is a process that helps people experiencing homelessness get help in a coordinated, standardized way. In a Coordinated Access System, service providers use a shared information system and work together to triage, assess and prioritize people consistently to get supports. There are three key steps to Coordinated Access:

1. Referring people experiencing homelessness to Community Access Points to be added to the By-Name List (BNL). Referrals can be done in-person or virtually (i.e. via email, over the phone, etc.). Community Access Points are agencies that have regular contact with individuals and families experiencing homelessness and support them in resolving their homelessness and finding and securing housing.
2. Using common intake criteria, a common assessment tool and transparent prioritization criteria to triage people for available housing supports.
3. A centrally managed referral process for dedicated housing and supports to service individuals and families who are connected to the Coordinated Access System. Vacancies are filled using the BNL based on community agreed upon priorities.



Coordinated Access and Durham's By-Name List

The goal of the system is to prevent and reduce homelessness and provide streamlined access to available supports.

Coordinated Access System Steps to Finding Housing



The Components of a Coordinated Access System

- Access Points are where people make contact with the Coordinated Access System and can be added to the By-Name List
- Clients are triaged and assessed using a common intake form to gather the information needed to make appropriate referrals
- Durham Region uses the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)
- People on the By-Name List are prioritized based on need for housing resources
- People are matched and referred for available housing resources based on prioritization

Why is it important?

- The alternative to Coordinated Access is to provide help on a first-come, first-served basis. This means that people who can better navigate the support system get help, not people who need it most
- Coordinated Access helps people access services based on their individualized needs
- Helps track our progress in ending chronic homelessness
- Makes it easier for people to find help
- Helps us identify gaps in service

To get more information, please visit durham.ca/BNL



Special Considerations

Ensuring Equal Opportunity

It is the intention of the By-Name List process to ensure that individuals have equitable access to appropriate housing outcomes matched with their individual level of need. The selection process described in the Filling of Vacancies section ensures that a community agreed-upon prioritization criteria is used to fill all caseload or housing placement opportunities.

To ensure that an individual is not excluded from selection, and with the client's signed consent, a client case may be brought to the Case Conferencing Table through a referral form. Some instances where a client may be brought to the table include (but are not limited to):

1. They are close to "ageing in" to chronic homelessness
2. They have been on the BNL without a housing/support opportunity for 4 or more months
3. They have turned down 3 housing/ support opportunities
4. They have been turned down/ not selected by a housing/ support opportunity 3 times
5. They were housed from the BNL and have now returned to homelessness
6. They have had a sudden, drastic change to their health
 - a. I.e. someone who is about to give birth or a senior client who has recently sustained a serious injury

In these circumstances, the individual or family will be intensely supported to meet selection criteria for the next available unit that meets their individualized criteria and satisfies their location choice. Any agency participating in Durham's Case Conferencing table can complete the referral form for their own agency or in partnership with another community agency as long as the client has provided consent.

Individuals & Families Fleeing Violence

Any individual or family fleeing violence who has concerns about their information being seen by anyone in HIFIS will be given the option to be a 'hidden client' on the BNL. The client will be tracked on a separate By-Name List Excel Sheet in order to prevent anyone else in the system from seeing or updating their information, other than the Homelessness Data Coordinator, Homelessness Program Coordinator, and Homelessness Program Manager. The lead agency working with the client will need to contact the Homelessness Data Coordinator to refer the client and ensure all required BNL information is provided, including a signed BNL Consent Form. Should an update be needed, the lead agency will be required to contact the Homelessness Data Coordinator with the updated information. The Homelessness Data Coordinator, Homelessness Program Coordinator, and Homelessness Program Manager will not

release information to anyone except the client and/or the lead agency for any reason. In the event of an opportunity for housing or support placement, the Homelessness Data Coordinator will work with the lead agency to ensure that the 'hidden' client has equitable access to the available supports through the Vacancy Referral Process.

By-Name List

The Durham Region By-Name List (BNL) is a real-time, up to date list of all people known to be experiencing homelessness in our community. The list contains key information about people experiencing homelessness that helps community agencies connect them to appropriate services. This information includes demographics, current housing state, housing history, personal history, and housing needs.

When someone has been homeless for 14 days and is unable to be diverted from shelter and/or unable to resolve their own homelessness, support system partners will begin the process to add the person to the BNL.

To be added to the By-Name List, the Access Point must ensure that all relevant client information is updated on HIFIS. This information includes: Client Demographic and Family Information (Client Details Module), Housing History (Housing History Module), Income (Financial Profile) and VI-SPDAT (SPDAT Module) (*see: checklist at www.durham.ca/BNL or in Appendix C*).

A signed Consent Form is also required. Once the Access Point has confirmed that all relevant client information is up to date on HIFIS, the client's signed BNL/HIFIS Consent Form must be uploaded onto HIFIS. A client must sign this Consent Form in order to be added to the By-Name List (*see: Consent Form in Appendix B*).

If a VI-SPDAT Assessment has not been completed at time of intake, the Access Point should use assertive engagement to ensure that a VI-SPDAT Assessment is completed as soon as possible after intake. The VI-SPDAT Assessment should be completed at point of intake as often as possible.

Note: Only Access Points have the authority to upload BNL/HIFIS Consent onto HIFIS.

This information is automatically added to the BNL and clients are prioritized based on assessment results and community agreed-upon priorities. As people are added to the BNL, they are referred to housing opportunities or community supports dedicated to ending homelessness as resources become available. In the meantime, referring agencies continue to support them until more appropriate supports or housing opportunities become available. It is important to continue community support for people to have opportunities to create housing plans that resolve their own homelessness and are not reliant on limited housing resources to become available.

By developing and maintaining a functioning By-Name List we will:

- Have actionable person-level data
- Understand system in-flow and out-flow
- Have the ability to triage and prioritize access to services
- Evaluate system performance
- Advocate for policy and resource changes
- Monitor progress toward ending chronic homelessness in Durham

The By-Name List will be managed by the Homelessness Data Coordinator who will:

- Monitor for data quality
- Facilitate frequent updates by following up with agencies with an “Inactive List” on a monthly basis to ensure consistent and frequent updates
- Advise the filling of vacancies in dedicated housing and support programs
- Ensure adherence to privacy legislation
- Process requests for information

What is a By-Name List?

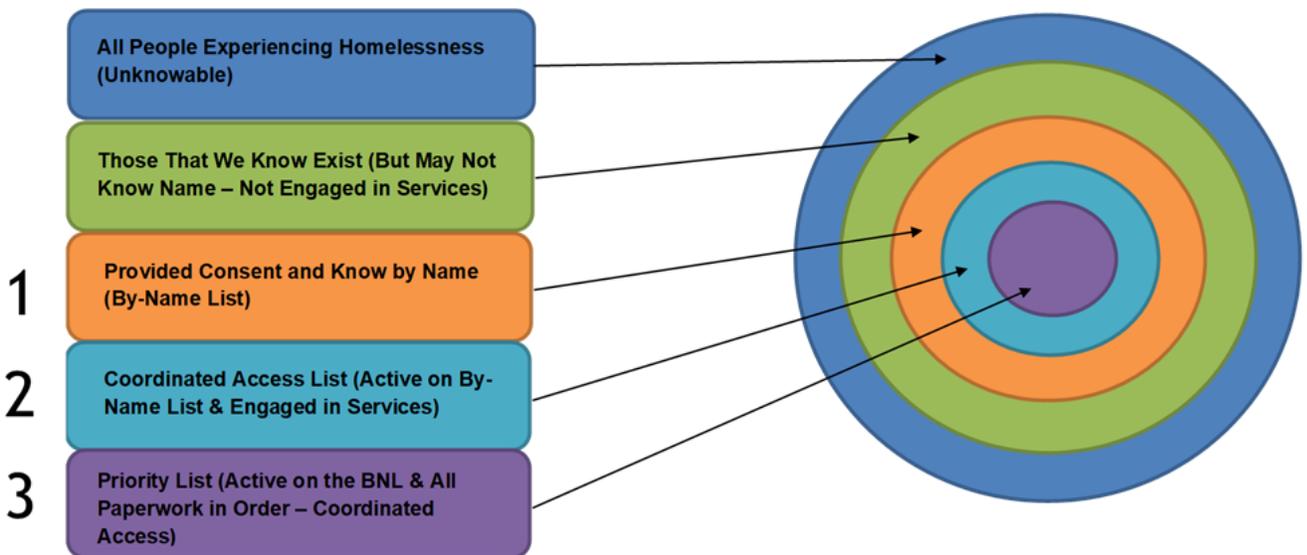
A By-Name List is a real-time list of all people experiencing homelessness. It includes information that supports coordinated access for people experiencing homelessness and an understanding of homelessness inflow and outflow at a system level. It helps communities evaluate system performance to find gaps in services, track progress towards ending homelessness, and advocate for policies and resources needed to end homelessness.

There are six main data points in a By-Name List. These are outlined in the picture below. This data can be reviewed every month to see changes in our community's inflow, outflow and actively homeless numbers. This information helps communities understand what is contributing to increases and decreases in homelessness and enables communities to adjust local interventions to better plan for ending homelessness.



To end homelessness, we need to know everyone experiencing homelessness by name, to bring this issue to light, and to advocate for the resources necessary to help them. It is important to clarify with people that being added to the By-Name List is not necessarily an immediate promise of housing support services, but that it is the fastest way in which people will be triaged based on the priorities identified by our community.

By-Name List, Coordinated Access & Priority List – What is the Difference?



Eligibility

People are eligible to be added to the Durham Region By-Name List if they meet the following criteria:

- At least 16 years old
- Experiencing Homelessness for at least 14 days
 - See: *Appendix A – Canadian Definition of Homelessness*
- Residing in Durham Region for the last 90 days, or have a meaningful connection to Durham Region
- Consent to participate
- Relevant client information is up to date on HIFIS including: Client Demographic and Family Information (Client Details Module), Housing History (Housing History Module), Income (Financial Profile) and VI-SPDAT assessment has been completed (SPDAT Module). A VI-SPDAT would ideally be completed at time of intake, but not required (see: *checklist at www.durham.ca/BNL or in Appendix C*).

People are added to the BNL once consent has been obtained and their information is updated on HIFIS. Ideally, the VI-SPDAT is also completed at intake. This helps the homelessness support system better understand a person's housing needs and supports referrals to available resources. If clients are missing information at the time of BNL intake, they may still be added to the BNL if they have signed consent. However, declining to answer certain questions or not completing the VI-SPDAT may impact a person's prioritization for certain supports. Access Points should use assertive

engagement to ensure that any missing information is updated as quickly as possible. Timely updates must be recorded on HIFIS.

When adding someone to the By-Name List, Access Points and other support services in the Coordinated Access System must go over the By-Name List – Frequently Asked Questions document (see: *Appendix D*) and review the types of Housing Opportunities connected to Durham’s Coordinated Access System with the client (see: *page 28 of this Guide*).

Adding Names to the By-Name List

Community Access Points have the sole authority to add individuals to the BNL.

Specifically, select representatives from each Access Point will be identified by the agency to add individuals onto the BNL. To do this, they will ensure the following client information is added or updated on HIFIS: Client Demographic and Family Information, Housing History, Income, VI-SPDAT Assessment (ideally all at time of intake). They will also upload the client’s signed Consent Form onto HIFIS (mandatory). By adding clients to the list, that agency must agree to keep contact with them and continue to serve them within their mandate.

If any agency encounters a person that they are not equipped to serve or assess, they must make a connection to a Community Access Point so that individual can be added to the BNL. This connection can be made by assisting the person to locate a more appropriate agency, booking an appointment, or making travel arrangements. Correspondence with a Community Access Point can be done in-person or virtually (i.e. over the phone, via email, etc.).

Community Access Points

The Durham Region By-Name List is designed to organize community level responses to homelessness. People experiencing homelessness will be connected to Community Access Points where trained staff will use a common assessment tool to determine the person’s depth of need (acuity), collect information used to prioritize them for housing and/or support services and then connect them to housing focused solutions as they come available.

Community Access Points are identified agency locations across Durham who have regular contact with people who are currently experiencing homelessness and have been trained to assess peoples’ needs.

Community Access Points can add a person to the By-Name List by completing the intake process. By adding them to the By-Name List, the agency must agree to keep contact with the person and continue to serve them within their agency’s mandate.

A full list of up-to-date Access Points can be found at www.durham.ca/BNL.

Collection of Information

Consent

Everyone who is added to the By-Name List must sign a By-Name List & HIFIS Consent Form (*see: Appendix B*).

A person may decline to provide consent to be added to the By-Name List. This decision does not prevent access to services. Community partners will continue to assertively engage with the person who declines to provide consent to ensure their access to services and supports.

Data Entry

The required information from a person who consents to be added to the By-Name List will be entered or updated in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). The Community Access Point is responsible for ensuring that a client's information is up to date before the client is added to the BNL. The Community Access Point will also be responsible for uploading the original signed Consent Form onto HIFIS.

Note: Agencies that are on HIFIS but are not an Access Point should ensure that a client's information is up to date on HIFIS before referring them to a Community Access Point for addition to the BNL. Agencies should also attempt to engage a client to complete a VI-SPDAT assessment before referring them to an Access Point, whenever possible. If an agency is already working with a client and has built trust with them, they may be more successful in obtaining the required intake information. This will likely result in a more efficient addition of a client on to the BNL through an Access Point.

Identity Protection

Individuals must sign a HIFIS/ BNL Common Consent Form before being added to the BNL on HIFIS. Additionally, each time a HIFIS user accesses a client's HIFIS profile, they are required to attest that their agency is serving that client.

If a client or agency feels that someone has accessed a client's information inappropriately, the Homelessness Data Coordinator and Homelessness Initiatives Team can download an audit log at any time to review all activity on a client's profile to ensure proper privacy procedures are being adhered to (*see: Privacy Breach Response Process*).

Confidentiality Considerations

All By-Name List client information will be confidential and subject to Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Participating agencies have their own confidentiality practices with regard to data management. Part of the BNL development process is working with agencies to share information professionally and respectfully with mutually agreed upon data sharing agreements.

It is important for the individual to understand that even though efforts will be made to protect their anonymity:

- If they have already provided consent to be added to the BNL, their information may have been seen by agency staff, and
- If the individual provides their information to another agency in the Coordinated Access System without expressing their concerns about privacy, their information may be seen by other agency staff.

Privacy Breach Response Process

Any unauthorized access to, or disclosure of, personal information related to the By-Name Priority List must be reported.

The following steps should be taken in the event of a privacy breach:

1. Notify the Homelessness Data Coordinator of the breach, as well as anyone else from your agency who should be involved in addressing the breach (i.e. Privacy Officer). The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario may be contacted.
2. Retrieve and secure any information that has been disclosed.
3. Ensure no copies of the information have been made or retained by the individual who was not authorized to receive it. Retain their contact information in case you need to follow-up with them.
4. Determine if the breach would allow unauthorized access to any other information and take necessary steps such as changing passwords or shutting down the system.
5. Notify all affected individuals of the privacy breach at the first reasonable opportunity.
6. Improve policies and procedures to ensure that a breach of this kind does not occur again.

Timely and Accurate Updates

The By-Name List can be accessed through the “Reports” Module in HIFIS. Only the Homelessness Data Coordinator and the Region’s Homelessness Initiatives Team will be authorized to download the BNL Report. However, representatives from each Community Access Point will have access to the BNL on a monthly basis in order to

review clients who are close to become Inactive, to add missing client information, and to update any outdated information. Any updates that need to be made to the BNL should be made directly in HIFIS via the Client Information and Client Management menus.

A list of clients who will become inactive at the end of each month will be sent to Community Access Points on the 15th of each month (if the 15th falls on the weekend, it will be sent out on the next business day). Whenever possible, Access Points should update client profiles in HIFIS via the Client Management Menu to ensure their clients stay active on the BNL. Updates made to any of the following modules keep a client active on HIFIS and the BNL: Admissions, Calls and Visits Log, Case Management, Goods and Services, Housing Placements, Service Restrictions, Turnaways, and SPDAT.

The Homelessness Data Coordinator conducts monthly data checks to ensure the data is balanced and up to date. The Homelessness Data Coordinator or Homelessness Program Coordinator shares a By-Name List Dashboard once a month at DACH and DHAN meetings.

Updating the By-Name List

Any HIFIS using agency who has had contact with a person on the BNL can and should update their information as applicable. However, it is the responsibility of the agency that added the person to the By-Name List to maintain contact with the person and continue to provide services to them in accordance with their agency's mandate.

HIFIS should be updated as often as possible (every month at minimum) with the person's current state of housing. This includes permanent housing move-ins.

If new information becomes available regarding an individual that is on the BNL, it should be updated on HIFIS in a timely manner (within 24 hours of receiving the update). This can include information such as:

- Contact information (Client Details)
- Income (Financial Profile)
- New VI-SPDAT assessment (SPDAT Module)

The By-Name List will only show individuals who are actively experiencing homelessness in Durham Region. In order for an individual to be active on the Region's BNL Report in HIFIS, they must meet **all** of the criteria below:

- The individual has signed the HIFIS/BNL Consent Form and it has been recorded in HIFIS as "Coordinated Access/Explicit Consent", or "Coordinated Access Consent" if the client has already provided Explicit Consent at an earlier date.
- The individual is "active" on HIFIS. This means they have interacted with a HIFIS using agency in the past 60 days.

- The individual must have a housing status of “homeless”, “chronically homeless”, or “transitional” (i.e. hospital, jail) in HIFIS and have been homeless for at least 14 days.

Individuals who have a status of “Inactive” or “Housed” will not show up on the Region’s BNL. When an individual’s status changes from “Actively Homeless” to “Inactive” or “Housed”, they will automatically be removed from the BNL.

The status definitions are:

Active: People who are actively homeless in the community, including those who:

- Are newly identified
- Have returned from housing
- Have returned from inactive status

Inactive: People who are not actively homeless, including those who:

- Have been stably housed
- Moved away from Durham region
- Have lost contact
- Are deceased
- Have withdrawn consent

HIFIS/BNL Consent does not have to be re-signed unless:

- The client had previously withdrawn consent
- It has been more than 24 months since their last consent was signed

[Tracking People Without a Full Assessment](#)

A person may decline to provide consent for their information to be added to the By-Name List (BNL). The decision to decline consent does not prevent access to service. The agency should continue to provide the client support services and continue to actively engage the client to obtain consent for the BNL and complete the assessment.

[Removing People from the By-Name List](#)

Any person may withdraw consent to be on the BNL at any time. They can make this request through their service provider or any other Access Point. If the request is made to a Service Provider that is not an Access Point, that Service Provider must contact an Access Point to have that individual’s consent record updated.

If a person withdraws consent to be on the BNL or is deceased, their name will automatically be removed from the BNL. If the individual withdraws their consent to be on the BNL (Coordinated Access Consent) *and* HIFIS (Explicit Consent), Durham Region will cease collecting and updating information about the person. If the person

later re-engages with the homelessness support system, a new Consent Form will need to be completed through an Access Point.

Note: If a person withdraws HIFIS Consent (Explicit Consent) at any point, they will automatically be removed from the BNL. In order for an individual to be Active on the BNL, they will have need to consent to being on the BNL *and* having their information shared on HIFIS.

By-Name List Inactivity Policy

The Inactivity Policy is a critical component of maintaining Durham Region's By-Name List (BNL) and a robust Coordinated Access system. To ensure an efficient assessment and referral process, referral sources and destinations must have the ability to contact and connect with households as soon as a housing opportunity is available.

Without this policy, Coordinated Access systems can experience delays in its referral procedures due to the time spent searching for households in the community who have not been able to be reached through multiple attempts, often for many months. Due to this loss of contact, it is hard for the system to determine whether these individuals are still in need of housing. In some situations, these individuals may have self-resolved their housing crisis or have relocated to another area.

Policy

If a household has had no contact with a HIFIS using agency, AND they have no services or shelter stays in HIFIS for the past 60 days (2 months), the household will automatically become inactive on HIFIS and will no longer appear on the BNL.

The By-Name List will flag when people have not been seen for 46 days (2 weeks from becoming inactive). These people are flagged with Access Points to watch for and to search as appropriate with other known locations, contacts, hospital etc. A list of clients who are 14 days or less from going inactive will also be sent out to Access Points on or around the 15th of each month.

If a person has been removed from the BNL due to inactivity and they re-engage with a HIFIS using service provider, they will automatically be re-added to the BNL provided they still have an active HIFIS/BNL consent and have a housing status of "homeless", "chronically homeless", or "transitional" on HIFIS. An individual can be referred to housing opportunities once they have fully re-engaged with the system, which may include reassessment of their vulnerability.

The VI-SPDAT may not need to be re-completed if a person's score is recorded in HIFIS within the last year or if there have been no major life changes in the person's life.

Common Assessment Tool

The Tool – VI-SPDAT

The Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, or the VI-SPDAT, is a triage tool for people working in the housing and homelessness sector. It allows the assessors to identify who should be recommended for each housing and support intervention, moving the discussion from simply who is eligible for a service intervention to who is eligible and in greatest need of that intervention. Like a triage station in an emergency room, this tool allows the housing and homelessness system to respond efficiently and appropriately to people based on need.

Participants can expect the same screening tool regardless of provider, and providers can standardize screening across workers and organizations. The tool allows Durham Region's Homelessness Support System to efficiently target resources towards those participants who need them the most. Appropriate interventions are based on acuity scores.

Partners in Durham's Homelessness Support System participating in Durham's BNL and Coordinated Access System are trained on how to use VI-SPDAT Version 2.0 for Adults and Families and Version 1.0 for Youth.

When to Complete the Assessment and Which Tool to Use

Version 2.0 of the Adult and Families VI-SPDAT and Version 1.0 for Youth VI-SPDAT is to be conducted by all Access Points or Community Partners.

Emergency shelter staff are to complete the VI-SPDAT with clients within 14 days of intake. This threshold of engagement was determined based on community data and research on homeless intervention best practices. In order to efficiently support people, it is recommended that workers allow individuals or families to conduct a self-directed housing search and self-resolve their homelessness for the first two weeks of their shelter stay. If there is an individual or family known to the system, and suspected high acuity, a worker may complete the assessment earlier in their stay. Workers may also use discretion when administering the VI-SPDAT to supplement responses through conversations and observations with the client. This helps ensure that the VI-SPDAT is accurately reflecting a client's circumstance in order to match them to the most appropriate housing or program opportunity. Workers are responsible for documenting this on HIFIS.

All other referral sources must complete the VI-SPDAT with clients when they are added to the By-Name List so that acuity score can be added and used to triage permanent housing and supports.

The appropriate version of the VI-SPDAT is to be used by referral sources based on the individual being assessed, as prescribed by the Region of Durham. Shelters that serve both youth and adults must administer the appropriate VI-SPDAT based on age. The youth VI-SPDAT (TAY-VI-SPDAT) is a tool designed for youth aged 24 and under. Adults aged 25 are still eligible to be referred to Housing First for Youth, but an adult VI-SPDAT should be conducted in this case. If a youth was assessed using a youth VI-SPDAT but becomes considered an adult before being referred to permanent housing with supports, an adult VI-SPDAT is not required.

Refusal to Participate

Upon entry into Durham's Homelessness Support System, an individual or family is asked to sign a common HIFIS and BNL Consent Form that allows Partner Agencies access to their information for the purpose of housing. The person's decision to decline to sign the Consent Form or complete the VI-SPDAT does not prevent their access to service. The worker will continue to actively engage with the individual or family to sign Consent and complete the VI-SPDAT.

Scoring the Assessment

After having thanked the client, take the time to score the tool and answer any questions the participant may have about consents, where the information will be stored, and what the scoring means. The score indicates level of acuity. Appropriate Housing Intervention referrals are listed below for each VI-SPDAT score range along with specific examples of local programs. Please be advised this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all homelessness programs in Durham.

Low score (0-3) – No Formal Housing Intervention: People who do not require intensive supports but may still benefit from access to affordable housing, housing listings and community level resources to resolve their own homelessness.

Medium Score (4-7) – Rapid Re-Housing: People with moderate health, mental health and/or behavioural health issues, but who are likely to be able to achieve housing stability with medium to short term access to financial and/or support services.

High Score (8-13) – Permanent Supportive Housing: People who need permanent housing with ongoing access to wrap around supports and case management to remain stably housed.

Very High Score (14+) – Permanent Support Housing: People who need permanent housing with ongoing access to services and supports (possibly 24/7) and case management to remain stably housed.

Reassessment

Referral sources do not need to complete a VI-SPDAT if one has been conducted within the past year or if there have been no major changes in the person’s life since the last VI-SPDAT was conducted – as long as the person has remained engaged with the homelessness support system. For example, if a person has been to the emergency room twice in the past month, they may have already scored a “1” in that section on their previous assessment, therefore another assessment would not necessarily yield a different acuity score.

Prioritization of Access

The Durham Region Homelessness Support System has identified key indicators that will determine an individual’s place on the By-Name Priority List.

Youth

The youth prioritization criteria is used when the housing opportunity comes from a youth-specific housing provider or housing program.

The top indicators identified for youth in priority order include: 1) Chronic Homelessness, 2) Age, 3) Tri-morbidity, 4) History of Trauma/ Abuse and 5) Current Living Arrangements.

Priority Level		Chronic Homelessness*	Age (16-24)	Tri-morbidity**	History of Trauma/ Abuse	Current Living Arrangements
1	High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ascending	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unsheltered
	Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ascending	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Emergency Shelter/ Provisionally Accommodated
	High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ascending	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsheltered

2	Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ascending	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency Shelter/ Provisionally Accommodated
3	High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ascending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsheltered
	Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ascending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency Shelter/ Provisionally Accommodated
4	High	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ascending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsheltered
	Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ascending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency Shelter/ Provisionally Accommodated

*Youth who have been homeless for 6 or more months in the past year **OR** have had 4 periods of homelessness in the past 3 years.

**Tri-morbidity is the presence of mental health, physical health, & substance use issues.

Single Adults

The top indicators identified for single adults in priority order include: 1) Chronic Homelessness, 2) Tri-morbidity, 3) Acuity, 4) Age and 5) Length of Time Homeless.

Priority Level		Chronic Homelessness*	Tri-morbidity**	Acuity	Age	Length of Homelessness
1	High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Descending	Senior (60+)	Descending
	Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Descending	Adult (59 or under)	Descending

2	High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Descending	Senior (60+)	Descending
	Low	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Descending	Adult (59 or under)	Descending
3	High	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Descending	Senior (60+)	Descending
	Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Descending	Adult (59 or under)	Descending

*Chronic Homelessness is defined as an individual or family who is currently homeless and has been homeless for: a total of 6 months (180 days) over the past year OR recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of 18 months (546 days).

**Tri-morbidity is the presence of mental health, physical health, & substance use issues.

Families

The top indicators identified for families in priority order include: 1) Chronic Homelessness, 2) Tri-morbidity, 3) Family Reunification, 4) Length of Homelessness, and 5) Single Parent.

Priority Level	Chronic Homelessness*	Tri-morbidity**	Family Reunification***	Length of Homelessness	Single Parent
1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Descending	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Descending	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Descending	<input type="checkbox"/>

4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Descending	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Descending	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Families who are currently homeless and have been homeless for: a total of 6 months (180 days) over the past year OR recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of 18 months (546 days).

**Tri-morbidity is the presence of mental health, physical health, & substance use issues.

***Family Reunification refers to when a lack of stable housing directly impacts a family's ability to live together (i.e. obtaining housing either results in family reunification or allows the family to continue living together). See Family VI-SPDAT Canadian Version 2.0, Questions 32 and 33.

Notes

In the event of a tie, the household's Date of Consent on the By-Name List will be used as a tiebreaker in ascending order (i.e. the household who has the earlier date of signing consent would be prioritized first).

Priority criteria will be reviewed at least once a year in consultation with the community. Factors outside of those listed in the prioritization policy cannot be used.

Last Revised: January 2022

Filling of Vacancies

When a dedicated housing or support resource becomes available, the following steps are taken to inform a client that a housing opportunity is available to them:

1. The housing and/ or support destination completes the Vacancy Referral Form (www.durham.ca/BNL) which notifies the Homelessness Data Coordinator of the available vacancy (or vacancies).
2. The Homelessness Data Coordinator will filter the BNL to only include those who are eligible for the available resource.
3. Three (3) names will be taken from the top of the List, which is ordered in accordance with the prioritization criteria.
4. The names will be forwarded to the housing and/ or support provider
 - a. If there is more than one vacancy, the number of names sent to the housing/ support provider will increase by up to two per vacancy. I.e.
 - i. One (1) vacancy = top three (3) names
 - ii. Two (2) vacancies = top five (5) names
 - iii. Three (3) vacancies = top seven (7) names
 - b. The names will still be sent in order of priority based on the prioritization criteria.

5. The housing and/ or support destination staff will select the **first** individual or family from the list of three (or more) provided.
6. The housing and/or support destination staff will connect with the Access Point that referred the client and any other relevant partners to ensure the placement is still appropriate.
7. The housing and/ or support destination staff will connect with the individual or family and offer the available housing and/ or support services.
 - a. If the individual or family accepts the offer of housing and/ or supports, appropriate steps will be taken to update and complete an application, complete a referral agreement with the landlord where appropriate, and connect the individual or family to other services (i.e. trustee, health, food).
 - b. If the individual or family does not accept the offered housing or supports, they will remain on the BNL without penalty. The organization will select the next individual or family in priority order from the original list to offer the housing and/ or supports.

The approximate amount of time that the housing and/ or support destination searches for a household before reporting back is 14 days. Housing and support service providers should make every effort to locate the household to connect them to the available housing and/or support, including consultation and collaboration with other community partners and the client's Access Point.

If the 14-day benchmark has been reached and the housing and/ or support destination has still not successfully confirmed that the household is accepting the housing/ support service, discretion can be used to exceed the 14 days. Consideration should be used if the client does not have contact information, if the client is transient, or in other similar circumstances. If the housing and/or support destination has exhausted all methods of contacting the client, including collaborating with the client's Access Point, they will go on to the next household from the list in Priority order.

It is important to remember that contacting the top client to make the offer is the most important thing. The housing and/ or support destination must provide the Homelessness Data Coordinator with a brief, written reason as to why a household on the list was not selected for the vacancy and why they moved to the next household on the list. If the system loses contact with a client for 60 days, whether they have moved away or disengaged, they will become inactive on HIFIS and will no longer appear on the BNL.

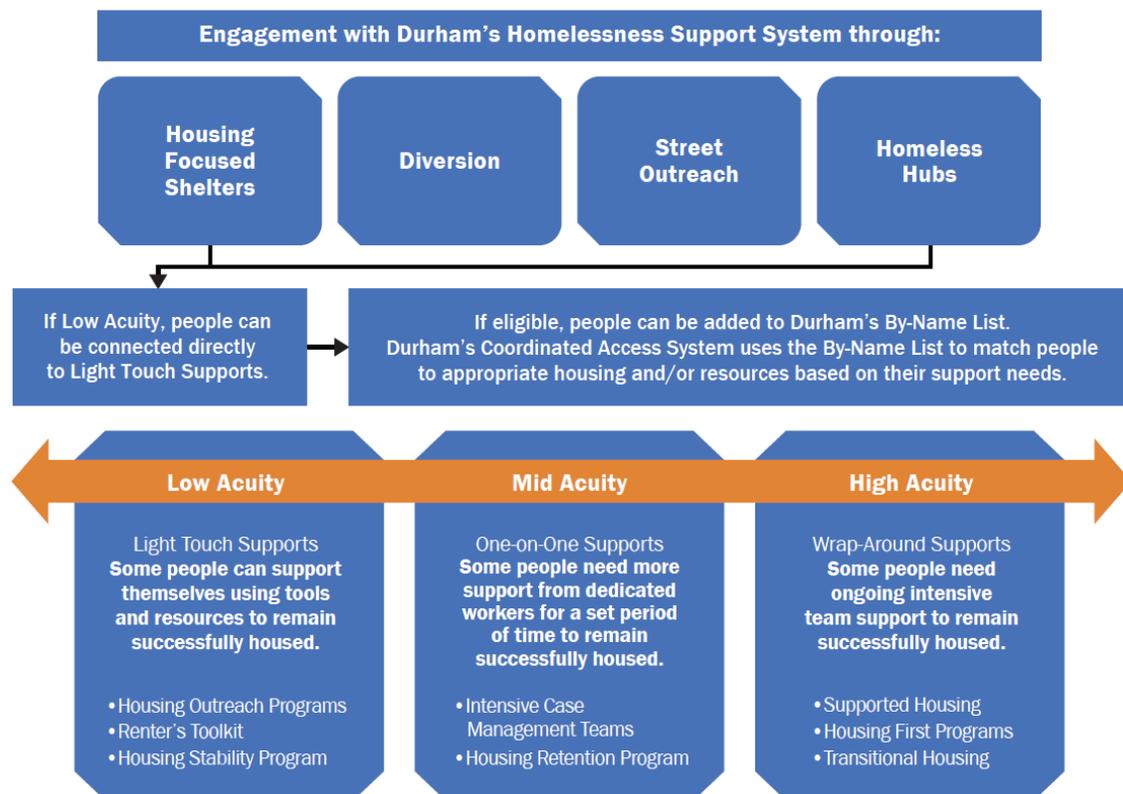
If needed, see the Dispute Resolution Process if disagreements arise between service providers during this process.

The Coordinated Access System operates under the principal that both households and service providers/ landlords have a choice when vacancies are filled. In the event that there is only one (1) household provided by the Homelessness Data Coordinator to fill the vacancy, the service provider/ landlord that dedicated the resource must choose that household or provide a statement in writing to the Homelessness Data Coordinator

and the Homelessness Program Coordinator at Housing Services explaining why they were not chosen.

Connecting Durham’s Coordinated Access System with Housing Opportunities

This flowchart shows the pathway between Durham’s By-Name List, Coordinated Access System and Housing Opportunities from engagement to being housed.



For more information and program descriptions, please visit www.durham.ca/housingsupports.

Dispute Resolution Process

In the event of a case specific dispute or a systemic dispute, the following procedures will be used to resolve them.

Case Specific Disputes

Case Specific disputes could be related to:

- Accuracy of assessment scores
- Prioritization on the BNL, or
- Selection for housing or program vacancies

Any case specific disputes will be address using the steps below:

1. Workers discuss issues with one another and seek resolution
2. Workers involve their respective supervisors to seek resolution
3. Managers/ Directors will resolve the dispute

Should a question be raised about accuracy of an assessment, prioritization on the BNL or selection outcomes for a specialized housing intervention, the Homelessness Data Coordinator and the Region of Durham Homelessness Program Coordinator should be included in steps 2 and 3. If the issue is not resolved, a formal complaint should be filed through the Feedback Form on www.durham.ca/BNL and the issue will be triaged to the appropriate table for review and to recommend a strategy for resolution of differences.

Systemic Disputes

Systemic Disputes could be related to:

- Administrative or procedural differences
- Differences in service philosophy, principles or policies, or
- Resource shortages, which may require harmonization of systems

Any systemic disputes will be address using the steps below:

1. Front line staff identifies the nature of the dispute
2. Front line staff informs their supervisor and/or Manager/ Director
3. Managers/ Directors discuss the issue and when necessary, a complaint is filed though the Feedback Form on www.durham.ca/BNL and the issue is brought to the appropriate table for review and to recommend a strategy for resolution of differences

If you would like to file a complaint or provide feedback on the Coordinated Access System, the By-Name List, or HIFIS, you may complete the online form at www.durham.ca/BNL. For a hard copy of the feedback form, you can contact Alyxandra.Riddell@durham.ca.

Appendix

Appendix A – COH: Definition of Homelessness

Canadian Definition Of Homelessness

Canadian Observatory on Homelessness¹

DEFINITION

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing.

Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other. That is, homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations, organized here in a **typology** that includes 1) **Unsheltered**, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation; 2) **Emergency Sheltered**, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence; 3) **Provisionally Accommodated**, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure, and finally, 4) **At Risk of Homelessness**, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards. It should be noted that for many people homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency.

The problem of homelessness and housing exclusion is the result of our broken social contract. The failure of society to ensure that adequate systems, funding and supports are in place so that all people, even in crisis situations, have access to housing and the supports they need. The goal of ending homelessness is to ensure housing stability, which means people have a fixed address and housing that is appropriate (affordable, safe, adequately maintained, accessible and suitable in size), and includes required services as needed (supportive), in addition to income and supports.

In the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, the definition of homelessness recognizes overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples (including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) amongst Canadian homelessness populations necessitates the inclusion of their historical, experiential, and cultural perspectives, as well as the experience with colonization and racism, in their consideration of homelessness. In addition, numerous populations, such as youth, women, families, people with mental health and/or addictions issues, people impacted by violence, seniors, veterans, immigrants, refugees, ethno-racial and racialized people, and members of LGBTQ2S communities experience homelessness due to a unique constellation of circumstances and as such the appropriateness of community responses has to take into account such diversity.

1. The COH (formerly the Canadian Homelessness Research Network) established a working group with leaders from the areas of research, policy and practice, to develop, refine and test a new definition. The COH Working Group included: Dr. Stephen Gaetz, Director, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, York University; Carolann Barr, Executive Director, Raising the Roof; Anita Friesen, Senior Policy Advisor, Program Policy and Planning, Family Violence Prevention and Homeless Supports, Alberta Human Services; Bradley Harris, Social Services Consultant, The Salvation Army; Charlie Hill, Executive Director, National Aboriginal Housing Association; Dr. Kathy Kovacs-Burns, Associate Director, Health Sciences Council, University of Alberta; Dr. Bernie Pauly, Associate Professor, School of Nursing, University of Victoria; Bruce Pearce, President, Canadian Housing Renewal Association; Alina Turner, VP Strategy, Calgary Homeless Foundation; Allyson Marsolais, Project Manager, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.

Durham Region’s Consent to Collect and Release Information

HIFIS

This partner agency is part of the Regional Municipality of Durham shared Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) System. HIFIS is a secure system that uses computers to collect and share information in order to help provide services to people who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The HIFIS system is shared between the Region of Durham and its community partners. For a full list of community partners, please contact the Homelessness Data Coordinator at 905-686-2661.

To help you access the supports you need, it may be important for relevant information to be shared among the partner agencies. As you receive services, personal information will be collected about your housing and support needs, the services you receive and the outcomes of those services.

Only information related to obtaining and maintaining your housing will be collected and seen by partner agencies. This partner agency will collect, store and disclose the following information about you to other partner agencies:

- Full Name
- Contact Information
- Date of Birth
- Educational History
- Marital, Family Status, and History
- Current Income and Assets
- Employment Status, History
- Housing History
- Service History (including services and programs accessed or applied for)

HIFIS information hosted by the Region of Durham may be shared with other service providers for the purposes of:

- a) managing and administering housing and homelessness services and programs now and in the future;
- b) verifying eligibility for housing and homelessness services funded by applicable municipal and/or provincial social programs;

What this means for you

We use your information to help you access services that may help you. We also use your information to manage and improve our programs and services. Lastly, we use this information to report back to the province and federal government using information that does not personally identify you.

- c) supporting and evaluating funded programs, and reporting to provincial and federal funding bodies using aggregate/non-identifying data.

Durham Region By-Name List

What is Durham Region's Housing & Homelessness Support System and By-Name List?

- Durham Region's Housing & Homelessness Support System is a group of agencies (Partner Agencies) that work together to help you find and maintain a place to live
- The By-Name List (BNL) is an up-to-date list of all individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the Durham Region

What personal information is collected?

- With your consent, any relevant information collected during intake, (E.g. your name and other identifying information) will be collected and entered into HIFIS
 - This includes information gathered during the Vulnerability Index- Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool assessments (VI-SPDAT)
- When necessary, relevant Personal Health Information, and legal information will be shared only as it relates to your ability to find and maintain housing. Personal Health Information and legal information is the information you provide during your VI-SPDAT assessment

Why are we collecting your personal information, and how will it be used?

- The goal of the agencies using HIFIS and the BNL is to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness and housing instability, and to match them with housing and support services based on their unique needs. This is done with your consent.
- In order to help you access the supports that you need, information related to obtaining and maintaining your housing will be used by necessary Partner Agencies, as needed.
- The information we collect will also allow us to review, evaluate and improve programs and services to ensure that they are meeting the needs of community members.
- Aggregate data will be shared with the Government of Ontario and the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness to support the continued investment in housing and homelessness programs.

What if you change your mind about your personal information being shared?

- Providing consent for your information to be used by Partner Agencies to improve your access to services is voluntary. Refusing to do so will not limit your access to emergency shelter but may limit other re-housing options available to you (E.g. transitional housing programs).

- At any time, you can request a list of the personal information that has been collected about you, with whom it has been shared, and what it is used for. For a full list, please contact the Homelessness Data Coordinator at 905-686-2661.
- You can remove your consent at any time by written request, but that cancellation will not be retroactive. If you remove your consent, any information collected to the time of cancellation will remain hidden in HIFIS and the BNL, and only your name will be accessible to Partner Agencies.

Consent for the Collection and Sharing of Personal Information

- I have read or have had read to me the information contained on this form and I understand it.
- By signing below, I give permission for my personal information, including any relevant Personal Health Information and Legal Information that may impact my housing needs, to be collected by agencies in the Housing & Homelessness Service System and entered into the HIFIS and BNL databases.
- I understand that I am providing permission for information gathered during my Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance assessment to be entered into the HIFIS and BNL databases. This may include information collected by my health care providers listed above who participate in HIFIS, who may also use the information they collect for purpose of providing health care to me.
- I also understand that, in order to assist me in accessing the services and supports I need, information about me may be shared with the Partner Agencies
- I understand that I may withdraw this consent in writing at any time, but that withdrawal of consent will not apply to information which has already been shared. Should I return for service in the future, I acknowledge that I will be asked to complete a new Consent Form for collection, use and disclosure (sharing) of personal information.

Once signed, this Consent Form will be valid for the period of 24 months. By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read the Consent Form and understand and agree with its contents.

Applicant's Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Co-Applicant's Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Dependant(s) (18 years and older)

Appendix C – By-Name List Intake Checklist

Consent* - Consent Module

- Client(s) has signed HIFIS/BNL Consent and Consent has been uploaded to HIFIS **(REQUIRED)**
- Consent Type: Coordinated Access & Explicit or Coordinated Access if Explicit Consent was signed at an earlier date
- Date Consent was signed

Client Personal Information – Client Details Module

- Full Name & Alias
- Date of Birth
- Gender Identity
- Veteran Status
- Citizenship/Immigration Status
- Indigenous Status
- Geographic Region
- Contact information (phone, email, etc.)

Client Family Information – Family Module**

- Family Member Name
- Family Role
- Relationship to Family Head
- Start Date

Income- Financial Profile Module

- Income Type
- Pay Frequency
- Hours Per Month
- Hourly Wage
- Start Date

Housing History- Housing History Module

- Housing Type
- Start Date
- Country
- Address (if known)

VI-SPDAT (SPDAT Module)

- VI-SPDAT Completed and Uploaded to HIFIS (Version 2 for Adults and Families, Version 1 for Youth)

*The BNL Report also pulls information from the **Case Management Module** and the **Housing Placement Module**. However, these modules are typically updated over time as staff members work with clients towards specific goals (e.g Housing). Therefore, this information is not required to be entered upon intake.*

***The Consent is mandatory to add anyone to the By-Name List. Ideally, all information is completed at intake to better understand the client’s needs. If clients are missing information at time of intake, this may impact a person’s prioritization for certain supports. Access Points should use assertive engagement to ensure any missing information is updated in HIFIS as quickly as possible.**

**** If the family member(s) are not already in HIFIS, a new client profile will need to be created for each member.**

By-Name List Frequently Asked Questions

What is a By-Name List?

A By-Name List (BNL) is a list of everyone who is homeless in our community.

A BNL is important for ending homelessness. Homelessness is constantly changing and you can't solve a problem that you can't see and don't understand.



What does a By-Name List do?

A BNL allows communities to:

- Know who is experiencing homelessness and where to find them
- House people as quickly as possible based on their needs
- See what is and isn't working in the homelessness system and make changes

How do I get on the By-Name List?

People are eligible for the BNL if they are:

- At least 16 years old
- Have been homeless for at least 14 days,
- Have provided consent, and
- Have been living in Durham Region for the last 90 days

To be added to the BNL, you can contact any of the Access Points. A list of Access Points can be found at www.durham.ca/BNL.



How do I stay on the By-Name List?

You can contact any of our Access Points or any agency in Durham's Homelessness Support System to update your information at any time.

It is important to keep your information up to date to stay on the BNL. Having up to date information ensures you can always be contacted for a housing or support offer.

How long will I be on the By-Name List?

There is a wait time for housing resources. Offers of housing and supports are based on priorities rather than first-come, first-served.

You and your worker should remain in contact to continue a housing search outside of the BNL and regularly update the BNL.



What kind of housing/support can I get from the BNL?

There are many housing/support programs through the BNL. These include:

- Support finding and maintaining housing
- Housing with supports
- Transitional, short-term housing
- Permanent, long-term housing

To learn more, visit our [Housing Inventory](#).